

Western  Graduate&PostdoctoralStudies

Western University  
Scholarship@Western

---

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

---

11-19-2019 3:00 PM


# The Amphibian, Melioristic Agenda for Dividuals: Tropological Oscillations versus Tropological Settlements

Donatas Sinkunas  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor  
Tumanov, Vlad  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy  
© Donatas Sinkunas 2019

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Sinkunas, Donatas, "The Amphibian, Melioristic Agenda for Dividuals: Tropological Oscillations versus Tropological Settlements" (2019). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 6758.  
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/6758>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

# The Amphibian, Melioristic Agenda for Dividuals: Tropological Oscillations versus Tropological Settlements

## Abstract

Some people often identify themselves too strongly with one particular belief system. Others, throughout their lives, travel from one belief system to another without necessarily weaving their experiences and gained bodies of knowledge in a complementary manner. This thesis discusses different frequencies and principles of this sort of settlements or oscillations. I argue that it is impossible to believe in perfectly purist ideologies that would not deviate from their putative, pre-established, holistic inner order. Through multiple literary, cinematic, and philosophical examples it is shown that people are of dividual (not individual) nature. That is to say, potentially we contain multiple dividual poles such as hedgehog versus fox, character versus author/agent, and different levels of authorship/agency, and a very large number of tropologies – a small, coherent system of different tropes that revolve around one axial trope – such as noise, silence, laughter, etc. Our level of authorship/agency depends on how often we oscillate between different dividual and tropological poles and how close is our relationship with them. These terms also allow us to look at the problem of determinism and free will from a slightly different conceptual angle.

This may pose two traditional questions: (i) Why act at all, if we are tropologically conditioned? (ii) What could be constructive principles for action? This thesis argues that even though we are incapable of controlling and predicted the consequences of people's actions (entropology), we may still follow the principle of melioristic, amphibian, tropological and dividual oscillations and hope for serendipitous outcomes. Examples and cases from the areas of literature, arts, philosophy, and cultural studies used in this thesis seek to provide a rich conceptual framework and gain new synthesized perspectives. Comparisons of old and new intellectual production helps us understand why tropological and dividual oscillations are inevitable and more desirable than tropological and dividual settlements.

## Keywords

Tropology, entropology, dividuality, polylogical consciousness, hedgehog, fox, characterhood, authorship/agency, noise, silence, laughter.

## Summary for Lay Audience

Some people often identify themselves too strongly with one particular belief system. Others, throughout their lives, travel from one belief system to another without necessarily weaving their experiences and gained bodies of knowledge in a complementary manner. That is to say, at different times they may hold very different, contradictory, and perhaps even opposite ideas. Naturally, this affects the perception of one's personal identity. Too often in literature, politics or philosophy, we tend to oversimplify the understanding of who we are by putting ourselves in one or another firm category. Then, we cannot re-contextualize ourselves or the ideas we hold and look at them in a different light. I call this phenomenon topological settlement. In this thesis, I advocate the idea of topological oscillations. This means that there are no pure, well-established, holistic ideologies and that we constantly oscillate between different ideas even if we do not notice it. Through multiple literary, cinematic, and philosophical examples it is shown that people are of dividual (not individual) nature. This means that we consist of many selves, not one particular self. I demonstrate this by showing how we tend to oscillate between the poles such as hedgehog versus fox, character versus author/agent, and different levels of authorship/agency. Moreover, I also analyze how certain popular contemporary tropes such as noise, silence, and laughter impact the way we think, speak, act, and conceptualize our identity. These terms also allow us to look at the problem of determinism and free will from a slightly different conceptual angle.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Summary for Lay Audience.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1.....	1
1 Conceptual and Theoretical Introduction.....	1
1.1 Tropologically Conditioned Thinking.....	3
1.2 Abstract Immanent Tropologies: Confusion of Confusions and The Mark and the Void .....	20
1.3 Two Modes of Thinking: Mode 1 and Mode 2.....	33
1.4 Entropology: Re-justifying Our Actions.....	41
1.5 Dividuality: Polylogical Mind and the Oscillations between Different Tropological Poles.....	57
Chapter 2.....	79
2 Dividual Oscillations between the Poles of Hedgehog and Fox, Character and Author; Different Levels of Authorship/Agency.....	79
2.1 The Dividual Tensions between the Tropological Poles of Hedgehog and Fox .....	80
2.2 The Dividual Tensions between the Tropological Poles of Character and Author/Agent.....	89
2.3 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 1.....	102
2.4 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 2.....	116
2.5 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 3.....	126

2.6	Different Levels of Authorship: Level 4 .....	138
Chapter 3	.....	148
3	Tropological Settlements: Noise, Silence, and Laughter. Tropes We Live by .....	148
3.1	Tropological Settlements: Noise .....	150
3.2	Tropological Settlements: Silence.....	155
3.3	Laughter as an Antidote to Tropological Settlements .....	172
Chapter 4	.....	185
4	Practicing Tropological Oscillations and Dividual Expansion through Perspectivism and Polylogical Cultural Works.....	185
Bibliography	.....	196
Curriculum Vitae	.....	209

# Chapter 1

## 1 Conceptual and Theoretical Introduction

Isaiah Berlin (1998), although playfully, classified philosophers and writers into two categories: foxes and hedgehogs. Since then, this classification has been appropriated, modified, and used in a myriad of different contexts. Philip Tetlock (2005), for instance, argues that foxes outperform hedgehogs when it comes to providing good judgements about future events. Ronald Dworkin (2011), on the contrary, advocates a hedgehog-like approach towards the interpretation of one's moral convictions. According to him, the reflective, introspective, and conscientious hedgehog-like moral agents should not behave at their whim but instead achieve a coherent interpretation of moral convictions. Thus, Dworkin rather praises than criticizes hedgehog-like qualities.

In this dissertation, I will avoid dividing people, their ideas, beliefs, and prototypes into rigid taxonomies. I will show the inevitable oscillation between the two poles of the following spectra: fox and hedgehog, character and author, and different levels of agency/authorship. I will use the concept "dividuality" which will help dismantle thinking based on strict binarisms and grasp the fluctuations and different shades of the gamut. Contrary to the concept "individuality" which implies the atomic and undivided understanding of the person, dividuality expresses the potentiality for the production of multiple selves and shows that we are the battlefield for competing sets of ideas or "tropologies" as I will explain in the following chapter.

I define tropology as a set of tropes that are interwoven into an allegedly fixed, stable, and coherent mini-theory. These systematic tropologies guide our actions and may even determine our identity. On the other hand, most of the time one stable and permanent identity does not describe us properly, so we may use our authorial power to recreate ourselves instead of unwittingly allowing the external prevailing ideas to shape ourselves.

I have to emphasize that the way in which I use the term tropology is not related to the historical use of it. In Christian tradition, tropology helped explain the figurative meaning of words. Specifically, the term was linked with a moral interpretation of an encoded meaning. Perhaps in this case tropology may help grasp and educe a moral and figurative meaning, which literally cannot be expressed because of the ineffable nature of our languages. Moreover, divine matters are unrepresentable and humans have to perform mental tricks and seek beyond words' literal meaning. Here tropology may perform a role of revealing something that is more real than the words can represent. In this dissertation, I use the term tropology in a more mundane way. Tropes never imply any outer reality that is unrepresentable or ineffable. Tropes simplify, misrepresent, misconstrue (unintentionally distort), contaminate, and reduce the thing it seeks to represent. Speaking in Kantian terms, the set of tropes that constitute a tropology rather signify the phenomenon, not the thing-in-itself. Furthermore, tropologies, to use one of its etymological meanings, turn tropologically constructed ideas into actions that have real, noticeable impacts on our realities. Think of the Domino theory which was so dominant during the Cold War. It expresses a dogmatic, tropologically dressed element of a much broader ideology (for example, capitalism) that informed the opinions of many powerful people, who through their actions could change the course of the world's history.

In order to be consistent with its multilayered nature, my dissertation will be oriented more towards breadth than depth. The creation of in-depth studies rather marks the emergence of tropological systems of thought that tend to lose sight of a more general view. For this reason, I would like to use a broad range of diverse literary and theoretical approaches which, hopefully, could help transcend tropologically conditioned intellectual artifice. I will illustrate a wide range of theoretical concepts and ideas with references to literary works and other cultural production which will help us understand how potent tropologies may influence our imagination.

As my dissertation progresses, I will examine how cultural industries reify, commercialize, or reflect our cravings for certain tropological systems, prototypes, and characters. I will propose a journey through literary and cinematic production to illustrate how our inner thoughts and desires are produced and/or mirrored. I will explore the



impossibility of non-tropological thinking and suggest potential principles to deal with it. I will also kindly ask the reader to remain patient if (s)he finds some chapters irrelevant, for example, I will discuss two different modes of thinking and its true relevance will show up only later. All these conceptual tools will be used to discuss different notions of authorship/agency in the last chapters of the first part.

## 1.1 Tropologically Conditioned Thinking

*“I speak and speak, but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear.”*

*(Marco Polo)*

Tropology is a set of tropes that are interwoven into an allegedly fixed, stable, and coherent mini-theory that aims at guiding our thinking and consequently our actions. Many thinkers have realized that their identity, reasoning, and cognition were affected by the use of language. William James, as many others, tried to break free from this linguistic “prison” and amplify the limits of imagination by coining new terms. He suggested replacing the concept *universe* with *pluriverse*, a term that purportedly could guide better our understanding. That was not all. James also introduced a term *nulliverse*, thereby protesting the attempts to reduce “the world to pure phenomena” (Menand 2001: 217). These and other numerous examples reveal the underlying paradox of many intellectual endeavors, namely, that one can only escape a tropological system by substituting it with another. Or as George Lakoff (2003) points out, thinking in images and tropes is essential to being human. If the generation of new ideas, the multiplication of our inner selves, and the change of the external world unavoidably happen by following different tropologies and we are to obey the tyranny of words, what is then? Naturally, my dissertation is not an exception and it will go along the inescapable line of reasoning that humans are sentenced to create more sentences. In this and following chapters, I will discuss the quantitative tropological expansion as well as qualitative principles that could help us conceptualize intended and unintended consequences caused by different tropological systems.

The popular cultural characters and themes not only emerge from our inner urges and anxieties, but also, once being outside, place us within certain tropological frames.

That helps explain why sometimes people tend to lean towards one or another tropological extreme. Excessive reliance on rigid tropological constructions is natural because people seek stability and predictability. That is why every new tropology seems like Ithaca, our final destination, although it is yet another hotel on our way. To paraphrase Luigi Pirandello, we are in a constant search of a proper character/author/role model with whom we could (temporarily) identify ourselves or we are in search of a tropological system, which could simplify and explain worldly complexities to us, thereby calming down our anxieties.

By no means is it a new topic in the history of ideas and the aim of this dissertation is quite modest, namely, to nuance the old problems and shed new light on them by using slightly different terminology. Plato's cave is an allegory which demonstrates the incompatibility between reality as it is and as we, humans, perceive it. Roughly speaking reality received by our senses is mentally, linguistically and culturally processed and we tell ourselves a story about it. In other words, the world is inseparable from our thinking based on imagination and conditioned by the languages we use. Tropology, then, is a reality converted into the currency of consistently and coherently interwoven tropes. Think of the European travelers who first reached South America and created two different stories about the indigenous people. Those stories relied on radically different tropes, *cannibals* versus *noble savages* (Jauregui 2008). As a consequence, these two different tropes caused two different reactions: the latter served as a justification for the extermination and conversion of local people to Christianity, while the former stimulated the European imagination to create utopias and theories about past golden ages. Both micro theories, or tropologies, are small but not insignificant particles of what was going on in those societies and they could be appropriated and used in larger discourses and stories. However, it is important to stress that the words "discourse," "ideology," or "story" are much larger entities that consists of many tropological elements. A tropology is a micro-theory which refers to logically coherent use of one or more tropes and serve the purpose to represent what Walter Lippmann calls *unseen environment*. Unseen environment is everything we cannot experience ourselves and it has to be reported to us by the media or other means of communication (Lippmann 35). In other words, everything we do not know directly

about the world is brought by someone else and represented by someone else's words. It is no wonder that contemporary populism relies extensively on the use of relevant and well targeted political and social tropes (immigrants, refugees, social elites, etc.)<sup>1</sup>. Populists seek to speak in the name of other people and they also use specific tropes to fabricate the unseen reality for the people and use these fake representations to manipulate them. According to Jan-Werner Müller, populism "is a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified—but (...) ultimately fictional—people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior" (Müller 19-20). These tropologies are the essential elements of a bigger ideological picture painted by some interest group.

The term "tropology" is also useful if we seek to grasp minor differences or dissident voices within a so-called unified discourse. For example, it might be that some nationalists or conservatives have doubts about limiting immigration or prohibiting abortions or perhaps people who consider themselves liberals are for limiting access to alcohol. Then, naturally, they have a mini-theory about why certain products, phenomena, things are good or bad. These tropologies do not have to be based on empirical data. They just need to be expressed in a logical and convincing form. That is why I prefer the term "tropology" to the term "discourse," namely, because putting all the conservatives or liberals under the same discursive umbrella would reduce the ideological complexities too drastically<sup>2</sup>. "Tropology" is a more precise analytical tool.

---

<sup>1</sup> An extreme case took place in Rwanda in 1993. The private radio station, the Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, incited violence and instigated the Rwandan genocide between the Hutus and Tutsis by attaching to the latter the trope of cockroaches (Smith 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Another great example could be John McCain's nickname *The Maverick*. It most certainly refers to his intertropological and ideologically inconsistent views and this label could be attached only by a gang of what I will call tropological settlers who are wholeheartedly purists and think that their views have always been and will always

Another important premise of this dissertation is that reality cannot be perceived non-tropologically. However, we should not fall into the pitfall of relativism. But what we need to understand is that “under certain conditions men respond as powerfully to fictions as they do to realities, and that in many cases they help to create the very fictions to which they respond” (Lippmann 7). Therefore, this pseudo-environment of ours which always implies a simplified, tropologically constructed perception of a much more complex and bigger reality has to be incessantly questioned, revised, and expanded. Quantitative intertropological expansion, that is, a well-informed outlook, which takes into consideration more than one tropological truth, and qualitative principle of our tropologically conditioned cognition, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, are the accomplices of the “Gang of Brutal Facts” that time to time murders a beautiful but wrong theory. There is nothing essentially wrong with the realization that our perceptions and opinions are constructed via linguistic, cognitive, or cultural contaminations, as long as we are ready to modify and upgrade them.

It seems that the very fact how we sometimes refer to our cognitive and linguistic limitations metaphorically: The allegory of the cave, language is a prison cell, etc., may render our thinking more relativist. Doesn't this binding together of several not necessarily related tropes engender a negative tropology regarding the role of language in our cognition? Is it possible to notice something more positive about human linguistic and cognitive limitations? In their study *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argued “that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (...) the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson 3). Moreover, different metaphors may constitute a coherent system which to a certain

---

remain objective and universal. Needless to say, the spirit of this dissertation is intertropological and I do not think that the label *Maverick* properly reflects the complexities of our views and worldly phenomena.

degree affects our thinking (9). Thus, metaphorical or tropological systems are the grammar of our understanding and actions. In the following paragraphs, I am going to address these three questions: (i) how can tropologies be useful in our daily lives and what is their role in this dissertation? (ii) how tropologies may be detrimental and bring about almost exclusively negative consequences? (iii) what sort of attitude could we assume or what sort of principle should we follow in order to avoid the negative effects of tropologies?

Let us start with the first problem. Precisely because tropologies are ineluctable, we as their containers have no other option than to analyze our dependence and attachment to them. In other words, tropologies are neither useful, nor harmful; it is rather the intensity and seriousness with which we identify ourselves with tropologies that cause positive or negative effects. In later parts of this dissertation, I will discuss the tropologies of noise, creative destruction, silence, laughter, etc. How otherwise, if not through incessantly renewed and ever-expanding tropologies, would it be possible to talk about creative destruction calmly, silence with words, chaos rationally, and laughter seriously? Thomas Keating used to say that “Silence is God’s first language; everything else is a poor translation”. A calm, wordy, rational, serious, or mockingly witty tropology is how we represent the imagined unseen realities, distort, refract, and weave worldly phenomena into logical and coherent view. The very objective of this dissertation is enabled by the deceitfully stable and typological tropes such as hedgehogs, foxes, characters, authors, noise, silence, or laughter. My aim is to write about the never-ending expansion and oscillation between different poles of tropological spectra, not about settling down in one or another end of it. This is why I chose the term “trope.” It implies that something is of metaphorical and figurative nature. That something can be loosely talked about, but it cannot be grasped. We are neither completely the character, nor the author; neither entirely the hedgehog, nor the fox. However, we can only analyze these fluctuations by invoking tropologies. Moreover, the myth of the constant tropological relocation or the impossibility of tropological settlement is, paradoxically, also tropological and affects our thinking. Thus, saying that we are sentenced to write more sentences is not necessarily a regurgitation of the old Romantic truths but rather the diagnosis of human condition. Tropologies, hence, should not be looked at with suspicion

but they should be regarded as very useful instruments that help us think about ourselves and our environments in new ways. Dividuality, which I will discuss later, is an abstract theoretical concept which contains the abovementioned oscillations but also enables us to reason about them metaphorically. Tropes allow us to create multiple symbolical orders, utopian worlds, and hypothetical situations that serve as a means to idealistically transcend our realities and engage into comparative activity between what is possible and what is not. Pondering what *could* be possible may open up plenty of potential alternative for the present moment. Thus, Nassim Nicholas Taleb and like-minded thinkers are not right when they advocate radical skeptical empiricism and downplay the potential merits of tropological idealistic thinking:

Skeptical empiricism advocates the opposite method. I care about the premises more than the theories, and I want to minimize reliance on theories, stay light on my feet, and reduce my surprises. I want to be broadly right rather than precisely wrong. Elegance in the theories is often indicative of Platonicity and weakness—it invites you to seek elegance for elegance’s sake. A theory is like medicine (or government): often useless, sometimes necessary, always self-serving, and on occasion lethal. So it needs to be used with care, moderation, and close adult supervision (Taleb 2007: 285).

Even though we should bear in mind that Taleb normally associates Platonism with overly confident experts, speculative statisticians, or game theorists who are in the permanent lack of full information and therefore, constant risk of taking wrong decisions, I argue that if we dared to generally apply Taleb’s recipe and if we silenced Platonic idealism, we would pauperize our tropologically driven imagination and thereby deprive us from rich comparative resources.

The multiplicity of tropologies approaches one particular issue from many different angles. This is what I call intertropology. Philosopher Hans-Georg Moeller can guide us now through several possible interpretations of *The Dream of the Butterfly* to

help us understand better an intertopological view. The story is about a Taoist Zhuang Zhou who had a dream in which he was a butterfly. Moeller provides Herbert A. Gile's interpretation and translation of the story in which the word *I* is dominant: "This I and the related question of what this I truly *is* make up the philosophical thread that runs through the story. Zhuang Zhou tells a story about himself, he tells how his I in his dream is the I of a butterfly. Then he awakes and Zhuangzi is, as he says, "*myself* again" (Moeller 2004: 46). According to Moeller, the main problem of the interpretation is that it is too much influenced by Western philosophical ideas and therefore, may have little to do with the original intention: "The tradition of Western philosophy has combined these three motifs—remembrance, the being of the "I," and doubt" (45, 46). Moeller argues that instead of remembering and doubt the original texts emphasize forgetting and doubtlessness (47). Moreover, "there is no such single, individual – which literally means *in-divisible* – I connecting them that both the butterfly and Zhuang Zhou can each be so fully real. They are real because they are divisible, not because they are in-divisible! During the dream, the butterfly is fully the butterfly, and when awake, Zhuang Zhou is fully Zhou" (49).

In his last book *Genuine Pretending* (2017), which Moeller wrote with Paul J. D'Ambrosio, the authors do not renounce the latter interpretation and complement it with the concept of "genuine pretending:" "[T]he capacity to genuinely pretend to be a butterfly in a dream depends on not knowing who one truly is while dreaming; it depends on not asking while one is a butterfly if one is in actuality Zhuang Zhou" (Moeller and D'Ambrosio 129). The paradox of this entire story, in my opinion, is that we can come up with a similar conclusion to not question one's potentially divisible self only because we are capable of telling such a twofold story. In other words, the topology of Zhuang Zhou and the butterfly being divisible can emerge because we can sense their indivisibility. The counter-argument that I may choose to emphasize indivisibility, because I am the product of the Western mindset, confirms the incessant multiplication of the interpretations based on slightly different topological systems. One interpretation can buttress the importance of the non-divisible self, another interpretation will stress divisibility and the importance of genuine pretending; lastly, I can also come up with an explanation that the story represents the essential oneness of various life forms that cannot be grasped by our

limited human mind. As I will argue later, the principle of genuine pretending describes a feasible and sound relationship with any tropological system.

The problem of the intensity of our attachment to different tropologies has been also a popular and often exploited theme not only in literary or philosophical texts but also in popular TV series. There has not been one specific way to treat the subject: (i) sometimes a loose attachment to a tropology is represented as a viable and artistic solution to grey and dull life; (ii) other times tropologies are crucial for knowing who you are and what is your life story; (iii) or our excessive and morbid identification with certain beliefs is shown as harmful. Let us examine these representations in an orderly manner.

Philosopher Richard Rorty called an ironist someone who understood the contingency of self-creation: “Rather than seeking to purify herself of doubt, the ironist embraces the inescapability of contingency. She undertakes self-creation through re-description, recognizing all the while that there is no way to move beyond description to what Rorty calls ‘Reality as It Is in Itself’” (Rorty 1998: 72, in Bacon 2012: 106). This Romantic idea of self-creation has been one of the most successful themes in the contemporary popular TV series where it is often shown how modern advanced technologies will enable us to push it to the extreme and almost completely retreat to virtual reality which will become more entrenched in the near future. Similar issue will be also of great theoretical importance in one of the later chapters on characterhood and authorship, in which I will also explore how technology deepened the conceptual dichotomy and newly nuanced some aspects of the free will problem. But for the moment, let us focus on how the trope of self-creation is differently represented in popular TV series.

In the fifth episode (“Exactly like you”) of the first season of *Maniac* (2018), a TV mini-series, the central themes are self-recreation and escapism that are coherently woven into a tropology. The author Miguel de Cervantes and his mysterious, lost chapter of *Don Quixote* are also important elements of the tropology which is used as an antidote to stressful, traumatic, and dull lives.



Two protagonists of the series are Annie Landsberg, a woman with personality disorder, traumatic memories, and the history of failed relationships; and Owen Milgrim, who potentially has schizophrenia and a troubled relationship with his family. Since they both think that in their lives they do not have anything to lose, they agree to participate in a mysterious experiment where people are medically sedated and connected to a huge computer-machine, which transports their thoughts to a virtual reality. This way they both expect to improve their lives and overcome their psychological problems. Moreover, when they meet for the first time in real life, a special intimate bond starts to develop between them. It is interesting to note that after they are medically sedated and their brains are connected to the machine, in virtual reality most of the time they have to live other people's lives. However, even there some mental error occurs and their real traumatic memories come back. Usually they just ramble in the artificially created virtual labyrinths.

In one of them, Annie and Owen meet in an enigmatic place with flashy people. It is revealed from the very beginning that Owen suspects Annie of the intention to steal the lost 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of *Don Quixote*. Then a conversation about the book takes place which reveals why finding the chapter is so important:

*Annie: You hear what I heard? About what the lost chapter can do?*

*Owen: No, and I don't care.*

*Annie: In 1615, Cervantes writes the final chapter to his masterpiece. So powerful that anyone who reads it is lost in their own fantasies forever. He shows it to a friend who slips into a coma. Same with a neighbor, never comes out. They live in their own dream worlds until they die.*

*Owen: Sounds swell.*

*Annie: Cervantes thought the opposite. He said being lost like that was a fate worse than death.*

Later on, Owen and Annie discover the lost chapter in a safe, but Annie steals it using her gun. Eventually, this dream starts to dissolve, and she finds herself in uncanny places that bring her past traumatic memories back.

There is no need to retell the well-known story of Alonso Quijano who reinvented himself after having read multiple romances of Chivalry and thereby became Don Quixote. This way he sought to embellish his reality and surroundings. As we can see in the conversation, both characters, Owen and Annie, also want to get lost in fantasies and alleviate or even abandon their true selves forever. The idea of the tropological embellishment of reality will also be important later when we will analyze the authors/agents of the 4<sup>th</sup> level. For the moment, it is essential to see how a tropology can emerge and affect our lives. Don Quixote is like an idea-germ that visits the myriad of human minds throughout ages and often participates as one of the central tropes in diverse tropological escapist strategies. It may have the flavor of escapism, self-creation, or self-negation, etc. But the crucial thing is that these essential tropes keep showing up on a regular basis in one or another tropological combination.

Another important element of this story is that the trope of the allegedly lost 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter is an intangible entity. The lost chapter in its tangible form appears only in virtual reality, in the minds of medically sedated Annie and Owen. The tangible thing could never appear in real life because it is just a metaphor and a trope. It is a metaphor in the sense that it allows us to transport our minds *somewhere* else from our real environments; it is a trope in the sense that it turns, changes, and transforms us. Therefore, every tropology contains potentiality for personal and environmental transformation. The *Maniac*'s episode also has its tropological cousins in other cultural areas. For instance, the idea of the importance of the Gospel of Thomas and other hidden or lost cultural artifacts are like tropological drugs that provide some people with hope that something essential and important has been lost but may be recovered and then things will get better. They create a trope-driven mini theory that governs their minds and their pursuits. All of this helps explain more precisely how ideas-germs may infect our minds. It is needless to even mention the role of red and blue pills in *The Matrix* (1999) and their cultural impact on the public imagination.

“San Junipero” (2016), an episode of British science fiction series *Black Mirror*, suggests that in the future we could even have a playlist of many different lives that would follow different trajectories. The episode is about two old and dying lesbian women who with the help of technology can meet in San Junipero town which is a part of simulated reality. The technology allowed them to change their age and live in an idyllic imaginary place even after death. I am not sure about the technological possibility of remaining in virtual reality after one’s death, but it seems that the main theme of the episode goes in line with the central idea of “Exactly like you” (*Maniac*), namely, that technological advancement may bring about more possibilities of escapism that could be based on many different tropological options to experience. The participants of such an experiment could choose their age, gender, profession, environment, family, friends maybe even more abstract things such as the emotional excitement or the intensity of happiness. Be that as it may, there are more practical and real ways of how tropologies may be used in our lives and help pull ourselves together.

I would like to propose a thought experiment to demonstrate how essential different tropologies are to our lives. We could name it after the famous fictional short story by Jorge Luis Borges “Funes el memorioso” (“Funes the Memorious,” 1944). Funes is a fictional character who started to remember everything after he fell off a horse. He was able to remember every tiny detail of his life or memorize books but was not capable of generalizations and abstract thinking. In fact, this story which advocates the idea of selective thinking is a solid counter-argument to the aforementioned Taleb’s critique of Platonistic and idealistic thinking. Given the natural limits of the human mind, people are doomed to ignore most of what happens to us or around us. I would like to call it *Funes’s complex* because no matter how savant, diligent, or precise we wish to be, we are condemned to remain selective and rely on generalizations and approximations that are inevitably tropologically based. Perhaps, we could even say that sometimes we artistically create and invent ourselves by using our dividual resources. Think of what we tell about ourselves to the friends in a bar, in a job interview, or how many possible *selves* appear in our inner polylogues. These constantly re-emerging selves rely much more on our imaginations than true memories. Our memories are more deceitful than we think. Most of what we tend to consider as memories is a form of tropological self-

creation because we select and attach ourselves to a certain role, mission, duty, or function depending on the circumstances and these choices will conduct our behavior.

*Tabula Rasa* (2017) is a Flemish TV series about a woman, Annemie D’Haeze, or simply Mie, who lost her daughter in a car accident. Now beside seeing things that do not exist, for example, Mie sees her dead daughter and acts as if she were still alive, she also suffers from memory loss and struggles to remember who she and people around her are<sup>3</sup>. Because Mie knows she will not remember things the next day, she has to take notes constantly and draw people in her note-book to be able to remember who they are. It is interesting that her case is opposite to that of Funes’s – she cannot remember anything, thus she has to use what Andy Clark and David Chalmers call extended mind (or in our case extended memory) and active externalism which is “based on the active role of the environment in driving cognitive process” (Clark and Chalmers 7). The memories and thoughts which she writes down every day, the people or impressions she draws and keeps in her note-book serve as external or extended memory devices. Mie knows that what she will think of herself, other people, and how she will act, depend on these external resources rather than her brain which she cannot trust. Mie’s case perfectly serves my intention to demonstrate how Funes’s complex works. So here is our thought experiment.

Imagine that you are in the same situation as Mie – by tomorrow you will have forgotten who you are and what your life story is. Thus, every morning the first thing you do instead of checking out the NBA highlights (it would not even make sense because you would not know who LeBron James is), you skim through your notes to remember who you are. If you live long, at the end of your life you could possibly write volumes about yourself. For this reason, we need an extra condition – the notes cannot be longer than 5-7 pages. From the moment you reach this number of pages, you will have to

---

<sup>3</sup> This topic, however, is not new. *Memento* (2000) also shows how the main character Leonard (Guy Pearce), who cannot form new memories, uses photographs and tattoos in order to remember the essential information and facts that he would otherwise forget.

become very selective about things, events, people and the relationships that you want to remember. So, which elements would you select? How extensively would you describe them? What criteria would you set up to decide what truly matters in your life?

In *Tabula Rasa*, Mie finds out that her mother was unfaithful to her father. The question is whether it is totally necessary to mention this in your extended memory device. Would you elaborate on your feelings and emotions you initially attached to the trope of infidelity? Perhaps you would choose to skip this part and save yourself from negative feelings in the future. Mie's case aptly illustrates how real-life events become tropes and the trope of infidelity may (or may not) become a tropology if it is associated and interwoven with other important elements such as emotions, feelings, etc. And each time you experience something important and truly worth writing down, your life story must become even more selective and more tropology-based.

Clearly this mental exercise is not about Romantic self-creation, nor is it an escapist strategy. In this case, tropologies guarantee a blurry but still unity of the person and through artificial and selective means they also reveal our individual nature. Only the use of very concise tropologies may ensure a temporarily stable but from a longer perspective unfixed notion of personal identity. And this is what I call Funes's complex, namely, the existential necessity to generalize and simplify one's life story and base it on an incessant selection and revision of the most relevant tropologies. People like Mie have to become hedgehogs, that is to say, to know several big things about themselves and those big things are not exactly lies but, hyperbolically speaking, efforts to avoid Funes's fate on the one hand or self-oblivion on the other.

The third tropological aspect I set out to discuss is our excessive attachment and morbid identification with certain beliefs that do not necessarily bring about positive results. The tropologies of unbridled skepticism, cynicism, or postmodern theories of relativism, firstly, are in their nature as much language-dependent (and often even more so) as any other tropology; secondly, such tropologies may engender the mindset which refrains from action. Now, discussing the oscillation between the absolute inactivity and argumentative belligerence, common to the postmodern relativists, is not the aim of this

dissertation. My theoretical objective is to demonstrate that some popular belief systems that proclaim themselves as a-tropological, are still essentially built upon tropologies. In other words, denying something is also a statement, as much as the advocacy of the idea of non-assertiveness can take place only through asserting non-assertiveness. That shows the impossibility of being tropologically unconditioned and goes together with the abovementioned paradoxes of wording silence, calming down destruction, or seriously analyzing laughter. Thus, we can only debate the trope of indifference through an engaged discussion and non-assertiveness through advocating this idea verbally and providing solid arguments. Even if an alleged atropology is based on the idea of learning by example personified by a role model, it, nevertheless, creates a tropological climate for emulation that consequently establishes and encourages specific and well-defined behavior patterns. Let us take a closer look at these issues.

The cynics of the Ancient Greece rejected most of the socially accepted norms such as “cleanliness, pleasant appearance, and courtesy” (Hadot 109). They sought to achieve “askesis, ataraxia (lack of worry), autarkeia (independence), effort, adaptation to circumstances, impassiveness, simplicity or the absence of vanity (atuphia), lack of modesty” (110). They “believed that the state of nature (physis), as seen in the behavior of animals or children, was superior to the conventions (nomos) of civilization” (110). Another ancient Greek skeptic philosopher, Pyrrho, advocated the idea of indifference which could be implemented by “stripping off man completely,” or liberating oneself entirely from the human point of view” (113). Naturally, in order to promulgate their philosophy, they needed to create their own social institutions and legitimate their behavior. Both the cynics and Pyrrho preached by example, role modeling, and emulation (108, 111). The cynics even formed a school (109). So, we see that even the anti-mainstream ideologies, if they want to strengthen their social positions and promote their teachings, which to a large degree aspire to be atropological, have to come up with tropological ways to spread their ideas across a wider community.

Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul J. D’Ambrosio stressed the hubristic nature of such intellectual endeavor while discussing the trope of an authentic Daoist sage: “Hubris, it has to be stressed, may also lie in assuming that one is a “true” Daoist master or model”

(Moeller and D'Ambrosio 2017: 183). To put it differently, a self-proclaimed sage or an enlightened philosopher should not be followed since it would imply the formation of another ideology. The authors champion the idea of a genuine pretender, someone “who is capable of performing tasks well and with pleasure while avoiding any identification with them, thus remaining selfless” (124). What it seems Moeller and D'Ambrosio are suggesting to us is that people are like an empty vessel which, throughout life, is filled with many tropologically conditioned social roles. The two scenarios we should avoid (i) is either a blind and passionate attachment to various roles (from being a hardcore football fan to being an exemplary sage) or (ii) fiercely trying to annihilate every possible role and tropology life offers or seeks to impose on us. Thus, a genuine pretender is someone who is selfless and “[i]f there is no self, there is no falsity involved in role-playing. Role play without falsity is genuine pretending” (126).

The 12<sup>th</sup> episode of the 16<sup>th</sup> season of the animated sitcom *Family Guy*, named “Send in Stewie, Please” (2018) interestingly problematizes two important issues we have discussed above, namely, self-creation and the absence of the true self. The episode brings some new hypothetical nuances to this theme: What if we create ourselves and temporarily identify ourselves with different tropologies and roles not because we are essentially selfless, but rather because we want to avoid, escape, or embellish our true selves?

The main character in the episode is Stewie Griffin, a sometimes violent, eccentric, narcissistic, sexually undecided, morally flexible, scientifically-minded and inventive baby-prodigy, who speaks with an articulate British accent although he was born and lives in the USA. He has a meeting with a child psychologist, Dr. Cecil Pritchfield. One of first scenes already reveals what a cynic and villain Stewie is. He enters the room and says to the psychologist: “I saw the kid who has cancer leave. That must've been fun. I don't know why his parents are still bringing him to school. It's uncomfortable for everyone. I've never seen him when he's not just thrown up.” Stewie starts the conversation with candid and offensive remarks, lots of negativity and complaints. He looks at Mr. Pritchfield's diplomas on the wall and sarcastically asks: “I haven't heard of any of the schools you went to, but I'm sure they were great. I mean,

you're here, right?" The psychologist calmly starts to dismantle Stewie's tropologically built personality, for instance he denies hearing his British accent, and exposes other weaknesses: "It sounds like it's very important what other people think of you (...) You seem like a very lonely little boy." In the beginning, Stewie is able to bounce back but eventually he becomes more vulnerable: "You can see inside my soul." Stewie bursts into tears and admits that he finds it difficult to find friends and fit in due to his high intelligence. He also tells that his unfulfilled dream is to be on Broadway and starts dancing and singing in the most miserable possible way. The psychologist notices that Stewie pretends to be someone he is not to which Stewie responds that nobody would like his true self:

Psychologist: *Have you ever thought of just being yourself your real self and then see what happens?*

Stewie: *I... I don't think I know how. Everything about me is this carefully constructed persona designed to keep people at arm's length. This isn't even how I really talk. This is. This is how I walk [for the first time he starts speaking with an American accent] The accent is... is nothing more than affectation, a... a coat of armor to get me through the day, just an image I cultivated so I could feel special. Wow. What a relief. For once, to talk with my real voice without the... the burden of trying to sound like someone I'm not.*

After a short period of excitement, Stewie suddenly realizes that he has "never been vulnerable to anyone before. You're [Stewie tells to Mr. Pritchfield] the only one who's ever met the real me." After the psychologist's remark that Stewie finally was "going to be just like everybody else," Stewie switches back to his British accent and yells: "I don't want to be like everybody else (...) Like any other zero in this miserable town, like my family (...) I want to remain what I've always been superior, brilliant, special. Oh, God, what I was thinking? I'm never going to lift the veil, ever. Nobody will ever know the real me."



The main difference between *Genuine Pretending* and this episode lies in the radically different starting premises. While Moeller and D'Ambrosio contend that true self does not exist and that it is accidentally filled in with random tropologies and roles, "Send in Stewie, Please" shows that the true self does exist and people willingly reinvent themselves in order to experience satisfaction by becoming someone they were not. Stewie also demonstrates the oscillation between characterhood and authorship: He is the author of his character, he is aware of the tropological artificiality of his personality and he wants it to stay that way. Stewie is disgusted by his true self and he rejects it. When the psychologist experiences a heart attack, Stewie deliberately allows the doctor to die by not giving him his medication.

Owen and Annie (from *Maniac*) sought to reinvent themselves following the guidelines drawn up by Cervantes. Stewie, on the contrary, had already invented a satisfactory version of himself and was consciously following the principle of genuine pretending. As I will discuss in the chapter on the authors/agents of the 4<sup>th</sup> level, these escapist strategies are not good solutions and I can see more plausible alternatives.

The realizations that (i) the true self does not exist, or (ii) that the true self exists but is not satisfactory enough allow us to grasp the idea of dividuality. However, it does not mean that our ever-expanding dividuality is not real because it is always doomed to be too tropological. To put it in Moeller's and D'Ambrosio's words, something is real "precisely because of this lack of grounding or inessentiality" (184). All the literary and cinematic references, I have mentioned, demonstrate the non-typological nature of tropologies. And since tropologies are not typological their relative transience perfectly explains how ever-expanding dividuality works and why dividuals incessantly oscillate between different poles of identity rather than settling down in one of them. In fact, the very action of oscillation allows us to understand tropologies non-typologically: As soon as we think of ourselves as hedgehogs, we become more fox-like; or if we realize that accepting certain behavioral patterns makes us more of a character, we gain a slight authorial possibility of reinventing ourselves and thereby demonstrate weak vibrations of free will. Louis Menand in his work on American pragmatists describes ideas as tools whose success depends on their adaptability:

They all believed that ideas are not “out there” waiting to be discovered, but are tools—like forks and knives and microchips—that people devise to cope with the world in which they find themselves. They believed that ideas are produced not by individuals, but by groups of individuals—that ideas are social. They believed that ideas do not develop according to some inner logic of their own, but are entirely dependent, like germs, on their human carriers and the environment. And they believed that since ideas are provisional responses to particular and unreproducible circumstances, their survival depends not on their immutability but on their adaptability. The belief that ideas should never become ideologies—either justifying the status quo, or dictating some transcendent imperative for renouncing it—was the essence of what they taught (Menand 2001: xi-xii (Kindle edition)).

Since ideas or tropologies never change by themselves but are adjusted by people, from this extensive quote we can understand the importance of fostering good cognitive habits. We should become the conscious authors of the tropologies around and within ourselves and not allow their alleged truthfulness to become a constant rather than a process. However, at least a rudimentary intertropology, a competition between diverse tropologies, is needed in order to implement such a principle.

## 1.2 Abstract Immanent Tropologies: Confusion of Confusions and The Mark and the Void

*“Tartuffe: In all things may Heaven’s will be done (...)  
I’ve already told you that my heart forgives him, and that is what Heaven commands (...)  
Those who know me will not believe that I act out of self-interest. Worldly goods have no  
attraction for me; I’m not dazzled by their deceitful appearance. If I have decided to  
accept the gift his father wishes to give me, it’s only, I assure you, because I fear it may  
fall into unworthy hands, that those who share it will use it for some criminal purpose,  
and not—as I will—for the glory of the Lord and the welfare of my neighbor”.*  
(Molière)

*“God is real since he produces real effects.”*

(William James)

*“Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our concept to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.”*

(Charles S. Peirce)

When discussing the notion of *force*, Charles Sanders Peirce invokes the pragmatic maxim by arguing that what we mean by it “is completely involved in its effects” (Peirce 262). In his opinion, language itself does not play a crucial role in similar cognitive and analytical processes although it may impact the way we express our cognition: “Whether we ought to say that a force *is* an acceleration or that it *causes* an acceleration, is a mere question of propriety of language, which has no more to do with our real meaning than the difference between the French idiom “*Il fait froid*” and its English equivalent “*It is cold.*” (264). A bit later Peirce starts to criticize those who are not satisfied with such definition of force and keep searching for a “mysterious entity” as if it were a tangible thing. The philosopher argues that the search for tangibles is a futile activity and “if we know what the effects of force are, we are acquainted with every fact which is implied in saying that a force exists, and there is nothing more to know” (265). However, what if we take one step further and try to apply the Peircean pragmatic maxim to what I call *abstract immanent tropologies* (AITs)? We will see that even though Peirce’s and William James’s theories of effects provide us with an insight into what AITs are, they do not necessarily work well in other conceptual contexts. Let us analyze this problem step by step.

William James’s idea that “god is real since he produces real effects” does not pertain to the category of AITs. I argue that god is an abstract transcendental tropology (ATT). God is transcendental because as such god cannot be found in this world in a tangible form. Note that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when we have to refer to god with a personal pronoun, it disturbs one’s mind because the tropology of god may be interrelated with other relevant and popular tropological systems. For instance, if we agree that genders are social constructs, it becomes difficult to refer to god using male pronouns. This short divagation just illustrates how contingent is this ATT and that it often goes together with

other random tropologies. Be that as it may, I agree that the pragmatic maxim may be applied to the ATT of god: (i) We assume that god is not from this world; (ii) but god can be known through the effects of the idea, for example, through the deeds of the people who say they believe in god. However, these effects may vary significantly. On the one hand, we may have a catholic community that is involved in charitable activities and try to make this world a better place. On the other hand, we may have religious hypocrites like Tartuffe who seek to abuse the idea of god in order to pursue their own egoistic interests. Thus, the effects of similar ATTs are endless and susceptible to manipulations and distortions.

Peirce was a bit less mysterious and more tough-minded person than James. Perhaps that is the reason why in his famous article “How to make our ideas clear?” he chose such notions as *force* and *cold*. Of course, we may argue that the perception of cold weather may be rendered relative by different linguistic and cultural communities, but we cannot change the fact that water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius or that all human beings would perish at minus 100 degrees Celsius. The same applies to other-worldly phenomena. Naturally, we still do not know many things about them but such phenomena as force are discoverable in nature. The way we dress up those discoveries may be random and contingent but in no way does it eliminate their essential pre-linguistic, pre-cultural, and pre-perceptive existence. Thus, the range of the possible effects of these worldly phenomena is narrower and they may be measured and classified more easily than the effects of purely conceptual (non-tangible) AITs and ATTs.

In this chapter, I would like to discuss the alchemy of the intangibles, things that do not exist, but whose effects we feel and experience in our daily lives. However, if we analyze those effects more thoroughly, we realize that at no point can we get a closed and all-embracing definition or explanation of AITs. While we can say that force is something discoverable and measurable, the AITs, for instance, the history of finances, demonstrate how man-made tropes shape realities in the most unpredictable ways and whose effects are in principle unmeasurable. Joseph de la Vega’s work *Confusion of*

*Confusions*, originally published in Spanish *Confusión de Confusiones* (1688)<sup>4</sup>, perfectly serves our conceptual purpose. The conversation, which takes place between a philosopher, shareholder, and merchant handsomely reveals the profound conceptual differences between their respective outlooks. The book also shows how shareholders, the alchemists of the intangibles, affect the world in such a way that applying a pragmatic maxim to their financial activities would not bring about any more clarity on what is going on.

At the time when Joseph de la Vega was living in Amsterdam, the city had already become one of the world trade centers and leading places for financial innovations. Although *Confusion of Confusions* deals specifically with the stock exchange business, it is full of philosophical digressions, rhetorical divagations, and it is highly saturated with literary insights. In the book, we can sense a clear moralistic approach, surely held by de la Vega himself. The intertropical nature of the book may mirror the complex personality of its author who was a Portuguese Jew, who chose to write this book in Spanish and lived in Amsterdam. The book consists of 4 dialogues between a philosopher, merchant, and shareholder. Each of them represents a different point of view which adds and extra intertropical flavor.

The intellectual objective of the book is to show the naked reality of the stock exchange business (de la Vega 2013: 68). It is emphasized that this so-called game is man-made (70), based on contingent rules, highly unpredictable, and chaotic. Moreover, the actions of the investors often depend on false information, miscommunication, deliberate distortions, intentional or unintentional rumors. The unpredictability of the business can be explained by the fact that many investors base their decisions on asymmetry of information and incomplete knowledge. People also tend to be too

---

<sup>4</sup> When referring to the details of the book and conversation, I refer to the Spanish edition prepared by Ricardo A. Fornero (2013). When I use exact quotations, I use the English translation (1957). At the time of writing (31/01/2019) both books were available online.

emotional or greedy; they may be overconfident with their essentially irrational guesses. Swindling, cunning, and shrewdness are also at play. To put it in popular terms, the financiers seek to outsmart others and use Machiavellian intelligence. All these intricacies of the investment activities are important to understand how AITs work. The consequences or externalities of this kind of AITs are never only positive or negative. Some people commit mental mistakes, some people do not; but those who have not committed them should not become overly confident because nobody knows when their luck will pass.

The shareholder, one of the three participants of the conversation, admits that his business is at the same time very real and very fake. He stresses that his science, or what I call AITs, brings about all kinds of externalities: Dignity and infamy, riches and poverty (84). We see that the business is real because it affects reality, but at the same time, it is fake because it has no tangible foundation other than false convictions that are guided by ignorance, faith, and emotions. The shareholder mockingly says that the financiers “are like Aesop’s dog which let go the meat because its shadow appeared bigger to him” (de la Vega 1957: 31). The groundless financial gobbledygook is said to be the creation of devil because devil, like god, created this jargon *ex nihilo* (de la Vega 2013: 122). Similar descriptions recur throughout the text, for example, in the page 203, financial idiom is referred to as *logo-diarrhea*.

The aforementioned pragmatic maxim is an important conceptual tool when we seek to understand an abstract phenomenon and since it may be not a tangible thing, we may try to understand it by analyzing its effects. However, if the effects of the physical phenomena may have a limited range, the same could not be said about the effects of AITs. The shareholder himself admits that the effects of the stock exchange are untraceable and undecipherable. The spectrum is very broad and complex, and it never follows fixed rules (167). Thus, the fundamentals of the business cannot be learned because there are no such. It is no wonder that the shareholder explains that everyone in this business should refrain from giving advice (170); besides, luck or the lack of it are temporal and hence, there is no time for regrets or excessive joy. He understands that the

consequences of AITs are essentially unmeasurable, unpredictable, and unforeseeable. Success in this business entirely depends on chance and lucky guess, not on logic.

How do the personalities and outlooks of other two characters, philosopher and merchant, reflect the intertropical nature of *Confusion of Confusions*? Both, though in very different ways, stand in opposition to the shareholder's views (or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, they stand in opposition to what the stock markets represent and the nature of AITs on which they are based).

From the beginning of the conversation, the philosopher demonstrates total ignorance in the unstable and fluctuating stock business. The philosopher is a representative of ATT, that is to say, he backs up his beliefs with the tropes of god and virtue, which is derived from the former. On the contrary, it seems to the philosopher that the stock business is based on infamy and sin (102). Thus, he finds the shareholder's business without any reasonable ground. Interestingly, because of this lack of a sufficient ground in stock business, the philosopher admits that if he had to participate in it, he would be very cautious (107).

The merchant holds essentially different views to those of the philosopher (ATT) and the shareholder (AIT). As a true trader, he reckons that everything what is reasonable is substantial and tangible. He despises the unstable nature of stock markets and he prefers to trade things instead of gambling and risking something what cannot be apprehended by its nature. The merchant seeks to stand firmly on the ground literally and figuratively. Towards the end of the conversation, the merchant confesses that, in his opinion, it is better to be poor on earth than rich in the sea (529). Then, jokingly, he adds that neither ships of round form, nor the large ones are the safest ships, but the ones that are at the port because then they can avoid storms (530).

This book is relevant to my dissertation because it nicely illustrates the clash of different mindsets guided by different tropological systems. Interestingly, as the conversation between them progresses, the ATTs, advocated by the philosopher, start to look more reasonable than the AITs, explained by the shareholder, in which cunning and shrewdness are much more important than its connection to reality. Thus, throughout the

four dialogues de la Vega manages to do an interesting topological trick: He demonstrates that since the philosopher's ATTs do not cause as much destruction as the manipulations of the shareholder's AITs, the former is more pragmatic and reasonable. Paradoxically, it is actually the philosopher who is less abstract, more constructive, and not the shareholders who are chasing the bodiless shadows. Philosophical activities, according to de la Vega, seek topological stability, while the stock markets' topological tricks work until the spell is broken. One essential thing few or maybe even nobody has control over is the expiration of topologies. When a topological bubble bursts, many are worse off and those who are not, will not last long. On the contrary, such notions as cold or force, if we go back to Peirce, cannot expire because they are real entities. Now, think of the Bitcoin and its price fluctuations. It fluctuates because its topological effects have an expiration date and nobody could tell it with precision. Thus, the alchemy of the intangibles is based on faith, intuition, asymmetry of information, rumors, opinions, the belief that one can control things, predict consequences and thereby outsmart others. These insights will be important when we will discuss the trope of creative destruction, the necessity to withdraw to silence, the four levels of authorship, and theories of outsmarting. For the moment, let us go back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and take a look at similar work.

In 2015, Paul Murray, an Irish author, published a book called *The Mark and the Void*, a fictional story about the machinations of the financial markets, with a special emphasis on one investment bank in Dublin. It is no coincidence that Murray's country had been hit by a financial crisis; thus, we could interpret his book as an apt caricaturing of what truly happened with some literary, rhetorical, artistic, and philosophical embellishments *à la* Joseph de la Vega. These elements add intellectual versatility to his work and give us an interesting critique of the financial AITs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which, as we will shortly see, is very similar to that of *Confusion of Confusions*.

For example, like de la Vega, Murray reverses the stereotypical use of professional labels. Claude is one of the main characters in the book. He is French with background and genuine interest in the humanities, although he works as a banker in Dublin. He has a troubled relationship with his father who did not approve of his wish to



become a banker. Throughout the book, Claude is described as a curious, commonsensical, responsible person with a clear sense of what is good or bad. Not a stereotypical banker. Although Claude inclines to think of himself as just another everyman, he is much more than that.

At the beginning of the book, Claude meets a writer, Paul, who is going through a period of personal crisis and whose real intentions are not very clear. Paul tells Claude that he wants to write a book about the life of a banker, but the reader always feels that Paul's real intentions are more selfish and malevolent. In this story, the banker seems to be more of an idealist with firmer moral beliefs than the vain writer. It seems that the common denominator of the two books is the moral that someone, who is not obsessed with the manipulations of AITs and does not seek personal profit, stands more firmly on the ground and causes much less destruction and negative externalities than someone with suspicious and shady intentions.

Another important theme of the book is that the surplus of abstract meaning (AITs) undermines the economic and mental health of societies. Murray derides the proliferation of financial terminology (swaps, derivations, etc.) and their negative impact on our lives. For example, Ish, also a banker, explains to Paul, the writer, what is a derivative:

‘If you do it in the bookies, it’s a bet (...) If you pay some 23-year-old in an Armani suit two hundred grand to go to the window for you, it’s a derivative. Because there is no limit to how often derivatives can be sold back and forth, the market for them is astronomically bigger than the market for actual things. In fact, no one knows how big it is (...) Wall Street banks were using instruments so complex that almost nobody understood how they actually worked. When their bets turned bad, they lost literally trillions of dollars.’ (Murray 42)

Murray mocks the excessively tropological order of our contemporary world. He demonstrates the emptiness of the terminology, which rules our economic and political

world, he shows how abstract words can be monetized and rendered profitable, and he ridicules the way objective laws lose the battle against the deliberately created and abused AITs. For instance, in the following quotation, Murray mocks the way such an abstract word as *need* is commodified and sold:

As populations rise, as resources dwindle, as infrastructure's destroyed by hostile climates, we're going to see some really needy folks out there. And that need – not oil, not weapons, not food, even, but *need* – that right there is the last reliable asset (...) There's not much you can sell to a world full of poor people. Crazy. So instead you make them the product. To be fair, we didn't invent the idea. The real visionaries were the boys on Wall Street. They're the ones who first saw this vast, untapped resource out there, these millions of Americans who were shit poor but who nobody trusted enough to loan money to. They saw that if they could get these deadbeats into the debt market – well, it's like the oil under Alaska, right? Billions and billions of dollars just waiting to be released (Murray 285-286)<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, rigid objective laws are doomed to lose against the unbridled fantasy and creativity of the financial sorcerers:

---

<sup>5</sup> Similar businesses were enabled by technological advancements, for example, in the article “Loneliness is a serious public-health problem”, The Economist writes that in Japan there are agencies and apps “that allow you to rent a family or a friend—a girlfriend for a singleton, a funeral mourner, or simply a companion to watch TV with.” Moreover, there is an American company which for a monthly fee can call and check in on elderly people. Although the business logic of these services is a bit different, essentially what they have in common is the commodification of human necessities and emotions.

In conventional terms two and two is always four and a triangle always has three sides. But there are fields of mathematics where that is not the case (...) [n]on-Euclidean geometry (...) [t]opological, differential, affine. Every level give greater symmetry, more and more figures become equivalent to each other. Metric spaces no longer exist, values are translated into their opposite, at this moment we apply providential antinomy, then break symmetries, again, return to metric space. (286-287)

Clearly Murray goes in line with de la Vega in disclosing the pitfalls of modern financial sorcery and its abuses of AITs.

Murray also manages to achieve a deeper, almost metaphysical, level of the analysis of AITs by invoking another fictional character, François Texier. He is an apt personification of an intertopological intellectual. Texier is a fictional French philosopher, the author of a book, interestingly, named *La Marque et Le Vide*, just like the book written by Murray himself. Texier was not only a philosopher, writer, painter, and the reader of reality in the broadest possible sense, he was also politically engaged. In 1968, he marched together with Gilles Deleuze during the protests. Texier's wife was an anthropologist and they both travelled around Polynesia and visited the tribal cultures of the Pacific. This experience led him to a conviction that "nothing belongs to anyone in perpetuity" (271, 329). Therefore, he constantly changed the spheres of his activity and looked for new forms of expression. One of his intellectual endeavors was to deconstruct the financial piffle. Allow me to provide an extensive quotation:

[Texier] saw the financial market, with its obsessive will to quantification, as the perfect instance of his totalizing system, his 'euthrophication' or 'veil of Maya' – a web of abstraction so complicated that it asphyxiated what it was supposed to explain before collapsing inevitably under its own weight. The artificial, the *less-than-real*, was once conceived as a kind of hell, he wrote. Yet today the less-than-real is prized more than gold, and the

quaint stuff of the tangible – the underlying, as it has become known – exists only as raw material for new and lucrative abstractions. The financial corporation has become a machine for *producing unreality*; why do we desire this unreality? Why do we model ourselves on this machine? (...) Today, though we no longer believe in angels, we still regard the corporation as a higher order of being. It is composed of ordinary people, but it transcends them; semi-divine, it floats above our messy and contingent reality (...) [W]e want to be like them, because we ourselves aspire to the condition of *persona ficta*: free from reality's contingencies and humiliations, insubstantial, unchanging, inviolable, endlessly apart (...) Humans have always used stories to order reality. Now, however, technology allows unprecedented quantities of reality to be turned into story. Reality thereby becomes secondary; just as the banks use the underlying only for what can be derived from it, life becomes merely raw material for our own narratives. (Murray 265-266)

The established link between the financial markets and the tropes of unreality, less-than-real, and nothingness bounds *The Mark and the Void* and *Confusion of Confusions* together. This is achieved through the skillful manipulation of AITs. The writer Paul, similarly to the philosopher invented by de la Vega, explained the groundless logic of the financial machinations to Claude: “In the past a novel didn't always need a story. You could just make it about a day in somebody's life. But that was when life meant people, movement, *activity*. You guys in front of your screens all day long, selling each other little bits of debt—it's a whole different order of nothing” (Murray 85). Murray also ridicules and hyperbolizes the lack of palpability of the business. He uses the term *providential antinomies*, which seems to be one of the conceptual axes of the entire story, but it is only mentioned three or four times in total. I will not provide even a tentative definition of the term because there is not supposed to be one, at least according to the inner logic of the book. The very idea of providential antinomies is to remain secret, indefinable, and unknown. This man-made and abstract topological product is not

a tangible thing. Providential antinomies do not exist as a thing, but they somehow affect our lives. Neither do most of the book's characters know how it exactly works:

“He’s been telling me about his PhD. Providential antinomies. Ever heard of them? Of course you haven’t, they haven’t been used for three hundred years. But guess what, Grisha here’s discovered some way of applying them to bond yields.”

“To do what?”

“(…) I don’t know. What they do isn’t the point. The point is that this time we’re the ones doing the crazy paradoxical rocket-science shit.” (Murray 101)

A clear definition would be redundant and unnecessary. Our minds can only be excited, ignited, and seduced by something, which has to be fantasized and imagined, not known, defined, cognized, and accurately interpreted. The lack of knowledge and the lack of definition are what turns on imagination and drives us. A thorough analysis is dull. The very idea of providential antinomies is to remain secret and alluring.

We could also draw a conclusion that the designers of this gigantic fake system know that all tropologies eventually expire and that they will lose control over the consequences of their own creation. At least initially to a larger or lesser extent, they are capable of using the AIT alchemy to their advantage. However, the foundational basis of AITs is too early and right or bad guesses depend on such unpredictable and uncontrollable things as miscommunication, rumors, distortions, lies, disinformation, etc. In the Peircean system, facts have a limited range of possible interpretations because their validity can be checked empirically. The manipulators of AITs, may keep manufacturing facts and reality endlessly: “A sufficiently large bank would create its own reality as opposed to simply reacting to consensus” (Murray 193). Why aren’t they recognized as the most successful postmodern artists? Thus, it seems that ultimately, de la Vega and Murray feel that writer’s duty is to unveil the art-ificiality of AITs and that is why their works are so intertropologically saturated.

The masters of AITs follow the principle of the bricolage of ideas. It may be more precise to name this process in Spanish, *el mestizaje de ideas*; or French, *métissage*,

because it does not have an apt translation in English. It could be translated as *the miscegenation of ideas* but then it puts too much emphasis on racial matters. The term *mestizaje/métissage* could also explain how the intellectual products emerge out of random cultural encounters not necessarily racial interbreeding. Mestizaje/métissage can explain the appearance of new books, new arts, new forms of architecture, etc. The financial alchemist John Law, whom we will discuss later, created new versions of AITs not only because he used and synthesized available resources around him (bricolage), but also because he travelled and by encountering different sets of ideas he was capable of combining them in unexpected ways (*el mestizaje de ideas*) that, as we will see, transformed the world of his day. The trope of creative destruction refers to the broad spectrum of positive and negative externalities of similar transformations (however, they do not have to be based entirely on AITs).

As I will discuss later, the attachment to AITs roughly determines the levels of authorship/agency. The demarcation line between the four levels is marked by the capacity to manipulate different tropologies and impose them on others (to make someone believe that buying bitcoins is the best investment). If one wishes to be the author of a superior level, one must maintain a *healthy* distance to AITs. What precisely a healthy distance is, is hard to say. Thus, the intellectual production and our relationship with it can be described not only by AITs, ATTs, and materialistic premises, but also by different modes of thinking Mode 1 (M1) and Mode 2 (M2), which is the central topic of the following chapter. I will argue that hubristic attitude of the AIT machinators and the subsequent luck or lack of it may be explained by:

- (i) too close an attachment to certain tropologies and a blind belief in their success. One confuses M1 with M2 and starts to think of AITs (M1 field) as natural phenomena, such as sound, cold, force (M2 field), whose outcomes may be essentially measurable and approximately predictable;
- (ii) the capacity to manufacture, manipulate and impose AITs but at the same time being unaware of the fact that one is also guided by other types of tropologies that lurk deep inside one's mind and remain invisible for the most part. Many apt manipulators are unconsciously

subject to the tropologies of power, control, and the idea of everlasting authorship. That means that even if they do not confuse M1 with M2, they are susceptible to failure, namely, because their actions are determined by hidden tropologies.

Before the proceed to the latter problem, let us analyze more in detail the difference between the different modes of thinking, Mode 1 and Mode 2.

### 1.3 Two Modes of Thinking: Mode 1 and Mode 2

*“The truth of art keeps science from becoming inhuman, and the truth of science keeps art from becoming ridiculous.”*

*(Raymond Chandler)*

In this chapter, I will draw the difference between what I will call Mode 1 (M1) and Mode 2 (M2) of intellectual production<sup>6</sup>. Mode 1 represents fact-less, contingent, subjective, clearly historically, geographically, politically, socially, etc. conditioned way of thinking. A chaotic and unpredictable production of ideas and beliefs with an infinite spectrum for possible interpretations and distortions emerge from M1. These ideas may be classified as both AITs or ATTs although, as I have already demonstrated in the previous chapter, the former type of tropologies has gained more relevance in the modern age.

Mode 2, on the contrary, represents an objective, factual, undeniable, universally valid, and axiomatic way of thinking. Admittedly, the very origins of these objective truths and facts may be the M1 field broadly understood. For example, some thinkers would argue that the contingent nature of our sensory apparatus may obstruct the establishment of scientific and objectively valid facts. Thomas Nagel (1974) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (2009) proposed two different mind experiments (what it would feel like to

---

<sup>6</sup> I borrowed and redesigned this distinction from Daniel Kahneman. The psychologist uses a similar distinction, which he calls Systems 1 (fast unconscious thinking) and System 2 (slow conscious thinking).

be a bat or a lion) in order to demonstrate that experiences differ depending on the subjectivity of consciousness and that perceptions across species are incommensurable due to the differences of their sensory apparatus. But regardless of the differences between us, bats, and lions, and hence, the randomness and lack of universal validity of percepts, it does not mean that we cannot aim at an approximately objective explanation (M2) of the world, and that we should eliminate the factor of objectivity from our theory building activities.

By no means should we draw a conclusion that we have to lean towards the doctrine of relativism because everything supposedly emerges from M1. The principle of intertropical activity, I advocated in the first chapter, does not reject the existence of M2, the realm of objective facts, although we should be aware of its potential tropological and worldly conditioning and its inherent randomness. An intertropicalist is not a sceptic or a relativist; she just dares to embark on a fox-like journey (intertropical intellectual activity in search of multiplicity of perspectives) with an eventual hedgehog-like end (yes, because even intertropicality is a tropologically constructed principle that guides intellectual activity). The abstract idea of M2 may serve as a lodestar whose purpose is to guide our intellectual journey so that we do not fall prey to the excesses of unreasonable skepticism and relativism.

Things that fall into the category of M1 depend on consciousness and language, and are observer relative, and intersubjectively agreed upon. Marriages, properties, money, beauty exist because human beings established these, as American philosopher John Searle calls them, “institutional facts” (Searle 2). However, Searle does not deny the existence of the so-called “brute facts” (2). For example, a language-independent fact is that Mount Everest exists, and it has snow and ice at the summit. On the contrary, language-dependent claim is that “Mt. Everest has snow and ice at the summit” is a sentence of English: (Searle 61).

It is important to note that sometimes physical things can be given symbolic meanings. For instance, a line of stones can serve as a boundary and thereby physical objects become “conventional public symbols of something beyond themselves; they



symbolize a deontic status beyond the physics” (74). New forms of social facts never stop emerging, “from dollar bills to cathedrals, and from football games to nation-states” (228). The function and the use of these artefacts is constantly changing and cannot be controlled. In other words, the ontological status of these things does not originate from nature and is artificially and conventionally assigned. Therefore, nobody is capable of controlling their subsequent formations, interpretations, and receptions. The effects of such social facts are also impossible to measure, and they have an infinitely long spectrum of all kinds of externalities. We already discussed these issues in the previous chapter. For the moment, it is important to emphasize that many people are prone to confuse the ontological status of social or institutional facts with brute or natural facts and that is often a sign of hubris; moreover, it may also augment, to put it in de la Vega’s terms, the confusion of confusions. The confusion of M1 and M2 properties may also happen in the manipulations with AITs. M2 will not perform an important role in my dissertation and will not be discussed in further detail. This dissertation is exclusively focused on the M1 production; however, we need the notion of M2 in order to maintain the conceptual clarity and reveal frequent failures of our reasoning.

Previously explored AITs are inherently social facts of which nobody can claim neither the authorship, nor the complete knowledge of their effects and predictability. From *The Mark and the Void*, we can draw a conclusion that people usually act on an incomplete knowledge: (i) Sometimes they perfectly know they sell junk; (ii) other times, they genuinely believe in the mathematical models they created to explain, predict, and manipulate the outer reality (the *real* world); (iii) or some of them even see through the artificiality of AITs and do not buy into them, they realize how detrimental the abuse of these tropological systems may turn out to be.

A cynical colleague of Claude’s thinks that the bankers have invented a magical way to profit from people by selling them something that does not even exist yet:

‘Come on, guys! Show some enthusiasm! (...) Don’t you see the bottom line here? Even when it all goes tits up, you still get paid! Profit is finally liberated from circumstance! It’s the Holy Grail!

It's the singularity! (...) The investors don't think it's madness  
(...) The last meeting I had (...) he's putting a million in it. A  
million of his own money, for something that doesn't even have a  
name yet.' (Murray 362)

The same banker, Howie, a bit later expresses an imprudent and ungrounded belief in mathematical models that can help the bankers increase their profits. He clearly confuses M1 with M2 but when his more sensible colleague discloses how non-commonsensual his beliefs are, Howie ignores her:

'It's maths, that's all. It's a new mathematical model, according to which capital will no longer be adversely affected by developments in the non-banking world. How can that be a bad thing?'

'Because we *live* in the non-banking world! The non-banking world is the *world*, don't you get it? What's the point of making millions if in a few years the whole planet will be underwater?'

(Murray 363)

In these conversational bits, we see that AITs are used not only in order to deceive and manipulate other people, but also to seduce the minds of their creators or users and make them believe in their objective validity, power, and omnipotence<sup>7</sup>. AITs may be a

---

<sup>7</sup> As Barak Orbach and Linsey Huang point out, con men often engage in confidence games in order to benefit "at the expense of their victims (the "marks")" (795). Con operators build their strategies on two main elements: "[T]he acquisition of the mark's trust – for which the schemes are known as "confidence games" – and the bait – an attractive reward that lures and disarms the mark" (Ibid.). Con men seek to exploit dishonesty, greed, and gullibility of their marks (796). Their schemes work as both trade and fraud: "Like trade, cons are voluntary exchanges, what most people call "deals." And, like fraud, cons are voluntary exchanges induced by misleading representations" (804). In this context the ability to use misleading representations is similar to the ability

tool made by a Machiavellian intelligence to cheat on others, but sometimes the creators or the users lose out of sight the accidental, tropological, and fact-less nature of AITs and the likely scenario that the consequences brought about by this tool may turn against you.

Murray also implicitly mentions the designers of these tropological systems. As I will argue later, these people belong to the category of the third level authorship. They sense the artificiality and potential volatility of their tropological production and they also sort of know that these products have their expiration date, although nobody knows when precisely it will happen. That is why, they keep incentivizing their workers to struggle for a higher degree of financial alchemy. Bank workers are encouraged to be intuitive, then counterintuitive, and eventually they are told to be beyond counterintuitive. This is the symptom of a morbid and excessive tropological reality and the distress people,

---

to manipulate AITs. Con operators' success may highly depend on the incessant renewal of the ideas based on the principle of mestizaje/métissage: "Like other forms of opportunism, confidence games have many guises that continuously evolve. As a result, legal rules cannot cost-effectively define the act" (808). Thus, the constant updating of AITs helps them avoid regulations and elude justice, because it resists being clearly defined and thereby causes legal inconveniences (808-809). Con men also tend to promise something they will not be able to fulfill. They often rely on the already existing brand, trust, reputation, and other AIT constructs. For instance, the Trump University project ab (Smith) (Nolan) (Orbach) (Steven) (Whitehead) used people's trust in already existing Trump's brand. Thus, subsequent AIT constructs are often built upon prior popular and successful AIT images that help boost one's credibility (810). Another method (also used by Trump) is to use hyperbolic exaggerations because they help create and manipulate people's fantasies and arouse ungrounded expectations (815, 817). Interestingly enough, Orbach and Huang distinguish between three different types of agency that could roughly correspond to the first three levels of authorship/agency that I will discuss in the second chapter – (i) con men (third level agency), (ii) enablers (second level agency), and (iii) marks (first level agency).

struggling for authorship, inflicted upon themselves. They always need to be several steps ahead in order to have at least a minimal and temporal control over their production and not to be outsmarted by others. Claude most of the time does not even know what is going on because the asymmetry of information and the constantly shifting common knowledge impede a slow and rational analysis. It is not clear what in Claude's world has literal or figurative meaning and to what degree the literal meaning is figurative and vice versa. That is why in the book, some bank-related characters relentlessly try to figure out and update their knowledge about the main principles of the creation of reality – they are scared to become still and passive. Being topologically inactive in the contemporary world means being a loser and being outsmarted. The main message all this conveys is – do not be read by others, do not become predictable, do not make your conceptual products easily decipherable, create a longer lasting chaos and confusion and perhaps you will be able to take advantage of it. The morbid and self-obsessed competition between the monads, the fabrics of the topological, M1 meaning creation, produces this ephemeral unreality, which is destined to burst once the interest and belief in it has expired: “Civilization has become a bubble” (Murray 362).

As it turns out later, none of these guys were good, smart, or Machiavellian enough to be a successful author. They cannot win this game because they are always acting on insufficient knowledge, incomplete information, and speculative premises. Interestingly, the historian Niall Ferguson, in his biography of Henry Kissinger, wrote about his distrust of game theories: “The greatest defect of the academic strategists of the 1960s was their love of abstraction, taken to its logical extreme in game theory. Kissinger, by contrast, thirsted to make the dilemmas of the nuclear age more concrete” (Ferguson 2016: 482-483). Thus, we see how the affection for abstract thinking may push people to develop a kind of an intellectual hubris and impulsively confuse M1 with M2; or how the lack of this sort of affection may render some of them more suspicious and aware of the fact that in human affairs nothing is axiomatic. Thus, sometimes game theorists and bankers assume too big a role by trying to disentangle the inextricable.

Temporary success may also blind the wannabe authors. From being *rational agents*, they fall into the category of *rationalizing agents* because they simply cannot

reject the strategies they became attached to or they believe too much in the infallibility and predictability of their tropological products. Let us take a look at the real-world. This will help us see better the connection between real fiction and fictional reality.

Niall Ferguson in his work *The Ascent of Money* (2008) analyzed the mathematical wizardry by Myron Scholes, Robert Merton, and Fisher Black. More concretely, Ferguson explains why the Black-Scholes mathematical model failed. At first, when the model was created many cheered it and “[i]t seemed as if intellect had triumphed over intuition, rockets science over risk-taking” (Ferguson 2008: 326). However, this intellectual hubris did not last long. Financial crises struck Russia and Asian markets and thus, something, they did not take into consideration and had control over, happened: “Stock markets plunge. Equity volatility hit 29 per cent (...) that just wasn’t supposed to happen, not according to the Long-Term risk models” (327). First, the model relied on a sterile bell-curve logic that ignores the irrational tendencies of human behavior but “it was still dear old Planet Earth, inhabited by emotional human beings, capable of flipping suddenly from greed to fear” (329). As Scholes himself admitted in an interview “Maybe the error of Long Term was (...) that of not realizing that the world is becoming more and more global over time” (329). Another major error was that the models relied only on the five years data and did not take into consideration any of the previous stock market crashes, defaults, or political cataclysms (329-330). As Ferguson put it: “[T]he Nobel prize winners had known plenty of mathematics, but not enough history. They had understood the beautiful theory of Planet Finance, but overlooked the messy past of Planet Earth. And that, put very simply, was why Long-Term Capital Management ended up being Short-Term Capital Mismanagement” (330).

This not only reminds us of the all too well-known truth about how abstract theoretical models reduce reality and fail as a consequence of not taking its complexities into account. The fictional character Grisha, a personification of a mysterious math genius, or the real failure of the Black-Scholes mathematical model are the clear-cut examples of the confusion between M1 and M2. Some people, who have unbridled authorial ambitions, create models that seek to explain what is inherently the area of social or institutional facts, that is to say, absolutely unforeseeable, chaotic, and irrational

human activity. The belief that such matters can be potentially explained and predicted, and that axioms or strict scientific laws can be established, is an example of the confusion between M1 and M2.

Interestingly, our dividuality can be revealed not only by the oscillations between the poles of character and author (and different levels of authorship), hedgehog and fox, or by never-ending vagrancies through different tropological realms, but also by the cognitive vacillation between the Modes 1 and 2. We rarely allow one of these modes to guide us completely and what describes the dividual more aptly is the constant perplexed adjustment of views that could roughly be inserted in between M1 and M2. Another American pragmatist, John Dewey, noticed that this double nature is one of the features of modern philosophy: It “could neither be frankly naturalistic, nor yet fully spiritualistic to the disregard of the conclusions of physical science. Since man was on one hand a part of nature and on the other hand a member of the realm of spirit, all problems came to a focus in his double nature” (Bacon 48). Thus, the tension between man-made-facts and naturalistic-objective facts also indicates our dividuality.

We have seen that AITs are mostly designed for outsmarting others but not for improvement. This gives birth to a race of cunning minds, divide people into different levels of authorship, and causes destruction. The questions are: Can we come up with qualitative tropological principles designed for the betterment of things? What should be our attachment to these principles? In the next chapter, I will analyze the term *entropology*, which, I believe, expands and newly nuances the pragmatic principle of meliorism and re-contextualizes the idea of genuine pretending advocated by D’Ambrosio and Moeller. An entropologist is a believer in serendipity because (i) she knows that every act of her will become independent and she will have little control over its consequences; moreover, (ii) an entropologist never confuses M1 with M2, because she knows that the beliefs she follows or the models she has created do not objectively represent reality but help cope with it or explain it in an abstract, artificial way. Thus, when Searle argues that one can make objective claims about the domain which is subjective (Searle 2013), we can add that he probably means that someone may use the idea of M2 just as a lodestar and aspiration. An entropologist knows that M1 realm will

never engender axiomatic and objective truths, strictly speaking, but we can still correct our mind habits and enrich our pseudo-environments with better tropologies.

## 1.4 Entropology: Re-justifying Our Actions

Hans-Georg Moeller in *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (2006) quotes the ancient Chinese story retold by Lind Yutang, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese-American writer. I would also like to share this story here:

There was an old man at a frontier fort in the north who understood Daoism. One day he lost his horse, which wandered into the land of the Hu tribesmen. His neighbors came to condole with him and the man said, “How do you know that this is bad luck?”

After a few months, the horse returned with some fine horses of the Hu breed, and the people congratulated him. The old man said, “How do you know that this is good luck?”

He then became very prosperous with so many horses. The son one day broke his leg riding, and all the people came to condole with him again. The old man said, “How do you know that this is bad luck?”

One day the Hu tribesmen invaded the frontier fort. All the young men fought with arrows to defend it, and nine tenths of them were killed. Because the son was a cripple, both father and son escaped unharmed.

Therefore, good luck changes into bad, and bad luck changes into good. It cannot be known where their altering ends<sup>8</sup>. (Moeller 99)

---

<sup>8</sup> As my supervisor pointed out to me, it is important to highlight the difference between real life and story-telling. While it is possible to evaluate consequences in a story/text, because it is essentially a closed and finite piece of and about reality, real life does not consist of full stops and definite answers. In real life the chains of consequences never

I am not planning to go deeper into the analysis of the Daoist thought in this chapter. I just wanted to share a thought-provoking and insightful story about how inherently atropological our reality is. Although we are doomed to represent it in our theories and reduce it to models, as we saw this in the last chapter, reality always breaks those conceptual shackles and escapes them. The consequences of our actions also tend to misbehave. I remember a couple of years ago I was reading an article about the different policies against the consumption of alcoholic beverages. I was surprised to find out that even well-intended policies often caused a wide variety of unintended and undesirable externalities. Thus, I started asking myself: Is there a perfect policy for anything? Is it possible to come up with a policy which would have entirely positive outcomes? If not, if we do not own and control the future of our intellectual production, if it becomes independent and liberates itself from our will, if we do not have control over the consequences of our actions, then, why act at all? If a precise blueprint for a successful action never works, still, how could we conceptualize a principle for an at least approximately successful action? How to come up with an answer that is not relativistic, is not permeated with indifference, and does not lead to cynicism or skepticism? In this chapter, I will try to address these issues.

An action always contains not only possible alternative bifurcations, but it actually transforms societies and personal lives in a myriad of the most unpredictable ways. The followers of the fixed and clearly established tropologies never question their validity and simplemindedly expect their actions to cause exclusively foreseeable outcomes be they bad or good. However, such steady and unchanging tropologies are the common feature of dogmatic beliefs; neither our physical, nor our social realities are typological in their nature, that is, stable and permanent. Tropologies alter and transform realities as they also alter and transform themselves never remaining the same.

---

stop developing which impedes our ability to evaluate them with a high degree of accuracy.



I was looking for a term that could contain all the three possible scenarios of action, namely, construction (positive), destruction (negative), and misconstruction (something that could usually be referred to as unintended consequences). Furthermore, I wanted the term not only to refer to the action → *all-kinds-of-consequences* pattern, but also indicate that the action was caused by a tropologically guided reasoning. Speaking of the consequences themselves, I wanted the term to express the essentially chaotic nature of the effects caused by the man-made tropes. We already demonstrated (i) that some AITs cannot be entirely cognized even through their effects; (ii) or how man-made models cannot explain and predict our messy and disorganized social realms.

In order to create the least typological tropology, I forged a new concept *entropology* (*entropy* – randomness, chaos, contingency + *tropos* – a turn, trope + *logos* – word, reason, plan, or discourse). Thus, entropology explains how the use of a trope can turn reality into something random, chaotic, disorganized, and contingent. It aims to analyze how once conceived the idea/cultural meme starts its vagrancy through different minds and affects reality in the most unforeseeable ways. Entropology exposes the mixed nature of externalities and complicates the simple understanding of the cause-effect relationship. It also reveals the constructive, destructive, and misconstructive nature of the ideas, and all these effects may be happening simultaneously.

One of the goals of my dissertation, nevertheless, is not to create a new system that should indicate to us how to proceed from less clarity to more clarity or from chaos to order. Any entropological activity should avoid fetishization of words and avoid erecting new tropological idols. However, since our conduct essentially depends on the ideas we hold, I believe we should try to find the middle ground between an ingenuous self-deception and skeptical disdain and rejection of all tropologies that eventually bring about a tropological void and do not necessarily cause emotional satisfaction. That, in fact, may be as destructive as a blind belief in a harmful tropology. How is a desirable entropological outlook possible? My answer is that an entropological observation may be valid not only for the outer world but for introspection as well.

As I have already indicated at the beginning, many times, thinkers add different people to separate taxonomies, for example, someone is classified as either a fox or a hedgehog. What I will seek to do differently is to show the conflict between different tropological options, ideas, characters, and convictions within the individual. The world, therefore, is not just a sum of clear-cut individuals but rather a very dynamic and chaotic entity, which consists of individuals, who likewise contain diverse tropological ecosystems. Entropological introspection inevitably overlaps with external entropological observation in the sense that it seeks to examine not only the proliferation of different selves but also the correlation with the external tropologies and vice versa. The entropological introspection seeks to discover the multiplicity of symbolic internal worlds and apprehends the potential for its future proliferation. I claim that an entropologist grasps the futility of the efforts to become entirely free from tropological conditioning. Therefore, she assumes the role of an intellectual *homo ludens*, someone who is aware of her inter-tropological existence and seeks to enjoy and be inspired by it. Even when the tropological itinerary of her life becomes more predictable and duller, the entropologist still may choose to follow William James's path and enjoy this tropological survival strategy expecting an interesting but not necessarily successful ride.

But let us go back to the concept of entropology. As it was rightly pointed out to me during the defense of my dissertation proposal, the concept had already been invented by Claude Lévi-Strauss and described in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955). We will come back to Strauss's definition of entropology but, for the moment, I would like to focus on Louis Menand's article *Entropology* (1997). In it, Menand seeks to connect Strauss's idea of entropology with the main themes of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966).

First, Menand describes Pynchon's tendency to identify himself with his protagonist, "a social dropout who sets off with some vague notion of making sense of the flux and ends swallowed up by it, one more electron knocking about the universal molecule" (Menand 1997). It is a feeling shared by a wider generation of the late-Fifties. This type of people, according to Menand, think they are "getting somewhere, they think they're looking for someone, and then they realize they're already where they want to be, the only place it makes any sense to be, which is on the road. They disappear, in effect,

into the ozone, just as Pynchon seems to have done” (Ibid.). What is interesting is that on the one hand, they seek to be intertropical creatures, they are very open to new experiences, impressions, people, ideas, and world views; on the other hand, they are absolutely guided by the idea of the road and the never-ending dividual expansion of the self. They resist rationalization and despise standardization, but they also seem to be influenced by the idea of cultural deterioration and intellectual disintegration.

Menand argues that in the story “Entropy,” Pynchon uses this term thermodynamically: “It refers to the tendency of all systems—and ultimately the universe—to run down, something that happens, technically speaking, through a loss of available energy as all molecules reach the same temperature” (Ibid.). Later Menand adds that in *The Crying of Lot 49*, “the concept of entropy is taken from information theory, where it refers to the tendency of communications systems to get rid of excess meanings, and to approach certainty and predictability” (Ibid.). Thus, we can see that a typical tropological fear of the elimination of diverse, exotic, and enriching worldviews, the acceleration of cultural homogenization, the standardization of civilization, the imposition of rational outlooks, and the replacement of fantastic interpretations with scientific certainties is common to Pynchon. In other words, he is guided by the trope of the loss of the old good world. On the contrary, my entropology purposively although, perhaps vainly, seeks to be atropological and does not label processes, events, or categorize effects. Menand connects Pynchon’s idea of entropy with Lévi-Strauss’s notion of entropology because they share the same theme of disintegration:

Thus it is that civilization, taken as a whole, can be described as an extraordinarily complex mechanism, which we might be tempted to see as offering an opportunity of survival for the human world, if its function were not to produce what physicists call entropy, that is inertia. Every verbal exchange, every line printed, establishes communication between people, thus creating an evenness of level, where before there was an information gap and consequently a greater degree of organization. Anthropology could with advantage be changed into “entropology,” as the name

of the discipline concerned with the study of the highest manifestations of this process of disintegration. (Lévi-Strauss 1992: 413-414 in Menand 1997)

In my usage of the term, the role of destruction is not that prominent. An entropologist, in my opinion, merely does not know the future developments of the effects of any act. In this respect, an entropologist seeks to be rather atropological, the ideas of degradation, randomness, disorder, chaos, or disintegration are certainly important for her, but they are not the only scenario and they may be happening in concert with more positive sorts of transformation. Thus, a trope may contain a very wide range of possible transformative potential. If we say that something is moving towards disintegration or melioration, we automatically assume an even, a typological progression towards an abstract, vague end indicated by the chosen trope; we also inevitably reduce the entirety of the actual processes to this one trope and eliminate the interminable complexity of other possible occurrences.

It is also noteworthy that tropologically guided minds usually do not waste time in reflecting on their own tropological conditioning. They rather stick to their fundamental speculative premise. This error may be committed even by the intertropologically-minded people. The openness to tropological exoticism and the frenetic advocacy of diversity may paradoxically go in line with close-mindedness and the restraint of other alternatives. The way Menand describes the use of the terms *entropology* and *entropy* respectively by Lévi-Strauss and Pynchon, sounds more like a M2 statement: “This is where we are heading.” Such thinking paradoxically presupposes certainty although it declares war to universally valid claims; it criticizes the limitations of the reason, but by defending the need for reckless intertropology it forgets that we are not Funes the Memorious and we cannot absorb, remember, understand, and appreciate all existing tropologies. An entropologist, on the contrary, realizes the impossibility of being tropologically unconditioned and therefore, playfully and partly seriously seeks to think of possible principles she could use in order to sift through tropologies.

Entropology is a qualitative principle, while intertropy is a quantitative expansion of unseen reality. An intertropical person may commit an error the entropologist would never commit. This error may be called tropological settlement and it may occur because the person is gullible, and she simply believes in the newest diets, unproven pseudo-scientific theories, conspiracies, and simply takes a hard line on many issues in life (the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> levels of authorship) imagining that it is the only possible truth and expecting her beliefs to bring about exclusively desirable outcomes. On the other hand, a cunning mind (the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of authorship) may also follow an intertropical path but not because it identifies itself with a specific belief system. Both a shrewd intertropicalist, and a more versatile entropologist know that every tropology is a potential shibboleth, that is to say, an outmoded principle or belief. We already discussed this particular mindset when referring to some of the de la Vega's and Murray's fictional characters, who understand that every belief has its expiration date although nobody knows when exactly it expires. Thus, a tropological settlement happens when a person craves order and stability, she despises change and desires the world to remain fixed. This person behaves like a hedgehog, she knows one big thing and sees everything through these particular lenses. A tropological resettlement may happen when a person seeks to manipulate and juggle tropologies, impose them on others, thereby expecting to benefit. Although she never truly believes in those tropologies, she is still obsessed with the ambitions of control, power, and authorship. An entropologist, on the contrary, neither is guided by these ambitions, nor does she abuse tropologies for her personal gain. An entropologist has very limited authorial ambitions because she knows that it is impossible to control the outcomes of one's beliefs and deeds. For an entropologist the random and chaotic development of tropologies represents neither the formation of truth, nor a progressive, linear creation of truth. It is no wonder that de la Vega's shareholder is, in fact, a very entropological character; other types, tropological settlers, would simply be too incompetent and shortsighted to explain the intricacies of the business, while the tropological re-settlers (the cunning and shrewd 3<sup>rd</sup> level authors) would be blinded by the tropes of predictability, control, and authorial ambitions. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that the shareholder has some things in common with the Daoist farmer: He refrains from giving advice, he does not celebrate luck or mourn the lack of it, he does

not have time for excessive joy or regrets. He simply is unaware of the subsequent AIT formations and therefore, refrains from judging and drawing firm conclusions.

This trope of indifference which, as we have seen has deep historical roots, recently has become even more fashionable. Apparently, there is the need not only for the modern re-interpretations of the ancient Greek or Chinese philosophies but also the new tropes of silence or inaction have been born and popularized. Herman Melville created the fictitious character of Bartleby, which has become not only a popular trope in literature, but also a symbol for inaction, for instance, Slavoj Žižek encourages us to think instead of acting by referring to Bartleby (Žižek 2018). However, despite all my appreciation for such revealing stories, I still do not find them convincing enough. Too often, these systems of belief suggest us to reject the human point of view and replace assertiveness (allegedly fake knowledge) with non-assertiveness (allegedly the antidote to fake knowledge). The problem with such a statement is that if we reject the M1 area (the human point of view), we stay in a cognitive and tropological vacuum because there is simply nothing beyond it. The tropology of non-assertiveness pretends to be a M2 statement, but it is not. The genuine pretending principle proposed by D'Ambrosio and Moeller is a good compromise between the tropologies of assertiveness and non-assertiveness. It shows us that there are other possible relationships with tropologies than being a radical, that is, being rooted in some sort of ideology. In the following paragraphs, I will complement the genuine pretending idea with the principles of meliorism, bettabilitarianism, and serendipity.

My proposal relies on the most certainly tropological belief in *meliorism*. To put it in William James's words, "Meliorism (...) is characterized by hope, holding that salvation is possible but not inevitable. It thus requires purposeful action, undertaken in a spirit of hopefulness but without guarantee of success" (Bacon 39). I can also describe this idea as *betteritarianism* (I deliberately changed the term initially coined by Oliver Wendell Holmes), which essentially means: I *bet* that pursuing this tropological path will work better. According to Louis Menand, Holmes called himself a "bettabilitarian" by which he implied a very similar idea to that of James's: "[W]e cannot know what consequences the universe will attach to our choices, but we can bet on them, and we do

it every day” (Menand 2003: 45). Nevertheless, at least in James’s case, there is no much room for optimism: “He [James] created a philosophy of hope expressly premised on the understanding that there is, finally, no reason for hope” (29). Neither is there room for ungrounded pessimism; this reasoning rather reflects the anti-formalist nature of pragmatism: “[I]t represents a principle of endless assault on every tendency to erect contingent knowledge into a formal system” (Menand 1997: xxxi). Thus, we see an intellectual revolt against slumberous tropological settlements and attempts to render tropologies typological instead of scrutinizing their validity. Since there is no final tropological settlement or destination, there is no final word and no ultimate truth to be arrived at. All our premises and knowledge are incomplete, ephemeral, and always originate in M1 realm. In *American Studies*, Menand cites Holmes: “[A]ll life is an experiment. Every year if not every day we have to wager our salvation upon some prophecy based upon imperfect knowledge” (Menand 2003: 51). Thus, both Holmes and James have serendipitous mindsets, which we may add, follow the melioristic and bettabilitarian principles of conduct.

Roughly speaking, what is the chain of possible reasons that led us to the birth of meta-cognitive activities, reflecting on the closeness of our attachment to a certain belief systems, and the efforts to come up with abstract and vague cognitive principles that, matter-of-factly, are not that easy to implement and do not make us feel more comfortable? (i) It may be related to the increased heterogenization of our societies when diverse groups that follow different belief systems physically meet in the same place and may experience the contingency of their ideologies. Thus, one of the necessities and challenges of the modern, global, and pluralistic societies may be to reflect and transcend tribal convictions. (ii) When we realize that we do not own and control the outcomes of our actions and intellectual activities. They tend to become independent and bring about the widest possible range of consequences. That may incentivize us to conceptualize the nature and possible developments of our beliefs, conduct, and its consequences. (iii) Meta-cognition is also important for the so-called Machiavellian intelligence, which seeks to outsmart others in order to gain personal benefit. As I will argue in later chapters, the Machiavellian intelligence is closely linked to the authorial ambitions, because the agent to a large extent must believe in the controllability and predictability of

the consequences caused by her conduct. However, what mostly concerns me here is that the cunning minds usually act on an incomplete and imperfect knowledge and the intellectual hubris, blinded by authorial ambitions, often lead to a failure or, at least, to unanticipated outcomes: “[S]ituations which demand (...) immediate action of some sort, will usually involve ignorance of certain aspects of the situation and will bring about unexpected results” (Merton 1936: 900). Another important realization is that the consequences of our conduct may be unpredictable no matter how rationally or irrationally we think we are:

Rationality and irrationality are not to be identified with the success and failure of action, respectively. For in a situation where the number of *possible* actions for attaining a given end is severely limited, one acts rationally by selecting the means which, on the basis of the available evidence, has the greatest probability of attaining this goal and yet the goal may actually *not* be attained. Contrariwise, an end may be attained by action which, on the basis of the knowledge available to the actor, is irrational.  
(896)

Therefore, an entropologist should not expect her conduct to bring about desired outcomes. She should rather assume the melioristic attitude and follow the principle of serendipity (of which more later). For the moment, let us focus on the first aspect of the problem, namely, the necessity to transcend tribal thinking. By indicating the three major factors of unexpected consequences enumerated by Robert K. Merton, I also expect to demonstrate that it is not only a social necessity of diverse modern societies, but also a cognitive prerequisite for a better performed melioristic action.

According to Merton, ignorance, error, and the “imperious immediacy of interest” are the three major factors of unexpected consequences of conduct (901). Error is the factor which interests me most. Usually people develop a mental habit and believe that if it helped them achieve desired outcomes in the past, it will keep happening in the future as well (Ibid.). However, no matter how many times the belief has been successful, we do



not know for how long its effect will last in the future, particularly in human affairs – the M1 realm. In their study *The Enigma of Reason*, the cognitive scientists Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber claim that “human reason is both biased and lazy. Biased because it overwhelmingly finds justifications and arguments that support the reasoner’s point of view, lazy because reason makes little effort to assess the quality of the justifications and arguments it produces” (Mercier and Sperber 9). Moreover, “using reason doesn’t help one reach better beliefs and choices” and, in fact, “reasoning serves this function very poorly” (175). In other words, reason usually is busy with justifying exclusively M1 matters for the sake of justifying them while ignoring higher cognitive order (M2), which could provide us with better mental habits. Thus, one of the reasons why the use of the word “metacognition” has been increasing is the necessity to overcome one’s tribal thinking, try to avoid cognitive biases and sophisms, and rise above the M1 realm.

The realization that we do not own the consequences of our actions is another possible explanation of why metacognitive and entropological activities are useful. As I have already indicated, the consequences become independent from our will and may cause the broadest spectrum of externalities. Game theorist and political scientist Steven J. Brams in his work *Game Theory and the Humanities* has demonstrated how to apply game theory to some situations described in the Bible. However, what drew my attention was the actual impossibility of game theory to work properly and not because of the traditional problems such as the asymmetry of information or insufficient knowledge, but rather because one does not have control over the outcomes of one’s actions. Brams calls God as a “superlative strategist,” who “having granted free will to His human subjects (which justifies a game-theoretic treatment) (...) is besieged by problems that their freedom engenders. These cause Him great anguish, leading to very human-like displays of anger, frustration, and jealousy” (Brams 21). The Brams’s interpretation comes in very handy for my whole argument and, speaking half-seriously, strengthens it by illustrating that even the omnipotent God has no control over his production and its further developments. Thus, even God may suffer from some sort of hubris and the realization of the limits of his omnipotence.

Going back to more mundane and less speculative matters, it may also happen that socioeconomic and political theories that rely on empirical observation do not turn out to be accurate because the opposite from what they predicted has happened. Corrado Gini calls this phenomenon ‘suicidal prophecies’ (Merton 1936: 904). Merton notices that “Marx’s prediction of the progressive concentration of wealth and increasing misery of the masses did influence the very process predicted” because labor organizations enjoyed “the advantages of collective bargaining, thus slowing up, if not eliminating, the developments which Marx has predicted” (Ibid.).

By the same token, who could assure that the unexpected consequence of a similar kind could not happen with Walter Scheidel’s implications about the eradication of inequality. In his work *The Great Leveler*, Scheidel argues that throughout history only his so-called Four Horsemen of Leveling have usually decreased inequality: “[M]ass mobilization warfare, transformative revolutions, state failure, and lethal pandemics (...) Sometimes acting individually and sometimes in concert with one another, they produced outcomes that to contemporaries often seemed nothing short of apocalyptic (...) by the time the dust had settled, the gap between the haves and the have-nots had shrunk, sometimes dramatically” (Scheidel 6). If we combine this empirical observation with Steven Pinker’s argument that throughout centuries, humanity has become less violent and more peaceful, then we could logically imply that inequality will become an inevitable feature of our future societies. However, exactly such dark and pessimistic prediction and the amalgam of, at first sight, random tropologies may become ‘suicidal prophecies’ in the sense that they may help prevent something they forecast. Historical analysis helps us develop informed opinions, however, these informed opinions should not turn into prophecies and assured predictions.

We should remember Mercier’s and Sperber’s warning that human reason tends to help justify our initial prejudices or line of thinking that do not necessarily have much to do with the complexities of reality. A tropological person would stick to a certain belief system/ideology/prediction/etc. An entropologist, on the contrary, understands the usefulness of an informed opinion but tries to avoid the expert’s hubris. A dystopian or apocalyptic view may have a chance to be written off as an unfounded speculation

although it has paradoxically become such because it might have helped avoid the worst scenario and inspired people to change the course of their actions (think of the worst ecological predictions). An entropologist should never discard even the darkest and gloomiest dystopias and should also seriously consider the nothingness and silence of a potential event in the past that might have happened but never did. And what else is this hope for positive unexpected externality if not the serendipitous and melioristic mindset of the entropologist?

The grasped contingency of the unanticipated directions of the events motivates the entropologically-minded people to undertake this metatheoretical task. A 'true' entropologist may be simply fascinated by the indecipherable complexities of M1, while a third-level agent, who has serious authorial ambitions may expect to come up with M2 sort of findings that could help him reach higher degrees of predictability, expertise, and controllability. Be that as it may, they both have differently motivated interests to invent the recipe for a successful purposive action, which according to Merton, is connected to conduct, "that is, with action which involves motives and consequently a choice between various alternatives" (Merton 1936: 895). Let us briefly focus now on how a metacognitive analysis of action may be applied to explain how Machiavellian mind operates.

Primatologist Frans De Waal defines Machiavellian intelligence as opportunism and the struggle for power (Waal 1998: 4). He argues that this struggle is common to many people around us even though most of them try to hide the underlying motives of their conduct (Waal 2005, 55). The problem is that when this Machiavellian mind wants to invoke a strategy for outsmarting others, no matter how intuitive, counterintuitive, or beyond counterintuitive it seeks to be, it always acts on insufficient knowledge. Or, to put it differently, before taking an action which should yield a personal gain, the agent feels the intense battle between the two different poles of her dividuality: The hedgehog and the fox. On the one hand, as Philip Tetlock suggests (2005), the fox-like agents tend to outperform the hedgehog-like agents. On the other hand, every fox which has taken a decision, has acted on limited resources of knowledge and information and hence, has committed a hedgehog-like act. As Henry Kissinger puts it when referring to

statesmanship, the art of this profession is “finding the right moment for action” (Ferguson 2016: 700). In fact, Kissinger is a good personification of the individual who is oscillating between the tropologically informed action and entropological doubts about its theoretical foundations; between the hedgehog-like practitioner/doer and the fox-like theoretician whose conceptual horizons are too wide and impede the undertaking of any action; the pole of an expert who putatively foresees the future developments of one’s actions and the pole of an entropologist who understands the essential uncontrollability of events and impossibility of any kind of precise forecast:

When the scope for action is greatest, knowledge on which to base such action is small or ambiguous. When knowledge becomes available, the ability to affect events is usually at a minimum (...) The conjectural element of foreign policy—the need to gear actions to an assessment that cannot be proved true when it is made—is never more crucial than in a revolutionary period. Then, the old order is obviously disintegrating while the shape of its replacement is highly uncertain. Everything depends, therefore, on some conception of the future. (727)

Kissinger perfectly understands the impossibility of being tropologically unconditioned when he admits that in the end the decision-making will also depend “on some conception of the future.” In other words, no agent’s mind is devoid of stereotypes, prejudices, value-judgements, idealistic convictions, or psychological considerations (Merton 1936: 896).

Thus, it is important to stress that the puzzles of the M1 realm will not exactly help us purify our knowledge, reveal and correct our cognitive biases. It rather demonstrates the impossibility of taking an objective and tropology-free decision. We should recall that tropologies are the small systems that are not necessarily based on one particular trope, but rather on a contingent amalgamation of several (possibly) completely random tropes. For instance, it seems that Paul Volcker, an American economist, believed that the support for higher inflation was a sign of weakness (“Paul Volcker’s

memoir invites a rethink of the fight against inflation”). He sort-of blended two different disciplines, economics with some shades of social Darwinism. Such reasoning confirms once again the statement that human beings are “rationalizing rather than rational animals” (Tetlock 2005: 2) and that our decision-making is guided by the most unexpected combinations of tropes. Unsurprisingly, the unintended and unanticipated consequences exist in abundance.

When the entropologist reaches the moment of decision taking, her only hope, thus, is the expectation for serendipity. The term should not only be understood in Panglossian sense, that is to say, nobody should ingenuously expect the happy and successful development of events to occur. The principle of serendipity, in fact, could be a very loose common denominator between the farmer’s story and the American pragmatism represented by the company that has and has not much in common: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. While the formal procedures and intellectual specificities of their argumentation may vary among these philosophers, they are connected by the idea that truth is a process. To put it in the terminology of this dissertation, “truth” is a M2 bait which motivates and encourages our never-ending intertropolological intellectual activity. Thus, there is a certain abstract resistance to the strict labelling of things as *correct* or *incorrect* or *good* and *bad*, but everyone, nevertheless, expects serendipitous results.

To use a more academic jargon, “[f]ruitful empirical research not only tests theoretically derived hypotheses; it also originates new hypotheses. This might be termed the ‘serendipity’ component of research, i.e., the discovery, by chance or sagacity, of valid results which were not sought for” (Merton 1968: 150). The serendipity pattern, as Merton calls it, opens up new possibilities for the investigator and new directions for the inquiry he has undertaken (159). Since we all start our inquiries with certain theoretical predispositions, the emergence of something unexpected helps us not to remain still, expand and refresh our hypotheses and theories (162). It seems that Dewey would agree with this sort of development of an inquiry because for him, ‘truth’ cannot be something fixed, and the use of the word must be only provisional (Bacon 55). The direction of further developments, thus, should remain unspecified, thereby relying on the

experimentalist spirit of the inquirer (58). An entropologist, then, is always ready to re-justify and re-adjust her premises and tries to maintain a healthy distance from her tropological views whose serendipitous effects are not foreseen, but rather expected and desired.

It is important to understand that actions are not only psychologically and socially motivated but also their consequences “are not restricted to the specific area in which they were initially intended to center, they occur in interrelated fields explicitly ignored at the time of action” (Merton 1936: 902, 903). They ripple through and transform all the possible compartments of the individuals’ and society’s lives and these processes are what entropology seeks to refer to. Following the entropological logic of construction, destruction and misconstruction, it may occur that the discussed principles will be used to serve as a smoke screen for evil cause, because people rarely commit actions without being motivated to benefit and without being conditioned by certain prejudices, predispositions, and ideologies. In order for this not to happen, the two (or more) participants have to start the conversation with the initial premise that the opposite part is not primarily an ideological enemy but is someone who follows the bettabilitarian and melioristic principles and that the *only* difference between them is the ideological beliefs they hold. Such attitude from both sides would help increase the possibility of serendipity. However, if at least one of the participants violates this principle in order to pursue her interests, the possibility of serendipity would be undermined.

The concepts of M1, M2, and entropology help us better understand why some fictional characters (in the cases of Murray and de la Vega) or real people (in the case of the Black-Schole model) have failed to realize their authorial ambitions. Needless to say, the entropological effects are much more common to the M1 realm than to that of M2. Although Merton did not use this specific terminology, he also emphasized the contingent and chaotic nature of human affairs: “Public predictions of future social developments are frequently not sustained precisely because the prediction has become a new element in the concrete situation, thus tending to change the initial course of developments. This is not a true of prediction in fields which do not pertain to human conduct” (903-904). As I have already indicated above, the validity of tropologies is

temporal and one must know the precise minute when to switch off from an expiring tropology and switch to a more fruitful one. However, the confusion between M1 and M2 and the lack of entropological awareness do not allow this to happen. That is why in the books we have explored, the persons with the highest authorial ambitions eventually failed. In the next chapter, I will discuss the extent to which our dividuality is determined by tropologies and how an entropologist could transcend this conditioning by incessantly expanding her amphibian nature.

## 1.5 Dividuality: Polylogical Mind and the Oscillations between Different Tropological Poles

*“Never before have we been faced with such an aggressive form of being. Some, in a kind of metaphysical rapture, believe it’s in the bags’ nature to take over the world, to conquer all continents; that they are pure form that seeks contents but immediately tires of them, throwing themselves to the wind yet again. They maintain that the plastic bag is a wandering eye that belongs to some imaginary “there,” a mysterious observer taking part in the panopticon. Others, meanwhile, with their feet more firmly on the ground, assert that these days evolution favors fleeting forms that can flit through the world while at the same time attaining ubiquitousness” (Tokarczuk 396-397).*

According to Gintautas Mažeikis, the expansion of new symbolic worlds implies the division of individuality, that is, fuels the birth of dividuality (Mažeikis 2013: 42). He also refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept *body without organs* (Deleuze and Guattari: 1977 and 1988) in order to illustrate how the overcoming of traditional definitions help disrupt our habits that seek to subject dividuality by symbolizing, representing, labelling, and consequently imprisoning it. The principle of dividuality is, thus, to be pursued because it guarantees a certain degree of autonomy (213). Dividuality is an assemblage-like indefinite principle for incessant self-creation and recreation that stands in opposition to traditional, externally imposed forms of subjectivity (215). My usage of the term dividuality has more to do with Mažeikis’s appropriation and reinterpretation of this Deleuzian term.

Deleuze used the term *dividuality* to refer to the new technological phenomenon when individuals become infinitely divisible (Deleuze 1992). Modern technologies can reduce people to mere numbers and data representations, that is, to endlessly divide them into small registrable units. Technologies, thus, affect the traditional way of how our selves are constituted, recorded, and expressed. They threaten to impede our agency and seek to control people instead of empowering them. Although in this dissertation, I discuss similar phenomena, for instance, Cambridge Analytica, the idea of metric society or the methods to hook people with the help of social media (chapter 4), I argue that since these methods seek to impose certain forms of topological and *dividual* settlement on us, they are rather creating individuality within us. *Dividuality*, thus, becomes a tool to disobey, to re-invent oneself, to become unpredictable and increase one's agency instead of becoming a character, or an author of the first two lower levels. In this regard, Deleuze is not very relevant to my dissertation. First of all, his concept of *dividuality* focuses on technological matters, while in my thesis technology is only one detail of a much bigger puzzle. Secondly, our use and interpretation of the term does not coincide. Therefore, my concept has more to do with Mažeikis's interpretation. Generally speaking, *dividuality* in this thesis means the possibility to be divided by diverse topological systems and different *dividual* poles. While it seems that the Deleuzian term implies settlement, in my thesis *dividuality* overcomes settlement and signifies oscillation.

Technologies may sometimes indeed provoke *dividual* oscillations. However, I argue that these oscillations are chameleonic, that is, inorganic and very incoherent reproductions of self. One of the aims of this dissertation is to discuss the extent to which we can oscillate and the degree of our openness to new topological resources<sup>9</sup>. A hedgehog-like doubts, however, do not impede the openness to randomness, messiness,

---

<sup>9</sup> Think of Paul Feyerabend's (2010) methodological anarchism's principle *anything goes*. An amphibian *dividual* has to make up her mind – whether everything indeed goes, or whether there are some limits on the validity of available topological resources. Thus, an amphibian *dividual* is always stuck between fox-like beginnings and hedgehog-like endings.



and contingencies. Therefore, the agenda for the tropological expansion is based on the principles of serendipity, entropology, and meliorism, whereas the principle of dividual expansion requires amphibian characteristics. I am not sure whether this helps dismantle the traditional Western system of thought based on dualisms, dichotomies, and rigid systems, but incessant dividual and tropological oscillations, or to put it in Olga Tokarczuk's words, motion, draw potential trajectories: "Sway, go on, move. That's the only way to get away from him. He who rules the world has no power over movement and knows that our body in motion is holy, and only then can you escape him, once you've taken off. He reigns over all that is still and frozen, everything that's passive and inert" (Tokarczuk 258).

Tokarczuk borrowed the idea of a constant motion from the sect called runaways (*beguny*), an old branch of the Orthodox Christians, who believed they had to be always wandering and always in motion in order to avoid any sort of settlement (being marked with passports, addresses, papers, etc.). They were described as schismatic, dissenters, secessionists (*raskolnik*). The idea on which the philosophy of the sect was based perfectly illustrates the dividual tensions and tropological expansions – a hedgehog-like idea of permanent wandering versus constant fox-like tropological expansion. Tokarczuk takes over this old idea and searches for contemporary runaways:

In their [the travellers] heads they perform mute examinations of conscience: Do they have everything, passport, ticket, and papers, have they exchanged money. And where is it they're going. And what for. And will they find what they are looking for, have they chosen the direction they need. The flight attendants, beautiful as angels, check to make sure we're fit to travel, and then, with a benevolent motion of the hand, permit us to plunge on into the soft, carpet-lined curves of the tunnel that will lead us aboard our plane and onto a chilly aerial road to new worlds. That smile of theirs holds—or so it strikes us—a kind of promise that perhaps we will be born anew now, this time in the right time and the right place (402-403).

The conceptual problem that arises is how to become organic, amphibian dividuals instead of inorganic, chameleonic dividuals (of which more later). That is one of the conceptual axes of this chapter.

The concept individuality, thus, poorly reflects the complexity of our inner multiple selves, which is more accurately expressed by the idea of dividuality. In order to illustrate the complexity of multiple selves and the dividual oscillations I will be referring to theatrical, philosophical, literary, and cinematic works. Luigi Pirandello, Lev Vygotsky, and Charles Fernyhough will be of much help explaining how our polylogical mind works and produces many selves. I will compare philosophical and linguistic approaches to the literary works created by Luigi Pirandello in order to explain better how polylogical dividual consciousness works. Interestingly enough, I will argue that Miguel de Unamuno's *Niebla (Mist)*, Augusto Boal's and Pirandello's ideas help us to better understand the problems of topological determinism, free will questions, and the schism between character and author that we can also see in *Black Mirror's* episode "Bandersnatch" (2018). I will start by explaining once again (i) the inevitable topological conditioning of the dividual; (ii) then, I will show how the problem of dividuality has been reflected in literary, philosophical, linguistic, and artistic works; and (iii) lastly, I will demonstrate the relevance of the distinction between chameleonic and amphibian dividuals which I will borrow from mathematician, philosopher, and politician Antanas Mockus. This distinction will help us grasp better the nuances of the intensity of the dividual's attachment to different topological systems.

It is best to search for the manifestations of dividuality in the inherently M1 areas such as arts, theatre, literature, movies, finances, economics, cognitive sciences, geopolitics, criminology (detective works), spy stories, etc. Here, the tensions between creating versus being created, outfoxing versus being outfoxed, randomness and contingency versus order, free will versus determinism are easy to notice. In those areas we observe the fluctuations between different topological systems, the inability to distinguish clearly between M1 and M2, the swinging between fox and hedgehog, author and character, paradigm shifter and docile subject, rationality and vain rationalization. The anticipation of alternative future metamorphoses and

transformations, the abundance of fox-like doubts that cause non-events and non-occurrences that may also serve as a non-existing sign for interpretation, if one takes the risk of wording silent evidence (the dog that did not bark in the night); or, on the contrary, a reckless venture that brings about creative destruction – these are the resources of dividuality and its potential directions for tropological expansion.

We already discussed the ferocious authorial competitions represented by de la Vega and Murray. These struggles not only divide the people externally into hedgehogs and foxes, but they also create an internal dividual tension within them – being just a character/hedgehog, who passively absorbs the knowledge produced by others versus being an author/fox who seeks to produce and impose knowledge on others. The authorial ambitions to manipulate and re-shape common knowledge and this never-ending and ever-expanding urge to win eliminates the concept of individuality. The complexity of situations and possible strategies render the individual dividual. Or to put it in other words, this modern mental fragmentation shows how typological and reductive the concept of individuality is. It cannot properly explain the inner metamorphoses and external transformations. We can always avoid a radical dogmatic attachment to tropologies, but we will not be able to avoid the intertropological expansion of dividuality and the oscillations between different tropologies.

The entropologist grasps the futility of the efforts to become entirely free from tropological conditioning. That has been noted by the Italian dramatist and novelist Luigi Pirandello in his work *Six Characters in Search of an Author*:

“A character, my dear sir, can always ask a man who he is, because a character really has a life of his own, a life full of his own specific qualities, and because of these he is always ‘someone’. While a man – I’m not speaking about you personally, of course, but man in general – well, he can be an absolute ‘nobody’” (Pirandello 1979: 53).

Thus, Pirandello claims that a character, although, she may be doomed to be a very tropological creature, can also be dynamic and gain personality exactly because of her being tropologically conditioned.

Jennifer Lorch cites Pirandello's personal letters where he compares humans to "a nobler type' of spider, snail or mollusc who cling, not to their webs or shells, but to their ideals, occupations, habits and feelings: protection mechanisms against an overwhelming sense of futility. Without these 'you are as a traveller with no home, a bird without a nest' (Lorch 2005: 3). But it does not mean that human being has to remain the same forever: "For him [Pirandello] identity is a collection of masks, forms imposed upon the life within us by ourselves and by others" (Ibid.). We can see that Pirandello and Murray have one thing in common. For them, our beliefs and activities are the marks essentially designed in order to fill the void: "This is the only way I can live now. To be reborn moment by moment. To prevent thought from working again inside me, causing inside a reappearance of the void with its futile constructions" (Pirandello 1992: 160). Pirandello in his novel *One, no One, and One Hundred Thousand*, oscillates between the gloomy option of getting rid of his self and a more optimistic desire of tropological expansion:

- (i) I wanted to be alone. Without myself. I mean without that self I already knew, or thought I knew. Alone with a certain outsider, whom I already felt obscurely I would no longer be able to get rid of, as it was I myself: the outsider inseparable from myself (12).
- (ii) [Name] is fitting for the dead. For those who have concluded. I am alive and I do not conclude. Life does not conclude. And life knows nothing of names (159).

Pirandello's nihilism is mainly caused by a radical and morbid tropological attachment to words, names, and brands:

They deceive themselves because truly (...) they can impose nothing but words. Words, you understand? Words that each

understands and repeats in his own way. Ah, but this, too, is how so-called current opinions are formed! And woe to anybody who one fine day finds himself branded by one of these words they all repeat. For example: *usurer!* Or for example: madman! (Ibid., 86).

This attachment to fixed tropologies and the idea of unchanging individuality have to be fought with an incessant intertropical dividual expansion of one's mind. Pirandello is an advocate of radical dividualism and constant tropological resettlement. One of the ways to achieve this goal is to listen to the polylogue of multiple voices taking place within oneself.

Pirandello himself was a very dynamic dividual who mostly drew on the different tropological poles of characterhood and authorship. A great example of what I call a polylogical mind or consciousness is again provided by Lorch who cites Pirandello's letter to his friend:

If material and social commitments did not distract me, I believe I would remain from morn to night in my study, at the beck and call of the characters of my narratives, who throng around me. Each of them wants to come to life before the others. They all have a particular wretchedness they want made known. I have sympathy for them all. (Lorch 20)

This short excerpt also provides us with interpretative tools to understand better his play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, which I will argue is a great example of polylogical mind. *One, no One, and One Hundred Thousand*, on the other hand, demonstrates the impossibility and futility of the idea of being tropologically unconditioned. In this context, we may also remember the previously discussed cases of Funes's and the TV series *Tabula Rasa* in which the necessity of tropologically created selves was analyzed.

Charles Fernyhough in his book *The Voices Within: The History and Science of How We Talk to Ourselves* (2016), writes about an interesting form of dividuality, namely, a dialogical mind. The main idea is that humans have inner dialogues in their minds and they may discuss with many voices in their heads. This process helps us to see things in different light and from different angles. It may also increase our creativity. It is easy to observe this behavior in people and especially children. They often discuss, make observation, and comment on something in a dialogic form. Many of us have experienced this weird moment of an unexpected and perhaps untimely burst into laughter. If we analyzed the cognitive chain of thoughts that led us to laughter, spotting the dialogical nature of it would be the easiest part, while the rest of cognitive mechanism may remain uncovered.

In his article “Life in the chatter box” (2013), Fernyhough refers to psychologist Lev Vygotsky who suggested that people take over the dialogical form of communication from the external social interactions. This way humans can debate various issues from different perspectives. The dialogical mind helps the entropologists to recreate themselves incessantly. However, these inner debates can hardly engender M2 truths. Noam Chomsky also refers to the same article by Fernyhough and claims that our thinking takes place in the internal language, the I-language, which is not accessible to our consciousness and which reaches consciousness in scattered fragments (Chomsky 59, 14). Thus, first, it is very difficult if not impossible to conduct an empirical investigation of our true inner thoughts; second, I am almost certain that Chomsky would agree that since the external language, the shadows and echoes of real thoughts, strictly pertains to M1, it cannot be the target of science. That is why Chomsky is not interested in sociolinguistics, the matters that strictly belong to M1 category. However, as I have underscored above, in this dissertation I focus exclusively on the speculative aspects of our intertropical dividual being.

I suggest that our dividual mind is rather polylogical than dialogical. Above I enumerated the tropological tensions that make our mind work hard and oscillate between different poles. To this, we can add Fernyhough’s observations about inner voices and dialogues. However, I have to stress that we are not talking about the most prominent

manifestations of the dividual aspects such as voice hearing, hallucinations, or schizophrenia (which is an extreme example of split mind and split personality). The BBC television series *Sherlock* visually illustrates the dividual nature of Sherlock Holmes and his enemies. The series does that by invoking the concept of “mind palace,” an imaginary mental place, in which the characters retreat to search for relevant information, to dig up the past memories and where they can hear and speak to many different voices. Even though it is depicted as temporary and very particular state of mind, it can, to a limited extent, exemplify the notion of dividuality. Mind palace is also very useful for outfoxing one’s enemies, create strategies, to simulate game theories, debate one’s views, etc. Mind palace is a place where the polylogical consciousness can operate best.

In “The Hounds of Baskerville,” the second episode of the second season of *Sherlock*, the main character Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) needs to visit his mind palace in order to put the scattered pieces of the case together. He asks other people in the room, including Doctor Watson (Martin Freeman), to leave him alone. Then, Watson explains the idea of mind palace to another puzzled person: “It’s a memory technique, a sort of mental map. You plot a map with a location, it doesn’t have to be a real place. You deposit memories there. Theoretically, you never forget anything.”

Mind palace itself works as a polylogical consciousness where dispersed and incoherent discursive fragments sound in your brain, random tropes, metaphors and phrases from the past pop up once again, different faces, voices, persons, sounds, images, ideas, slogans, incomplete memories, and sketchy encyclopedic facts stimulate and attack Sherlock’s brain until he selects the most relevant pieces, puts them together, and comes up with the necessary answer.

Another fictional and prototypical example of the dividual and polylogical consciousness is represented in “His Last Vow,” the third episode of the third season. Charles Augustus Magnussen (Lars Mikkelsen), a gifted villain and blackmailer, stores all his memories and information about other people in imaginary files and archives. Other characters thought that Magnussen kept all this information in a physical place

called the Appledore vaults, but the truth was that it was all saved in his mind palace and once he needed it, he just had to picture it.

As Fernyhough rightly noted, similar polylogical games help expand the fox-like dividual mind, the inner polylogues may provide us with more perspectives and insights, and all this undoubtedly fosters people's cognitive abilities. It may also contribute to a better selection of beliefs, more fluent development of ideas and consequently, more serendipitous outcomes of our actions. However, no matter how advanced these skills become, it will never make it possible to predict and control the occurrences and events outside of our brains and outsmart others with an accuracy of 100 percent. Well, unless you are Sherlock Holmes.

Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is another great literary example of a polylogical dividual mind that is also represented through the schism between character and author:

Father: We're looking for an author.

Producer: An author? Which author?

Father: Any author will do, sir (Pirandello 1979: 7).

It seems that this play is the materialization of Pirandello's mind palace where he talks with multiple voices and where he is solving the puzzle of being an actor, a character, an author and a real human being at the same time. Thus, we could interpret the stage on which the action of the play takes place as Pirandello's polylogical mind where each character represents a different set of tropologies that helps expand Pirandello's dividuality. The book itself becomes sort of a museum where he exhibits his inner voices and mental experiments. Pirandello's characters represent his inner voices and dialogues described by Vygotsky and Fernyhough. They (i) suggest ideas, they instruct, (ii) they are his source of inspiration, and (iii) the pillars of his dividuality:

- (i) "When the characters are alive, really alive and standing in front of their author, he has only to follow their words, the actions that they suggest to him" (54),



(ii) “The play is in us: we are the play and we are impatient to show it to you: the passion inside us is driving us on” (10).

(iii) “This is the real drama for me; the belief that we all, you see, think of ourselves as one single person: but it’s not true: each of us is several different people, and all these people live inside us” (22).

[Father to Producer]: “[W]hat if I told you that you were me?” (52).

Pirandello likes to play with the shifting roles of someone who is supposed to stay individual and stick to his tropologically determined self. Precisely through reversing the order of individuals and mixing up their roles, Pirandello renders individuals dividual. For example, the theatre actors whose work was interrupted by the characters in search of an author suddenly become observers of the weird show:

Leading actor: Look at this. What a show!

Leading actress: And we’re the audience (13).

Pirandello is a radical champion of a never-ending dividual and tropological expansion and against any form of tropological settlement; he is also perfectly aware that tropological systems eventually expire: “[B]ecause whatever is a reality today, whatever you touch and believe in and that seems real for you today, is going to be – like the reality of yesterday – an illusion tomorrow” (53). However, the reluctance to attach oneself to a particular tropological system and the superimposition of dividuality over individuality does not imply that our temporal identities and our transient beliefs should be easily erased without leaving any mark on our selves. On the contrary, these experiences maintain an important ontological status throughout our lives. Perhaps, for this reason, Father, in Pirandello’s play, despises the word illusion: “An illusion? For pity’s sake don’t talk about illusions! Don’t use that word, it’s especially hurtful to us!” (51). Father cannot tolerate the idea of him being illusory and hence, perhaps despite being only one of many voices within Pirandello’s mind, demands an equal ontological status because he feels to be an important element of Pirandello’s dividual assemblage.

Each experience, impression, joy or disappointment, success or failure, each tropological settlement that will be abandoned later on, each debunked system of beliefs leaves an indelible mark on the ever-increasing fabric of dividuality. The difference may be that some agents like the ones discussed by de la Vega and Murray treat the ideas too instrumentally and opportunistically. They never manage to establish a genuine relationship to their selves and tropologies. While an entropologist, conversely, may keep the obsolete tropological debris of his dividuality on the shelves in his mind palace as a testimony of the past inner voices, quests, successes, failures, and lessons learned or simply adventures undertaken.

We will shortly come back to this problem when discussing the difference between chameleons and amphibians. For the moment, I would like to dwell for a bit longer upon what we have just considered and look at how the problem of dividuality, multiple inner voices, the schism between author and character raise the question about determinism and free will and is represented in a contemporary cinematic work. More concretely, I will discuss “Bandersnatch” (2018) an interactive film, which is a part of the *Black Mirror* series. Before I proceed to the analysis of the episode, I will introduce a couple of relevant ideas from Miguel de Unamuno’s novel (or a nivola, as he called it) *Niebla* (*Mist*, first published in 1914). It will help us to better grasp the philosophical and psychological context and the changing technological possibilities of realizing and re-actualizing those ideas.

Such recurring themes as how real fictional characters are or how the problem of free will and determinacy emerges from the dividual tension between authorship and characterhood link together Unamuno, Pirandello, and “Bandersnatch.” Unamuno’s *Niebla* starts and develops as an unsuccessful love story. The main character Augusto Pérez is in love with Eugenia whom he wishes to marry. Despite all his attempts she keeps rejecting his offers. Eventually, Eugenia agrees to marry Augusto, however, a bit later she decides to escape with another man called Mauricio. Then, the most important and interesting part of the novel starts, which is also the most relevant chapter of *Niebla* (xxx). It is where the dividual and polylogical nature of the novel is best exhibited.

Augusto starts to think about committing suicide. He decides to meet the actual author of the book, Unamuno, and to inquire of him whether he is allowed to do that. Unamuno tells his character, Augusto Pérez, that he is not able to kill himself because he is just a fictional character and he does not have the necessary existential autonomy to do that. However, Augusto, in return, makes Unamuno realize that he may not be the ultimate author of the book and that perhaps he himself might be a character invented by someone bigger.

The dialogue between Augusto and Unamuno is another example of our dividual nature and polylogical mind. Unamuno reveals his inner dialogues and he shows how an imaginary conversation with one of his fictional characters can recreate him and make him realize the limits of his free will. For example, to the question whether Augusto can kill himself, Unamuno responds that Augusto cannot do that, because he is neither alive, nor dead because he simply does not exist; Augusto is just a product of Unamuno's and his readers' fantasy (Unamuno: 284-285). It also seems that Unamuno grasps the dialogical nature of our minds. He implicitly, through the character of Augusto, says that he has the necessity to discuss things with someone and then there is no one to talk to outside, he does that in his own mind which means that his monologues are dialogues (287). Unamuno-the-character replies that maybe Augusto's dialogues are only monologues because Augusto does not exist in reality. However, exactly this part of the conversation, paradoxically, informs us about the polylogues taking place in the Unamuno-the-author's head. A theatre director could show *Six Characters in Search of an Author* as a staged polylogical consciousness, as a mind of an author who is being attacked by a bunch of different characters and who creates as he converses with them. Unamuno, in turn, exposes his polylogical mind through his nivola.

Interestingly and paradoxically enough, Unamuno through this dialogue not only demonstrates the impossibility of a monologic mind; but he also seeks to show his own fragility, mortality, and some sort of fictitiousness through the invented character of Augusto. For instance, when Augusto is denied the possibility to commit suicide, he says that those who create, also create themselves and those who create themselves, inevitably die (294). Of course, the reader has to realize that it is not actually Augusto who says

that, and that these are the thoughts of Unamuno put in the lips of his invented character. This is the moment when Unamuno-the-character realizes his mortality and his finite existence, which naturally leads him to the question about the limits of his free will. In other words, Augusto suggests that Unamuno himself may be a part of a bigger plan, which would imply that Unamuno is not the author but just another character.

In another conversations between two “fictional” characters of *Niebla*, one of them says that there is a hidden novelist who always listens to them and takes notes that he will use for the book, which will be read by the readers who, at least for a very short period of time, will start to doubt their own existence and thereby a new character will be born (278). Precisely this idea connects *Niebla* with “Bandersnatch.” Stefan Butler, the main character of the episode, at one point realizes that he does not control his own life and cannot take his own independent decisions and that someone else, in this case, the viewers of Netflix are doing that for him.

Stefan Butler is an introvert young man, who spends most of his time in his room trying to create a video game. Butler blames himself for his mother’s death. When Stefan was five years old, he was playing with a toy in his room. He did not want to leave the toy and a conflict occurred. Because of the conflict his mother had to leave later and take another train. The train derailed and she died. Now, in 1984, Stefan is trying to create a video game based on a fictitious book called *Bandersnatch* written by a fictitious author. He might have chosen this particular book because his mother owned it. On the other hand, *Bandersnatch* (the book) provides a complex reflection on free will and explores the possible and alternative developments of our actions.

The main character may not only be motivated by the guilt and his traumatic experience as a kid, but also by the understanding of how a random combination of decisions, actions, coincidences can radically influence one’s life. Once you come to this realization, you become obsessed firstly, with the idea of disentanglement of the labyrinths of alternative and potential developments of events; secondly, you may become obsessed with the idea of being able to predict, control, and affect those developments. However, the impossibility to influence events leads you to the realization

that people lack free will. Moreover, even more importantly, one may realize that, in a sense, one is a character created by some external forces. For example, Stefan's later life and his activities were influenced by the event of his mother's death and by specific ideas exposed in the book he read.

That may encourage our minds to undertake the creation of conspiracy theories, but what should interest us mostly in this case is that it may also cause the dividual schism between the character and the author and the oscillation between these two tropological poles. The thing is that dividual people do not follow the same notion of free will all their lives and it may fluctuate depending on the circumstances, occurrences, and experiences. This fluctuation and incessant reconsideration of one's views is exactly what dividual tropological oscillation refers to. For instance, there is a moment in "Bandersnatch" when Stefan, who sought to realize his authorial ambitions through the successful creation of the video game, realized that he did not have control over his actions. He starts to ask questions and we, the Netflix viewers from the future, get a chance to inform Stefan that we are making decisions for him. Thus, the idea of this interactive episode is in a sense to make us feel as the authors of Stefan's character. However, we may as well come up with the idea that we are created as characters by Netflix. The viewers have a limited range of decisions to take for Stefan. They also choose to watch this movie because it is popular, and many people talk about it. What to say about the fact that most of the movies we decide to watch on the website are recommended by the algorithms that know our habits well and may further reinforce them by providing us with specific options based on our past choices and decisions ("Google leads in the race to dominate artificial intelligence").

Thus "Bandersnatch" in a way puts us, viewers, in the Unamuno-the-character position. For some time, we may enjoy our authorial powers, but then we realize that our free will is not that free and that our decisions are not actually ours and they are affected by outside forces. This dividual oscillation between the poles of characterhood and authorship links "Bandersnatch" and *Niebla* together. The oscillation may not only provoke doubts, but also kindle a polylogue between the different dividual tropological poles within us.

Throughout history, a great number of philosophers, thinkers, and writers implicitly have referred to dividuality and polylogical nature of our minds. Thus, by no means is this topic new to us; the only difference is that the contemporary technological development enables us to deal with these issues differently. In the deep and remote past, thinkers had to use more traditional means of expression such as poetry, philosophy, literature, theatre, etc.

For instance, Plato in *Phaedrus*, poetically depicts human beings as chariots drawn by two essentially different horses. One horse is not very attractive from the aesthetic point of view. It is mortal, mundane and preoccupied essentially with undignified and unsophisticated matters. Another horse is beautiful and represents a higher, more heavenly, and idealistic aims. The two horses have different whims and inclinations and seek for different things. This is why riding the chariot is never a balanced and stable activity because we, humans, are always torn between different choices and options. Therefore, what is usually referred to as the Platonic tripartite constitution of soul may as well refer to human dividuality which is being incessantly seduced by all kinds of different tropologies, oscillating between materialism and idealism, realism and fiction, the modes 1 and 2, etc. Moreover, this dividual may struggle to pick the right voice in his head. Let us recall the multiple testimonies about Socrates and the dialogical relationship with his daemon, which is also a great illustration of a polylogical consciousness.

Friedrich Nietzsche is another philosopher, who centuries later, in his own way described the dividual tensions within one's mind. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he speaks of an ideal person who should seek to combine the opposite dividual tropological poles of the self:

Thus our whole knowledge of art is at bottom illusory, seeing that as mere knowers we can never be fused with that essential spirit, at the same time creator and spectator, who has prepared the comedy of art for his own edification. Only as the genius in the act of creation merges with the primal architect of the cosmos can he truly know something of the eternal essence of art. For in that

condition he resembles the uncanny fairy tale image which is able to see itself by turning its eyes. He is at once subject and object, poet, actor, and audience. (Nietzsche 1967: 52)

This insight goes in line with another dividual distinction between our Dionysian and Apollonian natures discussed by Nietzsche. The idea is that neither of them should prevail and these two natures should be kept in tension complementing each other. Thus, Nietzsche also seeks to undermine the idea of individuality, the concept that always implies dogmatic settlement and is built upon a limited range of available tropologies.

Dividual existence that seeks to fight the imposition of tropologies from outside, however, comes at a cost. According to T. K. Seung, this fight also causes the internal conflict that is best personified by another Nietzsche's character, Zarathustra. Seung affirms that one of the main questions that preoccupied Nietzsche was "[h]ow can the individual be a creative master in the deterministic world?" (Seung xiv). Then Seung continues: "This awesome task of self-mastery is Zarathustra's epic mission. His struggle against eternal forces eventually turns out to be his struggle against his own cosmic self. Therefore, his epic journey is the battle of self-relation" (xxiii).

Reflective dividuality, hence, may be engendered not only by internal voices and tropological oscillations, but also by external divisive, tragic, and traumatic events. The simplest response to external irritant stimuli is closing oneself in the closet of individuality and trying to sedate oneself with a fixed, and unchanging views that supposedly promise salvation. This tropological settlement allegedly guarantees one's emotional and existential stability. Dividuality, conversely, does not appease tensions but is rather a product of never-ending turbulent reflections, existential dramas, impossibility to choose one exact path, to find one specific answer, or come up with one final and valid truth. We will come back to this problem when discussing the first level authors/agents.

Augusto Boal, Brazilian dramatist, sought to reverse and revolutionize the too well-established tropological order in theatre. He emphasized that it is necessary to expand the definition and consequently the role of spectators so that they also become involved and take action. Thus, not only did he understand and encourage the

development of our dividual nature, but he also expected to bring about serendipitous outcomes by motivating people to transcend their ideological convictions and enlarge their views:

‘Spectator’ is a bad word! The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanise him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators. All these experiments of a people’s theatre have the same objective – the liberation of the spectator, on whom the theatre has imposed finished visions of the world. (Boal 2008: 134-135)

Not all similar insights may have a leftist ideological flavor. Nijolė Šivickas, a Colombian-Lithuanian artist-sculptor, when speaking of the nature of her art works also brought up their dividual nature: “What are my objects doing in a building? They are my works, they look at people who come and go” (Goštautas). Firstly, the sculptures, according to her, resist to be assigned a specific role. Apart from being observed, they also observe, in other words, they undergo a dividual metamorphosis. Secondly, for a long time she refused to name her art works, because they would risk becoming tropologically determined and enslaved. Šivickas’s works also are difficult to classify because the sculptor used different materials, she blended different styles from different historical eras. For example, she was highly influenced by the pre-Colombian tradition (Ibid.). As a result, her works do not pertain to one specific era, tradition, fashion, and style. Finally, it is interesting to note that Šivickas created “objects that do not exist in reality because according to her, if they do, why bother to repeat them” (Ibid.).

People, however, cannot be like Šivickas’s objects and do not reflect the existing belief systems. The battle against external determining forces may be heroic but impossible. Then, the question is again about the degrees of intensity and authenticity in which our attachments to different tropological systems may vary. Primatologist Frans Waal notices that people tend to overemphasize one aspect of their dividuality while both



the primates and the human beings are capable of combining at least several different modes of being:

With both cruel and compassionate sides, we stand in the world like a Janus head, our two faces looking in opposite directions. This can confuse us to the point that we sometimes oversimplify who we are. We either claim to be the “crown of creation” or depict ourselves as the only true villains. Why not accept that we are both? These two aspects of our species correspond to those of our closest living relatives. (Waal 2005: 5)

Later, I will spend more time analyzing the difference between the tropologies of competition and cooperation. For the moment, it is important to stress that our dividual nature may be capable of absorbing these two, at first glance, incompatible views without recurring to more radical essentialist identifications with neither of them. Of course, as I will explain later, different levels of authorship/agency tend to give prominence to one of these tropologies. Nevertheless, that does not impede the possibility of a melioristic, serendipitous change. In order to better understand this statement, I need to invoke and explain the difference between chameleons and amphibians made by mathematician, philosopher, and politician Antanas Mockus, who also happens to be son of Nijolė Šivickas.

Mockus defines the “cultural amphibian” as a cultural, moral, and communicative facilitator and inter-cultural interpreter who seeks to synthesize diverse experiences and propose a better-working model:

The ‘cultural amphibian’ is the person who acts effectively in various contexts, like a chameleon, and at the same time, as an interpreter, enabling fruitful communication between them, that is, carrying fragments of truth (or morality) from one context to another. The cultural amphibian, both chameleon and interpreter, facilitates the process of selection, ranking and translation required for cultural wealth to circulate (...) The amphibian,

insofar as he weaves bonds and facilitates processes for recognizing elements of man's unity in the very mosaic of the plurality of traditions and models, can be seen as a kind of moral integrator of mankind (Mockus 2002: 34).

Mockus also understands that the cultural amphibian is "an ideal figure that is never fully realized" (Ibid.). Thus, we could say that the cultural amphibian is an idea of dividuality that helps us understand better how an entropologist who has serendipitous hopes could operate without ever settling down at some concrete tropological pole.

The cultural amphibian lives among multiple tropologies; she tries to understand them, carefully select them, and implement some of them in diverse contexts depending on the requirements of the concrete situation. The amphibian operates across different contexts by borrowing interesting ideas from one area and trying to implant them in others. The amphibian may also be an ideal type of educator, who seeks to select the best elements of knowledge and practices, re-interpret, re-arrange them, and then spread and transport them across diverse intellectual contexts (Mockus 2010). The amphibian engages in an active synthesis of different inter-tropological resources, in other words, her intellectual bricolage is not locally conditioned, but rather seeks to transcend its clearly delimited borders and thereby transform and enrich it.

Since amphibians are in the business of constant reinterpretations and recontextualizations, I would also like to add that they inevitably misconstrue the ideas they are dealing with. As I argued above, by no means does the concept "misconstruction" contain negative connotations. It is an inescapable part of what the entropologists do. Just like in translations from one language to another misconstructions, distortions, and the loss of the original meaning occurs, the same happens with the cultural activity of the amphibians. The amphibians are like translators in the sense that firstly, they always hope for the best possible and approximate transformation of the text into a foreign language; secondly, they, unlike the chameleons, always remain in between several different symbolic orders and preserve a close and genuine relationship with them (Ibid.).

Chameleons are like individuals who tend to blindly accept fashionable and comfortable truths and follow them without any intention to enrich and transform the different symbolic worlds they have inhabited; in other words, the chameleon seeks to change tropologies like colors which results into the reduction of intertropological being and narrows one's outlook. Chameleons are mimetic creatures who seek to adapt to specific systems and requirements without having any broader moral or intellectual commitment and purpose (Mockus 1994: 127). Sometimes they may even try to predict the changing tropological climate so that they can better adapt to the situation and survive. Therefore, switching off a belief system and switching to another more promising one, and then doing the same action repeatedly may be natural to them. This behavioral pattern is common to the financial activities discussed in the first chapter, but the term also helps explain the chameleonic behavior of the cunning and shrewd people in the transitional societies. They are chameleons because they do not have a genuine relationship with the views they hold. This mindset is usually described as pragmatic, but the term in those contexts is most certainly not used as it is used in this dissertation.

Cynical, chameleonic, and pragmatic (as it is used in everyday speech) behavior is the opposite to melioristic, entropological, amphibian, and serendipitous betteritarianism, which I defined above. While the chameleons are like empty vessels that can contain different sorts of liquid, that is to say, they pretend they are individuals for a limited period of time; the amphibians, conversely, accept and value their individual nature and they prefer the synthesis of diverse elements to uniformity. The chameleon is a tropological settler without melioristic mindset. As we will see in the chapter on the third level authors/agents, exactly the chameleons are most susceptible to the recipes of success, control, predictability, status, and power. The amphibians, although being much more versatile than the chameleons, understand that they cannot exceed the limits of their intelligence. Etymologically the term "amphibian" perfectly describes the principle of individuality because it refers to several modes of existence. However, even an *inter-*tropological existence has its limits, and a varying degree of determinacy. The amphibian understands that both her freedom and condemnation consist in the incessant oscillations between different tropological poles.

The dividual-amphibian principle has been aptly described by the historian John Gaddis. Before I provide an extensive quote by Niall Ferguson, I want to emphasize that I am not interested in the alleged ideological purification and rehabilitation or the political and propagandistic aspects of his book on Henry Kissinger. Kissinger is often referred to as a representative of realism and realpolitik. Ferguson in the Kissinger's biography argues that former statesman was an idealist. Without further ado, I would like to offer the quote as a great illustration of the dividual-amphibian-intertropological oscillations:

There is no single moment that one can point to and say: that was when the idealist became a realist. Rather, as John Gaddis suggested to me when he read the first draft of this volume, it may be better to regard idealism and realism “not as the biographical equivalent of positive and negative electrical charges—either one or the other—but rather as the opposite ends of a spectrum along which we act as circumstances require.

Some people gravitate to one pole or the other throughout their lives. Others zig zag erratically. Still others achieve Scott Fitzgerald's standard for a “first-rate intelligence”—they hold opposing ideas in mind simultaneously, and adjust in line with life's unpredictabilities. This last, I think, is the essence of strategy: your skill in adjusting depends on having long-term objectives for short-term improvisations. Or, as Lincoln says to Thaddeus Stevens in Tony Kushner's screenplay [for the film *Lincoln*], you consult your compass *and* you avoid swamps (Ferguson 2016: 873-874).

The mental operations of predicting, outsmarting, envisioning alternatives, and understanding the entropological nature of the consequences of one's actions are inherently connected to the oscillations between the poles of being a fox and a hedgehog. Hesitations and doubts are common to fox-like people; the hedgehog-like people feel the necessity to take the final decision and act. The permanent swinging between being dividual-fox (trying to see things from multiple angles) and being individual-hedgehog

(being able to act on incomplete knowledge) is a frustrating but unavoidable lot of the entropologists. Let us proceed now to the oscillations between these two tropological poles.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Dividual Oscillations between the Poles of Hedgehog and Fox, Character and Author; Different Levels of Authorship/Agency

It is not a long-term settlement in one of the tropological poles (hedgehog vs. fox, character vs. fox, and four different levels of authorship) which defines who we are, but rather the permanent undecidedness and oscillations, the tensions and conflicts between the different tropological poles that render us dividuals. For the moment, I want to emphasize two aspects, firstly, the dividuality that may be expressed via the swinging between the hedgehog-like and fox-like mindsets inevitably implies the oscillations between the tropologies of (i) free will vs. determinism, and (ii) the modes 1 and 2. The internal dialogical battle that takes place between monists (hedgehogs) and the pluralists (foxes) often focuses on issues like determinacy, predictability, controllability, understanding, and disentanglement of events. And even when a person chooses one particular theoretical model, it does not mean that she is not bothered and irritated by the existence of the opposite position anymore. Thus, the tension between our hedgehog-like and fox-like outlooks also relies on at least several other tropological interplays.

The discussion on being a character and an author is to a large extent based on the degree of determinacy. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that even when we use the terms “authorship/agency” the state of being a character is also implicitly implied. In the following parts and chapters of my dissertation, I will aim at demonstrating how all the concepts discussed in the first part conflate and make up a coherent whole, which in itself is going to be an illustration of a potentially fruitful tension between the hedgehog-like and fox-like inner dialogue.

## 2.1 The Dividual Tensions between the Tropological Poles of Hedgehog and Fox

Lithuanian philosopher Gintautas Mažeikis mentions the term dividuality in his work *Isikitinimai* (2013), however, he does not elaborate on the concept. It seems that Mažeikis's dividuality refers to a pluralistic and fox-like mindset while individuality, for him, stands for a monistic and hedgehog-like way of thinking. Dividuality is an unfinished ever-expanding personal project. Every now and then the person may appear as an individual in disguise but, in fact, never remains the same and is always changing (216). Thus, according to Mažeikis, dividuality implies self-creation, self-expansion through artistic means and independent choices (Ibid.). Although the dividual may construct herself as a random assemblage of tropologies, she must keep a safe distance from essentialist finite truths.

Mažeikis's ideas are more relevant to this chapter because he contrasts a monist-hedgehog-like-dogmatic subject with pluralist-fox-self-created dividual. However, he basically stops there without analyzing the distinction in more detail. Conversely, I want to emphasize the oscillatory aspect of dividuality, that is to say, that we never completely turn into a hedgehog or fox and that we are doomed to swing between the two tropological poles. In fact, Isaiah Berlin, after describing the distinction between the two poles, admits the artificiality and arbitrariness of the classification:

For there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system, less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel – a single, universal, organising principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance – and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related to no moral or aesthetic principle. These last lead lives, perform acts and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal; their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels,

seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision. The first kind of intellectual and artistic personality belongs to the hedgehogs, the second to the foxes (...) Of course, like all oversimple classifications of this type, the dichotomy becomes, if pressed, artificial, scholastic and ultimately absurd (...) like all distinctions which embody any degree of truth, it offers a point of view from which to look and compare, a starting-point for genuine investigation (Berlin 1998: 436, 437).

Although Berlin does not use the term “dividual oscillations,” I argue, that it is exactly how he describes Leo Tolstoy: “The hypothesis I wish to offer is that Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog” (438). Berlin writes that although Tolstoy “perceived reality in its multiplicity, as a collection of separate entities round and into which he saw with a clarity and penetration scarcely ever equalled, but he believed only in one vast, unitary whole” (466).

This is another great example of the limitations of rigid classificatory systems. It is, therefore, more preferable to describe these people as being torn by competing and conflicting truths, ideas, and dividual poles. Once they reach a shore, they start to think that this is a wrong place and that they have to travel elsewhere. Fox-like dividuals are torn apart by many different aspects of life and Berlin demonstrates that Tolstoy was not an exception. One may question the relationship between the right timing and the proper amount of information for action as it was the case with Kissinger; Tolstoy, in his turn, is preoccupied with the right balance between generalization and meticulousness (466). It seems that many fox-like dividuals suffer from the Funes’s complex – they have the predisposition for omniscience and, since the state of knowing everything is merely a tropological construction, they understand the necessity to generalize and abstract. Nevertheless, Tolstoy reproaches to the historians who are too selective and reduce the

complexity of situation without taking into consideration “‘inner’ events— that are the most real, the most immediate experience of human beings; they, and only they, are what life, in the last analysis, is made of; hence the routine political historians are talking shallow nonsense” (447). Here, we can clearly see the tension caused by the impossibility to balance the most detailed and thorough analysis with the necessity to generalize and select.

The degrees of predictability and controllability of events and actions are also reflected by Tolstoy, especially, when he describes battles and wars (478). A minute attempt to explain what is happening on the battlefield leads us to many other already discussed and important problems. First, how can one transcend his pseudo-environment, speaking in Lippmann’s terms, and increase his perception of reality? A soldier who participated in a battle may be almost as ignorant about what happened as someone who was not there. This thought experiment demonstrates the limits of our knowledge, perception, and imagination (476). It also brings about the realization that we cannot be topologically unconditioned.

First, when we try to explain a complex situation, we tend to reduce it with the aid of some theory, which obviously will not represent the real state of affairs. In fact, it results in the confusion of M1 and M2 when we assume that human matters can be axiomatically explained by “some manmade formula” (483). According to Berlin, a fox-like thinker understands the danger of this confusion and the impossibility to grasp inherently M1 affairs with an artificial formula “for each of the consequences affects the whole of the rest of the uncountable totality of events and things, which unlike chess is not defined in terms of a finite, arbitrarily chosen set of concepts and rules” (493). Paradoxically, this line of reasoning does not make our fox-like individual any happier because this is how he realizes the impossibility of being topologically unaffected. Berlin writes that Tolstoy and his correspondent Joseph de Maistre differently sought topological refuge: “Both sought for some escape from their own inescapable and unanswerable scepticism in some vast, impregnable truth which would protect them from the effects of their own natural inclinations and temperament: Maistre in the Church, Tolstoy in the uncorrupted human heart and simple brotherly love” (481).



Tolstoy's tropological thinking also shows when he places the emphasis on the role and importance of the ordinary people in the most important historical events: "[T]he most ordinary people not powerful and authoritative people are the most important factors" (449); and then he supposes "that simple people often know the truth better than learned men, because their observation of men and nature is less clouded by empty theories" (470). It is noteworthy that political scientist Philip Tetlock also found a similar tendency when comparing academic experts with ordinary readers of newspapers: "In this age of academic hyperspecialization, there is no reason for supposing that contributors to top journals—distinguished political scientists, area study specialists, economists, and so on—are any better than journalists or attentive readers of the *New York Times* in "reading" emerging situations" (Tetlock 233). The thing is that experts sometimes have too much specific knowledge about a particular issue and can only look at it through a specific theory which may eliminate many significant factors and lead to erroneous predictions. Influential people, in turn, are often blinded by their power and cannot see things soberly.

These examples help us understand again the huge contradictions common to the individual's thinking. On the one hand, the fox-like individual may perfectly understand the danger of confusing the modes 1 and 2; on the other hand, he also understands the impossibility of a tropology-free thinking and the nonexistence of rational, universally valid, and axiomatic explanations. He tries to fight and silence the inner voices of the advocates of monism but at the same time, the fox craves order and hedgehog-like answers. Neuroscientist Dean Burnett claims that the human brain has evolved in such a way that it has become its natural function to provide us with simple and efficient solutions: "The human brain takes the easy option where possible; it only has so many resources to dedicate to everything, so simple answers are often preferred to complex ones" (Burnett 2017). Thus, it would follow that although fox's voices are not uncommon to human beings, they may end up giving a way to hedgehog-like thinking.

On the other hand, we can also speak of the outsmarting competition taking place between the fox-minded individuals and hedgehog-minded individuals. In other words, there are people who have notably gravitated towards one of the poles. In this case, we

can speak of a collective dividuality where each person-atom is charged with different tropologies and cause random entropological development at the societal level.

Foxes can be active and smart creators of reality. Not only do they see the world in its bottomless complexity, but they may also create systems for the hedgehogs in order to manipulate and benefit from them as we have seen in the first chapter. In Murray's *The Mark and the Void*, the fictional character François Texier says that "in modern times the only one we can still believe is the man who tells us he's lying" (Murray 251). The damnation of Epimenides gained new forms when the structure of society has changed significantly and when people started to compete for the status of authorship. This battle takes place not only between authors and characters, foxes and hedgehogs – who is going to outsmart whom – but also among foxes themselves – how to become the author of a higher level? All participate in this rat race trying to guess answers to the paradoxes enabled by the language. As Unamuno put it in *Niebla*, language has been designed for lying, creating something that did not exist and then to get confused (Unamuno 314).

The reality is created and recreated, constructed and destroyed by a paradoxical, insufficient, contradictory, confusing, and chimeric language. I called this the Epimenides's damnation because being a Cretan he said that "all Cretans are liars," thereby passing down for generations an exclusively linguistically constructed paradox. Murray's focus is also on the deliberate human activity which relies on tropological manipulations imposed by the higher-level authors on the lower ones. As we have discussed in the first chapter, tropological abuses lead us to the problem of authorship/agency. However, these manipulators, although they act as foxes and could be classified as a particular sort of dividuals, are not entropologists. They do not act on melioristic and serendipitous principles; they are more chameleons than amphibians. In other words, they simply change their tropological beliefs cynically and when it suits them, without allowing those temporary tropological settlements to a greater or lesser degree mark their characters. They are the third level authors/agents who select tropologies by using the criterion of personal gain and profit instead of their potential serendipitous effects. This ferocious competition not only divides people externally into hedgehogs and foxes, but it also creates an internal intellectual tension within the person

– being just a character/hedgehog/individual, who passively absorbs the knowledge produced by others *versus* being an author/fox/dividual, who produces knowledge for others. Thus, this modern fragmentation also manifests itself both at personal and collective levels.

Meticulousness and overthinking may be related to the complexities of events and external environment. However, in spite of these outer complexities it is actually the inner force which makes one act in the most thorough way. In his fictional short story “On Exactitude in Science” (Borges 1998), Jorge Luis Borges writes how people in one empire decided to create a perfect map. Their efforts resulted in a map whose size coincided with the size of the territory it had to represent. Thus, too much perfection and meticulousness in this case undermined the very idea of the map and despite its thoroughness the map was absolutely useless. This short story tells more about inner forces competing within the dividual than about the infinite complexities of our environments. The nature itself did not invent the word omniscience. The idea of being omniscient is man-made and its ghost has possessed and haunted us ever since it was created, thereby rendering our decision making more tumultuous.

Henry Kissinger also noted the conflict between one’s hedgehog-like assessment of the situation and allegedly objective certainty:

[E]very statesman must choose at some point between whether he wishes certainty or whether he wishes to rely on his assessment of the situation .... [T]his does not mean that every time one acts on the basis of an assessment in an uncertain situation one is right. It simply means that if one wants demonstrable proof one in a sense becomes a prisoner of events. (Ferguson 2016: 560)

Kissinger has also suggested that “statesmen must be judged not only by their actions but also by their conception of alternatives” (302). However, such a statement engenders even more tension within the dividual and makes the pendulum swing with higher frequency. On the one hand, envisioning too many alternatives may impede decision making because it is not easy to bridle foxiness by hedgehog-like measures. On

the other hand, the realization that the “infinite number of alternatives” is yet another topology and that the number of possible alternatives is actually very finite, also hinders decision taking but this time because we feel the finger of destiny or external forces that limit the range of our possible options. Berlin also notices that the need to calculate alternatives soon reaches the limits of our cognitive abilities and free will:

We are what we are, and live in a given situation which has the characteristics – physical, psychological, social – that it has; what we think, feel, do is conditioned by it, including our capacity for conceiving possible alternatives, whether in the present or future or past. Our imagination and ability to calculate, our power of conceiving, let us say, what might have been, if the past had, in this or that particular, been otherwise, soon reaches its natural limits, limits created both by the weakness of our capacity for calculating alternatives – ‘might have beens’ – and (we may add by a logical extension of Tolstoy’s argument) even more by the fact that our thoughts, the terms in which they occur, the symbols themselves, are what they are, are themselves determined by the actual structure of our world (Berlin 1998: 492).

Using the terminology of this dissertation we can say that individuals feel not only their cognitive limits, not only the determining force of external factors but they also understand the impossibility of being topologically unconditioned. Topologically driven thinking is engendered by the interplay between the internal and external factors and it also reflects the intermingling of real and imaginary or metaphorical phenomena. I already mentioned the case when inflation (real-world phenomenon) was topologically linked with weakness (a term, most likely, borrowed from the discourse of evolution and randomly attached to inflation). Moreover, our thinking may be not only topological but also heavily based on analogy. For example, during the Cold War, the “domino effect” trope was very powerful and guided the American foreign policy course: “The experience of Cuba inclined many Americans to see every Latin American country as being on the verge of “collapse” into Communism” (Ferguson 2016: 517). Henry Kissinger also

noticed that history should teach us “by analogy, not identity” (869). Alas, tropologically guided thinking seldom is aware of the analogical nature of its conceptual foundations and takes fantasies as real.

In *El país de la canela* (*The Cinnamon country*, 2009), Colombian author William Ospina writes about a group of European people, who motivated by the desire to find the Cinnamon forest, embarked on an expedition in South America. As Gloria Riera put it, it was a paradoxical situation because the Europeans could have what they were not looking for, and they were looking for something, which did not exist (Riera 230). They discovered the opulence and abundance of the nature of the New World, incredible places, landscapes, mighty rivers, including the Amazon, but it was not enough, because they were led by a false and delirious desire to discover El Dorado and the Cinnamon forest. The expedition was doomed to failure because it was inspired by a mythical belief which had nothing to do with reality. On the other hand, Ospina claims that there are many things humanity would not have achieved if people had not chased phantoms and searched for unreal things (Ospina 307-308). By the same token, in *The Mark and the Void*, Paul Murray also mocks similar organizational principles of our contemporary world. He demonstrates the emptiness of the terminology, which rules our economic and political world, shows how abstract words can be monetized and rendered profitable, and he ridicules the way objective laws lose the battle against the deliberately created tropological maelstrom.

In “Bandersnatch,” although Stefan Butler’s intellectual endeavor is very fox-like, his life itself is pretty much wedged between several possible options. Precisely this realization of the limits of his free will and the finite number of alternatives weakens his authorial ambitions and significantly narrows the scope for action. The viewer also feels that no matter what you choose, the movie is going to end eventually and not on a positive note. The movie may encourage us to ask a fox-like question: Is there anything we could do in order to transcend the tropological limits of our thinking, increase the degree of our free will, and expand our tropological horizons?

French historian Serge Gruzinski notes that only internal transformations and evolutions are common to our Western civilization, for instance, Hegel against Kant, Marx against Hegel, Heidegger against Marx, etc. While these arguments give an impression of change, this change, however, happens only “among us” and within the same paradigm (Jeanne 202)<sup>10</sup>. It is interesting to note, that these words come out from the mouth of someone who specializes in the indigenous history of Latin America and cultural interactions between different civilizations. It is clearly an entropological intent to break free from the tropological field of one’s natural habitat, and to intertropologically enrich and expand it by placing oneself in different cultural and civilizational contexts. In this respect, the real person Gruzinski behaves like the fictional character Francois Texier who also tried to break free from Western paradigm by absorbing alternative areas of knowledge. These attempts go in line with the discussed ideas of Pirandello, Unamuno, Murray, Ospina, and “Bandersnatch” because they not only expose our tropologically driven thinking, but they also show how we switch back and forth between the dividual poles of hedgehog versus fox, and character versus author. This intermittent way of functioning reveals the impossibility of rigid classification and differentiation of people and rather refers to dividuality which is based on the constant tropological alterations.

Later I will explain more in detail how the system of four levels of authorship works. For the moment, it is important to stress that the level of authorship becomes higher as one’s foxiness increases. And it does not simply mean to “know many little things,” draw from an eclectic array of traditions, and accept ambiguity and contradiction

---

<sup>10</sup> The exact quote in French: «Dans notre civilisation, il y a un noyau dur, qui certes change, se transforme, mais seulement par rapport à des évolutions qui lui sont internes. Prenons le cas des philosophes: Hegel contre Kant, Marx contre Hegel, Heidegger contre Marx, etc. Ces controverses donnent l’impression du mouvement, mais en fait on reste dans la même sphère, on reste «entre nous» (Ibid.).

as inevitable features of life” as opposed to hedgehogs “who “know one big thing,” toil devotedly within one tradition, and reach for formulaic solutions to ill-defined problems” (Tetlock 2). Furthermore, being an author also is more than just breaking free from the tropological conditioning of one’s purview and becoming less impervious to the views advocated by a different ideological camp. Paradoxically, the author/agent also must have hedgehog’s qualities. As previously discussed, a fox-minded person is often too aware of the entropological effects of her actions. She envisions many possible alternatives and knows that she has to take a decision on incomplete knowledge. Acting in the situation of uncertainty increases her doubts. If an ideal prototype of fox existed, she would never be able to take a decision because of the incapability to surmount her doubts. Thus, she would never become an author. A prototypical hedgehog, on the contrary, would act on the pre-established plan and thus, would not be worth the author’s status. A hedgehog is someone who not only knows one big thing and blindly follows dogmatic prescriptions, but it is a character with confined free will and limited autonomy because she always allows external forces and other agents’ wills to affect her views.

My goal has been to demonstrate that the ideal prototypes do not exist. What exist are the constant oscillations between different poles. This human condition and predisposition to undecidedness and tropological swinging is also illustrated by the fact that Berlin, Tetlock, Dworkin, and many other thinkers, who use the distinction between hedgehogs and foxes, borrowed it from the Ancient Greek poet Archilochus. Let us recall that Ockham’s razor advocates the law of parsimony. His method seeks to defend the idea of simplicity by stating that “plurality should not be posited without necessity” or that “entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity” (“Occam’s Razor”). These insights reach the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and serve as a testimony of the dividual battles within human beings. Who else could have created such a hedgehog-like principle if not an overwhelmed fox?

## 2.2 The Dividual Tensions between the Tropological Poles of Character and Author/Agent

*“We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where*

*our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.”*

*(Roland Barthes)*

Ever since I started to think about the topic of my dissertation, I knew it was going to be somehow related to the distinction between characterhood and authorship. Naturally, it was inspired primarily by such authors as Miguel de Cervantes, Julio Cortázar, and Jorge Luis Borges. I had already read about the rudimentary distinction between individuality and dividuality (Mažeikis 2013) but I was not certain how I was going to locate what I call now the topological poles of hedgehog/fox and author/character within the concept “dividuality.” Then the wave of populism came, the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal happened, and lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I happened to read Peter Pomerantsev’s article in *The Atlantic* “The Hidden Author of Putinism. How Vladislav Surkov invented the new Russia,” in which Surkov is quoted: “I am the author, or one of the authors, of the new Russian system” (*The Atlantic* 2014). Documentary film-maker Adam Curtis also discussed the mechanics of Surkov’s supposed authorship in *HyperNormalisation* (YouTube 2016). Thus, the scope of the dissertation kept on expanding and started to include more mundane matters. I was intrigued by the possibility to look at these real-world events through the lenses of literary theory and philosophy, although I think that in my dissertation, these two disciplines fuse together and the boundaries between them are blurry.

As the process of writing progressed, I realized that the literary and philosophical distinctions, I wanted to invoke and apply, tended to oversimplify the matters and that what I was looking for was always much more complex and resisted the patterns of classification I sought to use. We can call it the paradox of Augusto Pérez or Stefan Butler – when after spending a long period thinking that you can control some things, at some point, you realize that everything is not as you thought and that the presumably stable categories and labels you have applied to yourself and the outer world are not accurate enough. Therefore, something that was supposed to be of individual and hedgehog-like nature suddenly becomes dividual. The great majority of real authors and fictional characters, I discuss in this dissertation, personify the destiny of the atom. It turned out that something that was supposed to be an indivisible entity can actually be



split into smaller constituent parts. In a similar fashion, I show how individuals get divided by the multiplicity of inner voices, individual poles, and tropological systems. Perhaps persons like Surkov call themselves authors because they have not been taught by different experiences? Could they potentially be trapped in individual doubts felt by Augusto and Stefan? What tropologies do they follow? Do they change, update, or expand their tropologies? Perhaps they can pretend to act as characters, but the ultimate goal is to remain the author? I will address these questions in the following sections and I will demonstrate that not only do we oscillate between the different poles of character and author, but we also swing between different levels of authorship. The concepts we have already discussed such as entropologist, meliorist, amphibian, chameleon, hedgehog, and fox will help us to nuance the differences between those levels.

Roughly speaking people are stuck between free will and determinism. On the one hand, they may be determined by some intersubjective entity (society); on the other hand, their fate may be designed by some more powerful, objective, exterior and unknown forces. Authorial ambitions may be strengthened by the appearance of an intermittent gleam of agency. Antanas Mockus often uses a story told by Pico della Mirandola that reinforces these ambitions. According to Mirandola, when god was creating human beings, he ran out of moulds, so he could not finish the process. Then, god gave them a chisel and a hammer and said: "Create yourself as you wish: You may choose to be a devil or an angel." Thus, in spite of being shaped by others, a person has a certain degree of autonomy over herself.

Authorship in this dissertation is not simply limited by textual production. It also implies acting, transforming, reshaping oneself, reality, and updating tropological systems. An author may be indeed interpreted as sort of a character, who is someone else's construction and whose existence depends on someone else's likes or dislikes, preferences and opinions. Michel Foucault gives an example: "If we wish to publish the complete works of Nietzsche, for example, where do we draw the line? Certainly, everything must be published, but can we agree on what 'everything' means?" (Foucault 302). It is not the author who decides to give herself this title, but someone else. To a

certain extent this author is an invented character who is supposed to perform certain function in society.

Nevertheless, Foucault agrees that an author may have a more significant role: “When we say ‘Aristotle,’ we are using a word that means one or a series of definite descriptions of the type: ‘the author of the *Analytics*,’ or ‘the founder of ontology,’ and so forth” (303). According to Foucault, author’s activity is not limited by writing and may have a much broader application: “(...) [I]t is obvious that even within the realm of discourse a person can be the author of much more than a book—of a theory, for instance, of a tradition or a discipline within which new books and authors can proliferate” (309). Thus, an author may be not only a chosen authority, but also an agent. Like in Mirandola’s story, the author acts, transforms, and moulds, thereby exercising her limited free will. On the other hand, an author should understand that his production will not last forever: “The initiation of a discursive practice, unlike the founding of a science, overshadows and is necessarily detached from its later developments and transformations” (311). In other words, any sort of production is destined to suffer from misconstructions (not deliberate misinterpretations), distortions, mutations, appropriations.

Foucault also agrees that the concept of authorship is subject to multiple future redefinitions: “[C]onsidering past historical transformations, it appears that the form, the complexity, and even the existence of this function are far from immutable” (314). And this is where I would like to complement this discussion by proposing to blur the boundaries between reality and fiction, characterhood and authorship, and set out to discuss how the oscillation between these dividual poles happens.

I will illustrate this by examining a classical example. Let us say that Cervantes is an author; then, Alonso Quijano is his character, who invents Don Quixote, who is the real agent, the one who does things and the one to whom things happen. However, Alonso Quijano to a certain degree also demonstrates his agent’s will by inventing the character of Don Quixote and thereby decorating his life. It is a great example of incessant dividual oscillations, tropological expansion, and mutual interdependence of

these threefold poles. This interaction also illustrates how agency differs depending on the oscillation:



In fact, the term agency may accompany both characters and authors. However, although for theoretical reasons, every now and then, I will use the concept “character,” when analysing different levels of agency, I would prefer to use the term “author” synonymously (author/agent). I decided so because, as I will show later, (i) the lower level authors may show intermittent realizations of self-deception; (ii) they may also be essential elements for social change; (iii) they may deliberately change their level. Agency, thus, is the consequence of balancing characterhood with authorship and different levels of it. In my dissertation, an author/agent means not only a fulfilment of an ideologically prescribed role, but also the attempt to transgress the pre-established tropological and dividual settlements, thereby transforming herself and reality.

Roland Barthes is another literary theorist, who provides us with useful theoretical insights. He is not entirely correct when he claims that identity is lost in writing. On the contrary, writing and acting are the locations where different tropologies compete, overlap, clash, and experience all sorts of contact. Therefore, the identities are not eliminated or undermined, but they experience unpredictable transformations and expansions, and perhaps, this may bring about discomfort and insecurity at times. I will use the terms “acting” and “writing” as synonyms because acting is re-writing reality and writing is always an act. In the same manner, I will use interchangeably the terms agent and author. The author is always acting, and the agent may have an authorial agenda and ambitions behind his acts. Different ways of writing and acting, therefore, never dissolve us completely. They transform us and the environment around us and this change is something what contains the dividual oscillations and has to be theorized and explained.

Furthermore, I do not share Barthes's opinion that writing kills voices. Writing and acting contain voices and to a certain degree they may become original through re-actualizations and new syntheses of those voices. In other words, the reader or the character do not replace the author because they all co-exist within the dividual. We can see this in Pirandello's act of writing – writing enacts and materializes the inner voices, schisms, and constituent dividual elements, gives them shapes, colors, and functions. At different times, we tend to dwell on different poles because we happen to follow different tropologies. Thus, ideal individual types (to be strictly the author or the character) do not exist, only temporal identifications that may radically change or become less intense over time.

To use the terminology of this dissertation it seems that Barthes claims that authorship is an AIT construction, however, he overestimates the role of language in providing ontological status to the author:

Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it (...) The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture (...) the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original (145, 146).

Authorship is not a tropological construction in its entirety because it can also be detected through the tangible ripples of the consequences of one's act (remember Peirce and his pragmatic maxim). Precisely the entropological consequences of one's actions give more ontological status to authorship and it would not be the case if authorship was a completely tropological/linguistic construction. Thus, I could rephrase Barthes's phrase "the author is never more than the instance writing" to "the author is never more than the instance acting" and add that a big part of the definition of authorship lies in the

consequences of its actions. Hence, the author or the agent are real ontological concepts regardless of the inner dividual oscillations and the lack of topological equilibrium.

What Barthes grasps perfectly well is the elusive and eely nature of meaning which neither depends on the author's intentions, nor on the text itself. It is the reader who will ultimately establish the meaning. In other words, our intellectual production has no fixed or intrinsic meaning and it is rather created by its consumer. I already discussed earlier, that the attempts to outsmart someone by being intuitive-counterintuitive-beyond-counterintuitive are vain because nobody has control over her intellectual production. Once released, it travels through different minds and gains the most unexpected forms. A process that is called entropology. Barthes rightly notices this important aspect:

Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile (...) literature (it would be better from now on to say *writing*), by refusing to assign a 'secret' an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law (147).

The impossibility to fix a stable meaning to the text by no means is a new idea. *Phaedrus's* (1952) Socrates complains that the written text cannot defend itself because its author is not there to do this. Consequently, the meaning of the written text is always susceptible to distortions and misinterpretations. The independent nature of the meaning of one's intellectual production is also discussed by Murray via his fictional character Texier:

[Texier] wouldn't ever sell his paintings, he only gives them to friends, because he thinks that when you sell them, the meaning changes? They start to become the false truth that he is trying to escape? But he can't control it: eventually the friends sell them, or they die and their children sell them – anyway, they finish up with

the price tag. And in the end he gives up painting too, because he thinks that art is only making things worse (Murray 252).

What we can imply from the Taoist farmer, Socrates, Barthes, and Texier is that the authors of a higher order envision the future distortions and misinterpretations of their (art)works that will never remain as their author intended them to be. The same could be applied to other current spheres of our world. For example, the warnings expressed by the leading scientists and business people regarding the possibly destructive nature of the AI. The stories about how the AI will get independent from the human beings and will bring about exclusively negative consequences are abundant. In other words, not only do we not have control over our inventions but with time they will even be able to outsmart us.

However, these are rather tropological than entropological views (except in the case of the Taoist farmer). An entropological view would not gravitate neither to the positive, nor to the negative pole. Socrates, on the contrary, is clearly skeptical about the value of written texts, while Barthes, on the other hand, seems to push the pendulum towards the tropological pole of reader at the expense of other important dividual elements: “[A] text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (...) the reader (...) is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted” (Barthes 148). Thus, not only that the reader’s importance is overestimated, but it seems like Barthes discusses the writer, the author, and the reader as if these were separate, individual, and autonomous categories instead of meeting all together within the concept of dividuality.

Barthes’s thought that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (148) may be correct only if he seeks to demonstrate how the pendulum shifts from one tropological pole to another. However, if he argues that the reader should replace the author, I have to regard it as a tropological, individual (in the previously discussed sense), and hedgehog-like statement which does not fully reflect our fox-like and dividual nature. Here, I would like to follow Socrates’s advice and avoid definite statements because Barthes cannot explain his thoughts to us. Moreover, it does not mean he would still hold the same beliefs. Thus, my critique towards his ideas is based on

rather weak premises on what he might have had in mind. Be that as it may, I think that Borges and Cortázar better express our oscillations between the poles of authorship and characterhood.

In her book *Why do we Care about Literary Characters?* (2010), Blakey Vermeule argues that interacting with fictional people is “a central human cognitive preoccupation” (Vermeule 12). Moreover, according to the study carried out by Marjorie Taylor, Sarah Hodges, and Adele Kohanyi, from all the adult fiction writers “[a]lmost everyone (92%) (...) reported at least some experience of the illusion of independent agency” (Taylor et al. 376). By “independent agency” they mean that fictional characters are “not directly under the author’s control” and that they “are often experienced by their creators as having their own thoughts, feelings, and actions” (366).

For example, in *Rayuela*, Julio Cortázar through Morelli demonstrates how the character can exercise his autonomy by re-shaping his readers. Morelli is a fictional writer in *Rayuela* where he shares his ideas and theories about literature, philosophy, and history (Cortázar 2013: 209). Through this character Cortázar seeks to transform, shake, puzzle or alienate his readers (Cortázar 2010: 608). Morelli admits that he views his future readers as his characters because he thinks he is able to manipulate them (Ibid.). On the other hand, a fictional character may not only seek to affect his future readers, but also to impact his own author. Just like in the case of Augusto versus Unamuno, Cortázar admits that another *Rayuela*’s character, Horacio Oliveira, made him stop writing and focus more on his fictional life and experience in France (Cortázar 2013: 206). Thus, Cortázar’s fictional character had a real effect on his life by changing his routine. This clearly shows the dynamic dividual interaction between the character and the author; between, on the one hand, the authorial power to mold; and, on the other hand, the character’s independent agency which manifests through re-molding his creator in return. It is not even clear to which dividual pole we could attribute the status of agency.

Vermeule warns us, however, that these ravings about the alleged influence of literary characters may be entirely dependent on banal clichés: “Writers pass around the same sayings from hand to hand, unquestioningly. One cliché is that an author’s

characters lead independent lives: they get out of hand, step off the page, come alive, surprise the author by doing things he never intended” (Vermeule 247). She admits, though, that this reasoning more often can be expected from the readers who find it hard to let the characters go after they finish a book or a movie (Ibid.). I would suggest ignoring these emotional attachments to one’s favorite characters. The topic may be banal or not, may be cliché-ridden or not, but it perfectly exemplifies our dividual nature.

The schism between author and character may lead to another important issue we have already discussed, namely, the balance between free will and determinacy. In the short story “Borges y yo” (“Borges and I”), Borges writes about the difference between Borges-the-author and Borges-the-real-person. Borges-the-author will not perish as much as Borges-the-real-person after death because he will keep reappearing in the minds of his readers. However, this ghostly existence will have nothing to do with the real person who truly lived, experienced things, or enjoyed coffee. That is why Borges stresses that the pages he wrote will not save him. This idea goes in line with the already discussed critique towards written texts provided by Socrates. Borges knows that his existence will depend on the imagination and interpretation of his readers. Thus, his image will be distorted, misinterpreted, contaminated, misconstrued, and refracted by others. Given all this, it is not surprising that translation theory was another topic which interested Borges.

Translation also perfectly reveals the dividual interplay between the reader-translator-author. The interplay also contains the problem between free will and determinacy. To what extent should the reader-translator remain faithful to the original text? If she decides to introduce some new elements or omit some uncanny details found in the original text, does she qualify as an author? If translations are historically and socially determined, what does a particular translation testify about the *zeitgeist* of the era of the translator? If translations are determined by the eras in which different translators lived, are these translators only the products of their respective eras? Thus, the schisms between the character, the author, the reader, and the translator not only reveal once again (i) our dividual nature; (ii) our limited capacity to predict and control the future distortions of our intellectual production; (iii) but it also displays the traditional problem



between free will and determinism. Borges claims that in translation studying “infidelity (...) must matter to us” (Venuti 1998: 45). Infidelity in translation is important in itself because it also helps us grasp our dividual oscillations between the character-reader-translator-author. We contain all these elements within our dividuality and at different times we settle in different tropological camps. Infidelity to the original text is not important factually, for instance, what exact elements we distorted or misinterpreted. Through distortions and misunderstandings it rather reveals who we are and displays our historical-tropological conditioning.

We should understand all the said as a critique towards radical statements about the author’s-reader’s-translator’s-character’s death. There are no deaths. There are only tropological, dividual oscillations; dividual contractions or expansions. By the same token, there is no pure originality or pure plagiarism. In *Niebla*, one character claims that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza have become more real than their author Cervantes (Unamuno 286). However, I argue that we should not get into confusing deliberations about how real Alonso Quijano, Don Quixote, and Cervantes are, because usually the boundaries between reality and fiction are too blurry and there is no way and method to measure it. Perhaps, by applying Peirce’s pragmatic maxim we could agree that fictional characters may become real through their effects on the living people. But there is no way or sense in trying to measure someone’s exact realness or fictitiousness.

*Neruda* (2016) is a movie, directed by Pablo Larraín, which handsomely illustrates the oscillations between realness and fictitiousness by showing the battle between authorship and characterhood. The movie may be interpreted in multiple ways but what interests me most is, namely, the difficulty to distinguish between essentially intertwined concepts of reality and fiction. The main character is the famous Chilean leftist poet Pablo Neruda (Luis Enrique Gnecco Dessy) who, after certain changes in global and national political affairs in 1948, lost his protections and started to be persecuted following Chile’s president’s orders. Óscar Peluchonneau (Gael García Bernal), a young police officer, sets out to catch Neruda. And this is where the boundaries between reality and fiction, characterhood and authorship start to fade away.

At moments, it seems that Pablo Neruda, as his wife Delia (Mercedes Morán) claims in the movie, has purposively created Peluchonneau as a character in order to give some prominence to his fugitive status and by showing that he is a victim of the regime, increase his political capital. What is more, it seems that the fact that Neruda is being persecuted, gives a lot of pleasure to his narcissistic ego. Thus, telling the embellished stories and creating fictional persecutors makes Neruda look more important than he truly is. The battle between Neruda and Peluchonneau is the illustration of the struggle for authorship. We remember that one of the intentions of Unamuno, Pirandello, and “Bandersnatch” was to make the readers/viewers start to have doubts about their own existence and realness by arousing the existential uncertainties in the minds of their characters. *Neruda* also seeks to puzzle and confuse the viewers through making us doubt the existence of Peluchonneau. The police officer and Neruda are striving to change and transform the political reality of their country. Therefore, we can claim that both have authorial ambitions, and both are trying to outsmart one another. Eventually, it is Neruda who comes out as a winner because he managed to make Peluchonneau doubt his existence and believe in his fictitiousness and his status of character.

On the one hand, we see the traditional authorial pattern: Neruda-the-poet uses his authorial skills and invents a fictional character and imaginary situations that help create and strengthen his image as a righteous revolutionary leftist. Thus, Peluchonneau in this case is an entirely made up character. On the other hand, we can see their relationship as the display of the battle for authorship in which Neruda prevails because he manages to convince an allegedly real person of his fictitiousness, a theme which is also common to previously discussed works.

To give a name to this situation we could rephrase the Pirandello’s book’s title “in search of an author” to “in search of a character” which means that people with authorial ambitions seek to be remembered, to fortify their image, and to leave an important legacy by trying to define and manipulate other people after creating them as characters. “[A] character will never die! A man will die, a writer, the instrument of creation: but what he has created will never die!” (Pirandello 1979: 9). A similar real-life situation occurred at El Chapo’s trial when on January 28<sup>th</sup> (2019) Alejandro Edda, an actor who plays El

Chapo in the TV series *Narcos*, showed up in the court room. Joaquín Archivaldo Guzmán (El Chapo), who had unsuccessfully tried to persuade other actors to personify him in the past, was more than delighted by this appearance (“El Chapo’s final chapter. A Mexican drug lord goes on trial”). This example demonstrates that there is a thin line that separates reality and fiction and that the literary, philosophical, and cinematic works, I chose to analyze in this dissertation, help us better conceptualize and understand ourselves, our deeds, and how our realities are transformed very often by invoking fictitious elements.

The intermittent switching between the author and the character is not the only way individual oscillations manifest. As I will argue in the following chapters, roughly speaking there are 4 levels of authorship and it is entirely possible for people at different times to fall into a different category. Migrating across different levels of authorship and temporarily settling down in one of them reflects our tropological conditioning or intertropological expansion. One important aspect of this system is that it requires a lot of efforts to become an author of a higher level, while going down the imaginary ladder may have multiple explanations. For example, it may be a tactics of existential survival; I will argue that this is the case in such works as *Waiting for Godot* and *No One writes to the Colonel*. Pretending that one is an author of a lower level may also help to outsmart others and achieve personal goals. I will illustrate these statements with references to Steve Jobs and the *Reality Distortion Field*; George Soros and his *General Theory of Reflexivity*. I will argue that by deliberately changing their levels of authorship, sometimes these authors are capable of creating temporary forms of collective solipsism and benefit from it. Finally, there are melioristic and entropological reasons why someone would pretend to be an author of a lower level as it is the case with Antanas Mockus and his artistic methods used in order to improve civic life in the city of Bogota.

The third and the fourth levels of authorship are the most interesting and exciting levels to analyze. These are the most dynamic and mercurial individuals constantly switching their levels of agency, using and changing diverse tropologies as socks. It is important to stress that the manipulation of tropologies may not necessarily be inspired by cynicism but also by entropological and melioristic intentions. The level of authorship

is determined by the intensity of attachment to certain belief systems. As the level of authorship rises, the attachment to ideologies becomes looser and less genuine. The ultimate goal of mine is to combine Moeller's and D'Ambrosio's idea of genuine pretending with the fourth level of authorship, someone who is not a cynical relativist but rather has an entropological, amphibian, and melioristic mindset without taking things too seriously.

It is also important to note that the lower levels of authorship imply the higher level of characterhood. However, I am sure that our authorial/agentive hubris, as it was exemplified by Augusto and Unamuno, would resist and reject the idea of us being classified as characters and not authors. Thus, I decided to call them the agents/authors of a lesser degree. I would like to make clear that these categories and levels are just a playful way of sorting out people with different attachments to ideologies. By no means should we take these taxonomies too seriously and essentialistically. I admit that we are free to augment the degrees of agency if we wish and those levels are never stable and fixed. In fact, they are doomed to fluctuate because of our dividual nature. Therefore, such characters as Vladimir and Estragon (*Waiting for Godot*) or the colonel (*No One writes to the Colonel*) are interesting to analyze. They personify someone who is purposively deceiving oneself by invoking tropological means but is also capable of rising above the created illusions when necessary. For example, Don Quixote could be interpreted as a first level author who is on the brink of insanity and who is blinded by his tropological convictions. However, everything changes when we assume that Don Quixote is a character invented by Alonso Quijano and whose mission was to embellish his dull existence. One needs to be the author of the first level to act as a fool and to be absolutely certain of what one is doing; however, in order to invent this fool, one needs to be at least the author of the third level and maybe even fourth.

### 2.3 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 1

*“Put more crudely, on Facebook ‘the user is the product.’”*  
(Niall Ferguson)

*“People tend to be inspired by stories they believe to be real. They overattribute real existence to the stories they want to believe in.”*

*(Blakey Vermeule)*

In *Confusion of Confusions*, Joseph de la Vega mocked the people who tried to vainly imitate their superiors. For instance, some of Plato’s disciples pretended they were hunchbacked just like their teacher; or those of Aristotle started to stutter because this is how their teacher spoke (de la Vega 505). No wonder these examples are discussed in the book on financial machinations. In order to be able to outsmart others, one has to make them imitate certain patterns of behavior, make them believe wholeheartedly in certain tropologies, and make them say and repeat things those people think are their own personal opinions although these ideas have been clearly imposed on them. These imitators are what I call the authors/agents of the first level. They are closely related to the second level authors in the sense that they are the products of the authors of higher levels. The agents of the higher levels (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) may even regard the first level authors as the characters created by themselves. But we already agreed in the previous chapter to use the terms author/agents instead.

The first level authors are not necessarily fictional figures. I will provide examples from both the real and fictional worlds, but it is important to stress that we, people in flesh and blood, can also be authors of the first level. Thus, there are two reasons I would avoid calling this level of authorship as characters. The first reason, as I have just mentioned, is that some of these authors are real and not fictional figures: They truly exist, they think, they believe in certain ideas, but they can also revise their belief systems and expand them voluntarily. Therefore, potentially there is a significant degree of agency in them. Secondly, as I will shortly demonstrate, assuming that we are only first, second, or third level authors is wrong. Bearing in mind the psychological characteristics of people, it is obvious that we could roughly classify people into these categories based on the tendencies and regularities of their behavior. Claiming that there are strict categories of authorship/agency would violate the idea of dividual oscillations. It would also imply the existence of the ideal individuality which, as I have explained above, is even a bigger tropological illusion.

We all have specific psychological features and predispositions of personality that are more prominent than others. Sometimes we may dogmatically express and defend certain views (2<sup>nd</sup> level); at other times, we may look for an expert to suggest us an authoritative and well-grounded opinion we could follow and perhaps even use as our own (1<sup>st</sup> level); or, we may try to act in a cunning way and pretend we hold firm views (while we do not) just in order to outwit others and benefit from them (3<sup>rd</sup> level authorship. Molière's *Tartuffe* is a great example of it). The levels of our agency may alter because of the infinite number of reasons and factors. It can be conscious or unconscious, amphibian or chameleonic, melioristic or Machiavellian; it may be determined by the outer forces or intertropologically conditioned, when we genuinely engage into intellectual activity and expand our dividuality, thereby diminishing bigotry within ourselves and fostering qualitative personal transformations over time. Given the scope of the dissertation, I cannot address all the instances, so I will discuss the most illustrative and relevant cases.

Firstly, I would like to briefly discuss how subjectivities, or the first level authorship, are created in the contemporary digital era. The principles and examples I will discuss demonstrate how the authors of higher levels try to put words in people's mouths, impose certain political and ethical stances and outlooks and thereby affect our behavior and attitudes. Secondly, I would like to proceed from the real-life examples to the literary examples. These will help us create more theoretical and conceptual depth and grasp how it is possible to intermittently alter one's level of agency and understand the non-deterministic and existential nature of the classification I have proposed.

In *The Square and the Tower*, Niall Ferguson mentioned "the sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz, who argued in the 1950s that ideas flowed from the media to the wider population via opinion 'leaders'" (Ferguson 2018: 61). The role of opinion leaders or influencers is still an important one in the process of the creation of the first level agents. Usually, the stereotypical opinion leaders and influencers can be divided into the authors of the second level (they passionately believe in the ideas they advocate) and the authors of the third level (they have a chameleonic and cynical attachment to the ideas they defend. They either seek a personal advantage, or they understand the

tropological climate and adopt to it. A “committed” Eastern European communist could turn into the defender of free market economy over one night). We will discuss these two levels in the following chapters, but I have to mention them here because they are the ones who plant the tropological belief systems into the heads of the first level authors and the catchphrases, slogans, and buzzwords into their mouths.

Ferguson claims “that even emotional states can be transmitted through a network” (61). However, first of all, before targeting people with relevant messages, the algorithms have to know people in order to be able to transmit those ideas, states, and emotions more efficiently. And this is where the data resources of social networks such as Facebook come in handy. The algorithm can predict your personality better than your partner after having analyzed only 150 “likes” and know you better than you with only 250 “likes” (Lissardy). Then, the authors of the higher levels can start attacking you with the relevant tropes that will plant certain ideas in your brain and change the way you act, vote, and think.

Sociocultural linguist Mary Bucholtz argues that the use of tropes could help us better understand how language can produce, reproduce, shape, or transform social worlds (Bucholtz 249). Social worlds can be shaped through the transformation, creation, and mobilization of identities (2-3). Identities are created through a discourse in a broad sense – movies, paintings, literature, music, advertising, etc. Tropes have to be relevant and very carefully selected depending on the cultural, social, historical, and political circumstances. An apt and thorough selection of what is relevant, fearsome, emotional, appreciated, or detested will guarantee a successful application of a trope. Of course, it is difficult to define what a successful result is, it undoubtedly varies depending on the particular circumstances and ambitions— it may be a successful but not necessarily victorious participation in an election, an increased number of supporters, or a change in future policies regarding sensitive issues, etc. It is also important to understand that because of Big Data analytics, no one particular trope is used to appeal to the population as a whole; instead different groups within a population will be targeted with different tropes, increasing the efficacy of messaging. Such “tailored” use of tropes is not an entirely new phenomenon, but in the age of populism mixed with advances in media

technology it has achieved a new level of possibilities of creating first level agents and consequently its potential social and political harm has soared.

One of the goals of a successful trope imposed from top to bottom is to shape desired stances of the targeted people. According to Bucholtz, “stance is a basic building block in the construction of social identities, as speakers display their subjectivity toward their addressee and toward the ongoing talk” (Bucholtz 238). And this is what populists do through the imposition of carefully selected tropes on the targeted groups. Bucholtz discusses agency and individual performance or display of one’s moral, political, and social views. It is a quasi-Orwellian project in the sense that our thinking has to be linguistically affected and use thought patterns suggested by other agents.

Ferguson also notices the divisive nature of the tropological targeting of people: “[H]omophily in social networks seemed to result in polarization when politics became the topic of discussion, with individuals’ views becoming more extreme in the ‘echo chamber’ of shared bias” (508). And these are indeed the distinguishing features of our digital societies: The aggressive competition and discord between many different and divided homophilic groups, who live in the echo chamber in which one man’s lies reinforce other men’s ungrounded opinions and they end up constantly quarrelling and fighting over beliefs that were not theirs in the first place. It is obviously an attempt to create individuality and suppress active and conscious individual oscillations. It is an attempt from the outside to limit one’s imagination by using carefully selected tropologies and create a similar sort of collective solipsism as the one described by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Alexander Nix, former chief executive officer of Cambridge Analytica, who was responsible for Trump’s digital strategy, emphasizes that behavioral communication is more important than informing attitudes (“Cambridge Analytica - The Power of Big Data and Psychographics”). For example, if you have a private beach and you want people to stop using it, you can put up a sign saying that it is a private beach. In this case, you seek to inform attitudes. Behavioral communication, on the contrary, would seek to provoke a threat of being eaten by a shark and you could put up a sign that signals about the



presence of sharks in that area (Ibid.). Thus, it is necessary to better understand psychological types and target people with purposeful psychographic messaging, which appeals to the specific interests and desires of that particular group of people. Psychographics, for instance, may allow to influence one's behavior, or help form a temporal stance towards certain issues. According to Nix, highly neurotic people would receive a message based on fear and emotions; conservative and traditional people would receive more values-based messages, etc. (Ibid.).

This is the modern factory of characters (or to be politer, first level authors) in the real world. The artificial digital creation of temporal stances that are based on irrational fears and emotions; the entrenchment of like-mindedness when the first and second level authors can only enjoy the circles that espouse their specific set of tropologies and cannot agree with and tolerate any ideological digression from the "correct" interpretation are one of the main defining features of our age. By using the aforementioned techniques, it is sought to produce close-minded individuals and to narrow one's dividuality. However, we should bear in mind that first level authors are passive tropological settlers. Yes, they may exercise their powers by forming passive silent majorities and voting but they are not active proponents or warriors. Furthermore, they never devise ideologies and impose them on others but rather are subjected to them. But I still insist on calling them first level agents/authors because they can transform realities by simply being a part of someone else's socialization process.

It should be observed that larger groups of people may also act as collective first level authors. Jan-Werner Muller in his recent work *What is Populism?* (2016) notes that ideologies with their specific but contingent content are usually built on the main emotional pillars such as anger, frustration, or resentment. Populism, which is a new dominant feature of our politics, is thus, a factory of first level collective authors/agents of individual nature who inertially follow imposed fashionable explanations and truths. However, despite all attempts it is impossible to make groups of people believe in certain monistic theories, hold the same views for a long time, and mold them as a homogenous mass that acts in a unified and predictable way. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. argues in *The Cycles of American History* (1986), throughout American history we can detect certain

paradigmatic shifts, ideological alterations, changes in people's attitudes, cyclical oscillations between different belief systems. Of course, we can only speculate about such swinging pendulum with the benefit of hindsight and such theories themselves may sound overly deterministic and based on the conceptual predispositions of the theoretician, but we cannot deny that from the long-term historical perspective societies tend to change their behaviors and attitudes and that they zig and zag and take unpredictable topological paths. Paradoxically this means that dividuality may not only be a personal feature, but to a limited extent the concept may also be applied to the larger groups of people and explain their topological dynamics. Thus, large groups of people may also be dividual and change their views over time.

It seems that Schlesinger Jr. analyzes the cycles that are more common to the first level authors. That is to say, he analyzes the changes in the general-collective mood and attitudes. If we fuse together (i) the theories about populism and the digital creation of subjects, (ii) the inconsistent development of ideologies, (iii) the idea of topological and dividual oscillations and (iv) the tension between free will and determinism, which is as old as humanity, we will start to see how topological climate shapes people and is in return re-shaped by them. And all this takes place simultaneously at the personal and collective levels.

These levels never function in isolation because they are interdependent. Think of the swings of the political pendulum in young democracies where every now and then a new populist political party may be elected because they manage both to create and benefit from the shifting topological climate. Thus, the voter, as a character, naively buys into some attractive topological construct and then, as a first level author, exercises her will at the polls. This example illustrates shifting collective preferences between different topologically created promises and dividual oscillations between characterhood and authorship. The third level authors, who tend to be of a chameleonic nature, may also change their views often. I already mentioned the example of a "committed" Eastern European communist who can change his views very rapidly because it suits him well. The analysis of the fluctuations in collective historical dividuality is not the main topic of

my dissertation. But I think it is important to draw some parallels between the personal and collective levels regularly.

Now, I would like to turn to the more personal and existential facets of the first level authorship. I am going to discuss how sometimes people deliberately create tropological lies to deceive themselves and use them as a survival strategy that should provide them with emotional and existential stability and soften turbulent external circumstances. What is important in the following analysis is that my chosen first-level authors do not completely pertain to this category because they intermittently doubt and question their intentional self-deception. It is crucial to stress this because precisely these doubts and uncertainties reveal our distrust of certain tropologies and our oscillation between different levels of authorship. It also shows our propensity and capacity to re-create ourselves.

Constant checking of one's cell phone to see if new notifications have appeared, incessant visiting of one's Facebook wall to see if more people gave you "likes" and morbid checking if a new email has come in; the possibility to enable desktop notifications for almost every app you use and an enormously increased rates of anxiety, loneliness, and psychological discomfort can implicitly be linked with our newly acquired habits. The logic beyond all these insanely repetitive actions may be that we are waiting for someone or something and this waiting is not rational or grounded on solid premises. This waiting is not even a properly developed tropology, that is to say, this process does not have any concretely expressed and defined idea dressed in a seductive and attractive linguistic form. It is almost like an instinct that guides our lives and makes us wait impatiently and with no good reason. This person is the modern version of Gabriel García Márquez's colonel and Samuel Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon in the digital age. The former character every Friday was waiting for a letter to come, which never did; the latter characters have become the popular personifications of waiting for someone or something who or which do not even exist.

I think it is possible to discuss these two works as glocal phenomena both historically and geographically. *Waiting for Godot* and *No One Writes to the Colonel*, are

important because they reflect the universal nature of human beings, which is not spatio-temporally embedded. That is why I called it glocal, by which I mean that they can be recognized, appropriated, locally adapted, understood and appreciated by different troubled groups of people all around the globe. Similarly, as I will argue in the chapter on third level authorship, Molière's *Tartuffe* is also a glocal work in the sense that it aptly mocks people's vices that do not differ significantly across different ages and countries.

The two works are about the people who are doomed to design their own survival strategies and deliberately be deceived by them. This strategy helps survive in turbulent times. What is more, both works do not criticize the state, society and concrete political institutions directly. Instead, the texts serve as a kind of medium through which we can sense the social and political disorder. The themes of poverty, abandonment, despair, violence, immense and inhumane bureaucracy, indifference, and the lack of empathy in the society, loneliness, the social relationships that have been distorted by self-interest, may be intuited. Historical accuracy is not the main objective of neither text. It is rather the necessity to reveal individual struggles in a socio-historical situation that does not have to be very specific and concrete. The main focus here is not the official history but rather personal stories and how the characters respond to the external challenges by creatively forging linguistic chimeras. Friedrich Nietzsche in his essay "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" has expressed a similar idea. According to him, we do not know the things themselves but rather we have metaphors which do not resemble their original entities. Truths, therefore, "are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are" (Nietzsche). Despite that, human beings have a natural propensity to the formation of metaphors which is the fundamental human drive. This drive seeks for "a new realm and another channel for its activity, and it finds this in myth and in art generally (...) man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived" (Ibid.).

A traditional reader, thus, may be led astray by the perplexed encounter with the ideas of Godot, the letter, and the rooster. I argue that it is erroneous to think that these objects and the imaginary person respectively represent the ideas of salvation and savior. It does not really matter who Godot is, because the play is not about Godot (as the title deceptively suggests). It is rather about Vladimir and Estragon, just like Márquez's novel

is not about the rooster and the letter, but about the colonel (without whom these objects would not exist) and his daily existential struggles. Therefore, I sustain that the letter, the rooster, and Godot perfectly exemplify the topological creation of a survival strategy that is enabled by abstract immanent topologies (AITs) discussed in the beginning of this dissertation. What makes the letter and Godot abstract is the fact that most likely they will never come; what makes them immanent is that there is physical place (the post office) where one can go to check if the letter has arrived. Moreover, Godot does not seem like a transcendental religious figure in the text. It seems that he has humane qualities, ordinary features, and is about to show up. What is also common to these two topological constructs is that all the three characters, the colonel, Vladimir, and Estragon intermittently admit their topological nature.

As Thomas Kooreman puts it, the colonel tries “to transcend the despair of his condition” by “projecting a poetic vision upon the world” (Kooreman 271). Every now and then, the colonel discloses that he is not insane, and he can perfectly perceive the reality as it is, however, he would prefer not to. Very often after these sober declarations he tends to withdraw again to the temporal realm of his fantasies and blissful oblivion of these deliberately constructed and self-imposed topologies. This theme also recurs in *Waiting for Godot*. Precisely these moments create incompatibilities and discontinuities in the opinions they hold at different times and demonstrate that they are not entirely the agents of the first level because they perfectly understand the artificiality and fictitiousness of their beliefs. This displays the dividual nature of our characters and reveals their oscillations between different levels of authorship.

Firstly, Estragon shows understanding that nothing they have been talking about has a deeper or more substantial meaning: “Oh ... this and that I suppose, nothing in particular. (With assurance.) Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That’s been going on now for half a century” (Beckett 42). Then, a bit later, Vladimir agrees with Estragon that they constantly seek to be re-affirmed via linguistic creations:

Estragon: We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?

Vladimir: (impatiently). Yes yes, we're magicians. But let us persevere in what we have resolved, before we forget (44).

Thus, it seems that there are certain moments when Estragon and Vladimir suspend the validity of their tropological self-deceit, stop waiting for Godot and openly admit the artificiality of their constant search for new symbolic orders. They may be classified as tropological chameleonic re-settlers, but they are not exactly the third or fourth level authors. They are not the former because they do not seek to manipulate other people and impose their views on them; and they are not the latter because they have not really invented any melioristic and entropological belief system.

On the other hand, I believe it is possible to argue that the Beckett's work itself could be interpreted as entropological and melioristic in its intentions. According to theater director Sean Mathias, people affected by consumerist culture, capitalism's failures, and economic crisis could make a perfect audience for the Beckett's play. In the past, it was also adapted by other troubled societies from all over the world: "An all-black Godot in South Africa implied a wait for the end of apartheid. Productions in California's San Quentin prison and in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina captured a restless present and yearning for renewal" (Smith). In Sarajevo under siege (1993) another adaptation of Beckett's play dubbed "Waiting for Clinton" took place. According to Susan Sontag, who staged the new version, "Beckett's play, written over 40 years ago, seems written for, and about, Sarajevo (...) In Sarajevo, as anywhere else, there are more than a few people who feel strengthened and consoled by having their sense of reality affirmed and transfigured by art" (Ibid.). Thus, Beckett as an author could be called as a fourth level author, but for the sake of my argument, I would suggest dwelling on the psychological particularities of the fictional characters rather than their real authors. Especially because these invented people reflect the behavioral patterns of real people.

I have already mentioned that in the works I chose to analyze the letter and Godot represent something/someone which/who does not exist in real life. The letter the colonel

was waiting for is not supposed to come just like Godot is not supposed to show up either. These are two AIT constructs. The rooster, on the contrary, does exist in the colonel's life. However, what matters most is not the mere fact of its existence but rather the excessive tropological importance attached to the rooster by the colonel. The rooster serves as a fictional linguistic consolation: "At this moment they're probably talking roosters," said the colonel" (Márquez 11). In this utterance, the colonel refers to his dead son and a dead neighbor who now are talking about the rooster in the heaven. Thus, rooster, although it exists as a real animal, in the colonel's imagination performs a tropologically constructed consolatory function. It is interesting to note, that the colonel's wife, although she also misses their dead son, is less intense and does not attach the same tropological meaning to the animal and rather sees it as an obstacle to their survival.

Already in the very first paragraph, Márquez depicts poor conditions the colonel and his wife have to endure: He is preparing coffee "mixed with bits of rust" (9). When the colonel has to go to the funeral of his neighbor, he is looking for "the old black suit which since his marriage he used only on special occasions" (Ibid., 11). In order to survive, the colonel and his wife had to sell everything except the clock and the picture. Besides, his wife tried to get a loan on their wedding rings. The family finds itself in such a hopeless situation that his wife even dares to break the tropological spell of the rooster by objecting to her husband: "It's a sin to take the food out of our mouths to give it to a rooster" (33). In the novel, she represents a realistic and simplistic approach rather than the perspective of a deceitful poetic embellishment of life personified by her husband: "I'm tired," the woman said. "Men don't understand problems of the household. Several times I've had to put stones on to boil so the neighbors wouldn't know that we often go for many days without putting on the pot" (43).

Just like the characters from *Waiting for Godot*, the colonel intermittently demonstrates those rare moments of realization of the self-imposed tropological view:

- (i) "You can't eat hope," the woman said.  
"You can't eat it, but it sustains you," the colonel replied"  
(41).

(ii) “I understand,” he said sadly. “The worst of a bad situation is that it makes us tell lies” (42).

(iii)“(…) [T]he colonel said, realizing his aloneness for the first time. ‘All my comrades died waiting for the mail’” (27).

These utterances reveal that deep inside the colonel just like Vladimir and Estragon understand the function of the AITs they have invoked as their survival strategy.

Another very important common denominator of the two works is that they dismantle and replace the objective notion of time with their own subjective notion of time. Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen observes that in some places in Africa people structure their time around the important events rather than obey its objective measurements: “Events regulate the passage of time, not the other way around. If a traveler, or an ethnographer, to an African village wonders when a certain event will take place, the answer may be: “When everything is ready.” Not, in other words, “at a quarter to five” (Eriksen 39). Polish traveler and writer, Ryszard Kapuściński, notices exactly the same thing:

The European and the African have an entirely different concept of time. In the European worldview, time exists outside man, exists objectively, and has measurable and linear characteristics (…). The European feels himself to be time’s slave, dependent on it, subject to it. To exist and function, he must observe its ironclad, inviolate laws, its inflexible principles and rules. He must heed deadlines, dates, days, and hours. He moves within the rigors of time and cannot exist outside them (Kapuściński 16).

Thus, we could also claim that the colonel uses the letter not only as a device for tropological self-deceit, but also as a means to invent a fictitious event and structure his time around it, thereby alleviating the meaningless process of waiting:



- (i) “For nearly sixty years – since the end of the last civil war – the colonel had done nothing else but wait. October was one of the few things which arrived” (Márquez 9).
- (ii) “It was his only refuge ever since his co-partisans had been killed or exiled from town and he had been converted into a man if with no other occupation than waiting for the mail every Friday” (21-22).

By the same token, Estragon and Vladimir wait for Godot not because he will come, but rather because this idea has a therapeutic effect:

- (i) Estragon: One knows what to expect.  
 Vladimir: No further need to worry.  
 Estragon: Simply wait.  
 Vladimir: We’re used to it (Beckett 25).
- (ii) Vladimir: He didn’t say for sure he’d come.  
 Estragon: And if he doesn’t come?  
 Vladimir: We’ll come back tomorrow.  
 Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.  
 Vladimir: Possibly.  
 Estragon: And so on.  
 Vladimir: The point is—  
 Estragon: Until he comes (10).

On another occasion, when the character called Pozzo shows up, Vladimir pronounces the words: “Time flows again already” (50). At first, Vladimir and Estragon thought that maybe he was Godot, but even if it was not true, Pozzo’s appearance was a sufficiently important event which made their time flow again. Interestingly enough, then Pozzo inquires about the exact time, Vladimir cannot tell the exact hour. Estragon responds something silly: “That depends what time of year it is” (55). This is another example of the clash between the two different concepts of time. In this case, Pozzo

performs the role of a “normal” member of society. Pozzo needs to know the precise hour, but Vladimir and Estragon cannot give him a definite answer, because their existence is not based on the objective notion of time.

The merely tropological nature of the survival strategies and subjective eventful time invented by our three fictional characters and the blind belief in these AITs would reduce them to the first level authorship. However, I chose to analyze specifically these characters because just like Alonso Quijano right before he died, the colonel, Vladimir, and Estragon time to time show the signs of understanding the essential tropological conditioning of their lives. This perfectly serves my theoretical and conceptual purpose to demonstrate that there are no truly individualistic, hedgehog-like, monistic mindsets and genuine tropological settlers who would represent the prototype of the first level author/agent. Their occasional doubts and uncertainties represent their oscillations between different tropological worlds and orders and shifting between different levels of authorship. The myriad of interpretations unnecessarily mystify and render the discussed AITs (the letter, the rooster, and Godot) more transcendental than they seem to be. These AITs are self-defense mechanisms that would not exist without intentional consciousness and deliberate agency of the colonel, Vladimir, and Estragon.

## 2.4 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 2

*“He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.”*

*(Harold Wilson)*

While the prototype of the first level authorship is most likely a peaceful, passive tropological settler who does not seek to impose aggressively his views on others, but rather passively absorbs the dominant tropologies, the prototype of the second level authorship is an active, belligerent fighter who passionately believes in certain tropologies and seeks to fiercely spread them. Of course, it is necessary to emphasize that there is a big difference among them. One can be a committed activist trying to save and protect whales in Iceland and persuade people by taking measures that are often within the limits of the law. Or, there can be people who gravitate towards the most extreme pole of the spectrum like Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant who are ready to commit

the most brutal atrocities in order to defend their cause. However, for the most part, I find the agents of the second level as rather dull and ridiculous advocates of all sorts of irrelevant ideas: Language and grammar police, pseudo-intellectuals, social network celebrities, social media influencers, opinion leaders, all sorts of activists or religious people who stop and bother you in the street, etc. What interests me most is, like in the case of Estragon, Vladimir, and the colonel, the possibility to oscillate between different levels of authorship and the discomfoting ability to update one's tropological beliefs which is not an easy task. I will briefly discuss the examples of some intellectuals who are capable of both writing entropological and melioristic texts and descending from this level to more simplistic ones. The most important part of this chapter, though, is not to make a mockery of someone or someone's beliefs, but to analyze the dynamics of the rejection of the tropologies that one strongly believed in but eventually was able to update them and adjust oneself to new circumstances after having learnt about their detrimental outcomes. At the end of this chapter, I will discuss the movie *American History X* and try to compare it with Fernando Aramburu's *Patria*.

Although I am definitely not on the Nassim Nicholas Taleb's fan list, I think his rant on what I call second-level agents is very apt. In *The Black Swan*, he calls them 'bildungsphilister' and accuses them of epistemic arrogance and hubristic behavior. As I will show in the next chapter, some of these features are also common to the third level agents because in spite of their abilities to manipulate tropologies, sometimes they confuse M2 with M1. The second level authors are shallower and much more tropologically-driven. To put it in Taleb's terminology, a bildungsphilister is

a philistine with cosmetic, nongenuine culture. Nietzsche used this term to refer to the dogma-prone newspaper reader and opera lover with cosmetic exposure to culture and shallow depth. I extend it to the buzzword-using researcher in nonexperimental fields who lacks in imagination, curiosity, erudition, and culture and is closely centered on his ideas, on his "discipline." This prevents him from seeing the conflicts between his ideas and the texture of the world. (Taleb 2007: 307)

More than 10 years later, Taleb suggested another sarcastic synonym for *bildungsphilister* – the Intellectual Yet Idiot (IYI) who

has been wrong, historically, about Stalinism, Maoism, GMOs, Iraq, Libya, Syria, lobotomies, urban planning, low carbohydrate diets, gym machines, behaviorism, trans-fats, Freudianism, portfolio theory, linear regression, HFCS (High-Fructose Corn Syrup), Gaussianism, Salafism, dynamic stochastic equilibrium modeling, housing projects, marathon running, selfish genes, election-forecasting models, Bernie Madoff (pre-blowup), and p-values. But he is still convinced that his current position is right. (Taleb 2018: 125-126)

These satirical but partly correct remarks can be also illustrated by the famous quote from *Good Will Hunting* (1997). In one scene, the main characters of the movie, Chuckie (Ben Affleck) and Will (Matt Damon), are in a bar drinking beer and trying to have a chat with some girls. When Chuckie is about to start a conversation with two girls at the bar, another guy (the second level author) approaches them and tries to impress the girls by embarrassing Chuckie with what he considers deep intellectual stuff. Will, who is a self-taught genius, reacts and starts to defend his friend by saying:

Of course that's your contention. You're a first-year grad student. You just finished some Marxian historian, Pete Garrison prob'ly, and so naturally that's what you believe until next month when you get to James Lemon and get convinced that Virginia and Pennsylvania were strongly entrepreneurial and capitalist back in 1740. That'll last until sometime in your second year, then you'll be in here regurgitating Gordon Wood about the Pre-revolutionary utopia and the capital-forming effects of military mobilization (...) Do you have any thoughts of your own on the subject or were you just gonna plagiarize the whole book for me? ("Good Will Hunting Transcript")

Of course, these are smart and amusing quotes. Many of us may enjoy reading them and apply them to our colleagues from work or old friends of whom we are a bit tired after so many years of friendship. Some of us, definitely not many, will apply them to ourselves and maybe even make some proper adjustments in our own behavior. Be that as it may, the philosophical message may lie somewhere else. It seems that specifically in this respect, Barthes is right: We all are readers rather than authors. We are readers in a broad sense, of course, we listen, watch, observe, and read. But it is impossible to say something original, something, as Will put it, our “own on the subject” and not to regurgitate and plagiarize someone else’s ideas. This dissertation itself would be a void without the ideas borrowed from other authors, synthesized and combined in a supposedly new way. Nevertheless, as I argued above, I disagree with Barthes and I insist on calling people authors. The paradox is that at different times we can find ourselves at different levels of authorship. Sometimes we do behave like a pretentious IYI, sometimes we may have very melioristic plans and we seek to implement them with entropological mindset, that is to say, we are not sure about the precise outcomes of our actions; sometimes we are just being the product of our time and environment, taking for granted something that is contingent and not universal. What should shake us up is not the ostentatious discussion how to label our status – whether we are the readers or the authors – but rather the degree to which we should expect our actions to affect reality. And here we can go back to Robert Merton once again, according to whom, actions may be differentiated into two types: (a) Unorganized and (b) formally organized:

The first refers to actions of individuals considered distributively out of which may grow the second when like-minded individuals form an association in order to achieve a common purpose.

Unanticipated consequences may, of course, follow both types of action, though the second type would seem to afford a better opportunity for sociological analysis since the very process of formal organization ordinarily involves an explicit statement of purpose and procedure. (Merton 1936: 896)

Merton indicates several important points that can help us better understand how different levels of agents operate. Firstly, he claims that the analysis of the organized movements can best show and in a way help us feel or even measure the unexpected outcomes. For example, “Yellow Vests Movement” in France, which tried to turn into a well-organized political movement but at least at the time of writing nothing substantial has happened. Or, The Arab Spring, which as many first and second level agents believed would bring about exceptionally good outcomes but reality, unfortunately, turned out to be much more complex. The second important aspect Merton indicated is that organized movements should have a large number of likeminded *individuals*. Of course, the most hedgehog-like, monistic, and tropologically-driven individuals are the authors of the first and second levels. The movements consisting of these individuals should be orchestrated by the third or fourth level authors. Among other important external factors, the lack of like-mindedness and too many third level authors in a movement, who simply pursue their own narrow interests, may undermine and dissolve social initiatives and movements as was the case in the two aforementioned movements.

In *Blueprint for Revolution* (2015), Srđa Popović emphasizes that for a movement to be successful a wide unity of very diverse societal segments is necessary. For this reason, the movement’s orchestrators should invoke relevant combinations of different tropologies that would be appealing to the widest possible number of people, thereby creating a temporal identity for a “collective individual.” In other words, Popović describes a factory of the first and second level agents: Some people just believe in those tropologies, some people actively promulgate them, others invent and suggest them to the lower levels. This picture should not preoccupy us, and it is rather descriptive than judgmental. Swinging between different levels of authorship does not have any diminishing connotations and it cannot be described as necessarily good or bad. As a matter of fact, on multiple occasions, Popović argues that it is precisely a well mobilized majority of the first and second level agents (to use my terminology) that is important for the successful transformation of our world, while the egoistic battle among the third level authors most certainly will kill the movement.

Through multiple examples, Popović illustrates Merton's proposal to analyze organized social movements if we want to grasp the nature of unintended consequences. An entropologist will always know that it is possible to roughly measure those consequences only with the benefit of hindsight, while the first and second level agents prospectively expect exclusively positive outcomes. The problem with the second and third level authors is that because of epistemic hubris, which is occasionally common to their reasoning, they forget to switch off from an obsolete tropology and switch to something more appealing to reach a wider audience. Popović also names it as one of the reasons why some movements fade away.

Ferguson observes that the ideas spread through social networks do not create the desirable result and that this leads to the already mentioned creation of echo chambers locked up in which first and second level authors reinforce each other's shortsighted tropologies. "[N]etwork science – he argues – offers the best way of understanding why some ideas can spread very rapidly. Ideas – and indeed emotional states and conditions such as obesity – can be transmitted through a social network, not unlike a contagious virus" (Ferguson 2018: 61). "But – he adds – the notion that taking the whole world online would create a utopia of netizens, all equal in cyberspace, was always a fantasy – as much a delusion as Martin Luther's vision of a 'priesthood of all believers'" (534). Thus, we can claim that the reckless social engineering of our digital age has even facilitated the creation of the hedgehog-like individuals holding strong or even extremist views. Like-mindedness, thus, is related to mono-mindedness – the desire to stop oscillating and to create a fixed and firm individuality where the norms, standards, and values remain based on stable tropologies, unrevised, and unquestioned.

It may also happen that a person is not trying to reinforce her views but seeks to find an authoritative opinion of a pundit who could provide her with supposedly insightful and well-grounded views. If we did not use other people's opinions, no matter how selective we think we are, it would be impossible to have an opinion about hardly anything. We can recall Lippmann's thought that we all live in pseudo-environments and we can only have indirect and not empirically tested opinions about what is outside our limited realities. Therefore, if someone is completely honest when expressing her views

about, for example, Venezuela's political and economic crisis, she also must admit that she is sort of a character because she is using the arguments and phrases someone else had put in her mouth. Especially if she is not an expert in the field.

Online or real networks may affect not only the public opinion, but also change the mindsets of important and influential historical figures. Ferguson claims that Nelson Mandela abandoned his socialist views because of his trip to Davos (410). He quotes Mandela's reminiscence about how he traveled around the world listening to the opinions of leading economists on how to improve economy and eventually they managed to convince him about the advantages of free market (Ibid.). Therefore, differently from the chapter on the oscillation between characterhood and authorship, here I prefer to use the terms "author" and "agent" and to classify them into different levels. I do not think that in real life if someone regularly changes her opinions because she has found a better source of information, she automatically becomes a character because she uses someone else's words and opinions. In this case, we would all be characters, but I want to assign us a higher degree of agency. Real and online networks, then, mostly are the factories of the first and second levels of agency.

On the other hand, the formation of public opinion often may have undertones of the creation of a character especially if someone uncritically takes each word of her role model as truthful. For example, Slavoj Žižek gives his opinion on the Colombian presidential election in 2018 ("Žizek. Las elecciones en Colombia. 2018"); Mario Vargas Llosa criticizes the immigration policy of Donald Trump ("Mario Vargas Llosa contra Donald Trump"); Alex Jones fiercely defends the right to possess a gun ("Alex Jones Vs Piers Morgan On Gun Control Live On CNN"). This company of people may seem a bit random but what unites these examples is the fact that they are not exactly the experts or obviously competent people on what they give their opinions. And yet they do. And many do listen to them and later regurgitate those truths as if they were objective truths. However, it does not mean that Vargas Llosa or Žižek cannot become authors of the fourth level. If they assume the entropological and melioristic stance, they may produce works of enormous importance. In fact, as we will see in the chapter on the fourth level authorship, an entropologist may deliberately play the role of the second level agent in



order to help implement better ideas. An entropologist may even be a part of the crowd, that is to say, a first level agent, if she is fighting for the melioristic cause. Many of the discussed examples show the fluctuation of people who do not have extremist views. We may also raise the question whether a radical and bigoted human being can change his extremist views throughout his life. *American History X* and Fernando Aramburu's *Patria* demonstrate that such change is possible although very hard to achieve.

*American History X* is about two brothers Derek Vinyard (Edward Norton) and Danny Vinyard (Edward Furlong) who were to a different degree involved in the neo-Nazi movement. One of the most crucial events that made them adopt racist beliefs was their father's murder committed by black drug dealers. Moreover, one night some thieves attempted to break in Derek's property. Derek took his gun and chased them down the street. The ordeal ended up with Derek cruelly killing one of them who happened to be black. Derek was sentenced to three years for this crime. In prison, Derek joins the Aryan Brotherhood but eventually he gets into conflict with its members because, in his opinion, their ideology was not pure enough and they had "business" relationships with the gangs of other ethnicities and races. After Derek openly dissociated from the group, he was raped by its members in the shower. Soon after this accident Derek is visited by Bob Sweeney (Avery Brooks) who is an African-American school principle where Danny studies. Bob not only warns Derek that his brother is gravitating towards the extremist pole of neo-Nazism, but he also gives one of the most memorable and effective talks that could be interpreted as a crucial turning point in Derek's life because after it took place, he started to gradually change his ideological beliefs and turned into a different man, who later on unsuccessfully tried to persuade Danny to choose a correct path. The underlying message of Bob's talk is pragmatic. As an older and more experienced man, he basically suggests that one has to judge one's beliefs by analyzing the outcomes they brought about and if the outcomes are of destructive and negative nature, one must get rid of them:

Bob Sweeney: There was a moment, when I used to blame everything and everyone for all the pain and suffering and vile things that happened to me, that I saw happen to my people. Used to blame everybody. Blamed white people, blamed society,

blamed God. I didn't get no answers 'cause I was asking the wrong questions. You have to ask the right questions.

Derek Vinyard: Like what?

Bob Sweeney: Has anything you've done made your life better?

("American History X Transcript")

This pragmatically and melioristically saturated utterance made Derek's individuality oscillate. His stable second level authorship based on unquestionable extremist tropologies was undermined and he became more dividual as he kept letting in uncomfortable questions. In his book *Patria (Homeland, 2016)*, Spanish author Fernando Aramburu writes about similar tropological deradicalization.

The novel is about two Basque families ripped apart by radical nationalism<sup>11</sup>. Bittori is one of the main novel's characters whose husband, Txato, is assassinated by ETA (Basque Country and Liberty), a leftist Basque nationalist and separatist organization. After the murder, Bittori's life is ruined and the only thing she hopes for is that Joxe Mari, the second family's son, who is an active ETA member and is suspected of killing Txato, will ask her for forgiveness. The families are turned against each other by different attachments to the ideologies of socialism and nationalism. While Bittori's family holds moderate views, Miren, Joxe Mari's mother, sees her son as a hero whose atrocities can be justified by the right separatist cause. Thus, one of the most intriguing themes of the novel is whether Joxe Mari will be able to revise and reconsider his radical views, acknowledge his guilt, and ask for forgiveness.

In fact, just like in Derek's case, Joxe Marti starts to reconsider and moderate his ideological views during his time in prison. He even writes a letter to Bittori in which he defends his decision to join ETA: "I didn't join Eta to be bad" (Aramburu 525; my

---

<sup>11</sup> In following paragraphs, I will use some ideas from my review wrote on *Patria* (Šinkūnas).

translation). Joxe Marti's correspondence with Bittori may symbolize and illustrate his efforts to deradicalize his views that eventually comes to fruition. Aramburu not only shows how a hedgehog-like individual, a radical agent of the second level becomes more individual and less extreme, but also how tropologies that have been guiding people's lives for a long time become obsolete and expire. The novel ends up with the two previously ideologically divided women, Bittori and Miren, meeting and hugging each other without saying a word in a square. What is important in this scene is that only old people, who know about their rivalry and tragedy, whisper something among themselves while little kids keep playing without giving any importance to the dramatic encounter between the two women. This not only exemplifies the change of tropological climate as the population ages or grows up, but it also shows how over a relatively short period of time society may alter so much that the radical and excessive tropologies become unacceptable and one has to change one's views or to perish socially.

Second level agents who are hedgehog-like individuals are very closely attached to the tropologies they advocate and seek to spread them actively. They also have a narrow understanding of the consequences of their actions that could be described as wishful thinking. Second level authors are certain that their actions will bring about the outcomes they expect and desire. However, it does not mean that the authors of the two lower levels are doomed to stay exactly as they are all their lives and I hope I have illustrated successfully their potential dividuality with literary and cinematic examples.

Thus, the authors of different levels vary in the intensity of their attachment to certain tropologies and the conception of how wide the range of possible negative, positive, intended, and unintended externalities of their actions is. In the chapter that follows, I will argue that although the authors of the third level lack the genuine belief in the ideologies they choose to create, manipulate, and impose, they are not completely atropological agents either. They still strongly believe in the idea of authorship and the possibility to control the outcomes of their actions. Although they are very dividual, fox-like, and they may deliberately oscillate between different levels of authorship, in reality, they may have some hidden personal interests, and they are also vulnerable to the confusion between the modes 1 and 2. That is to say, while the authors of the lower levels

usually believe in the already existing external tropologies, the authors of the third level may create tropologies by themselves but do not necessarily know when to abandon them in a timely manner because they are too convinced by their eventual success.

## 2.5 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 3

*“The question was how to become a participant, as opposed to a mere spectator.”*  
(Niall Ferguson)

*“What are great men? They are ordinary human beings who are ignorant and vain enough to accept responsibility for the life of society, individuals who would rather take the blame for all the cruelties, injustices, disasters justified in their name than recognise their own insignificance and impotence in the cosmic flow which pursues its course irrespective of their wills and ideals.”*  
(Isaiah Berlin)

*“Jane Davis: Machiavelli died in exile. Boss Tweed made a deal with the governor, but in the end was never released. And Nixon was a prisoner of his past until the day he died. All men who had no idea how to walk away.”*  
(House of Cards)

Third level of authorship is the one in which the confusion between reality and fiction, intentional characterhood yet ultimate believe in authorship, and the cynical and opportunistic manipulation of tropologies are the most prominent. However, the third level author's attachment to tropologies is not that loose all the time. In fact, they are very much driven by the tropes of control, prediction, power, success, and authorship. I already mentioned in one of the previous chapters that the concept of authorship was accidentally suggested to me by an article on Vladislav Surkov, a Russian ideologist, who intentionally blends reality with fiction in order to pursue his ideological interests. We will see in this chapter that it is not only the methods invoked that help blur the boundaries between reality and fiction but the people themselves may be irrationally influenced by fictional characters and the depiction of their nonrealistic faculties. Moreover, some popular fictional characters may easily turn into “real” ones, while real people, who have clearly discernible third level author's features, may easily become popular books' and movies' characters.

Various outsmarting strategies and the efforts to change other people's perception of reality are other important elements of the third level authorship. These agents seek not only to reshape public opinion and common knowledge but also to outfox each other and to use it to their advantage. We already discussed the psychographic method used by Alexander Nix and his company Cambridge Analytica. Nix is clearly what I call a third level author. Christopher Wylie, a whistleblower and data analyst who worked for Alexander Nix at his company, describes Nix as someone who "cares more (...) about winning than what we actually did at the company. He's an upper-class Etonian who expects people to follow him wherever he goes" ("Cambridge Analytica whistleblower: 'We spent \$1m harvesting millions of Facebook profiles'"). What is important in this whole story is how the third level authors tried to outsmart each other. In the interview, Wylie recalls how Nix was trying to impress Steve Bannon by setting up a fake office in Cambridge: "[W]hen Steve would come we would bring a bunch of people from the London office, plop them into the Cambridge office, and give Steve the impression that we had a lot of our operations based out of the University. We changed how he perceived who we are and what we were doing" (Ibid.). Thus, it is not just an ordinary act of cheating but the battle between ambitious agents who seek to change each other's perception of reality.

I already discussed how Frans de Waal uses the term Machiavellian intelligence. Blakey Vermeule along with this term, also employs the term "mind-reading." According to her, the Machiavellian intelligence has evolutionary origins:

We humans have evolved mental mechanisms to cope with group living and to help us negotiate the byways of status. These mental mechanisms are especially attuned to calculation, cooperation, and conflict. Indeed, researchers now think that human intelligence evolved to handle the social complexity of living in groups—to outwit fellow primates, to think several moves ahead of them on a giant social chessboard, and to keep track of alliances. (Vermeule 30)

Mind-reading, on the other hand, is related to the “rise of a modern media culture that also puts greater pressure on mind-reading skills by asking people to keep track of an infinite number of other minds. So mind reading is an evolved cognitive process that is subject to change under different historical and economic conditions” (Vermeule 57).

As de la Vega shows in *Confusion of Confusions*, outwitting, mind-reading, and the competition between cunning minds may be a little bit older phenomenon but its precise dating is not important. I concur with Vermeule that these phenomena of our lives become truly important only when they become widely spread tropes popularized and exploited by cultural industries and when they start to guide our beliefs, actions, and consequently, reshape realities. Vermeule also notices that we often become obsessed with the trope of the mastermind who “is the most Machiavellian of characters” (87). Interestingly enough, the majority of fictional “characters, such as Sherlock Homes, are more like gods than humans in that their access to relevant social information is distinctly heightened” (56). Thus, the trope of an omnipotent fictional character haunts the imagination of the real people and contributes to the distortion of their perception of reality. The third level authors tend to disregard that only fictional characters can have heightened faculties while the real world punishes such an epistemic hubris and brings about an eventual collapse.

Jordan Belfort, the real person (not the movie character), in his book compared his brain to computer: “I’m constantly weighing everything in my mind and trying to predict how my actions will influence events. Or maybe manipulate events are the more appropriate words. It’s like playing a game of chess with your own life. And I hate fucking chess!” (Belfort 167-168). I am not sure if it is appropriate to call the drug lords Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo and Pablo Escobar as third level authors, but their reasoning as it is depicted in TV series *Narcos* has some essential features of this level authorship. In one scene, Escobar (Wagner Moura) asks Gallardo (Diego Luna Alexander) why he wanted to be involved in drug business. Gallardo’s responded: “When I was 22, I was in love. My first wife... she died of leukemia. We have to control this fucking world. Or it will control you. And if you don’t protect yourself, it makes a mess and breaks you” (Narcos).

This insatiable appetite for control, prediction, and authorship, that is to say, the belief in the possibility to shape the world as one wishes is also criticized by Tolstoy. According to Berlin, Tolstoy sought to show the destructive nature of the mindset of the individuals who “can by the use of their own resources, understand and control the course of events. Those who believe this turn out to be dreadfully mistaken” (Berlin 1998: 450). Moreover, the third level authors are capable of making others believe in their alleged superiority, for instance, “Napoleon, who acts upon, and has hypnotised others into believing, the assumption that he understands and controls events by his superior intellect” (Ibid.). These quotes express the criticism towards the shortsighted and tropological belief in one’s fictional powers. How otherwise we could explain the final defeat of Napoleon, the death of Escobar, or the imprisonment of Gallardo. This leads us to another mistake commonly committed by the third level authors – bad timing and the inability to declare victory on the right moment – the qualities that Srđa Popović reckons to be of crucial importance for success.

According to Ferguson, John Law, an economist and financial alchemist of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, “invented the stock market bubble” (Ferguson 2008: 127). Law was someone whom I called a master of AITs at the beginning of this dissertation. This type of agents has an extraordinary capacity to combine and synthesize the available conceptual resources around them (bricolage). Having lived or spent time in Scotland, England, Holland, Italy, and France, Law learnt from the multiple financial and economic innovations, such as lottery loans, banknotes, the joint-stock companies, etc.; he observed innovations and could come up with his own new ways of blending those concepts and ideas and profit from those products-chimeras. Law thought he had discovered the philosopher’s stone, namely, how “to make gold out of paper” (139). The problem, however, was that his abstract immanent tropological production was too reliant on confidence, human moods, emotions, and the predictability of human behavior. These factors, obviously, cannot be the source of stability and human euphoria and economic growth can be suddenly replaced by depression and stagnation.

Law’s actions, thus, inevitably led to the burst of the financial bubble. As Ferguson notices, “Law had no clear idea where to stop” (144). His downfall took place

because his premises were wrong, and he had no control over events and changing moods. Law could not cope with inflation, some more insightful people decided to switch from banknotes to gold and silver instead (150). The reality as Law imagined it and his expectations did not coincide with the complexities of the real world. Perhaps he could have avoided this bust if he had been able to control his excessive pride and halt the erroneous epistemic transition from what was clearly mode 1 to mode 2. Moreover, it is also important to have a feeling when certain tropologies are about to expire and update or abandon them in a timely manner.

As we have seen in the case of the failure of the Black-Scholes mathematical model, M2 may get confused with M1 because of the insufficient empirical data on the complexities of worldly phenomena. In the case of Law's financial machinations, he might have taken for granted that people's behavior will be consistent, stable, and predictable and hence his essentially M1 premises mistakenly were given the status of M2 axioms. As Ferguson puts it, "[s]o long as human expectations of the future veer from the over-optimistic to the over-pessimistic – from greed to fear – stock prices will tend to trace an erratic path" (175). In other words, the success of the Law's AITs and similar conceptual productions entirely depends on the irrational expectations, behavior, and incessant tropological oscillations of other people and can never get close to the axiomatic and lawful realm of M2. The third level authors tend to ignore it and, consequently, they get punished for this mistake.

Kissinger thinks that "[a]nyone wishing to affect events must be opportunist to some extent. The real distinction is between those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mold reality in the light of their purposes" (Ferguson 2016: 697). The third level agents tend to cause creative destruction at both collective and personal levels exactly because they seek to mold reality at their whim, vision, and often solipsistic imagination. Some of the Law's financial innovations are used even in the contemporary world, however, he personally experienced a big failure because he did not know how and when seize the momentum. We can recall Murray's literary fictional character Grisha whose mathematical models sought to bridle the adverse effects of the non-banking world and the entire fake system collapsed.



Despite being chameleonic manipulators of tropologies, the third level agents are not entirely tropologies-free. Often their thinking is determined by certain tropes whose analysis may reveal the inner motives of their actions. In *Wall Street* (1987), Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) gives the infamous speech on the positive aspects of greed. The evolutionary undertones, the contempt for the unfittest, and the preference of competition over cooperation are the most prominent elements in the speech:

The point is, ladies and gentlemen, that greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms, greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge, has marked the upward surge in mankind and greed, you mark my words, will not only save Teldar paper, but that other malfunctioning corporation called the USA. Thank you very much. (“Wall Street Transcript”)

Thus, third level authors who may be very flexible and cynical in creating, synthesizing, imposing, and manipulating tropological products, are not entirely free from some of them. In fact, the tropes that guide their thinking are somewhat related to aggression, competition, greed, evolution, social Darwinism, winning, etc. In an old interview showed in the British documentary *Trump: An American Dream* (2017), Donald Trump discloses similar tropological premises guiding his activity: “The world is made up of people with either killer instincts, or without killer instincts. And the people that seem to emerge are the people that are competitive and driven and with a certain instinct to win.” Jordan Belfort, the fictional movie character, also openly abhors poverty and losing: “Let me tell you something. There’s no nobility in poverty. I’ve been a rich man and I’ve been a poor man. And I choose rich every fucking time” (*The Wolf of Wall Street*). Belfort-the-real-person recalls a conversation in which he was told that “Wall Street’s no place for kids. It’s a place for killers. A place for mercenaries” (Belfort 2). It is yet another example of the thinking which is primarily driven by the tropes of greed, money, personal interest, competition, and the fetishization of wealth.

Needless to say, these utterances do not reflect how human nature “truly” is, although they temporarily establish certain tropological order until its effects fade away and its assumptions are contradicted and undermined. An excessive emphasis on competition may be connected to the fashionable tropes common to a certain era (although not necessarily). For instance, Richard Dawkins published *The Selfish Gene* in 1976. Margaret Thatcher served as a prime minister of the UK from 1979 to 1990. According to Frans de Waal, attitudes in the society then considerably shifted towards individualism and Thatcher’s views “may have been inspired by the evolutionary views of her day, or perhaps it was the other way around” (Waal 2005: 30). Although Dawkins may defend himself by saying that his views were misunderstood or distorted, I argue that his book’s tropological impact cannot be necessarily measured by what is in it, but rather by what people imagined and supposed it was about. Later, the trope of cooperation has gained more prominence. In *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life* (1994), Robert Wright argues that cooperation, although too often only among the members of the same group, is common to humans and other social animals. The problem is that we use it or not when it better suits our goals. Moreover, in *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* (2000), Wright sustains that in modern era, non-zero sumness has been becoming wider spread because the interdependence among countries has increased. Although people are still selective with whom to engage into a non-zero sum relationship, its ever growing presence is proven by the expanding cities, scientific progress, or the expansion of human rights. Waal, in turn, also underscores that the coexistence of the two opposite tropes (cooperation and competition) does not contradict our individual nature.

Waal, in principle, agrees with Wright that cooperation is common to human behavior and also with the fact that interdependence and connectedness have encouraged people to emphasize more the tropes such as caring and commitment (Waal 2005: 31). The fact that the pendulum swings between the different poles of this tropological spectrum can be explained by our essentially individual nature and has more to do with the prevailing ideological climate of the time: “We need to decide whether we are like Robinson Crusoes sitting on separate little islands, as Thatcher seemed to imagine, or members of complexly interwoven societies in which we care about each other and from

which we derive our reason for being” (31-32). In other words, it is rather social consensus than our nature that defines the temporary dominance of a certain tropology. Waal also argues that trying to reduce our complex nature to one specific trope, for example, hate or love, competition or cooperation is an intellectually futile activity:

Such questions are a waste of time for the bipolar characters that we are. It’s like asking if a surface is best measured by its length or by its width. Even worse are attempts to consider only one pole at the expense of the other. Nevertheless, this is what the West has been doing for centuries by depicting our competitive side as somehow more authentic than our social one. But if people are as selfish as is assumed, how do they form societies? (215).

It seems that by calling us the bipolar characters, Waals implicitly refers to our individual nature. He invokes the Janus head metaphor because “we are the product of opposing forces” (220). This logic is obviously misunderstood by the majority of the third level authors. They tend to be driven by a specific tropology which usually has bellicose connotations and brings about almost exclusively negative outcomes and destruction. Thus, although they are indeed cynical with respect to other tropes, the tropes of control, power, prediction, and the ultimate authorship are what defines who they are.

Another important aspect of this level of authorship is that these agents are capable of erasing the boundaries between reality and fiction. They know how to use the credulity of other people to their advantage. In fact, the gullibility of others facilitates their tropological machinations and the deliberate blending of reality and fiction make their task easier.

In 2008, the year of global financial crisis, Michael Douglas participated in the United Nations annual jamboree as a UN ambassador for peace. He was asked twice “whether he should bear some responsibility for the global financial meltdown” because of his role as Gordon Gekko in the past; Douglas’s answer was simple: “My name is not Gordon. It’s a character I played 20 years ago” (Coorey). Although this anecdote in no way affected, distorted, or negatively transformed reality directly, because Gekko is a

fictional personification of a third level agent, there are more deleterious non-fictional cases in which real agents act in non-melioristic, chameleonic, and harmful ways.

Vladislav Surkov, who hubristically claims to be the author or at least one of the authors of the new Russian system, deliberately blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, between organic social and political developments and the orchestrated ones, and thereby seeks to reshape reality at the whim of the Kremlin's propagandists. He seeks to direct "Russian Society like one great reality show" by blending together different spheres of social, cultural, and political life such as "ideology, media, political parties, religion, modernization, innovation, foreign relations" and modern art (Pomerantsev). To use the terminology of this dissertation, Surkov as an author of third level chameleonicly manipulates a wide range of tropologies and by doing this he seeks to achieve the goals set by the political elite. Surkov's strategy could be aptly described by the de la Vega's books title – confusion of confusions:

One moment Surkov would fund civic forums and human-rights NGOs, the next he would quietly support nationalist movements that accuse the NGOs of being tools of the West. With a flourish he sponsored lavish arts festivals for the most provocative modern artists in Moscow, then supported Orthodox fundamentalists, dressed all in black and carrying crosses, who in turn attacked the modern-art exhibitions (...) The Kremlin switches messages at will to its advantage, climbing inside everything: European right-wing nationalists are seduced with an anti-EU message; the Far Left is co-opted with tales of fighting U.S. hegemony; U.S. religious conservatives are convinced by the Kremlin's fight against homosexuality. (Pomerantsev)

Peter Pomerantsev, the author of the article, perfectly describes the profile of the third level author: He believes in the ultimate idea of authorship, he does not have a genuine attachment to the tropologies he is dealing with; he simply seeks to impose them on others in order to cause chaos, divisiveness and other unmelioristic consequences, and

he seeks to control what other people think, say, like or dislike, and how they act. In other words, a third level author often seeks to create characters (or authors of lower levels to use my terminology) who will follow his script. Surkov, for instance, seeks to control what and how other people think, and he does not want “any independent movements develop outside of [Kremlin’s] walls” (Ibid.). That shows his belief in the possibility of control and prediction. Be that as it may, we cannot dwell more on this case of authorship because we still do not have the benefit of the hindsight and we do not know how he will finish his life and what consequences of his actions he will face. Thus, it is important to note that we can only discuss with certainty the lots of the third level agents retrospectively. We know that Law and Belfort failed and experienced an eventual downfall because reality misbehaved and did not obey their tropological alchemy. One of the first lessons we can learn from them, thus, is that we cannot assert anything prospectively. The third level authors not only try to mix up reality and fiction, but they also seek to create characters out of people or to act as one without losing the idea of the ultimate authorship out of their sight.

Third level authors are also capable of blurring the boundaries between authorship and characterhood. Sometimes they may seek to implant certain cognitive schemes in other people. Belfort, similarly to Surkov, describes how the agents of lower levels of agency were instilled with useful truths and lines of thought in Wall Street:

[C]ontrary to previous assumptions, young men and women who possess the collective social graces of a herd of sex-crazed water buffalo and have an intelligence quotient in the range of Forrest Gump on three hits of acid, can be taught to sound like Wall Street wizards, as long as you write every last word down for them and then keep drilling it into their heads again and again—every day, twice a day—for a year straight (Belfort 54).

It sounds like a factory of agents in which some people are tropologically processed and subjected and serve as pawns in someone else’s bigger plans. On the other

hand, the most chameleonic third level authors may intentionally become characters themselves if it serves their ultimate purpose of the strong authorship.

In 1981, Andy Hertzfeld wrote about how Steve Jobs's charisma, rhetorical style, and personal will helped "to bend any fact to fit the purpose at hand" and convince people around him to act in a desirable way (Hertzfeld). To put it in Bud Tribble's words, reality in Jobs's presence becomes malleable: "He can convince anyone of practically anything. It wears off when he's not around" (Ibid.). According to Daniel Kottke, Jobs was not always like this and he took over certain personality traits from Robert Friedland who supposedly also taught him the reality distortion field (Isaacson 2011: 38). Kottke recalls that at the beginning Steve was a shy and self-effacing guy whereas Friedland was the complete opposite: "He was charismatic and a bit of a con man and could bend situations to his very strong will. He was mercurial, sure of himself, a little dictatorial. Steve admired that, and he became more like that after spending time with Robert" (Ibid.). These examples again illustrate the possibilities of individual expansion, the tropological and authorial oscillations, and the self-creation as a character if necessary.

Many traits of the third (or fourth level agents) are not inborn but rather gained through individual expansion. Once one belongs to a higher level of authorship, then one is able (i) to intentionally rise and descend to different levels of agency; (ii) to portray oneself as a character if it helps to make others believe in a given set of tropologies (the transformation of a timid guy into a charismatic leader); and (iii) to chameleonicly manipulate relevant and appealing tropologies in order to pursue one's goals. For example, a third-level author becomes second level author when he starts to defend an ideology, promote a product, or champion some sort of belief, although he may know it is a sham and has no genuine relationship to it. I hope this justifies my choice not to make an easily comprehensible distinction between the fictitious and real characters/authors (Gekko vs. Belfort) and establish rigid and clearly delineated boundaries between different levels of authorship, namely, because there is always the possibility to change one's position and not to remain stable, individual, and hedgehog-like.

Third level agents are indeed quite individual and fox-like. However, they often fail because they confuse the modes 1 and 2 and they are overly confident in their erroneously heightened faculties to predict and control events. Gekko, Law, or Grisha obviously lack entropological understanding of their actions. Epistemic hubris that is common to their behavior often revolves around aggressive tropologies, vague and unclear references to evolutionary vocabulary that sustain their belief in the possibility of the ultimate authorship. Moreover, they are essentially chameleonic agents without any authentic belief in the ideas they defend. For example, in 1719 “John Law was seen at Mass for the first time (...) having converted to Catholicism in order to be eligible for public office” (Ferguson 2008: 147). The instrumental mentality is also common to Surkov. Pomerantsev notices that the Moscow Surkov helps create may “feel like an oligarchy in the morning and a democracy in the afternoon, a monarchy for dinner and a totalitarian state by bedtime” (Pomerantsev).

In previous chapters, we briefly discussed the fictional character Tartuffe as a perfect personification of a third level agent. According to Oskaras Koršunovas, a Lithuanian theater director, who adapted Tartuffe to modern times, “Tartuffe is an evil who reinvents itself” (Bouniol, my translation). In other words, it is an agent who adjusts himself to any historical era and knows how to use and manipulate existing technological and conceptual resources around him in order to achieve his personal goals. The rising populism and the abuses of social networks is the new modern face of Tartuffe (Ibid.). Tartuffes are intertropological and chameleonic hypocrites who have adapted well to the necessities and ideological climate of their times. Let us recall that the real Tartuffe was manipulating abstract transcendental tropologies while the contemporary Tartuffes more often use the AITs. As Augusto Boal put it in the 80’s, such characters as Tartuffe do not necessarily have to be represented as the products of their own time, because they should rather reflect “traits similar to those of our people” (Boal 149). Many of the fictional and real figures we have discussed in this chapter share plenty of common features with the prototype of Tartuffe. In the next chapter, I will discuss the fourth level agency and will draw the essential differences between the levels three and four.

## 2.6 Different Levels of Authorship: Level 4

*“There is no point in getting angry against events: they are indifferent to our wrath.”*

*(Plutarch)*

*“I can calculate the motion of heavenly bodies, but not the madness of people.”*

*(Isaac Newton)*

The flaws in the third level authors’ reasoning reveal that they tend to be bad readers of reality and focus instead on false authorial ambitions to reshape reality at their will. Often, the insufficient reading skills lead to wrong convictions about the truthfulness of their beliefs (the confusion of the modes 1 and 2). In this chapter, I would like to start with the philosophical assumptions of George Soros’s financial activities. It is interesting and important to pay attention to his ideas because they rely, in a way, on the terminology of this dissertation: The distinction between M1 and M2, the blurred boundaries between outer reality and subjective imagination, the tension between the dividual poles of reader-author-character, and the battle between free will and determinism. Antanas Mockus is a prototype of the fourth level agent whose ideas and concepts I will also discuss in this chapter. Although Soros and Mockus are real people their beliefs and behavior may be examined with the help of literary and philosophical concepts. Moreover, (i) they both theorize their dividual oscillations; (ii) they both try to find the dividual equilibrium; (iii) they both have ambitions to improve societies (this statement may be questionable); (iv) they both understand the artificiality and contingency of their tropologically conditioned thinking and hence, they regard tropologies from the entropological point of view but maintain the hope for serendipity. Although they understand the importance of being a good reader and translator (to translate good ideas into good practices), they also understand the vanity and absurdity of the ill-fated pretension to be the ultimate author.

Soros’s reflexivity theory deals with the complex relationship between the objective reality and the subjective attempts to understand it via artificial theories and concepts. “Reflexivity is (...) a two-way feedback mechanism in which reality helps shape the participants’ thinking and the participants’ thinking helps shape reality”



(Ferguson 2018: 427). In order to be able to predict the future events (at least to a limited degree) one has to be a good reader and sometimes even go with the trend (to follow the prevailing tropologies) and, only on rare occasions, to opt out of it and augment one's degree of agency (to become an author): "Most of the time I am a trend follower (...) but all the time I am aware that I am a member of a herd and I am on the lookout for inflection points (...) Most of the time the trend prevails; only occasionally are the errors corrected. It is only on those occasions that one should go against the trend" (427-428). Thus, it is important not only to reflect on the external worldly events and phenomena, but also know how to oscillate properly between one's dividual poles of reader-character-author.

I decided to discuss Soros' ideas in the chapter on the fourth level agency because he analyzes and conceptualizes the possibilities and the limits of one's agency, the ability to predict and control future events: "It has also enabled me to explain and predict events better than most other" (Soros 2009). Furthermore, he seeks to harness his authorial ambitions and contrary to Law, Belfort, or Surkov, he does not use characterhood instrumentally but rather understands it as an inevitable and essential part of his dividuality. In other words, not only does he understand the ineluctable tropological conditioning of his free will but also knows that at certain times this collective determinism can be broken, thereby increasing his level of agency.

Soros admits that at some point of his life he had hubristic ideas: "I carried some rather potent messianic fantasies with me from childhood which I felt I had to control, otherwise they might get me into trouble" (Steinberger). Perhaps this could have been a lesson that taught him about the sense of infallibility most of the second and third level agents have. Soros is not one of them because he understands the essentially unpredictable, unstable, and fallible nature of human affairs, opinions, and actions. That is why "financial markets cannot be regarded as perfectly efficient, because prices are reflections of the ignorance and biases, often irrational, of millions of investors" (Ferguson 2008: 317). However, regardless of how wrong or biased are one's opinions and actions, they still affect reality. Soros can be considered as partly a fourth level author because his reflexivity theory is entropological, that is, he understands that one's

actions affect reality in the incalculable number of ways. Therefore, such things as a perfect equilibrium and hence, predictability do not exist: “Instead of equilibrium, we are faced with a dynamic disequilibrium or what may be described as far-from-equilibrium conditions (...) misinterpretations and misconceptions can play a very important role in human affairs” (Soros 2009). All this shows that Soros is careful and does not commit a typical mistake common to the third level agents, namely, to confuse M1 with M2 and expect that they have invented the magical formula or model that will bring about exclusively positive results. Soros understands that human affairs are too messy and subjective and cannot be simply reduced to a theory. The paradox is, and I think it reveals his oscillation between the commonsensical fourth level authorship and the alchemical and wishful third level authorship, that he still struggles to come up with an at least partial theory which would enable him to predict the future events: “The concept of reflexivity (...) applies exclusively to situations that have thinking participants. The participants’ thinking serves two functions. One is to understand the world in which we live; I call this the cognitive function. The other is to change the situation to our advantage. I call this the participating or manipulative function” (Ibid.).

Soros’s theory reveals not only the authorial oscillations but also the schism and tension between free will and determinism. On the one hand, he admits that he often acts as a member of a herd (thinking which is influenced by collective tropologies and which leans towards the pole of characterhood); on the other hand, he seeks to invent a theory according to which, reading skills (in the broadest possible sense), if properly used, can help reshape the subjective reality at his will (the inclination towards free agency, paradigm shifting, and the pole of authorship) and bend the events to his advantage. In either case, a tropologically undriven and unconditioned thinking is not possible although Soros understands its simplistic nature: “Confronted by a reality of extreme complexity we are obliged to resort to various methods of simplification—generalizations, dichotomies, metaphors, decision-rules, moral precepts, to mention just a few. These mental constructs take on an existence of their own, further complicating the situation” (Ibid.).

The question, then, is: How not to fall into the pitfall of cynicism or skepticism? It is obvious that Soros is not against the activities of theorizing and conceptualizing. He criticizes and rejects the sometimes simplistic and hedgehog-like theories that are inherent to the thinking of the second and third level authors: “[B]y far the most impressive attempt has been mounted by economic theory. It started out by assuming perfect knowledge and when that assumption turned out to be untenable it went through ever increasing contortions to maintain the fiction of rational behavior” (Ibid.). The theory of reflexivity he champions has clear limits, periods of utility, and no pretension to be ever based on objective and axiomatic foundations but is more fox-like. It seeks to take into consideration the enormous quantity of factors.

Such theory is inevitably built on the entropological foundations. His theory is pragmatism combined with some entropological components – our beliefs do transform reality, but we do not know what exactly are going to be the externalities of our actions. Soros claims that the principle of reflexivity rests on two simple propositions: “One is that in situations that have thinking participants, the participants’ view of the world is always partial and distorted. That is the principle of fallibility. The other is that these distorted views can influence the situation to which they relate because false views lead to inappropriate actions” (Ibid.). Soros himself admits that uncertainty is one of the most important elements of his theory: “There is bound to be some slippage between intentions and actions and further slippage between actions and outcomes. As a result, there is an element of uncertainty both in our understanding of reality and in the actual course of events” (Ibid.). Moreover, a reflexive statement does not express a state of affairs “and its truth value depends on the impact it makes” (Ibid.). Here, we arrive again at the Epimenides’s paradox discussed previously and which was so successfully appropriated by chameleonic, insidious and cunning agents: “Reflexive statements have some affinity with the paradox of the liar, which is a self-referential statement” (Ibid.). Soros even jokingly criticizes the alchemists who, in his opinion, “made a mistake in trying to change the nature of base metals by incantation. Instead, they should have focused their attention on the financial markets where they could have succeeded” (Ibid.).

Consider the fictional character Mark Hanna from *The Wolf of Wall Street* (the movie) who introduces Jordan Belfort to the main rule of Wall Street: “OK, first rule of Wall Street (...) Nobody knows if a stock is gonna go up, down, sideways or in fucking circles. Least of all, stockbrokers, right? (...) You know what a fugazi is? (...) ‘Fugayzi’ fugazi. It’s a whazy. It’s a woozie. It’s fairy dust. it doesn’t exist. It’s never landed. It is no matter. It’s not on the elemental chart. It’s not fucking real” (“The Wolf of Wall Street Transcript”). Hanna personifies the financial alchemist described by Soros, who even though does not necessarily confuse modes 1 and 2, cannot be considered as a fourth level author because his actions are not melioristic and amphibian that are the essential qualities of the fourth level agent.

Soros has prominent features of the fourth level authorship because he understands that people’s beliefs and the events these beliefs produce pertain exclusively to the subjective, random, and contingent sphere of M1: “[Market participants’] bias can also influence the course of events. This may create the impression that markets anticipate future developments accurately, but in fact it is not present expectations that correspond to future events but future events that are shaped by present expectations” (Ferguson 2008: 317). Another important feature of the fourth level authorship is the entropological realization that reflexivity theory is not some magical formula that can work always everywhere: “Reflexivity (...) is a special case; it does not rule the markets every week of the year” (320). These theoretical zigzags – the fox-like entropological intention to understand the fathomless complexity of human affairs on the one hand, and on the other hand, the hedgehog-like tropological intention to come up with a theoretical model that could help explain and perhaps, at times, even predict the unfolding of events – reflect and illustrate Soros’s authorial, tropological, and dividual oscillations. The incessant dividual oscillations and the impossibility to remain stable, fixed, and individual is another important attribute of a fourth level author.

One feature of the fourth level authorship which Soros lacks though is that he is not an amphibian agent. By using the reality distortion principle Steve Jobs could intentionally switch to a different role and use his charisma to affect people’s minds around him. Similarly, the reflexivity theory allows Soros to read, use, and even change

people's opinions and beliefs instrumentally. One of the problems of the theory is that it is not necessarily used for melioristic purposes, it does not presuppose a genuine (amphibian) relationship with the prevailing beliefs and provokes a chameleonic behavior whose goal is to gain personal benefit. Antanas Mockus who, I argue, is the prototype of the fourth level agency, suggested the term "cultural amphibian" which, if slightly modified, can give us an inkling of how a genuine relationship with tropologies should be:

The 'cultural amphibian' is the person who acts effectively in various contexts, like a chameleon, and at the same time, as an interpreter, enabling fruitful communication between them, that is, carrying fragments of truth (or morality) from one context to another. The cultural amphibian, both chameleon and interpreter, facilitates the process of selection, ranking and translation required for cultural wealth to circulate. (Mockus 2002, 34)

It is important to stress, that every amphibian may have some elements of a chameleonic behavior, however, a truly chameleonic behavior is not necessarily amphibian. A chameleon seeks to adapt to the environment and its tropological climate without any intention to transform it, in other words, a chameleon changes its colors in order to become a part of it without disrupting the visual background of the environment. An amphibian, on the contrary, is not only able to adapt to a new environment, but also to take over different traditional elements, transform them, and transplant them into a new cultural context; a chameleon, on the contrary, does not establish an active transformative relationship between the different symbolic worlds it has experienced (Mockus 2010). Moreover, a traditional translator usually translates from one language to another, thereby culturally enriching only one of the worlds she knows; amphibians, in their turn, remain committed to as many worlds as they belong to (Ibid.). Such an amphibian activity not only transforms the external environments, but also contributes to the incessant individual expansion because amphibians are doomed to revise and reconsider the premises they follow and constantly compare and update different tropological regimes.

Although amphibians are fully aware of their essential tropological conditioning, precisely because of this reason they do not act chameleonicly or cynically. Cynicism and excessive skepticism do not satisfy the amphibian because she understands that non-assertiveness is also an assertion and that therefore, a more tangible philosophical approach and solution are required. The amphibian, then, chooses the melioristic criterion – she selects tropologies based on the serendipitous expectation that this particular tropology will bring about the best results. Doris Sommer tells a story how “Mockus himself would joke about the illusion of uncluttered freedom in a country as chaotic as Colombia. “In the United States or Canada I’d probably be an anarchist. My ambition for Colombia is for my grandchildren to have the anarchist option, because right now and for the immediate future no one here would notice” (Sommer 20). To put it in different terms, the melioristic logic behind this statement is that, for instance, in an excessively conservative environment, one should intentionally act as a liberal; in a society which overrates work ethics, one should be more relaxed and, on the contrary, in the environment which is too relaxed, one should become more serious. We see that an amphibian has the chameleonic capacity to change herself, but she does not change to adapt to a new environment but to transform it by offering some new and refreshing tropological elements that do not exist there or are not strong enough.

Mockus not only advocates the idea of melioristic manipulation of tropologies but also seeks to confuse the boundaries between reality and fiction, authorship and characterhood. This helps interrupt well-formed and unquestioned people’s habits and by doing this to encourage and expand their dividuality. According to Sommer, Mockus borrowed the idea of the interruption of habit through defamiliarization from Viktor Shklovsky’s “Art as Technique” (1913), whose main goal is to wake people up from the individual-hedgehog-like slumber through artistic means (Sommer 19). Sommer calls Mockus an artist, teacher, creator, philosopher, translator, or simply – a cultural agent (2). The terminology of this dissertation helps better nuance why Mockus’s efforts to change culture are essentially different from Nix’s or Bannon’s projects. The latter projects are designed by the authors of the third level, and hence they are cynical, divisive, non-entropological, non-melioristic, and oriented towards the suspension of others’ dividuality rather than its qualitative fox-like expansion.

One of many artistic and melioristic projects Mockus has successfully realized is the traffic mimes: “Twenty made-up artists with no authority to detain people or to issue traffic tickets stopped buses, mocked jaywalkers, and beguiled a growing public. The effective antics encouraged Mockus and his inspired staff to keep playing. Within ten years, traffic deaths decreased from thirteen hundred per year to six hundred” (24). Here Mockus borrowed Boal’s ideas on the distinction between spectators and actors (we discussed it earlier), slightly transformed and made it work in reality. The idea is that citizens should not be passive spectators roaming in the public places but should assume more active and civic roles: “[T]he jaywalkers, the laughing crowd, and the corrected crossers at crosswalks were all spect-actors, in Boal’s deconstructed neologism that undoes the difference between the doers and the done to” (25). Sometimes Mockus himself becomes a character, for instance, he gets married in the circus and leaves it riding on the elephant, dresses up as “Super Cívico” (“Super Citizen”), and engages into myriad other playful activities. What is important here, is that by becoming a character, Mockus truly seeks to realize his amphibian, authorial, melioristic ambitions to transform his society into a better one. He also understands that artistic and ludic means may facilitate the acquisition of certain civic skills, responsibilities, and competences. Games may engage people, attract their attention, make them think of a set of skills that is needed to play the game and then transfer those skills back to “real” life when the game is over.

Vygotsky discusses a similar phenomenon and refers to *Studies of Childhood* (1895) by James Sully:

Sully early noted that, remarkably, young children could make the play situation and reality coincide. He described a case where two sisters, aged five and seven, said to each other, “Let’s play sisters.” They were playing at reality. In certain cases, I have found it easy to elicit such play in children. It is very easy, for example, to have a child play at being a child while the mother is playing the role of mother, that is, playing at what is actually true. The vital difference, as Sully describes it, is that the child in

playing tries to be what she thinks a sister should be. In life the child behaves without thinking that she is her sister's sister. In the game of sisters playing at "sisters," however; they are both concerned with displaying their sisterhood; the fact that two sisters decided to play sisters induces them both to acquire rules of behavior. Only actions that fit these rules are acceptable to the play situation: they dress alike, talk alike, in short, they enact whatever emphasizes their relationship as sisters vis-a-vis adults and strangers. The elder, holding the younger by the hand, may keep telling her about other people: "That is theirs, not ours." This means: "My sister and I act the same, we are treated the same, but others are treated differently." In this example the emphasis is on the sameness of everything that is connected with the child's concept of a sister; as a result of playing, the child comes to understand that sisters possess a different relationship to each other than to other people. What passes unnoticed by the child in real life becomes a rule of behavior in play. (Vygotsky 1978: 94-95)

Mockus understands this interplay between reality and fiction, characterhood and real-life agency and uses artistic means to create his own version of reality distortion field, if I may appropriate the expression. He seeks to engage his fellow citizens to play the role of the citizen and by doing so to think of the necessary rules, qualities, and behavioral patterns, to follow and imitate them, and once the game is over to transport the playfully practiced skills to real life. That is why Mockus is a perfect example of a melioristic and serendipitous mindset. Nevertheless, as a fourth level agent, he is also an entropologist.

Mockus understands that artistic projects and other melioristic means are essentially art-ificial and that they are subject (and always should be) to polysemic interpretations (Sommer 20). Creativity, thus, often "follows from purposeful misunderstanding" and for this reason "bilingual and bicultural games are a source of



endless fun and wisdom as they track the artful failures of language” (27). However, misunderstandings, misconstructions, and distortions that are so common to human affairs should not tempt us to assume postmodernist views about the artificial linguistic nature of everything or hyper-relativism. According to Mockus, we should maintain our melioristic mind active:

Like Sommer, I believe that any human being can be a cultural agent, and to be one you need only intervene in the course of human actions in such a way as to create meaning and leave a mark, to make people think and lead them to act. A cultural agent is someone who is not content to accept the current state of things; someone who takes sides, who sets an example and follows examples; someone who learns to surprise others and be surprised herself by her immediate results; but also someone who, whether one succeeds or fails, is always willing to play again.

(Tognato, 602-603)

Thus, the melioristic mindset and serendipity are not undermined by entropology but rather complemented by it in the sense that entropology informs us that failures if seen in a broader context may end up producing positive outcomes, and, vice versa, one should not become too excited about temporal successes.

Soros’s reflexivity theory shows the dividual oscillations between the different levels of agency, the collective tropological fluctuations, the impossibility to control things and the necessity to switch to or off from prevailing tropologies. He also discusses the importance of being a good reader of the M1 realm, but his theory is more chameleonic than amphibian, more private than public<sup>12</sup>. Mockus, in turn, is a

---

<sup>12</sup> Of course, we could also talk about his philanthropic activities from which I, as a Lithuanian, benefited a great deal. However, I only wanted to focus on Soros’s theoretical and conceptual ideas rather than on his social engineering activities. Although, I guess he knows as well as no one else that melioristic activities may have unintended

prototypical fourth level agent with an amphibian, entropological, polylogical, melioristic, fox-like, dividual consciousness. He knows how to combine tropologies that are different in kind. He does not confuse modes 1 and 2 because every belief for him is in the process of refinement and betterment. Mockus understands that he is tropologically conditioned but despite the contingent and random nature of this sort of determinism, he is not a cynic and is solution-oriented. Mockus also understands the underlying paradox of the fourth level authorship, namely, that it is essentially built on the tropologies of meliorism, serendipity, etc. and that basing one's activities on these principles requires one to descent to the at least second level agency. For instance, when one acts as a sister, mother, doctor, citizen, professor, etc., in a sense one temporarily becomes a character or a first-second level agent. However, these are not chameleonic escapist strategies discussed in the first part of the dissertation. The fourth level authors are committed and integral parts of the whole that mark an amphibian qualitative dividual metamorphosis: "I have gone from reflection to action and from action to reflection dozens of times. The harmony and joy arising from this is unbeatable," says Mockus (Tognato, 586). The fourth level agent is a dividual who contains an archipelago where small islands-tropological-dividual elements are connected with bridges in a more or less coherent ensemble. She also conceives herself as an island of a wider external societal archipelago that also has to be linked together via melioristic tropologies.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Tropological Settlements: Noise, Silence, and Laughter. Tropes We Live by

In the previous chapter, I discussed different levels of authorship and how they increase or decrease private and public good. The conclusion is that the third level authors exclusively seek to gain personal benefit, while the authors of the fourth level, although

---

consequences. I am referring to the fact that he had given a scholarship to Victor Orban and "donated money to Fidesz (the Alliance of Young Democrats), a student organization that Orban helped found and that evolved into his political party" (Steinberger).

they understand the entropological nature of their melioristic activity, hope for serendipitous consequences and increased public good. The first and second level agents blindly follow ideologies and are closely attached to them; the only difference between the two levels lies in different degree of activism. In this chapter, I will discuss the tropes that very often guide or misguide our thinking: Noise, silence, and laughter. My initial idea was to write about creative destruction, the term used by the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (2008), which aptly describes our modern age and impulsive desire for innovation and incessant revolutionization of technological and economic sectors. However, I reckon that “noise” is a broader concept that embraces creative destruction as well as many other similar personal, existential, social, technological, and economic phenomena. Moreover, noise is often accompanied by the modern desire for silence. The movies and the books on silence cannot avoid the theme of noise, because the latter is conceived as the cause of the former. I will also discuss the utility of these tropes. Whereas noise causes a lot of anxiety in people and make them search for more comforting silence, pure silence is just a tropological illusion that helps people deceive themselves without necessarily being a constructive form of retreat or other sorts of escapist strategies. The paradoxical nature of silence also lies in the fact that one cannot speak, write, or otherwise mark or express silence without provoking one or another form of noise. Furthermore, as is the case with noise, which may be often personified by some mercurial character, silence or laughter may also use the prototypes of a silent wise man, a marginal figure who withdrew from conventional life. The use of these prototypes, I argue, render these ideas firm tropologies that often misguide our thoughts and actions. Therefore, laughter historically has performed an important epistemic role. It disrupts the flow of excessive seriousness or too close an attachment with certain tropologies. Laughter, however, may not only perform a deconstructive function and only seek to dismantle the prevailing beliefs. It may also be of constructive nature. The fourth level author is the agent who actively and incessantly oscillates between different tropologies, the poles of authorship and characterhood based on specific necessities and requirements of the situation. In a similar manner, laughter, if rendered a melioristic tropology, makes us oscillate, makes us less hedgehog-like and individual. To put it differently, constructive laughter makes us more dividual, exposes the artificial nature of various

tropologies, mocks our immoderate identification with them and, thereby may become a melioristic, serendipitous, tropological force. Thus, what I criticize in this chapter is not the ideas of noise, silence, and laughter themselves but the frequent inability to oscillate between these tropologies and search for a balance which would allow them to melioristically complement each other.

### 3.1 Tropological Settlements: Noise

*“When a thing is current, it creates currency.”*

*(Marshall McLuhan)*

*“Whoever marries the spirit of this age will find himself a widower in the next.”*

*(William Ralph Inge)*

Different levels of agents may experience different kinds of noise. A common denominator between them is that their tropological resettlements are the marks on the void, to paraphrase Paul Murray. A chameleonic, short term, and noncommittal tropological resettlements may be common to the first, second, and third level agents. They are well described by Carl Gustav Jung and Joseph Brodsky (cited by Zygmunt Bauman). The former allegedly quotes his Native American friend who speaks of the civilizational emptiness of the white man:

I have a Red Indian friend who is the governor of a pueblo. When we were once speaking confidentially about the white man, he said to me: “We don’t understand the whites; they are always wanting something—always restless—always looking for something. What is it? We don’t know. We can’t understand them. They have such sharp noses, such thin, cruel lips, such lines in their faces. We think they are all crazy.” (Jung 1960, 213)

Brodsky, in his turn, related tropological resettlement to the existential insufficiencies of modernity rather than to racial or civilizational predispositions:

[Y]ou'll be bored with your work, your spouses, your lovers, the view from your window, the furniture or wallpaper in your room, your thoughts, yourselves. Accordingly, you'll try to devise ways of escape. Apart from the self-gratifying gadgets mentioned before, you may take up changing jobs, residence, company, country, climate, you may take up promiscuity, alcohol, travel, cooking lessons, drugs, psychoanalysis...

In fact, you may lump all these together, and for a while that may work. Until the day, of course, when you wake up in your bedroom amid a new family and a different wallpaper, in a different state and climate, with a heap of bills from your travel agent and your shrink, yet with the same stale feeling toward the light of day pouring through your window... (Bauman 2007, 105)

According to Bauman, this need for escapism and the void filled with tropological resettlements are provoked by consumerist modern culture (Ibid.). However, none of these resettlements brings about tranquility and each time engenders more and more noise.

The incessant switching of tropologies by the first and second level agents serves as a form of escapism or search for cool, a principle which is doomed to never remain the same and hence, make people chase it recklessly and vainly. In *No Logo*, Naomi Klein notices that the question "Am I cool?" is another AIT construct that haunts not only teenagers but also CEOs (Klein 69). This specific AIT construct produces confusion, the sense of insecurity, and provokes hectic behavior in people who pursue this idea. The pursuit is condemned to failure because the thing they search for does not exist; its meaning is constantly changing because it is defined by random and contingent whims of intersubjective consciousness. Klein insightfully claims that instead of indicating some external stable ideal, the chase of the cool principle rather reveals our inner doubts:

The quest for cool is by nature riddled with self-doubt ("Is this cool?" one can hear the legions of teen shoppers nervously

quizzing each other. “Do you think this is lame?”) Except now the harrowing doubts of adolescence are the billion-dollar questions of our age. The insecurities go round and round the boardroom table, turning ad writers, art directors and CEOs into turbo-powered teenagers, circling in front of their bedroom mirrors trying to look blasé. Do the kids think we’re cool? they want to know. Are we trying too hard to be cool, or are we really cool? Do we have attitude? The *right* attitude?” (Ibid.)

Other exhausting questions the first and second level agents keep bothering themselves with may be: Am I alternative enough? Is it underground enough? Am I anti-mainstream enough? Is this bohemian enough? Is this authentic enough? These agents find it difficult to keep up with all the changing trends and fashions and that is why their restless and noisy activity eventually may end up by resettling in some new tropology.

The noise experienced by the third level agents is well described by de le Vega and Murray. Not only do they seek to outsmart others and each other, but they also structure their beliefs and activities around belligerent or tiresome tropologies of competition, innovation, and progress. The Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter calls this capitalist phenomenon *creative destruction*: “Capitalism (...) is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary” (Schumpeter 2008: 82). The economic structure then is revolutionized “*from within* incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in” (83). The constant search for new practices and the obsession with progress provoke not only internal emotional agitations but it also causes incessant external social change “[e]ach class resembles a hotel or an omnibus, always full, but always of different people” (Schumpeter 1966: 126). In other words, you are either innovative and progressive or you will be soon replaced by others who have these qualities; their time, however, will not last long.

Creative destruction, as one of many forms of noise, may be caused by the mercurial third level authors but its effects ripple through the entire society. It produces the fear of replacement, the sense of transience, the feeling of an inevitable eventual failure and loss, the stress of the incapacity to keep up with the times and the consequent threat of being punished for that. Those who can observe the phenomenon *from the outside* contrary to its participants may remain calm. In fact, Schumpeter himself emphasizes the entropological nature of creative destruction: “[S]ince we are dealing with a process whose every element takes considerable time in revealing its true features and ultimate effects, there is no point in appraising the performance of that process *ex visu* of a given point of time; we must judge its performance over time, as it unfolds through decades or centuries” (Schumpeter 2008: 83). The participants of creative destruction, however, do not share this cold, analytic reasoning and they engage into racing for the sake of competition consequently destroying, constructing, or misconstruing equilibrium within and around themselves.

As I will argue in the next chapter on silence, these different forms of anxiety may encourage people to fantasize about pure silence, invent and borrow from the past fictional prototypes of silent characters or embellish the real-life stories of those who searched for silence. These attempts do not imply a dividual balance; they rather indicate the existence of the obvious lack of equilibrium, which is one of the principle features of modernity. The dividual and tropological stagnation forces people to create and later on retreat to supposedly pure and fictional tropological shelters. While the trope of noise aptly describes our era, the fictional tropes of silence, retreat, ineffable wisdom, laughter, etc. and the constant search for them reflect the symptoms and the human emotional condition. The constant uncertainty and doubts described by Brodsky, Klein, and Schumpeter make people set out on a quest for tropological escapism which, to the chagrin of its chasers, is entirely *chameleonic* and *individual*. That is why at the beginning of the dissertation, I mentioned that tropological re-settlers tend to confuse a temporary tropological shelter with the final destination, Ithaca. The different parts of the journey of the agents of the lower levels are essentially disconnected and therefore, their experiences and impressions do not form a coherent whole. The constant resettlements from different sorts of noise into different sorts of silence do not make the person

oscillate between different tropologies and establish an amphibian and hence, a more organic link between them. Tropological resettlements establish a firm, stable and therefore, artificial patterns of behavior that often may be backed up by references to role models. This engenders a noncommittal and hedgehog-like attitude that disturbs mental and emotional balance by halting the dividual-tropological oscillations and attaching oneself too seriously to a particular belief system.

It is also interesting to note that the hunt for certain attributes, images, and symbols in the contemporary capitalist culture is often based on AITs. Klein claims that “a huge dollar value had been assigned to something that had previously been abstract and unquantifiable – a brand name” (Klein 8). Later she adds that “brand mania has become a new breed of businessman, one who will proudly inform you that Brand X is not a product but a way of life, an attitude, a set of values, a look, an idea” (23). The obsession with AIT constructs – the way these tropologies are created and imposed on other people – not only reveal the void they mask with different types of noise, but also show the essentially competitive interaction between different levels of agents, the attempts to influence and guide some else’s free will, confuse the boundaries between reality and fiction, and gain personal benefit by successfully implanting new forms of thinking. Klein illustrates this process by giving another relevant example:

By fall 1998 it had already started to happen with the Korean car manufacturer Daewoo hiring two thousand college students on two hundred campuses to talk up the cars to their friends (...) The vision is both horrifying and hilarious: a world of glorified diary trespassers and professional eavesdroppers, part of a spy-vs.-spy corporate-fueled youth culture stalking itself, whose members will videotape one another’s haircuts and chat about their corporate keepers’ cool new products in their grassroots newsgroups (80).

The competition among different levels of authors happens, thus, through the creation and imposition of AIT principles. Later an AIT construct has to be successfully



monetized and to paraphrase Marshall McLuhan, this is how a current thing becomes currency. The cunning and insidious creation, manipulation, and imposition of relevant tropologies by the third level authors, the discontent of life that makes one travel and explore new unexperienced things, the hope to find something that only exists in fantasies, the routine noises of our lives: Noises from the streets, noises of the cell phones, the notification sounds of social networks, all sorts of noise that cause anxiety and end up with an attempt to escape are the topics often exploited in the contemporary historical, philosophical, and literary works. In general, noise in its multiple forms is very common to the agents of the three first levels because they tend to be overly dependent on certain belief systems and instead of oscillating between different tropologies they settle down in one of them. Even if they change them over time, this change is chameleonic, hedgehog-like, and non-melioristic. In many cases tropological resettlements can be considered as noise, and since we have analyzed plenty of these examples in the previous chapters, now I would like to proceed to the critique of the tropologies of silence.

### 3.2 Tropological Settlements: Silence

*“All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” (Blaise Pascal)*

*“Silence is not only golden, it is seldom misquoted.”  
(Bob Monkhouse)*

The trope of silence is one of those we can often find in philosophical, literary, and historical works. More and more fictional and non-fictional works that deal with the topic of silence reach us from different continents and traditions. We even have a book dedicated to the history of silence whose ideas I will briefly discuss in this chapter. What interests me most in this chapter is not exactly the trope of silence, but the tropology of silence and its impact on public imagination. In other words, the trope of silence is often linked together with the intentions to escape the age of noise, to recuperate an authentic existence, and are based on the image of a silent sage, etc. Therefore, it is not, for example, Herman Melville’s *Bartleby* who should interest us, but the subsequent

tropologies that use this character and their impact on public imagination which engenders new ways of acting.

There are two paradoxes. Firstly, silence must be worded in order to reach and stimulate our imagination. Secondly, it is laughter that follows excessively serious tropologies, disenchant them, and make us more individual in the sense that it helps us to oscillate between more than one tropology. Silence, I argue, is a fictional and artificial form of thinking that sometimes tends to misguide people. The obsession with the tropes of authenticity, sincerity, and role models, who incarnate these tropes (which is one of the things Moeller and D'Ambrosio criticize) reveals tropological artificiality common to our thinking. Again, the problem is not that we cannot be tropologically unconditioned; the problem is how not to become too much conditioned by different tropologies.

Alain Corbin, a French historian, in his work *Histoire du silence: De la Renaissance à nos jours* (*A History of Silence: From the Renaissance to the Present Day*, 2016), shows how the tropologies of silence have been changing throughout history and how they have influenced human behavior in various ways: From the Middle Ages when silence was conceived as the prerequisite for establishing the relationship with god, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when silence was tropologically linked with the concept of “sublime”. While in the first case, the tropology of silence and god made people close themselves in the cells where they meditated and prayed, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, people searched for silence in the exterior world: Mountains, deserts, sea, or countryside<sup>13</sup>. Corbin demonstrates that

---

<sup>13</sup> Although praying and other forms of communication with god might have taken place in silent environments, these acts do not imply silence *per se*. Praying is a form of internal discourse or a dialogue with god. Thus, the human mind is not completely devoid of linguistic noise while performing these acts. This suggests that complete silence is rather a tropological aspiration than a real thing. In fact, one experiment demonstrates that “some people even prefer an electric shock to being left alone with their minds” (Nadia Whitehead). Participants stayed in a lab room for 15 minutes. During this time “they could push a button and shock themselves if they wanted. The results were

silence as a trope was always relevant and seductive, but the content of the tropologies of silence and their causes have been changing. The 18<sup>th</sup> century's silence could be connected to countryside and promenade but the contemporary desire for silence may be related to the increased use of medias, tiresome and permanent online availability, the deluge of the delusional opinions of unknown people. Thus, our 21<sup>st</sup> century's noise is the noise of medias, the contamination of toxic opinions, the pollution of the wars of information caused by different levels of agents. It may be the fatigue of constant connectivity which makes people write books on silence, its history, revive the prototypes of the wise silent sages from the past, and reinterpret and adjust some ancient Eastern beliefs to the necessities of our digital age.

As it was already mentioned in the last chapter, much of this contemporary noise and fatigue are caused by the AIT constructs. As Tim Wu shows in his work *The Attention Merchants* (2016), advertising and branding agents by trying to capture our attention increase the levels of distraction and anxiety. Thus, the more one dedicates her attention to social media and networks, the more one's life is intruded by the unmanageable amounts of information, the more one gets distracted and influenced by the AIT advertising noise. This new sort of digital intrusiveness has also much to do with the creation of the lower level agents by imposing new forms of thinking. *Histoire du silence*, thus, as many other works I will discuss in this chapter, are the symptoms of the exhaustion inherent to our age. Many are curious to find out how people from the near or remote past sought silence, wisdom, and tranquility, and in return, they get easily seduced by ancient and modern personifications of silence.

---

startling: Even though all participants had previously stated that they would pay money to avoid being shocked with electricity, 67% of men and 25% of women chose to inflict it on themselves rather than just sit there quietly and think" (Ibid.). To some extent this experiment confirms that in silent environments inner speech, inner dialogue and thoughts become so active that they may even be more unbearable than physical pain.

It seems that this quest, led by the desire of self-deception, has become a good market niche but this time, surprisingly, for someone with a humanist education. For example, Alain de Botton, a British-Swiss philosopher, in 2008 created the School of Life (“The School of Life”). Among its production one may not only find the book titled *Religion for Atheists*, but also recommendations how to live a quiet life and minimize stress (“In Praise of The Quiet Life”). The hectic life style causes anxiety, stress, and exhaustion; this in turn, engenders a yet-not-verbalized yearning for tranquil and sedative tropologies; eventually, the commodification of these longings occurs through finding appealing tropes and turning them into relevant tropologies that not only reflect the spirit of our age but also sell well. People marvel at the mountains and the sea, they promenade in the countryside, and they buy and read books on silence or attend seminars about how to live quietly and avoid stress, people turn to ancient Eastern wisdom and practices; what matters here is that each time they *do* something and that *doing* is guided by the tropology one follows, which might have been imposed by the authors of higher levels or simply reflect the spirit of the era one is living in.

Erling Kagge is another popular writer on silence who admits that the need for it emerges from the excessive noise around us and in us. In his book *Silence: In the Age of Noise* (2017), he claims that the cacophony of modern technologies and city noises make us crave silence. Technologies, social media and networks are designed in such a way that they capture our attention and instill fear of missing out on “important” things within us. Moreover, they make us feel as if we had less time than we do. Since technology and media take away so much time from us, the trope of silence becomes tropologically attached to the trope of slow time. Another form of noise is what Kagge calls experiential poverty. It is also produced by the excessive use of social networks that enable us to constant comparison between ourselves and others. Since there are too many others who experience all sorts of things people start to feel like their lives lack experiences. According to Kagge, the more we try to overcome boredom, the more bored we feel. Thus, the trope of noise is interwoven with the tropes of frustration, anxiety, loneliness, missing out, and lack of experiences; all together these tropes make up one tropological system.

Kagge also makes another important tropological distinction that may influence people to undertake different escapist strategies. He distinguishes between *the silence around us* and *the silence within us*. The latter is more important to Kagge because it does not suggest that there is a magical and mysterious place where we could feel at ease. The tropology *silence within us* suggests that instead of feverishly looking for something that may not exist in the outer world, we should start from ourselves. On the other hand, it seems that Kagge himself does not avoid creating fictitious tropologies based on external places because he associates Antarctica with the search for silence. The problem is that it creates a brand and a trend out of the physical place. This newly created tropology will bring about entropological noise and will turn what has been ideal calm places into new noisy touristic attraction points (think of India, South East Asia, Machu Picchu, some overcrowded popular places in Europe, etc.). Thus, what Kagge sometimes does is to word silence and make another contribution to the market of silence. Let us not forget that one of his occupations is publisher. Silence in the age of noise is a luxurious commodity. Not everyone can allow herself to purchase it. It is also the sickness and obsession of the middle or upper middle classes that are tired of the modern forms of noise.

The movie *Into the Wild* (2007) shows this through the character of Christopher McCandless (Emile Hirsch) who sought to escape the tyranny of the capitalist culture and fake moral oppression of his family. In fact, McCandless, who was a real person, as a book and movie character has become a popular prototype of the seeker of silence and dissident of the system. There are three reasons why this prototype is important for us. First, as an avid reader McCandless allows the tropology of silence, anti-materialism, and anti-consumerism to guide his actions and his life and eventually turns himself into the prototype who strengthens this tropology, thereby creating a vicious (or virtuous, depending on one's views) circle. Second, each tropology is more influential and stronger when it is personified by someone, thus, McCandless's story has become important to the imagination of a specific segment of society. Third, this prototype while trying to escape the modern capitalist noise described by Corbin and Kagge, disobeys the recommendation of the latter not to look for silence *around us* but rather to discover or create it *within us*. He, therefore, seeks to undermine the tyranny of the dominant culture

through a tropological resettlement, that is to say, he replaces one strict tropological order with another radical tropological order.

In the movie, Chris until his graduation docilely fulfils his duties and obligations. He gets good grades, he is not only good at his school subjects, but he also avidly reads world's literature and is highly influenced by the ideas he finds there. However, right after his graduation he decides to give all his saving to charity and sets out to multiple road trips without giving a notice to anyone. From Chris's utterances we can understand that he is trying to escape the civilizational, modern, capitalist, consumerist, overly moralistic noises. He constantly repeats he does not want to use phone, buy more things and prefers freedom to obligation. In his view, civilization made the society sick and that is why he has to retreat to the nature. His decision shows that he failed, to put it in Kagge's terms, to find silence within himself instead of searching for it elsewhere in different physical environments. According to Chris, society is ruled by illusory tropes such as money, power, etc., but what he does is to replace these tropes with other equally imaginary tropes and resettle himself into another equally tropological regime. Silence, tranquility, authenticity, freedom, and pure life for him can only be found outside the civilization and city; so, he chooses the road and the nature. This is the tropology of silence he created for himself and which guided his actions.

I already mentioned the paradox of the tropologies of silence, namely, that it is only possible to talk and write about silence by casting the nets of words on it. A similar paradox is common to the radical chasers of silence, such as Chris. He rejects the civilization, culture and its norms only after having been immersed in them. Here we may remember Gruzinski's idea that all conflicting and opposite ideas to Western civilization are created by its members who happen to live within the same paradigm. In other words, Chris's rejection is rebellious opposition to the society and it feeds on its anger and seeks to replace and contradict instead of complement and improve. Paradoxically, throughout his journey he keeps reading and writing, that is, acting as someone who essentially belongs to his culture. As readers and movie watchers we would not be able to know about him, his life, his journey, his thoughts, and his death if he had not committed the civilizational acts of reading and writing. And this is exactly how the tropologies of

silence and the silent prototypes contradict themselves – they cause too much commotion and noise around them. They become popular movies, popular books, they are discussed at conferences and bars, people write about them, comment on them, movies get nominated and win awards, books are being published. The cultural production on silence, paradoxically, causes exactly the opposite effect than it purportedly seeks to. Instead of creating tranquility these tropologies and prototypes may become stormy obsessions.

Chris should not be considered as a fourth level agent not only because he was highly influenced by the ideas of other people, but also because he stopped oscillating and he tried to escape tensions, stress, pressure, and coercion not by augmenting his inner dividuality but by trying to search for a more perfect environment, physical place, which does not exist. Thus, his actions are chameleonic and non-melioristic; he is not an entropologist because he only foresees desirable consequences of his actions, he expected to find pure freedom and perfect place and it all ended up with his death. He is a tropological settler not an oscillator.

The movie *El abrazo de la serpiente* (*Embrace of the Serpent*, 2015) is more entropological and it more aptly shows how silence can prevail over noise by simply eliminating and destroying the physical object which is an essential part of a newly emerging seductive tropology. It helps us understand the dangers that lie in associating the quest for abstract tropes with physical places or objects as I already briefly discussed this above. *Embrace of the Serpent* is about two Western explorers Theodor Koch-Grünberg (Jan Bijvoet) and Richard Evans Schultes (Brionne Davis) who in different parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were looking for a mysterious and little known plant in the Colombian part of the Amazon. The rare plant is called yakruna and the indigenous man called Karamakate (Antonio Bolívar) had to help them both to find it at different times.

Theodor desperately needed the plant because he thought he would be cured by it. Theo was very sick and Karamakate was trying to help him find the plant and heal him. It is important to note Yakruna has an important ritual and medicinal function for the indigenous. It cannot be used for recreational purposes on a daily basis. However, when

Karamakate arrives at a camp where he sees drunk people cultivate yakruna in order to abuse it, which goes against the indigenous sacred and ritual traditions, he furiously decides to burn and destroy the plantation. For Karamakate it is better to make the plant disappear than to use it for wrong purposes.

In 1940, after more than 30 years, an American botanist Evans, who has read the diaries by Theo, goes to the Amazon to look for Karamakate. But his intentions are murkier. On the one hand, Evans tells Karamakate that he is only interested in finding more about the plants; on the other hand, at some point Evans admits that his true objective is to find rubber trees for the Americans. Be that as it may, Karamakate, who is old now and who feels guilty for having lost the customs and traditions of his tribe, sees Evans as someone he could pass on the remains of his indigenous knowledge. After a long journey they finally find the last plant of yakruna. Karamakate prepares it for Evans who passes through hallucinogenic experiences and possibly personal transformation. When Evans wakes up Karamakate is not there. The movie ends up without showing what are Evans's subsequent actions. Thus, we as viewers ignore the nature and the possible effects of his metamorphosis.

This story is important and interesting because it shows the unfolding of many entropological processes. Contrary to *Into the Wild*, *Embrace of the Serpent* explores not the clash of two separate logics and tropological orders, but rather how two different logics firstly converge and then diverge in order to converge again in the future. The two different outlooks (the Western and the indigenous) do not exist as two essentially different entities but they constantly interact with each other, conflict, contradict, but also complement and inform one another. In this respect, the movie shows a more accurate and much more complex nature of civilizational and cultural interactions than it is usually depicted in public or academic discourses. Moreover, Karamakate is not shown as a prototypical wise-silent indigenous man. Karamakate is full of doubts, guilts, tropological oscillations, he commits mistakes by burning the plantation of the secret plant but later on he seeks to redeem himself by passing on the knowledge of his culture on a white man. But he can only do that if he himself has experienced a personal metamorphosis, that is to say, a dividual expansion. Besides, the old Karamakate has an entropological mindset, he



understands the essential amalgamation of positive and negative externalities and the human impossibility to disentangle the complicated cause-effect relationship. Nevertheless, the young and furious Karamakate demonstrates us how it is possible to eradicate the future entropological noise. He dismantled all the possible variations of the tropology of yakruna by destroying the physical object itself which stimulates and agitates the public imagination in the first place. The absence of the physical object silences the potential AIT constructs that could exploit the trope of the plant. This way he sought to halt the possible negative developments in the future such as illegal trading, human exploitation, wars, invasions, killings, etc.

It is no wonder this sort of tropological critique has been derived from the interaction between the Europeans and the indigenous cultures. To a certain degree, the European colonization was motivated by the tropologies that made people look for physical places (El Dorado) or physical objects (natural resources) that did not necessarily exist. These physical places were embellished, if not created, by AITs and haunted the public imagination of some colonizers. The interactions engendered by this sort of tropologies bring about a wide spectrum of unintended consequences. Karamakate shows us that silence can be found not only within or around us, but it can also be understood as an effort to uproot the physical object (yakruna in this case) from the public imagination of the colonizers and abusers by simply destroying it. Although Karamakate blamed himself for this decision later on, he demonstrates that silence also means the impediment of future entropological noise and the possible entrenchment of a new AIT cult.

Another important aspect of the movie is that it does not represent Karamakate as a prototype of a silent wise indigenous man or noble savage. After bringing about silence, he is torn apart by the voices of guilt and internal reproaches. The movie shows the eternal and ineluctable dialectics of silence and noise which emerges in the form of doubts, frustration, disappointment, reproaches, anxiety, uncertainty, etc. The existence of absolute silence and absolute noise as separate entities is impossible because they have to coexist in a complex mutual relationship that produces unpredictable metamorphoses

at micro and macro levels<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, it also shows the dialectics of the two civilizations because Evans needs Karamakate and Karamakate needs Evans to achieve their own specific purposes. Both characters are full of entropological doubts and instead of becoming finite hedgehog-like individuals they experience constant tropological oscillations and dividual expansions.

The character of Karamakate is more complicated, more complete, and more realistic than Jorge Luis Borges's Tzinacán. In the short story "The God's Script," Borges depicts his main character, Tzinacán, as an absolute settler of the tropology of silence. Besides, the creation of the cult of ineffability which leads Tzinacán to self-imposed obliteration is not a melioristic, entropological, and oscillatory endeavor:

May the mystery lettered on the tigers die with me. Whoever has seen the universe, has beheld the fiery designs of the universe, cannot think in terms of one man, of that man's trivial fortunes or misfortunes, though he be that very man. That man has been he

---

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting that, for instance, Taoism and Confucianism are often interpreted as two completely different schools of thought. The former is often regarded as a free, mysterious, contemplative, and speculative form of thought; while the latter is seen as a more traditional, ritual, conservative, and socially oriented belief system. However, if we looked at the society, which gave birth to these two types of thinking as if it were a collective dividual, then, we could interpret Taoism and Confucianism as dividual, tropological, complementary oscillations between the poles of fox and hedgehog, an inaction that relies on metaphysical speculations and an action that relies on tradition, etc. Thus, even if we claim that Eastern traditions, such as Buddhism and Taoism, pursue inner nothing as opposed to inner something, the prerequisite for this "nothingness" is "something," which in human world exists prior to the tropology of nothingness. Therefore, I interpret various examples not as pure forms of some tropology and essentially pertaining to it, but as part of a much more complex, wider, interrelated, and dialectic system.

and now matters no more to him. What is the life of that other to him, the nation of that other to him, if he, now, is no one. This is why I do not pronounce the formula, why, lying here in the darkness, I let the days obliterate me. (Borges 1964: 9)

Tzinacán is, thus, a hedgehog who has stopped oscillating and whose chosen inaction is not entropological and melioristic. He represents the prototype of an allegedly silent wise character who is devoid of doubts, uncertainties, and dividual polylogues; he has found the right path and he has no need for further dividual expansion. Tzinacán is exactly the kind of fictious prototype I chose to criticize.

Murray's fictional character Texier has a more complete and epistemologically substantial concept of silence and obliteration than Tzinacán. Texier purposefully uses cultural symbols and artefacts to convey his philosophical message. Silence and obliteration for him are a long term philosophical and existential project that seeks to reveal and undermine the tyranny of AIT branding and trending. However, before he realized this, Texier had to change many activities and ways of self-expression; he was a chameleonic tropological re-settler until he understood that no matter what intellectual tool one uses, the author has no control over his production as Claude, the main character of *The Mark and the Void*, finds out about it from his friend:

‘When he is quite old, he becomes disillusioned with philosophy. Philosophy, science, religion, they all start by saying they will tell you the truth, and from there they lead only to bigger and bigger lies. But art is different, because art tells you right at the start, “Okay, I’m going to tell you a whole lot of bullshit here...”’

Texier says that in modern times the only one we can still believe is the man who tells us he’s lying. And so he gives up philosophy and he starts to paint (...) And he has all these interesting ideas – for example, he wouldn’t ever sell his paintings, he only gives them to friends, because he thinks that when you sell them, the meaning changes? They start to become the false truth that he is

trying to escape? But he can't control it: eventually the friends sell them, or they die and their children sell them – anyway, they finish up with the price tag. And in the end he gives up painting too, because he thinks that art is only making things worse” (Murray 251-252).

Texier was a philosopher, traveler, public intellectual engaged in politics of the time, then he became a painter. But no discipline, form of expression, activity or genre were good enough to convey his thoughts because all sorts of intellectual production sooner or later are appropriated by others and their original meaning is distorted. Signs, symbols, endless sentences, and the incessant entropological noise are artificial and less-than-real because they only mark the void, which is more real than its verbal and artistic articulations. This is how he comes up with an idea to show how silence and obliteration will eventually prevail over noise:

Words upon words upon yet more words; hundreds of pages of text superimposed one on top of the other, rendering each utterly illegible-creating instead a cascading darkness that seems to devour the very possibility of meaning.

‘He wrote it all out, you see. His book, the unfinished book, on the canvas, in pen and ink. When he had finished he burned the transcript and all his notes, and treated the canvas with the soot. And he stipulated that whoever owned it subsequently would have to expose it to smoke, which it’s been chemically designed to absorb over time – that’s why we’ve hung it over a fireplace.’ (...)  
‘He’d certainly grown wary of the idea of definitive statements (...) But in fact the painting fits his philosophy rather well. The mark, “making your mark”, this idea that to live in full means to leave some permanent evidence of yourself on the world, he’d become quite suspicious of that. And the corresponding notion that the world is blank page waiting to be inscribed, a void to be covered up with our doings. No, no. On the

contrary. The void comes from inside us, from deep inside us. And the more we try to escape it, the more we turn the world into a mirror. Of that emptiness. That's what he felt he'd done, while attempting to come up with his definitive statement (...) art is something you give away. Instead of grabbing up bits of reality for oneself. He became very interested in the tribal cultures of the Pacific – his wife was an anthropologist, he used to travel around Polynesia with her. Anyway, he was very taken with the cycles of exchange they have, whereby objects are passed back and fourth through generations, and nothing belongs to anyone in perpetuity. Or rather, that there is no “one” for things to belong to. (328-329)

Thus, Texier understood that the only way to avoid possibly wrong interpretations, distortions, appropriations, and misconstructions of our intellectual production, is to create a work of art that destroys itself over time, thereby conveying the dialectics of the mark and the void, of noise and silence.

The main drawback of the tropologies of silence is that they ignore the crucial dialectic role of noise. Usually these tropologies stand in opposition to noise and instead of making one oscillate or complement already existing convictions, they simply seek to replace them. In other words, the tropologies of silence instead of engaging into the interaction with different tropologies seek to establish an opposite and separate tropology. It seems that many books, movies, and other forms of production of cultural industries intend to provide us with definite answers which at the same time reveals the symptomatic escapist tendencies of our age.

The specter of Bartleby's character invented by Herman Melville haunts the imaginations of the people who are particularly prone to similar sorts of escapism. Bartleby was a scrivener whose job was to deal with the noise of words. It is a brutally dull, monotonous, wearisome, and stultifying job. Over time, Bartleby was becoming increasingly apathic, indifferent, passive, isolated, and alienated from his environment and people around him. Nobody heard him speaking unless he was answering someone's

questions. He never read anything even newspapers. This suggests he has become tired of all sorts of verbal interactions and activities, in other words, he was tired of wordy noise. Eventually Bartleby refuses to do things by simply pronouncing the famous phrase: “I would prefer not to.”

What is important here is not Bartleby himself, his personality or the circumstances that supposedly provoked his nihilistic reaction; nor is it Melville or his text. It is rather the subsequent interpretations, appropriations, and the creations of different tropologies that matter to us and that reveal the importance of Bartleby’s character to public imagination. It is possible to argue that Bartleby personifies the beliefs of how meaningless modernity and capitalism are or how rotten and absurd modern society is. Thus, what is important is not Bartleby, but his impact on public imagination and how different tropologies disclose this. Gilles Deleuze asks: “Is it against Western philosophy that Melville directs his insult, “metaphysical villain”?” (Deleuze 86). Slavoj Žižek, on the other hand, does not see Bartleby as a “metaphysical villain” but as a good example for a leftist activist who should think more instead of acting feverishly (“Don’t Act. Just Think”). However, it is doubtful whether Bartleby could properly personify a metaphysical or political revolutionary. Firstly, he refrains from action without offering any particular sort of alternative agenda and that is why he is not a meliorist. We do not know what he *would* prefer to and, therefore, he is no good revolutionary.

Enrique Vila-Matas, a Spanish writer, published a book in which he intends to gather together the Bartlebys from different countries and ages. In *Bartleby y compañía* (*Bartleby & Co*), first published in 2000, he is looking for writers who after publishing something suddenly stopped writing. Vila-Matas writes about the authors who expressed the profound negation of the world, he searches for different modes of being Bartleby or simply any sort of artists of silence. The Spanish writer eliminates the ones who committed suicide because, according to him, such a radical rejection of the world is not interesting. Vila-Matas also notices the power of the tropological prototypes that have guided many people’s choices throughout history. He briefly discusses the character of Socrates who represents an eccentric sage whose intellectual indifference has had a huge impact on the imagination of many. However, the main attention is focused on the

tropologies of silence and the prototype of Bartleby. Vila-Matas perfectly understands the paradox of silence, he admits that he himself writes a text on the absence of other writers' texts, in other words, the *raison d'être* of his text is the non-existence of other texts. One important aspect of Vila-Matas's motivation to write this book is, as he reveals in the epilogue, was to avoid *bartlebism* and not to fall into the pitfall of the tropologies of silence (194). This leads us to another problem of the dissertation, namely, that Bartleby represents a radical tropological settler and hedgehog-like individual whose behavior is guided by close and narrow tropes of inaction, passivity, withdrawal, and obtuse silence. Bartleby advocated the logic of total retreat and indifference that clearly stand in opposition to other tropologies of noise and do not seek to introduce any complementary, oscillatory, and individual elements. The Bartleby's syndrome can be also found in many other works such as Héctor Abad Faciolince's *Basura (Garbage)*.

*Basura* (2000) was written at around the same time as *Bartleby y compañía*. It deals with many different topics of literary theory such as the distinction between the boundaries of reality and fiction, the difference between reader, author, and character, what it means to be an author – whether it is the one who writes fragments or it is the one who puts them together; finally, how real is the writer's account of events – is it biographical or is it entirely fictional? All these literary questions are implicitly dealt with in the book and they have also been significant in this dissertation. However, what interests us most in this book is the trope of silence that is linked together with withdrawal from society, loneliness, disappointment, disillusionment with noise, and search for authenticity.

The book is about two neighbors. One is Bernardo Davanzati, an author, who had unsuccessfully published but who stopped writing after failure. Now he lives alone in his apartment and keeps writing but instead of publishing his fragments he throws them away. Another neighbor, who is telling us the whole story, found these fragments in the garbage can and now is always waiting for new ones to come so that he can piece them together and write the story we read. Thus, what we, as readers, know about Bernardo is what we know from another reader who happens to be his neighbor.

The story handsomely shows the paradox of silence, namely, that Davanzati's retreat and writing would have remained silent if his written fragments had not been reconstructed by his neighbor. Thus, the idea of silence must be worded and dubbed by someone. Davanzati has not published anything for the last 20 years and it seems that now he has finally discovered the joy of writing alone, in silence, and for no public. He is not writing to win awards or recognition. In fact, the potential noise his writings or any other text can cause, scares him. Just like other characters who craved silence and whom I have discussed in this chapter, Davanzati is tired of the worldly, societal, and civilizational noise. Particularly, he is tired of graphomania and verbal diarrhea, as he puts it. The main tool of the writer is words and sentences, but it never reveals truth. This tool only produces more and more M1 sort of noise. The M1 matters cannot be turned into a coherent textual wholeness, thus, they always postpone completeness, conclusion, and they lack truthfulness. Completeness and coherence are not real. They are imaginary, and this is the role Bernardo's neighbor performs in the novel – he puts the fragments together and the text appears as coherent and finished. In the meantime, Bernardo keeps writing scattered fragments that he throws away later. He is certain that literary and similar intellectual activities are shitty, and he compares speaking to barking. In one of the fragments Bernardo calls himself a chameleon who knows how to adjust himself to a new environment in order to avoid conflict. Interestingly, after having realized that literature has nothing serious and substantial to say, he immerses himself into, what I call M2 matters. As he was becoming aloof, his interest in science was growing – he sought to replace the random M1 noise with M2 stability, objectivity, and empiricism. Davanzati was falling into silence gradually.

When Bernardo's neighbor started to collect information about him, he found out that Bernardo had been a drug trafficker. He transported drugs to the US for a while to have enough savings that would allow him to retreat and live in silence. This fact is important because of two reasons. Firstly, this way the real author of *Basura*, Faciolince, shows how the reader's relationship with the author and the possible interpretations of the text may vary depending on the acquisition of personal information about the writer. But what is even more interesting is the character of Davanzati himself, who apparently had



had a turbulent life full of uncertainties, fears, and stress and who deliberately chose to spend the rest of his life in complete silence.

The specter of Bartleby is also visible in this novel. The silent character Davanzati goes in line with other escapist tropologies so common to our age. Faciolince's decision to follow the popular tropological path also symptomatically reflects the intellectual revolt against noisy age. However, Faciolince shrewdly shows the essential human addiction to and dependence on noise and so-called verbal diarrhea by revealing the agitated and distraught state of mind of Bernardo's neighbor when he stopped finding new fragments in the garbage can. The neighbor may represent the modern chaser of the tropologies of silence who is so attracted to them that he cannot stop thinking, reading, and looking for them. Besides, Davanzati himself represents a non-melioristic and non-amphibian character. He has stopped oscillating and it is illustrated by his confession that he has no time to become different, but he does not want to remain the same either. His transition from noise to silence was chameleonic, noncomplementary, individualistic, hedgehog-like, and overly conditioned by popular tropologies. Bernardo has moved not only from noise to silence, from drugs to tranquility, but he also tries to replace M1 chaos with alleged M2 stability. In other words, instead of being a dividual amphibian, he seeks to find calming individuality and he expects silence and withdrawal to provide him with answers. It is not a very entropological reasoning. Silence does not necessarily save. We know about Bernardo because his existence, thoughts, and ideas were brought to us, the addicts of noise, by his neighbor.

Faciolince's work is similar to Texier's painting in the sense that it undermines itself. By its own existence it denies and rejects what it claims and that is a message in itself. Both works recommend the dividual tropological oscillation instead of dwelling on one particular and fixed idea. Moreover, they also partly deal with the problem of the quest for the right sort of agency. Bartlebies are interesting characters but they are passive settlers with excessive emphasis on silence over noise. Neither they, the first or second level agents, nor the overly mercurial and noisy third level agents should be our tropological guides, but rather a more complete, fox-like, and pluralistic entropologist, who could hint at how a dividual tropological oscillation looks like.

### 3.3 Laughter as an Antidote to Tropological Settlements

*“The imagination is not an escape, but a return to the richness of our true selves;  
a return to reality.”*

*(George Mackay Brown)*

*“You ought to learn to laugh, my young friends, if you are hell-bent on remaining  
pessimists.”*

*(Friedrich Nietzsche)*

The tropologies of silence or noise often use popular images and prototypes that help create behavioral patterns that are easy to emulate. Emulation automatically implies what I call tropological settlement, individualization, and the cessation of individual oscillations. Laughter, on the contrary, although sometimes may also contain the same sedative tropological elements, often can help dismantle essentialist behavioral models. Melville’s *Bartleby* suggested the possible tropological directions to other writers who later on sought to look at others through the lenses of the silent prototype and to notice communalities rather than differences between diverse cases, thereby reducing their complexity. To paraphrase Luigi Pirandello, people are always in search of a role model or tropology to imitate. Laughter, then, may help undermine such vain tropologies as a silent sage, non-melioristic escapist strategies, the quest for authenticity, or the contemporary obsession with the third level shrewd, chameleonic, and mercurial agents. A constructive laughter has to seek to be melioristic, make us oscillate, and have serendipitous agenda. It is different from any sort of noise in the sense that it is not random and contingent, it is not cacophonous and chameleonic, and therefore, seeks not only to deconstruct but also to offer an alternative way out of the prevailing tropologies without providing precise instructions. Laughter is the principle not instruction. It has to be committed and reformative, that is to say, more amphibian than escapist. Laughter may not necessarily seek to entirely reject tropologies but to reveal their excessiveness, detrimental seriousness, and essentialism. Laughter mocks too close an attachment and at the same time understands the impossibility of being tropologically unguided.

Molière (2008), who mocked the third level agents through the character of Tartuffe, regarded comedy and laughter in a similar fashion:

[T]he task of comedy is to correct the vices of mankind (...) In the State, the vice of hypocrisy is far more dangerous than all the others; and we have seen that the theater is a strong force for its correction (...) Displaying vice to the mockery of men deals it a great blow. Men put up with admonition but are loath to be mocked. One might be willing to be wicked; one cannot bear to appear foolish (xxx).

Molière also emphasized that “the task of comedy is to reform men while amusing them” (118). Thus, if we do not go any deeper in the historical context and analysis of his works and we assume that one of the Molière’s aims was to mock the abusers of ATTs (and sometimes AITs) and show the pitfalls of the first level authors’ gullibility, then, his conception of humor and laughter may be interpreted as melioristic and amphibian with an underlying serendipitous agenda to positively reform society.

Doris Sommer also notices that Antanas Mockus knows how to joke seriously (15). His humor is civilizing, improving, melioristic, and entropological. Sommer tells the story about how Mockus came up with the idea to bring the clowns to the Bogota’s streets and help solve the problem of traffic deaths. When Mockus was the mayor of Bogota,

he encouraged the Institute of Culture and Tourism to design cultural pressure that would arouse *shame* for ignoring crosswalks, not fear of fines (...) Each day for a month, the mayor asked the institute’s frustrated director, Paul Bromberg, for a good idea.

Bromberg finally confided to his father-in-law that he felt discouraged. During dinner one evening he asked the old man for advice. Instead of help Bromberg got a sarcastic dismissal, he told Mockus the next morning. The ironic in-law had snapped: “When

there's nothing to be done, it's time to bring out the clowns.”  
After this unhappy report, and a short pause in the conversation,  
Mockus lit up. “That’s a great idea!” He would propose replacing  
some embarrassingly corrupt traffic police with a few funny  
mimes poised to make people laugh at lawlessness (26-27).

Mockus managed to reduce the rate of traffic deaths and one of the reasons is that he acted as a fourth level agent – entropologically and melioristically. Sommer argues that the relationship between the artists and the society they live in could be explained synecdochally (32). In other words, the artists should conceive themselves as a part of the whole – democracy, country, society – and seek to improve it. Laughter, thus, dismantles hedgehog-like tropologies and renders individuals more individuals, responsible, and committed.

Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul D’Ambrosio (2017) also notice that laughter should deconstruct rigid belief systems but refrain from indicating the exact way of how things should be done:

[A] contemporary philosophy of genuine pretending would have to react to the paradoxes and absurdities of an age of authenticity, and to the—in our opinion, impossible—social demands, hubris, obsessions, and stress it produces. It would have to deconstruct the incongruity of authenticity ideals and the perfidy of calls to emulate them. It would have to undermine the semantics of authenticity with humor and thereby “carnivalize” its appeal—or at least show how this can be done. (187-188)

To illustrate his point about undermining the tropologies of authenticity and their pillar, the prototype of sage, Moeller also analyzes a story about Liezi and he offers a humoristic reading of it. Moeller argues that the humorous parody teaches us about the possibility to understand and learn things only when one rejects too close an attachment to certain beliefs: “[A] comical depiction of how Liezi (...) fails in his eager attempt to study Daoism and, ironically, attains some sort of a Daoist “way of life” only after he has

long given up learning and withdrawn into retirement” (Moeller 2016: 379). Liezi blindly follows the prescriptions of the conventional and simplified version of Daoism and mindlessly emulates his teacher Huzi:

[Liezi] does not appear as a model Daoist learner; on the contrary, he is caricatured as a wannabe-Daoist dimwit. At the beginning of the story, Liezi is depicted as someone who is easily impressed and eager to jump on any bandwagon: he mindlessly falls prey to or, as the text says, “becomes intoxicated by” (...), a popular “guru” whose trade is physiognomy (...)

Huzi’s magnificence is comically mirrored by Liezi’s silliness. The grandiose but unfathomable exercises of Huzi only make Liezi despair. He gives up studying the Daoist arts altogether and turns into a caricature of a Confucian who is oppressed by his wife and practices ritual propriety with his domestic animals (384).

After Liezi gave up studying, he “returned to his home and did not emerge for three years, cooking for his wife, feeding the pigs as if he were serving guests, remaining remote from all endeavors, carved back into unhewn blockishness” (Moeller 2017: 87). Paradoxically, Liezi did not learn anything when he was taught by Huzi, when he had high expectations of becoming a sage and was following the behavioral model in order to become one. Ironically, it is simplicity, ignorance, and lack of efforts and intentions that made him more Daoist:

As the ultimate simpleton, Liezi lives out his years in blissful ignorance and unwittingly adopts a “primitivist” Daoist way of life out of ignorance. Ironically, he could only become a Daoist after he gave up trying what he could never learn. Liezi emerges from this story as a failed and frustrated Daoist practitioner. Only in his retirement, and only after distancing himself from Daoist cultivation ambitions and training efforts, is he able to

coincidentally—or perhaps “naturally” (...)—partake in a Daoist experience (Moeller 2016: 385).

The ironic and humorous story dismantles the empty and false pretensions and ambitions of the tropologies of silence and reveals the internal “noise” that they cause within human beings in the form of agitated emotions, passionate efforts, and the need to follow certain tropologies, and emulate role models. The laughter provoked by short stories like these, may help not to “become all-too-serious Daoists, all-too-devoted practitioners, or all-too-sure-of-oneself expert Daoists” (391). In other words, this sort of laughter helps people to notice the insufficiencies and drawbacks of the tropologies they follow, encourage them to oscillate and to expand themselves dividualy instead of being guided by some hedgehog-like tropology. The story also reveals and mocks the artificial internal noise caused by the tropologies of silence. In fact, I would like to briefly discuss another humorous short story which paradoxically shows how after a long deceitful self-imposed silence our hero chooses the noise of the capital.

The short story called “The Story of the Hussar Ascetic” was told by the fictional legendary character of Russian literature, Ostap Bender, in *The Twelve Chairs* (2011) by Illya Ilf and Evgenii Petrov. I will not go into more details about the famous con man, rogue, or smooth operator as Bender is usually referred to in English language and will focus on his humorous, and to a certain degree didactic, fictional account of Count Alexei Bulanov. The story discusses and mocks two important and radical life choices made by Bulanov – firstly, after having lived a delightful and adventurous life, he chooses silence over noise; however, after many years spent in silent retreat Bulanov decides to go back to civilization and moves to Moscow.

Count Alexei Bulanov was “a hero of aristocratic Petersburg” (Ilf and Petrov 148). His name was always in the lips of the member of high society, newspapers, and journals. Wicked deeds were not uncommon to Bulanov’s behavior, he “was followed everywhere by his reputation as a participant in many secret duels with fatal consequences, open romances with the most beautiful, least accessible society ladies, crazy pranks pulled on persons of note, and heartfelt debaucheries which inevitably

ended with him thrashing petty bureaucrats” (Ibid.). He was not only a war hero, lucky in love and cards, but also in his inheritances. He was sunk “into a carefree abyss of delights” (Ibid.). But suddenly Count Bulanov disappeared, he could not be traced, and people started to spread false rumors about him. Finally, a letter came explaining that Bulanov “had taken the highest monastic vows” in order to “know the meaning of life” (149). He chose a very radical form of ascetism, silence, and the rejection of earthly possessions:

In his cloister, Count Alexei Bulanov, who had taken the name Yevpl, mortified his flesh with great deeds. He really did wear chains and fetters, but felt that that was not enough for him to know the meaning of life. Then he invented a special monastic uniform for himself: *a klobuk* with a bill that hung down in front, covering his entire face, and a cassock that restricted his motions. With the hegumen’s blessing, he took to wearing this uniform. But even this seemed too little. In the firm grip of pride, he retired to a sod hut in the woods and lived in an oak coffin (149).

He only ate “dried crusts of bread” provided by an old man every now and then (Ibid.). He lived like that twenty years. He “thought that he was living a wise, correct life, and the only true one (...) He knew the meaning of life and understood that living any other way would be impossible” (150).

One night, however, his ascetic idyll and fullness were disturbed by a burning pain in his back which was caused by bedbugs. Yevpl asked the old man who used to give him bread crusts to bring him kerosene as well, which was surprising because he had “taken the vow of silence” (151). After two months Yevpl realized that kerosene could not help to get rid of bedbugs. When other measures could not help either, Yevpl’s health declined significantly: “A dark, desperate life began. Yevpl started to find the coffin revolting and uncomfortable” (Ibid.). The ascetic realized that “he’d completely stopped thinking about the meaning of life because he was spending entire days killing bedbugs” (Ibid.). His life was as dark and mysterious “as it had been twenty-five years ago. He

hadn't been able to walk away from the world's anxieties. Living with his body on earth and his soul in heaven had proved impossible" (Ibid.). He left the sod hut and "walked ahead without looking back. Now he's working as a driver in the Moscow Community Serviced horse depot (152).

When interpreting the story on Huzi and Liezi, Moeller refers to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and its section 54 in which he writes that "laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" (Kant 2007: 133, in Moeller 2016: 386). We can apply this Kantian insight to the humorous story on the Hussar Ascetic in the sense that every radical change in life, which is guided by excessive tropologies, eventually turns into nothingness. The story told by Ostap Bender shows us how earthly causes and inconveniences – such as bedbugs, diseases and bodily pains, the dependence (or perhaps even free-riding) on the good will of other people such as Yevpl's subsistence on bread crusts and other forms of help provided by the good old man – might make people reject or at least adjust certain ungrounded beliefs. This apt mockery makes fun of the erroneous separation between putatively earthly body and heavenly soul – one can trick her soul with false tropologies, but one cannot cheat on the physiological needs of her body.

*Into the Wild* is another great example of it. As "The Story of the Hussar Ascetic" the movie also demonstrates that one can seduce his brain with beautiful tropologies of silence, wilderness, and freedom but not the human body. Nevertheless, I do not think that these two stories and the story on Huzi and Liezi can be classified as humor of incongruity as Moeller would seem to indicate. They do not necessarily have to reduce our false expectations to nothingness and leave us in the tropological vacuum. This sort of laughter could be called oscillatory laughter – it makes us oscillate between diverse tropological regimes and see how they can contradict and complement each other instead of rejecting each other and thereby either establishing a hierarchy of tropologies or leaving us devoid of tropologies. Oscillatory laughter is amphibian in the sense that it does not seek to necessarily replace excessive tropologies but to soften them, render them less serious, essentialist and offer new possible approaches and alternatives. It may expose the incongruity between empirical reality and tropological constructs but it is not



naïve enough to claim that we can live without fictions. All the three stories disclose the agitative nature of the radical tropologies of silence and through humor, in a way, confirm Kagge's principle that silence should be created within oneself rather than found around oneself in the external world; they do not reject the tropologies of silence, they simply criticize their excessive nature and seek to moderate them.

Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) concept of laughter is dividual, melioristic, and oscillatory to a limited extent. One of the main objects of his study in *Rabelais and His World* is popular-festive laughter (120). It is a special sort of laughter, it is medieval, collective (not subjective and individual) that reflects "the social consciousness of all the people" (92). Bakhtin is interested in laughter that helps see the world "anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint" (66). Thus, laughter also stands as an opposition to the tropologies of excessive seriousness:

Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naivete and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality. Laughter does not permit seriousness to atrophy and to be torn away from the one being, forever incomplete (123).

Bakhtin understands the dividual and complementary functions of laughter and he does not treat it as a separate and conflicting tropology which have to replace the tropologies of seriousness. Collective laughter has the mission to dismantle and reveal the unreasonableness of the different modes of seriousness, fictitious oneness and "the oppression of such gloomy categories as "eternal," "immovable," "absolute," "unchangeable" (83). It discloses the essential incompleteness and pluralism of our world rather than closed and suppressive forms of monism. Laughter revolts against individualization, authoritarian norms, prescriptions, hedgehog-like intellectual activities and allegedly finite areas of knowledge such as grammar, legal texts, laws, etc. (85-86).

Bakhtin's laughter, however, has some specific aspects why it cannot be considered as entirely melioristic, oscillatory, and dividual. Firstly, collective laughter

could take place during special moments and occasions such as feasts, carnivals, or festivals when the ordinary order and norms could be temporarily challenged and reversed: “The men of the Middle Ages participated in two lives: the official and the carnival life. Two aspects of the world, the serious and the laughing aspect, coexisted in their consciousness” (96). Bakhtin clearly understands the dividual nature of human consciousness, but in order for this consciousness to manifest itself special time and special place were needed. This means that “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order (...) Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal” (10). These carnivals and feasts used to take place in the marketplace. Thus, although Bakhtin’s laughter has some features of tropological expansion and oscillation – “[i]t asserts and denies, it buries and revives” (12) – and it helps to refresh, reconsider, and moderate essentialist views, it would seem that its presence in people’s consciousness is rather ritual and occasional. In this case, the oscillatory needle is more stationary than moving frequently; it only moves at certain periods and in certain places. It would also seem that once the feast is over, people go back to the monotony of oneness. Therefore, I would like to render Bakhtin’s theory less ritual, temporary, place-dependent and stress that fox-like, expanding, and dividual laughter should be heard more often in our dividual polylogical consciousness<sup>15</sup>.

Laughter may not become only a destructive force that dismantles and disassemble dominant tropologies. The abundance of works and the emergence of the interest in laughter and the figures of joker and trickster instead of having the effects of tropological renewal and regeneration may end up as yet another popular resettlement. I

---

<sup>15</sup> Of course, I should stress that constant, melioristic, and amphibian forms of laughter can only exist under favorable political circumstances. This type of laughter has better chances to flourish in democratic societies. Both melioristic, amphibian laughter and the fourth level authors’ freedom of expression are severely impaired by authoritarian regimes. Thus, it is important to bear in mind the political context in which Bakhtin was writing.

am not referring here to the historical notions of joker and trickster but to the popular contemporary desire to become one, especially, common to the newly emerged category of agents who operate online, call themselves influencers, and often invoke humor. In this case, it is not necessary to make an analytical distinction between trickster, joker, or jester because it is not what is relevant here<sup>16</sup>. Many agents believe in chaotically and

---

<sup>16</sup> In the times that perhaps have been too serious, we may observe not only how the boundaries between the characters and authors, reality and fiction, but also between traditional politics and comedy fade away. Not only traditional ideological distinctions become less clear, but also the traditional notions of jester, trickster, or joker start to lose their traditional meaning. Historically, jester may be conceived as the battlefield between seriousness, laughter, and mockery (think of Jan Matejko's painting "Stańczyk," in which the jester is represented in a very serious, preoccupied, and reflective manner). Beatrice Otto in her work *Fools are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around the World* (2001), also stresses that jesters' mission in different eras and cultures have been much more than just a mere entertainment. In the contemporary world, however, jesters, jokers and tricksters may be intermingled in such a way that the traditional academic analytical distinctions become too sterile and do not grasp the dynamics of the distortions of meanings of these characters. *The Economist* ("The boundaries between politics and stand-up comedy are crumbling") suggests calling some of the contemporary politicians as "cometicians" who do not necessarily perform the traditional function of expanding people's understanding of what is normal and resist excessive seriousness and power through humor and mockery, but who may be the puppets of the traditional orthodox politicians, who have decided to stay in the backstage for a while. Thus, jester's dexterity, versatility, intellectual profundity, hidden seriousness and commitment are not that relevant anymore. The emergence of "cometicians," the popularity of infotainment, and the reckless pursuit of cool and funny images by the so-called influencers and even politicians, to a certain extent, put aside the clearly delineated categories that can be found in academic literature. Therefore, what is more important to me, is how the popular images of noisy, mercurial, and successful or silent, wise, and socially indifferent, or cool

randomly formed tropologies that do not reflect the sterile and diligently established academic definitions of those categories. The current popular obsession with internet trolling is an amalgamation of many different sorts of humor, prototypes, and intentions. Perhaps, the common denominator between different forms of trolling is the chase for the images of cool and funny. Another important common feature is that these forms of sometimes innocent, sometimes morbid and perverted humor do not always have melioristic agenda and represent detached and chameleonic type of humor. Too often, this kind of joking is oriented towards tropological destruction, mockery, and dismantling for their own sake and it lacks constructive nature when dismantled tropological pieces are re-assembled into a more sustainable, melioristic, entropological, and amphibian set of tropologies. In this regard, the pursue of the image of joker becomes another tropological settlement without any clear long-term agenda that is similar to that of Bartleby's.

Consider such examples as laughter therapy, laughter club, laughter yoga, or laughter workout proposed by Indian physician Mada Kataria in his books *Laugh For No Reason* (1999). People who follow his concept of therapeutic laughter may gather together in public places such as parks and start laughing for no reason. And this constant tropological resettlement is exactly what I call chameleonic laughter. It does interrupt the dull routines of many, but it does not translate into something more constructive and amphibian. In other words, it does not make the jobs and realities of contemporary Bartlebies' more meaningful and it does not really change the situation that produced escapist desires in the first place. And that is what is meant when I claim that some jesters, proponents of silence, mercurial agents, and other champions of noise engage into chameleonic activities. Noise, laughter, or silence become commodities, deceitful motivation for a detached non-melioristic action or radical escapist strategies that are only capable of offering another tropological resettlement.

---

and funny prototypes are on the one hand, formed, appropriated, and randomly distorted by public imagination and, on the other hand, how they reshape it.

In the first half of the dissertation, I looked at some of the Nietzsche's statements through the lenses of dividuality. I showed how he advocated the idea of combining the opposite dividual tropological poles of the self and different Dionysian and Apollonian natures we possess. Nietzsche's laughter is more frequent than Bakhtin's intermittently dividual laughter and he also encourages to oscillate between heroism and foolishness with more frequency: "At times we need to have a rest from ourselves by looking at and down at ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *at* ourselves or crying *at* ourselves; we have to discover the *hero* no less than the *fool* in our passion for knowledge; we must now and then be pleased about our folly in order to be able to stay pleased about our wisdom!" (Nietzsche 2001: 104). As Mark Alfano notices (Mason 2018), Nietzsche's laughter has an epistemic function as it seeks to reduce the effects of excessive seriousness and detrimental nihilism. According to Alfano, *In the Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche encourages pessimists to learn how to laugh in case they want to remain such (70). Thus, Nietzsche sees a person as a dividual (a hero and a fool) and he regards laughter as an antidote to nihilism, seriousness, and scientific hubris. Nietzsche's dividual oscillations are not bounded spatio-temporally as it seems to be the case in Bakhtin and Nietzschean dividuality is the arena where tropologies change one another in the complementary manner.

Moreover, Nietzsche perfectly grasps the paradoxes common to our three tropes (noise, silence, and laughter), namely, that we can discuss laughter seriously, express silence through words, and that noise is essentially complementary and not a separate entity from silence. Just like foolishness and heroism, laughter, seriousness, verbal noise, and silence can coexist within the dividual. That is implied in the dialogue between an old man and Pyrrho which can be found in *Human, all Too Human* (Nietzsche 1996). The latter advocates an at first glance contradictory idea of the mistrust of words and silence, but eventually admits that the philosophy of silence and laughter is not the worst:

*The old man:* Friend! Friend! Your words too are those of the fanatic! – *Pyrrho:* You are right! I shall be mistrustful of all words. – *The old man:* Then you will have to stay silent. – *Pyrrho:* I shall tell men that I have to stay silent, and that they

should mistrust my silence. – *The old man*: So you are retreating from your undertaking? – *Pyrrho*: On the contrary – you have just shown me the gate through which I must pass. – *The old man*: I do not know – do we still understand one another completely? – *Pyrrho*: Probably not. – *The old man*: Do you still understand yourself completely? – *Pyrrho* turns around and laughs. – *The old man*: Alas, friend! Laughing and staying silent – is that now your whole philosophy? – *Pyrrho*: It wouldn't be the worst one (362).

Alfano argues that Pyrrho this way teaches us about skepticism (Mason 68). I agree with this interpretation and would like to add that Nietzsche's Pyrrho is completely aware of the impossibility to be tropologically unconditioned and therefore, his skepticism champions the idea of radical complementary tropological oscillation and dividual expansion as opposed to tropological settlements that are entirely hedgehog-like, individualizing, and hence, more artificial and non-melioristic.

An amphibian humorist understands that M2 seriousness originates from M1 randomness. The amphibian laughter, however, does not tediously overemphasize, like some postmodern chameleonic theories, the M1 origins of absolutely everything but rather intellectually engages into M2 activities and amphibiously connects it with M1, thereby revealing our essentially dividual nature. Therefore, melioristic, entropological, oscillatory, and amphibian laughter juxtaposes tropologies and does not necessarily superimposes them. Dividual and tropological oscillations mostly refer to the interdependence of different tropologies not the dominance of some of them. Moreover, oscillations should not be of ritual nature because it may create the first level agents with intermittent realizations about tropological deceitfulness such as Marquez's colonel, Vladimir, and Estragon. Melville compares dead letters to dead men, perhaps because both have not reached their destination, that is to say, the fulfilment of their purpose. Sometimes the agents of lower levels get lost not because there is no addressee but because one is confused by deceitful tropologies on his way. The contemporary technologies impinge on the idea of dividuality. They impede its development and seek to measure, predict, and create individuality whose consciousness is analyzed, predicted,

and formed at someone else's whim. This is the topic of the last chapter of the dissertation, namely, how to find the reasonable sort of agency that could act upon reasonable principles.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Practicing Tropological Oscillations and Dividual Expansion through Perspectivism and Polylogical Cultural Works

*"The core of man's spirit comes from new experiences."*

*(Jon Krakauer)*

*"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."*

*(Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.)*

One of the main goals of this dissertation is to discuss the principles of melioristic and entropological (the fourth level) agency which, to put it in Sommer's words, would "help to translate good ideas into enduring practices" (Sommer 3). Although such agency should not rely on excessive tropologies, it should follow well established principles that we have discussed above. In the digital era, however, the most important of these principles such as tropological oscillations and dividual expansions are threatened by the artificial creation of new forms of subjectivities. All the authors I am going to briefly discuss in the following paragraphs emphasize the individualizing nature of new technologies and examine the imposition of hedgehog-like views.

Seth Stephens-Davidowitz (2017) like many others argues that the digital trails we leave in the Internet allow the Big Data analysts to know precisely what our fears, desires, psychological condition, and interests are. This information can also help understand and predict our behavior and give access to the unconscious decisions we make. Such technique is the dream that has come true for the third level agents because, according to Stephens-Davidowitz, it enables them to detect strong causality in human behavior and makes it easier to manipulate and reform it in the future. Tim Wu (2016)

calls these mind-miners as “attention merchants.” They seek to get inside people’s heads and monopolize their attention by overwhelming them with messages, ads, products, brands, and other AIT constructs. They instill people’s brains with fake needs, desires, and constantly disrupt their routine with all sorts of technological noise and contamination of information. That creates the unprecedented levels of distraction which is a form of chameleonic, transient behavior guided by the AITs.

Nir Eyal and Ryan Hoover (2014) describe this problem using different vocabulary. According to them, new technologies seek to change the user’s behavior by hooking them and recreating their habits or instilling new ones. New products form new habits and become an important part of people’s routine. Often, in some businesses (videos games, etc.) the users are not charged until they form proper consumerist habits and are thereby hooked. Habits, according to the authors, are unconscious, automatic actions that are frequently committed. If one stops performing certain usual actions, for instance, checking one’s Facebook News Feed, one starts feeling anxious or as if one was having an itch. A modern person has many artificially caused and imposed “itches” that she has to constantly scratch to feel a relief. We could also call it as internal noise, which individualizes us and limits our free will.

Márquez’s colonel’s obsession with the letter, which I argued above is an example of a calming self-imposed AIT construct, can also be interpreted in a similar fashion. The desire to go to the post office and check whether the letter has finally arrived may be compared to the nowadays obsession of checking one’s email account the infinite number of times throughout the day. These two kinds of habitual behavior, most certainly, differ in intensity and frequency of our actions and the fact that the contemporary “itches” have invaded many more spheres of our lives. Here, we can recall two aspects from the first part of the dissertation. First, the blurred conceptual difference between the character and the author (which also contains the free will question). Second, to illustrate the former statement, we can remember the observation that on social networks the user is the product. Through the fourfold system (for more details see Eyal and Hoover) it is possible to observe, analyze, re-create, and manipulate people’s



behavior. We have already discussed this when referring to Cambridge Analytica and psychographics.

What Eyal and Hoover seem to be reluctant to admit is that in contemporary technological era user's habits may gradually turn into addictions. "Smithereens" (2019), the second episode of the fifth series of *Black Mirror*, shows exactly this sort of evolution – when a disturbing habit becomes an addiction. The main character Chris (Andrew Scott) lost his wife in a car accident due to the distraction caused by his cell phone and the social network he wanted to check. Some time after the accident he started to work as a rideshare driver. He used to wait for his clients near the offices of the large social media company called Smithereens whose app he was using at the time of the car accident. Eventually he picks up Jaden (Damson Idris), an intern at Smithereens. Chris takes Jaden as a hostage and demands a personal conversation on the phone with Billy Bauer (Topher Grace), the CEO of Smithereens. Chris's intention was to inform Billy by sharing his personal tragedy about the destructive consequences his addictive app has caused. The workers at Smithereens struggle to find Billy because he is out of town for his regular silent retreat. It is paradoxical because he is shown as the main designer of the highly addictive and noisy social network. As Billy admits later in the conversation with Chris, he did not expect to lose control over his product but, nevertheless, it was getting steadily independent. Billy is a good depiction of a third level author who initially manages to create a product that will cause destruction and noise; then he loses control over it, and eventually he tries to tropologically resettle himself from creative destructive noise to silent retreat somewhere in the mountains far from civilization. Bill's behavior is non-melioristic and chameleonic – when Chris is presumptively killed, and Jaden is liberated – Bill comes back to his yoga position and closes his eyes this way plunging himself into chameleonic, escapist silence. The fact that his silent retreat had been interrupted by the undesired effects of his product, also shows the sterility, artificiality, and impossibility of the tropologies of silence.

The vicious circle of knowing personalities and then re-shaping them at whim has stultifying and individualizing qualities in the sense that they limit free will, impose specific behavioral patterns and hedgehog-like tropologies. The designers of this circle

also are aware of how to commodify and monetize boredom, loneliness, depression, and other similar feelings. In fact, Eyal and Hoover notice that depression correlates with an increased usage of the Internet, repetitive checking of one's email account, or dull scrolling of one's news feed. Each time the person is doing this, she unfruitfully expects to find a reward, alleviation, solution, or an answer to her problem. But since such a hope has no ground the person gets stuck in this repetitive cycle. Just like Vladimir, Estragon, and the colonel, this person is attracted by the unknown, which must be of AIT nature, and justifies her meaningless repetitive actions by the futile expectation to receive a prize eventually. It is important to understand that such a habitual and sometimes perhaps even addictive behavior does not eliminate the roots of depression and may even deepen it. Given this context, the previously discussed method of Mockus – to interrupt people's habits by invoking artistic means – should make more sense now. Daily, random, artistic acts may help see some of our hedgehog-like tropologies in another light and to update or reject them. This would allow us to notice alternative tropologies, render them less chameleonic, and start our dividual oscillation instead of dwelling on specific tropologies and individualizing roles.

Steffen Mau in his work *The Metric Society* (2019) analyzes how measuring, quantifying, ranking, evaluating, constant tracking of people's activities, and other forms of metrics pervade and condition our lives. The metric society is the society where people's perception of value and status highly depend on how our actions have been processed, quantified, and later evaluated by others. *Sociometrics* invades many spheres of our daily activities: “[C]onsumption patterns, financial transactions, mobility profiles, friendship networks, states of health, educational activities, work output” (Mau 4). New technologies, therefore, allow the data miners to describe and predict people's behavior and make us “comparable in a multitude of ways: with norms, with other people, or with performance targets that we ought, or wish, to reach” (Ibid.). Mau claims that the constant measurement and comparison encourages competition and rivalry between people. I would also add that people's freedom is limited, their dividuality is narrowed and sometimes even suspended, and the tropologies to which they are exposed depend more on the external factors than on their internal drives, curiosity, quests, and personal will. This is how the first and second level agents operate; the modern technologies turn

people into tropological settlers rather than oscillators. It is interesting to note that while many people are not unreasonably worried about being spied by their devices, they should also be worried about the possible dystopian emergence of the new totalitarian intersubjective area in which their behavior, attitudes, norms, and values are not only analyzed and predicted by algorithms, but also recreated and reinforced in unbearable ways. The authors, whose ideas I have discussed thus far in this chapter, demonstrate how modern technologies reduce our agency and turn us into characters as it was also discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

“Nosedive” (2016) is an episode of *Black Mirror* which shows how modern technologies and social networks turn the wannabe utopian society into a total social, psychological, and emotional hell. Lacie Pound (Bryce Dallas Howard), whose current rating is 4.2 out of 5, is a person who absolutely depends on others’ opinion about her, social scores, and rankings. In fact, there are reasons why one should be worried about social ranking. People can enter certain restricted areas only if their overall rating is over 3.7. Ratings also help divide people into social classes which affects their chances to buy a better apartment, rent a better car, get a plane ticket, or find a better job. Personal rating decides whether you are socially excluded or accepted. Other people’s opinions materialize themselves through giving other people stars (from one to five stars). This forces one to blindly accept specific behavioral norms and patterns. The majority of highly-ranked people are shown without any authentic personal traits; they rather look like characters who follow externally imposed habits, behavioral patterns and are unable to improvise because they are afraid of possible social rejection and decreased social score. In this repressive system people are evaluated and judged all the time. The more “normal” or “authentic” people (I refer to the ones who are not obsessed with the ranking thing and their social score) usually have fewer than 2 points. At the end of the episode, Lacie is punished for her attitude. She embarrasses herself in front of many very highly-ranked people at a wedding party, almost loses her mind and is taken to prison. There the technology enabling the entire rating system is removed from prisoners’ eyes. In her cell, Lacie sees another imprisoned person. This time they cannot see each other’s rating and they begin an informal conversation saturated with dirty humor and nasty jokes which

seemingly helps them come back to sanity. Humor allows them to start oscillating again and overcome repressive individualizing social norms.

One of the ways to encourage tropological oscillations and individual expansions is the intentional and methodological multiplication of perspectives and inner voices. I will focus on perspectivism a bit later. Now, I would like to discuss how certain educational principles and methods could enable and facilitate these melioristic processes. Imaginary, artificial identification with selected tropologies via games, simulated discussion, or other sorts of mental exercises and subsequent reflection, revision, rejection or modification of one's views would help a great deal. These temporal and non-genuine tropological attachments would allow to reveal the often one-dimensional, chameleonic, and expirable nature of tropologies. Reflecting these simulated tropological games does not necessarily imply rejection but rather the understanding of their dynamics and logic.

According to Vygotsky (1978), “in play a child creates an imaginary situation” (93) and “[f]rom the point of view of development, creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as a means of developing abstract thought” (103). Younger children may foster their imagination by playing an actual game, while at later stages people can rely more heavily on their imagination and abstract thinking. Imagination in this sense is the arena where many diverse tropologies are displayed and playfully used in order to sense the power of looking at things from different perspectives. This process should be of amphibian (inclusive and complementary character) rather than chameleonic (exclusive and conflicting character). These ludic simulations do not change who people are; they change the way they think by provoking fox-like behavior, curiosity, and divagations from pre-established cognitive directions. Alain Morin adds to what has previously been said, that such inner speech acts (or playful temporal identifications with and advocacy of the opinions in which one does not necessarily believe) facilitate self-understanding, one's emotions, thoughts, behavior, etc. (see Fernyhough 2013). Moreover, Morin also argues that internal dialogue increases self-awareness and self-evaluation (Morin 2005).

The growth of the simulations of tropological attachments and inner speech acts may help acquire more melioristic moral beliefs. John Dewey had a similar idea who,

according to Michael Bacon, by this sort of “growth” meant “the capacity to develop as a human being, something which is not a merely mechanical process but requires reflection rather than mere stimulus-response to one’s surroundings” (Bacon 58). This principle is entropological because it expects good results and offers possible guidelines but not “fixed ends:” “The importance of the individual revising his or her beliefs in this way explains why Dewey leaves the direction of growth unspecified: to specify for all time what constitutes human growth would violate his experimentalist belief that the criteria for growth can only be discovered through inquiry and not fixed in advance by the philosopher” (Ibid.).

Robert Wright (2000 and “Robert Wright: The evolution of compassion”) stresses the importance of the expansion of moral imagination. In this regard, the expansion or the growth, to use Dewey’s term, of moral imagination is conditioned by available tropologies. In general, Wright’s aim is to show how non-zero-sum games, when one player’s gain is not other’s loss and when the interests of different players overlap, have impacted diverse human achievements. However, it does not mean that zero-sum games, when one player’s gain is another’s loss, can be entirely eliminated. As Waal, Wright argues that both competition or zero-sumness and cooperation or non-zero-sumness are common to human behavior. Under different circumstances and in different situations people decide which particular tropology they should follow. According to Wright, the more interdependence between different people grow, the more people tend to be guided by the tropologies of cooperation and non-zero-sumness. Nevertheless, choosing one or another tropology is not determined by law or nature. Since it is the choice people arbitrarily make, they should seek to better understand the advantages and benefits of non-zero-sumness which is supposed to be more melioristic a choice. We should not be naïve though – the outcomes of our actions are not necessarily going to be as we desire them to be. We never choose the outcomes of our actions; with serendipitous mindset we choose the tropologies to guide our actions based on the criterion of meliorism. The way events unfold is the terrain of entropology not that of our wills, plans, and desires. Thus, the expansion or growth of imagination may be related to the experimental simulations, usages of tropologies and can also be described as the acquisition of multiple perspectives.

Perspectivism provides us with the possibility to understand different circumstances, situations, and the selective and random nature of the tropologies we choose. If educational practices such as the above-mentioned imaginary games and exercises could help reveal the contingency and circumstantial conditioning of the tropologies we follow, it could also help soften the derivative problems of tropological settlements such as homophily or like-mindedness. Homophily is “our tendency to gravitate towards people similar to us (also known as assortativity),” notes Ferguson (2018: 50). Homophily or like-mindedness are other names for tropological settlements or they can also refer to tropologically closed circles of the first and second level agents whose beliefs remain unquestioned, unrevised, and inertially reinforced due to lack of tropological and dividual oscillations. It is important to stress that in this way the intertropological educational practices or perspectivism help resist the contemporary widespread creation and manipulation of individuality and intersubjective field. Oscillatory exercises also interrupt habits that might be influenced by externally suggested tropologies and make our agency more deliberative.

As it was mentioned in the first chapter, the term “tropology” is more precise than “discourse” or “ideology.” Tropology is inevitably ideologically conditioned; it is a micro ideology or a discursive bit. However, it seems that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is impossible to be ideologically consistent. Even people, who at first glance may belong to the same ideology, are internally divided by tropological quarrels. Many studies on discourses or ideologies overlook their internal tropological divisiveness and complexity. Paradoxically, some tropologies may divide the adherents of the same ideology and unite them with the adversaries from the opposite ideological camp. Therefore, tropology is a better analytical tool while intertropological method helps enrich our perspective understanding of the world around us. All is much simpler than it may seem reading this burdensome terminology. In principle, our thinking cannot consistently follow any holistic ideological system and our behaviors are the mosaic of many randomly formed tropological bits. Only tropologies can reveal how chaotic our thinking is, and perspectivism is another common practice that may serve as a good exercise to expand our moral imagination.

Perspectivism is a fashionable and widely used method in education. Many international education programs take pride in saying that *they* know the original way how to foster imagination and critical thinking skills by encouraging children to see things from different angles across diverse academic disciplines. The classical example is how pupils have to identify themselves with the wolf, one of the main characters in “Little Red Riding Hood,” and try to explain the motives of his behavior. Thus, instead of immediately blaming the wolf for his misdeeds, the pupils try to understand how it would be possible to rationalize his actions. Erling Kagge also encourages adults to look for silence, new exotic places, widen one’s consciousness, thereby gaining new perspectives through new unexpected experiences. One of the essential features of perspectivism should be the effort to transcend the artificially established boundaries of academic disciplines. Firm belief in the truthfulness of one’s discipline is nothing else than tropological settlement which should be set in motion by exposing oneself to different tropological resources.

The literary works, popular movies, and TV programs of polylogical nature also contribute to the expansion of imagination. This sort of movies is exceptionally vital in recently emerged Netflix culture. Moreover, people may enrich their moral imagination not only by reading or watching polylogical works, but also by trying to understand their polysemic nature (Hesmondhalgh 2012: 40). According to John Fiske, wide audiences receive messages and meanings encoded in cultural production subjectively and selectively (Fiske 1990: 137). Therefore, it is not only the polylogical production itself which serves as a good exercise, but also the possibility for meta-interpretation, that is, our own interpretation of others’ interpretations<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> In *The Better Angels of our Nature* (2012), Steven Pinker discusses the phenomenon called the Humanitarian revolution. In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the increased number of published books, growing literacy rates, and a wider variety of genres facilitated perspectivism, helped increase people’s capacity for empathy, and encouraged them to take the point of views of others (208-211).

Perspectivism is also related to the increase of voices in our polylogical consciousness. This sort of writing is especially common to some Hispanic authors. For instance, Spanish writer Rafael Chirbes tries to reveal the internal polylogue within his characters. Consider his two novels *Crematorio* (*The Crematorium*, 2007) and *En La Orilla* (*On the Edge*, 2013) in which he not only tells the story from the first-person perspective, but also unites the two novels in the complementary (I would suggest the term amphibian) way and thereby transmits a more complex meaning. Through his characters Chirbes shows the inner worlds of the people of bad reputation and the traditionally marginalized groups. His characters in real world normally are blamed for their alleged vices and wrongdoings, such as a bankrupt businessman, a real estate developer, an immigrant, etc. But he also makes the two novels to complement each other – while the first novel, *Crematorio*, takes place in industrial noisy areas and deals with constructions and frantic urban expansion, the second novel, *En La Orilla*, puts more emphasis on the silent periphery, marsh. These two completely different worlds are supposed to complement each other in amphibian way. The trope of marsh and its symbolic organic vitality suggests that Chirbes's Spain, which was suffering from financial crisis and unsustainable real estate bubble, can still recuperate and reinvigorate itself. For Chirbes even radically different tropologies, instead of seeking to replace each other, should be linked together in the hope of renewal and more melioristic beginning.

Another great example of multiperspective and polylogical literature is Mario Vargas Llosa's *La Fiesta Del Chivo* (*The Feast of the Goat*, 2000). The book conveys different personal accounts of the Dominican dictatorship and the atrocities committed by Rafael Trujillo. The experiences of Urania Cabral, a victim of the regime, Trujillo himself, and his assassins make three storylines and provide the reader with the access to very different interpretations of what happened. Instead of creating another grand historical narrative, the book tells us personal stories as they are experienced by the participants themselves. In this novel, history is not something what remains only in the past. It is still alive and present in Urania's mind. Decades after her trauma and escape from the Dominican Republic, she returns to her country and seeks to understand the events, motives, and decisions of the people who hurt her, including her own father.



Thus, historical events are not only unfolding before the reader's eyes, but they can also have a glimpse at the endless Urania's introspection.

Personal reflection of historical traumas is also an important theme in Fernando Aramburu's *Patria*, which we have discussed earlier. The novel implicitly prompts us to reconsider our own beliefs by exposing the circumstances of how radical tropologies form. And the reader, just like is the case with some of Chirbes's and Vargas Llosa's writings, can eavesdrop on Aramburu's characters' inner monologues and thoughts. This intimate method of writing may also amplify the interpretative space of the reader and provoke more possible approaches. All these works are essentially intertropical, polysemic, and spur tropical and individual expansions. They help an individual to become more individual through becoming an intertropical nomad and expanding the horizons of unseen reality.

To sum up, hedgehog-like ideas lead to individualizing tropical settlements that may lead to an increased polarization of the society which is not an uncommon phenomenon nowadays. This happens because of the lack of perspectivism and the possibility to consider things intertropologically. In such instances, the belief that different sides follow the principle of meliorism – when people of different viewpoints genuinely believe that their ideas can improve the situation – tends to fade away. Moreover, many agents lack the entropological understanding of events, namely, that their ideas (although used melioristically) will not necessarily bring about the desired outcomes. Entropology eliminates the deceitful idea of purposeful movement, for example, regress or progress, and brings the factors of unpredictability and unintended consequences into play. The fact that these principles of deliberate agency are of tropical nature is not important as long as we understand the essential tropical conditioning of pretty much everything. It is more reasonable to follow this sort of tropical principles than having firm tropical answers which is the essential feature of the lower levels of agency. The oscillatory principle would not allow us to gravitate towards radical assertiveness or anti-assertiveness. To be radical etymologically may be derived from the word “root.” I suggested the principle of tropical and individual oscillation instead of being tropologically and individually *rooted*.

## Bibliography

- Abad, Hector F. *Basura (Spanish Edition)*. Bogota, CO: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial Colombia, 2011. Kindle Edition.
- Adam Curtis HyperNormalisation 2016*. Dir. Adam Curtis. 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afBmN7icFRw>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Alex Jones Vs Piers Morgan On Gun Control Live On CNN*. Dir. Alex Jones. 2013.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWQPZ-taYBs>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- American History X*. Dir. David McKenna. 1998.
- American History X Transcript*. n.d.  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120586/characters/nm0000984>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Aramburu, Fernando. *Patria*. Barcelona, SP: Tusquets Editores, 2016.
- Bacon, Michael. *Pragmatism: An Introduction*. Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity, 2012. Kindle Edition.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translator Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press Bloomington, 1984.
- Bandersnatch, Black Mirror*. Dir. David Slade. 2018.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image, Music Text*, tr. Stephen Heath. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1977. 138-142.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot: tragicomedy in 2 acts*. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1954.
- Belfort, Jordan. *The Wolf of Wall Street*. New York, NY: Random House, 2007.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*. Berlin, 1998.
- . *The Proper Study of Mankind. An Anthology of Essays*. London: Pimlico, 1998.
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Pluto Press, 2008.
- Borges, Jorge L. "Borges y yo." *Obras Completas II 1952-1972: edición crítica*. Bogota: Planeta Colombiana, 2014.

- Borges, Jorge L. "Funes El memorioso." *Ficciones*. Argentina: Grove Press, 1944.
- Borges, Jorge L. "On Exactitude in Science." *Collected Fictions translated by Andrew Hurley*. New York, NY: Viking, 1998.
- Borges, Jorge L. "The God's Script." *Chicago Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, translated by L. A. Murillo. 1964. 5-9.
- Borges, Jorge L. "The Translator of the Thousand and One Nights." Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translation Studies Reader*. London; New York: Routledge, 1998. 34-48.
- Bouniol, Béatrice. "Oskaras Korsunovas et le triomphe de Tartuffe." *la-croix.com* (2018). <https://www.la-croix.com/Journal/Oskaras-Korsunovas-triomphe-Tartuffe-2018-07-20-1100956401>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Brams, Steven J. *Game Theory and the Humanities*. London, England: The MIT Press Cambridge, 2011.
- Bucholtz, Mary. *White Kids: Language, Race, and Styles of Youth Identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Burnett, Dean. "How internet porn caused the rise of Donald Trump." *Theguardian.com* 27 02 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/brain-flapping/2017/feb/27/how-internet-porn-caused-the-rise-of-donald-trump>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- . *Idiot Brain: What Your Head Is Really Up To*. W. W. Norton Company, 2016.
- Cambridge Analytica whistleblower: 'We spent \$1m harvesting millions of Facebook profiles*. 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXdYSQ6nu-M>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Chapter 71, season 6, episode 6 in House of Cards*. Dir. Beau Willimon. 2018.
- Chirbes, Rafael. *Crematorio*. Barcelona, SP: Anagrama, 2007.
- . *En La Orilla*. Barcelona, SP: Anagrama, 2013.
- Chomsky, Noam. *What Kind of Creatures Are We?*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016. Kindle Edition.
- Clark, Andy and Chalmers, David. "The Extended Mind." *Analysis*, vol. 58, no. 257. 1998. 7-19.

- Consciousness & the Brain: John Searle at TEDxCERN*. Dir. John Searle. 2013.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j\\_OPQgPidKg&t=37s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_OPQgPidKg&t=37s). Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Coorey, Phillip. "Michael who? It's Gekko we're after." *shm.com* 26 09 2008.  
<https://www.smh.com.au/world/michael-who-its-gekko-were-after-20080926-gdswg1.html>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Corbin, Alain. *Histoire du silence: De la Renaissance à nos jours (French Edition)*. Paris, FR: Albin Michel, 2016. Kindle Edition.
- Cortazar, Julio. "Lo lúdico en la literatura y la escritura de Rayuela." *Clases de literatura. Berkeley, 1980. Edición de Carles Alvarez Garriga*. Bogota, CO: Alfaguara, 2013.  
 —. *Rayuela Edición de Andrés Amorós*. Madrid, SP: Cátedra, 2010.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- De Botton, Alain. 2012. Toronto, CA: Signal, Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion.
- De la Vega, Jose. *Confusión de confusiones versión en español moderno, introducción y notas Ricardo A. Fornero*. Mendoza, AR: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 2013.
- De la Vega, Joseph. *Confusion of Confusions*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Printing Office, 1957. Print.
- De Unamuno, Miguel. *Niebla*. Madrid, SP: Biblioteca Nacional de España, 1982. Kindle Edition.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Viking Press, New York, 1977.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Athlone Press, London, 1988.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October*, vol. 59, 1992, pp. 3–7.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Bartleby or The Formula." *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 68-90.
- Dworkin, Ronald. *Justice for Hedgehogs*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011. Print.
- Embrace of the Serpent (El abrazo de la serpiente)*. Dir. Ciro Guerra. 2015.

- Eriksen, Th. H. *Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age*. London, UK: Pluto Press, 2011.
- Eyal, Nir and Hoover, Ryan. *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*. London, UK: Portfolio Penguin , 2014.
- Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method*, London, Verso, 2010.
- Ferguson, Niall. *Kissinger: 1923-1968: The Idealist*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016. Print.
- . *The Ascent of Money*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2008. Print.
- . *The Square and the Tower: Networks and Power, from the Freemasons to Facebook*. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2018. Kindle Edition.
- Fernyhough, Charles. "Life in the chatter box." *New Scientist Online*, vol. 218, no. 2919. 2013. 32-35.
- . *The Voices within: The History and Science of how we Talk to Ourselves*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016.
- Fiske, John. *Introduction to Communication Studies - 2nd edition*. London, UK: Routledge, 1990.
- Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" 1969. In: [https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/624849/mod\\_resource/content/1/a840\\_1\\_michel\\_foucault.pdf](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/624849/mod_resource/content/1/a840_1_michel_foucault.pdf). Date of access (25, 11, 19).
- García, Gabriel. *No one writes to the colonel. translated from the Spanish by J. S. Bernstein. Harmondsworth*,. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Good Will Hunting Transcript*. n.d. <https://www.wired.com/2007/10/berkeley-scienc/>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Good Will Hunting*. Dir. Gus Van-Sant. 1997.
- Goštautas, Stasys. "Nijolė Šivickas work by fire." *LITUANUS Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* (2005). [http://www.lituanus.org/2005/05\\_4\\_4Gostautas.htm](http://www.lituanus.org/2005/05_4_4Gostautas.htm). Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Gruzinski, Serge. "Entretien avec Gruzinski Serge "Faut-il avoir peur du relativisme?" by Boris Jeanne." *Tracés. Revue de Sciences Humaines*. 2007. 195-206.
- Hadot, Pierre. *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. Print.

- Hertzfeld, Andy. *Reality Distortion Field*. 1981. Folklore.org. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Hesmondhalgh, David. *The Cultural Industries -2nd edition*. London; Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012.
- His Last Vow episode 3 season 3 in Sherlock*. Dir. Nick Hurran. 2014.
- Ilf, Ilya, Petrov, Evgeniï and Fisher, Anne O. *The Twelve Chairs: A Novel*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011.
- In Praise of The Quiet Life*. 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npNc5P\\_66tQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npNc5P_66tQ).  
Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Into the Wild*. Dir. Sean Penn. 2007.
- Isaacson, Walter. *Steve Jobs*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2011.
- James, William, and MyiLibrary. *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Jáuregui, Carlos A. *Canibalia. Canibalismo, calibanismo, antropofagia cultural y consumo en América Latina*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2008. Print.
- Kage, Erling. *Silence: In the Age of Noise. Translated by Becky Crook*. New York, NY: Pantheon, 2017.
- Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York, NY: Penguin Books Ltd, 2011. Kindle Edition.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment. Trans. by John H. Bernard*. New York, NY: Cosimo, 2007.
- Kapuściński, Ryszard. *The Shadow of the Sun: My African Life*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Kataria, Madan. *Laugh for no Reason*. Madhuri International, 1999.
- Klein, Naomi. *No Logo*. London, UK: Fourth Estate, 2010.
- Kooreman, Thomas E. "Poetic vision and the creation of character in "El coronel no tiene quien le escriba"." *Romance Notes*, vol. 33, no. 3. 1993. 271–277.
- Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*. New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2007.
- Lakoff, George. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Kindle Edition.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude , translated by Weightman, John and Doreen. *Tristes Tropiques*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.

- Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. United States: Start Publishing LLC, 2015. Kindle Edition.
- Lissardy, Gerardo. "Martin Hilbert, gurú del Big Data: "La democracia no está preparada para la era digital y está siendo destruida"." *bbc.com* 06 04 2017.  
<http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-39511606>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Lorch, Jennifer. *Pirandello: Six Characters in Search of an Author*. New York;Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Maniac 2018*. Dir. Keris Fukunaga. 2018.
- Mario Vargas Llosa contra Donald Trump*. Dir. Mario Vargas. 2018.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwUdXsemO78>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Mason, Michelle. "The epistemic function of contempt and laughter in Nietzsche." *The Moral Psychology of Contempt*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- Mau, Steffen and Howe, Sharon. *The Metric Society: On the Quantification of the Social*. Cambridge, UK: Medford, MA, USA, 2019.
- Mažeikis, Gintautas. "Audronės Žukauskaitės daugialyumo logika." *Asmenybės, Lytis, bendruomenės*. 2012: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, n.d. 174-179.
- . *Įsitikinimai. Sąmoningumo Metamorfozės*. Kitos knygos, 2013.
- Melville, Herman. "Bartleby." *Billy Budd and Other Stories*. Penguin, 1986.
- Menand, Louis. *Entropology. vol. 44*. New York, NY: N Y REV Incorporated, 1997. Print.
- . *American Studies*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. Kindle Edition.
- . *Pragmatism: A Reader*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997.
- . *The Metaphysical Club*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001. Kindle Edition.
- Memento*. Dir. Christopher Nolan. 2000.
- Mercier, Hugo and Sperber, Dan. *The Enigma of Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Merton, Robert K. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1968.
- Merton, Robert K. "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action vo.l 1, no. 6." American Sociological Society, n.d. 894-904.

- Mockus, Antanas. "Anfibios culturales y divorcio entre Ley, Moral y Cultura." *Revista Aleph* (2010). <http://www.revistaaleph.com.co/component/k2/item/467-anfibios-culturales-y-divorcio-entre-ley-moral-y-cultura.html>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- . "Anfibios culturales y divorcio entre Ley, Moral y Cultura." (2010).
- . "Anfibios culturales, moral y productividad." *Revista Colombiana de Psicología no.3* (1994): 125-135.
- . "Co-Existence as Harmonization of Law, Morality and Culture." *Prospects, vol. 32, no. 1* (2002): 19-37.
- Mockus, Antanas. "Peaceful Play as a Basis for Pleasurable Government,." *The Legacy of Antanas Mockus. Edited by Carlo Tognato*. Harvard University Press, 2018. 583-624.
- . *Representar y disponer: Un estudio de la noción de representación orientado hacia el examen de su papel en la comprensión previa del ser como disponibilidad*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1988.
- Moeller, Hans-Georg and D'Ambrosio, Paul. *Genuine Pretending*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017. Kindle Edition.
- Moeller, Hans-Georg. *Daoism Explained: From the Dream of the Butterfly to the Fishnet Allegory*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2004. Print.
- . "Liezi's Retirement: A Parody of a Didactic Tale in the Zhuangzi." *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy, vol. 15, no. 3* (2016): 379.
- . *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*. New York, NY,: Columbia University Press, 2006. Print.
- Molière, and Prudence L. Steiner. *Tartuffe*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2008. Print.
- Morin, Alain. "Possible links between self-awareness and inner speech: Theoretical background, underlying mechanisms, and empirical evidence." *Journal of Consciousness Studies, vol. 12* (2005): 115–134.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. *What is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Print.
- Murray, Paul. *The Mark and The Void*. UK: Penguin Books, 2016. Print.
- Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review, Vol. 83, No. 4* (1974): 435-450.



- Neruda*. Dir. Pablo Larraín. 2016.
- Nietzsche, Frederich. *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*. n.d.  
[http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Nietzsche/Truth\\_and\\_Lie\\_in\\_an\\_Extra-Moral\\_Sense.htm](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Nietzsche/Truth_and_Lie_in_an_Extra-Moral_Sense.htm). Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Translator Kaufmann, Walter. New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1967.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich W and Hollingdale, R. J. *Human, all Too Human*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich W. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes an Appendix of Songs*. New York; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Nosedive, season 3, episode 1 in Black Mirror*. Dir. Joe Wright. 2016.
- Occam's Razor*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc, 2018.
- Orbach, Barak and Huang, Lindsey. "Con Men and their Enablers: The Anatomy of Confidence Games." *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 4 (2018): 795-822.
- Ospina, William. *El país de la canela*. Barcelona, SP: La Otra Orilla, 2009.
- Otto, Beatrice K. *Fools are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around the World*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Peirce, Charles. "How to make our Ideas Clear." *Popular Science Monthly*, vol. 12. 1878. 286-302.
- Pinker, Steven. *The Better Angels of our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity*. London: Penguin, 2012.
- Pirandello, Luigi and Weaver, William. *One, no One, and One Hundred Thousand*. vol. 18. New York, NY: Marsilio, 1992.
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. London, UK: Eyre Methuen, 1979.
- Plato and Hackforth, R. *Plato's Phaedrus*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952.

- Plato. "Phaedrus, tr. R. Hackforth." *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Princeton, NJ, 1961. 475-525.
- Pomerantsev, Peter. "The Hidden Author of Putinism. How Vladislav Surkov invented the new Russia." *Theatlantic.com* (2014).  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/hidden-author-putinism-russia-vladislav-surkov/382489/>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Popovic, Srdja and Miller, Matthew. *Blueprint for Revolution: How to Use Rice Pudding, Lego Men, and Other Nonviolent Techniques to Galvanize Communities, Overthrow Dictators, or Simply Change the World*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2015.
- Riera, Gloria E. "El mito como expresión del desentendimiento cultural en El país de la canela de William Ospina." *Estudios de Literatura Colombiana no. 31* (2012): 229-247.
- Robert Wright: The evolution of compassion*. Dir. Robert Wright. 2015.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4wFyRGilp4>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Rorty, Richard. *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- San Junipero, season 3, episode 4 in Black Mirror*. Dir. Owen Harris. 2016.
- Scheidel, Walter. *The Great Leveler*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M Jr. *The Cycles of American History*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.
- . *Imperialism [and] Social Classes: Two Essays*. New York, NY: Meridian Books, 1966.
- Searle, John R. *The Construction of Social Reality*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1995. Print.
- Send in Stewie, Please, season 16, episode 12 in Family Guy*. Dir. Joe Vaux. 2018.
- Seung, T. K. *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005.

- Sinkunas, Donatas. "Fernando Aramburu's Patria: Postponing Moral Judgment." *thescatteredpelican.com* (2018). <https://thescatteredpelican.com/fernando-aramburus-patria-postponing-moral-judgment/>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Slater, Robert. *Soros: The Life, Times and Trading Secrets of the World's Greatest Investor*. New York, NY: Irwin Professional Pub, 1996.
- Slavoj Žižek: *Don't Act. Just Think*. Dir. Slavoj Žižek. 2012.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Igr6uaVqWsQ&t=2s>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Smith, David. "In Godot we trust." *theguardian.com* 08 03 2009.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/mar/08/samuel-beckett-waiting-for-godot>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Smith, Russell. "The impact of hate media in Rwanda." *BBC* (2003).  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3257748.stm>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Smithereens, season 5, episode 2 in Black Mirror*. Dir. James Hawes. 2019.
- Sommer, Doris. *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities*. Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Soros, George. "Soros: General Theory of Reflexivity." *financial times ft.com* 2009.  
<https://www.ft.com/content/0ca06172-bfe9-11de-aed2-00144feab49a>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Steinberger, Michael. "George Soros Bet Big on Liberal Democracy. Now He Fears He Is Losing." *nytimes.com* 17 07 2018.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/magazine/george-soros-democrat-open-society.html>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Stephens-Davidowitz, Seth and Pinker, Steven. *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and what the Internet can Tell Us about Who we really are*. New York, NY: Dey St., an imprint of William Morr, 2017.
- Sully, James. *Studies of Childhood*. London, UK: Palala Press, 1895.
- Tabula Rasa*. Dirs. Veerle Baetens and Malin-Sarah Gozin. 2017.
- Taleb, Nassim N. *Skin in the Game: Hidden Asymmetries in Daily Life*. New York, NY: Random House, 2018.

- . *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. New York, NY: Random House, 2007.
- Taylor, Marjorie, Hodges, Sara D and Kohányi, Adèle. "The Illusion of Independent Agency: Do Adult Fiction Writers Experience their Characters as having Minds of their Own?" *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* vol. 22, no. 4. 2003. 361-380.
- Tetlock, Philip E. *Expert Political Judgment: How Good is it? how can we Know?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Print.
- The Colombian Connection, season 1, episode 5 in Narcos: Mexico*. Dirs. Chris Brancato and Carlo and Miro, Doug Bernard. 2018.
- The Economist. "El Chapo's final chapter. A Mexican drug lord goes on trial." *economist.com* 02 02 2019. <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2019/02/02/a-mexican-drug-lord-goes-on-trial>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- . "Google leads in the race to dominate artificial intelligence." *economist.com* 07 12 2017. <https://www.economist.com/business/2017/12/07/google-leads-in-the-race-to-dominate-artificial-intelligence>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- . "Loneliness is a serious public-health problem." *economist.com* 01 09 2018. <https://www.economist.com/international/2018/09/01/loneliness-is-a-serious-public-health-problem> (2018 09 01). Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- . "Paul Volcker's memoir invites a rethink of the fight against inflation." *economist.com* 29 11 2018: 1. <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2018/11/29/paul-volckers-memoir-invites-a-rethink-of-the-fight-against-inflation>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- . "The boundaries between politics and stand-up comedy are crumbling." *economist.com* 18 05 2019. <https://www.economist.com/international/2019/05/18/the-boundaries-between-politics-and-stand-up-comedy-are-crumbling>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- The Hounds of Baskerville season 2 episode 2 in Sherlock*. Dir. Paul McGuigan. 2012.

- The Power of Big Data and Psychographics*. Dir. Alexander Nix. Accessed February 16, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8Dd5aVXLcc>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- The School of Life*. n.d. <https://www.alaindebotton.com/the-school-of-life/>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- The Wolf of Wall Street*. Dir. Martin Scorsese. 2013.
- The Wolf of Wall Street Transcript*. n.d. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0993846/characters/nm0000190>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Tokarczuk, Olga. *Flights*. Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
- Trotsky*. Dirs. Alexanderand Kott and Konstantin Statsky. 2017.
- Trump: An American Dream*. 2017.
- Vargas, Mario. *La Fiesta Del Chivo*. Madrid, SP: Alfaguara, 2000.
- Vermeule, Blakey. *Why do we Care about Literary Characters?* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Vila-Matas, Enrique. *Bartleby y compañía*. Barcelona, SP: Seix Barral, 2015.
- Vygotskiĭ, L. S. and Cole, Michael. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Waal, F. B. M. de. *Chimpanzee Politics: Power and Sex among Apes*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- . *Our Inner Ape: A Leading Primatologist Explains Why we are Who we are*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2005.
- Wall Street*. Dir. Oliver Stone. 1987.
- Wall Street Transcript*. n.d. [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/wall\\_street/quotes/](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/wall_street/quotes/). Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Whitehead, Nadia. "People would rather be electrically shocked than left alone with their thoughts." *sciencemag.org* (n.d.). <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2014/07/people-would-rather-be-electrically-shocked-left-alone-their-thoughts>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations: Translated*. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1968. Print.

Wright, Robert. *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*. 2000: Pantheon Books, New York, NY.

—. *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Wu, Tim. *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside our Head*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.

—. *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside our Heads*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.

Zizek. *Las elecciones en Colombia. 2018*. Dir. Slavoj Žižek. 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyHjCZr5O68>. Date of access (01, 06, 19).

## Curriculum Vitae

<b>Name:</b>	Donatas Šinkūnas
<b>Post-secondary Education and Degrees:</b>	Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas, Lithuania Bachelor of Philosophy, 2005-2009
	Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas, Lithuania Master of Social and Political Critical Studies, 2009-2011
	KU Leuven Leuven, Belgium Advanced Master in Ethics and Political and Social Philosophy (Mphil) Cum Laude, 2011-2012
	KU Leuven Leuven, Belgium Advanced Master in Estudios Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos Cum Laude, 2012-2014
	The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada Ph.D. Comparative Literature, 2016- Present
<b>Related Work Experience</b>	Professor's assistant (Erasmus Internship) University of Ulster Derry, Northern Ireland, 2011
	Spanish language teacher Aleksandras Stulginskis University Kaunas, Lithuania, 2014
	Individuals and Societies, Theory of Knowledge and Philosophy Teacher CIEDI (IB school) Bogota, Colombia, 2015-2016
	World Cultures, Literatures and the Arts Across the Ages Teaching assistant (TA) The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada, 2016-2018 History, Ethics, Global Perspectives Teacher Erudito Licejus, Cambridge International School

Kaunas, Lithuania, 2019-Present

**Publications:**

Literary review: Fernando Aramburu's *Patria*: Postponing Moral Judgment in The Scattered Pelican, The University of Western Ontario, 2018

Translation of Classic Philosophical Texts into Lithuanian: Summer Workshop. Thomas Reid Of Identity and Of Mr. Locke's Account of our Personal Identity (Translation in Group), 2011

Translation of Classic Philosophical Texts into Lithuanian: Summer Workshop. Charles Sanders Peirce How to make our ideas clear (Translation in Group), 2010