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A Diplomatic Philosophy for the Cosmopolitical World

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Abstract: The complex relationship between philosophy and the world's issues demands a deep re-examination of the way the former engages the latter. Modern politics has been characterized by the pursuit and the denouncing of power by philosophers, whose contours as public intellectual morphed alongside the specialization of scientific disciplines. Contemporary philosophers such as Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers have developed a diplomatic proposal, which seeks to understand both the matters-of-concern of the New Climate Regime and the role of philosophers/social scientists in a non-modern manner. Diplomacy is not only a political endeavor, since it also involves affective dynamics (care, trust, and vulnerability) alongside metaphysical compromises with ontological and epistemological pluralism. Hitherto there has been no serious consideration of the therapeutic effects of philosophy-as-diplomacy. This essay seeks to review part of the theoretical debates over the social commitment of public intellectuals and to contribute to them with some auto-ethnographic vignettes of my own work as a diplomatic psychotherapist. As it will be shown, the emphasis on healing is necessary to truly demarcate the diplomatic proposal from other kinds of modernist figures such as the modest witness, the militant or the legislator.

Keywords: *Bruno Latour, Cosmopolitics, Diplomacy, Ethnopsychiatry, Post-critique.*

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Introduction

I find it somewhat amusing to be writing a piece for this special issue about the 'social commitment of philosophy', since I myself am not very social, committed, or even a professional philosopher. Still, the topic is relevant in our hectic contemporary world and it deserves meticulous examination. Who would have the cynicism to say that international state-of-affairs are going on smoothly? Who would still have optimism about the old ways in which we have organized ourselves as society? The boundaries between the local and the global have been blurred, hence that today's politics are cosmic in nature. What would it mean to be a philosopher – a lover of wisdom, in its etymological sense – in such a panorama? This essay, arranged as a triptych, seeks to meditate on this and other related questions. First, profiting from the vast literature in the history of sciences, we shall review how intellectuals as social actors have always been related – by proximity, symbiosis, or rejection – to power dynamics. Second, diving deeper in contemporary debates about cosmopolitics, we will outline the diplomatic proposal developed by Bruno Latour and his philosophical allies – most notably Isabelle Stengers. And finally, I will explore some possible ties between philosophy-as-diplomacy and philosophy-as-therapy. Benefiting from my experience as a psychotherapist and independent researcher, I will provide some auto-ethnographic vignettes to further illustrate this novel role of the socially committed intellectual. My leitmotiv is not to provide ultimate answers of any kind, but to contribute to the ongoing discussion about diplomacy by shredding a less-politicized and more affective light.

I - Power

As Bruno Latour has put it, we are living "the end of the modernist parenthesis"[1]. If modernity is characterized for the proliferation of sharply separated spheres (Nature, Culture, Religion, Science, Technology, Law, Morality, etc.), then we are currently witnessing a rather hasty mixture of domains. There is an uncanny resemblance between today's globalized landscape and the seventeenth century when all kinds of beings freely roamed the Earth. Certainly, the figure of the philosopher is not immune to these mutations. We ought to remember that the philosopher as a specialized professional embedded in academic institutions with specific

[1] Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (Harvard University Press, 2013), 8.

curricula is quite a recent phenomenon derived from Frege's logic and analytic philosophy[2]. Labels such as *scientia*, *naturphilosophie*, mixed mathematics, sage, and courtier were loosely exchangeable in pre-modern times[3]. Likewise, today's cutting-edge research in many fields is problem-oriented and gather interdisciplinary teams to work on them, so the once ubiquitous concepts of episteme or paradigm are no longer suitable in contemporary academia[4]. These simple historical remarks allow us to understand scientists and philosophers as Protean figures, ever-changing shapes and overlapping roles. By examining this cascade of metamorphosis one can get a clearer view on how knowledge has been instrumentalized in peculiar power constellations that might or not still be relevant to our current cosmopolitical world.

If we go back to Ancient Greece, we can find a quite interesting case of the mutual brewing of science and politics. The development of geometry was not only useful for architecture or accounting, but also for establishing the very grounds for reasoning and argumentation. Geometrical notions of 'parameters', 'proportions', and 'axioms' were later transposed into the *agora* in the shades of 'syllogism', 'correspondence', and 'logic'[5]. In this line, it is no coincidence that Plato's dialogues proposed a political system based on numerous Pythagorean themes. Even Socrates, who openly dismissed sophists and political participation, attempted a reversal of power by privileging intellect over money, military dexterity, and beauty[6]. Aristotle tutoring Alexander the Great and Seneca mentoring Nero come to mind too. However, we must insist that it is not philosophy alone, but the conjunction of logic and geometry the surest means to achieve power. For instance, Archimedes not only discovered some laws of physics, but also applied his levering powers in the political landscape of Syracuse[7]. Indeed, his mathematical intuitions were rather irrelevant until they caught the interest of Hero in fortifying the city against the Roman siege. In short, mathematical cognition allowed philosophers to rule out their adversaries in public debates and to produce efficient war machinery. Several things have changed since then, but our reliance on quantified data has only grown stronger due to the emergence of statistics in the nineteenth century and its pervasive

[2] Michael Lynch, "Is a Science Peace Process Necessary?," in *The One Culture?*, ed. Jay Labinger and Harry Collins (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 53.
[3] Lorraine Daston, "Science Studies and the History of Science," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no.4 (2009): 807.
[4] Mario Biagioli, "Postdisciplinary Liaisons: Science Studies and the Humanities," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no.4 (2009): 819.
[5] See the remarkable book by Reviel Netz, *The Shaping of Deduction in Greek Mathematics* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[6] This already classic critique comes from Friedrich Nietzche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162.
[7] Michel Authier, "Archimedes: The Scientist's Canon". In *A History of Scientific Thought*, ed. Michel Serres (Blackwell, 1995), 137.

role in today's digital ecosystems. Nietzsche once claimed "I am afraid that we have not got rid of God because we still have faith in grammar"[8], but he might as well have said the same about our faith in numbers.

We can make a colossal historical leap – skipping some Middle Ages landmark authors such as Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, and Thomas Aquinas – to examine the entanglements of power and knowledge during the Scientific Revolution. Erudite historians of science have carefully explored the Boyle/Hobbes and Galileo/Scholastic controversies[9]. Behind the appearance of a mere intellectual dispute over Corpuscularianism and Heliocentrism, there was a pungent struggle to establish the limits of sovereignty and the intellectual resources more suited for it. Boyle and Galileo are peculiar figures insofar they composed their writings smoothly integrating theology, natural philosophy, and nascent experimental methods. This last piece was pivotal for the configuration of what Donna Haraway has designated as the "modest witness"[10]. He who can speak in the place of 'Nature'; he who can observe the empirical data and make accurate logical inferences; he who can eliminate his own body and social embeddedness in order to become a reliable witness whose testimony cannot be refuted. What is paramount of the Scientific Revolution is not the triumph of reason over the superstition of Dark Ages, but rather the birth of a bizarre creature named 'objective knowledge' which presents itself with no history, no cultural constraints, and even devoid of an enunciating subject. Under the guise of empiricism, the transcendental *eidos* of Platonism were posed as the ultimate goal of human intellect. History of philosophy usually points to Locke's division between primary and secondary qualities or Kant's unsolvable schism between *noumena* and human subjects. Yet, without the boiling work of early mechanics, this philosophy would have been rejected as merely speculative. All these proto-scientists aimed for higher positions in universities and royal courts, employing an extensive array of rhetorical and experimental gimmicks aligned under the commanding notion of 'objective knowledge'. Albeit this *doxa* has taken deep roots in Western civilization, the end of the modernist parenthesis is releasing us from its impressive hold. Nowadays it is more natural to be suspicious about the alleged universality and infallibility of objective knowledge – and, perhaps more importantly, to question the motives of those who insist upon this kind of discourse.

[8] Nietzsche, *Twilight*, 170.
[9] There are many accounts, but our preferred ones are Steve Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (Princeton University Press, 1985) and Mario Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).
[10] Donna Haraway, "Modest Witness: Feminist Diffractions in Science Studies," in *The Disunity of Science*, ed. Peter Galison and David Stump (Stanford University Press, 1996), 428.

The revolution of natural sciences threw a shadow where other disciplines discreetly gestated. While Descartes is regarded as the champion of rationalism and was once applauded for his efforts to derive a psychology from early mechanics, Bartolomé de las Casas in the Caribbean was also dealing with the complex question of establishing a criterion for attributing the status of 'humanity' to different beings[11]. Another kind of intellectual was emerging in this process, not the witness of 'Nature' in Haraway's parlance, but rather a legislator of 'Culture'. As Bauman rightly argued, the concurrence of colonialism and secularization during early modern times gave way to the "ideology of culture"[12]. Besides the spiritual and natural realms, the social sphere gained autonomy partly due to the labor of humanists and artists who devised the proper methods to domesticate the masses. The quest to educate the overseas savages was paired with the campaigns to civilize western societies. Alongside the Jesuit missions in Japan or India, one might think of Pasteur's hygiene revolution in France or the rising bureaucratic system in Prussia. Note that inquiries, surveys, and other statistical methods helped to transform the avatar of the humanist into the 'proper' social scientist in parallel to – or even before, actually – the appearance of broad theories like the ones proposed by Durkheim or Weber. A common feature between social and natural scientists during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was their invisibility. While the latter abstracted themselves in order to faithfully represent 'Nature', the former hid themselves behind symbols of nationalism and progress in order to reinforce the autonomy of 'Culture'. This was especially present in the case of the young republics in Latin America, which made significant efforts in fabricating a repertoire of stereotypes based on miscegenation, the abundance of natural resources, a joyful Catholicism, and a sure hope for the progress of the region[13]. Of course, this enthusiasm eventually decreased and in the twentieth century the intellectual milieu was characterized by a rejection of meta-narratives. Eventually, the ideology of free market replaced the ideology of culture – ironically, the former seems to deal more easily with diversity than the former (more below)[14]. And this, in turn, led to a change of attitude within academic communities. The liaisons between intellectuals and State institutions ceased to be desirable, since it was assumed that the role of the social scientists was to denounce power dynamics rather than reinforce them.

But, alas, critical thinking has proven to be a remedy worse than the disease! The writings of Molière and Voltaire were doubtlessly emancipatory back in the day, but during the

[11] Enrique Dussel, *Filosofías del Sur* (Ediciones Akal, 2015), 21.
[12] Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (Routledge, 1992), 2.
[13] Santiago Castro-Gómez, *Crítica de la razón latinoamericana* (Puvill Libros, 1996), 69.
[14] Bauman, *Intimations,* 101.

twentieth century militancy became the mandatory attitude for intellectuals and ultimately "critique ran out of steam" throughout such turning[15]. Critique has a clear destructive, iconoclast flavor, aimed at challenging the blind transmission of traditions. It has also a constructivist side, directed towards the vindication of the marginalized and the opening of new possibilities. However, critique avoids at all cost any attachment with a particular collective or cause that might become dogmatic, so it is only capable of partial militancy[16]. Indeed, critique leaves an undefined, unsubstantial definition of the 'better future' that might arrive once the oppressive *status quo* is unsettled. At best, critique deploys a vague sympathy for alterity, diversity, and deliberation, but plenty of times it is rather an instrument which casts sharp objections and shallow propositions. Laclau has also noted a self-defeating trait of the militancy of left-wing parties, which final goal is to restore to each actor its own voice[17]. In a sense, this is the opposite of the representation regime where the scientist speaks in the name of 'Nature' and 'Culture'. In the utopia of critique, every actor is emancipated from the yoke of fallible leaders deciding for him. But, if sovereignty is widely distributed and political representation is entirely banned, then we arrive to the landscape of hyper-individualism promoted by the ideology of free market. Again, this is not solely a change in philosophical ideas, but a historical shift anchored in the realm of science. Yes, we are still inhabiting the numerical daydreams – or better, nightmares – of Platonism; we are still employing the experimental methods fashioned by Galileo and Boyle; and now more than ever we have the fever of statistical measurements. So what exactly has mutated in the sphere of science lately? Arguably, the main transformation is the abandonment of the pursuit of unity between disciplines. Contemporary scientists no longer entertain the fantasy of an encompassing theory of everything nor the demand for homogeneous research methods. The doctrine of incommensurability – entailing epistemic relativism and value-pluralism – have become the signature mark of today's academia, mirroring the aforementioned landscape of hyper-individualism[18]. In sum, critique has shattered the ziggurats of 'God', 'Nature' and 'Culture', but has left us in a place where every man is a cosmos of its own and any attempt of building a common world is doomed due to the impossibility of establishing non-oppressive bridges or accurate translations between individuals.

This sketchy recount confirms that power and knowledge have always been mingled.

[15] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no.2 (2004): 228.
[16] Rita Felski, "Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *M/C Journal* 15, no.1 (2011).
[17] Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipación y Diferencia* (Ariel, 1996), 36.
[18] Lindsay Waters, "The Age of Incommensurability," *boundary 2* 28, no.2 (2001): 151.

Even though this is a truism, it sometimes goes unnoticed that such entanglements render diffuse the silhouette of the philosopher – who exchanges the cloths of the speculative theologian, skilled experimenter, carriers of objective knowledge, legislator of cultures, counselor of the State, accuser of power abuse, promoter of self-governance, mourner of the disenchantment of the world, and so on. Hobsbawm used to qualify the twentieth century as "short"[19], but the same could be said about the fleeting series of events that constitute the modernist parenthesis. If we are concerned about the social commitment of philosophy, we must remember that the figure of the philosopher has undergone several changes and that the very notion of 'social commitment' is only meaningful once the domain of the 'Social' has gained autonomy due to the ideology of culture. Now that the discreet spheres are melting into each other again, it has become unclear how philosophers should participate in politics. The avatars summarized so far had both advantages and drawbacks, but novel times demand novel figures. Can we delineate a new role for the philosophers of the contemporary world? Or is it too late and we are bound to see the Icarus' falling of the public intellectual?

II - Diplomacy

In this section we shall return to Latour, who suggested some resources to deal better with the pressing matters-of-concern of the Anthropocene. This implies, as we shall see, a re-conceptualization of the public life of intellectuals. Skeptic of both the Nature/Culture dichotomy and the idealist excesses of rationalism, the French philosopher produced an entire *oeuvre* dedicated to renewing our understanding of science, technology, politics, religion, aesthetics, psychiatry, climate change, and even architecture. In his late writings – characterized by a recast of constructivism in the shape of "compositionism"[20] – it appears the intriguing figure of the diplomat. Broadly speaking, the diplomat is a translator who creates a nexus between different ontological and epistemological domains. However, such translation never assumes the existence of a meta-language capable of re-arranging all these metaphysical differences into a single template[21]. As we saw, the New Climate Regime poses the challenge

[19] Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Extremes* (Abacus, 1995).
[20] The French philosopher first used the compound 'social constructitivsm' but quickly dropped the adjective 'social'. Then he spent some years trying to rehabilitate a 'constructivism' tout court which included the agency of non humans – see Bruno Latour, "The Promises of Constructivism," in *Chasing Technoscience*, ed. Don Ihde and Evan Selinger (Indiana University Press, 2003). However, he eventually dropped the noun 'constructivism' and coined the more ecologically friendly term 'compositionism' – see Bruno Latour, "An Attempt at a Compositionist Manifesto," *New Literary History* 41, no.3 (2010): 474.
[21] Latour, *Inquiry*, 325.

of excessive hybridization. Technology has permeated every sphere of human life, from bio-metric watches to artificial insemination; Religion has returned under the proliferating light of new age mysticism; Gaia has started her revenge by altering the regular cycles of temperature; and so on. Cosmopolitics is the name of the game of composing a common inhabitable world for both humans and non-humans – and the diplomat is the key player. Due to limits and constraints, we cannot summarize the entire Latourian metaphysics or give a detailed assessment of the diplomatic proposal. One of the major difficulties of engaging with the French philosopher is that he was never alone. Faithful to the tenets of his actor-network theory, every time Latour advanced an idea, he actually condensed a whole series of authors, bibliographies, technical artifacts, and many other allies. Therefore, we will restrict ourselves to situate three moments pivotal in the formulation of this diplomat archetype.

The first moment was the largely ignored encounter between Latour, Isabelle Stengers, and Tobie Nathan[22]. During the 80s, Latour made a name for himself with his early books on sociology of science. And by the end of the 90s, he was eager to apply his actor-network theory to the realms of humanities, social sciences, and psychiatry. However, there was an unease ambiance within the main quarters of science and technology studies, since several colleagues were suspicious about the flirting between actor-network theory and technological determinism. Certainly, Latour had a flourishing career in the anglophone milieu, although he never left the francophone academic circles – where he met Isabelle Stengers. She was a rising scholar praised for her collaborations with Ilya Prigogine and her fine exegesis of the cryptic books of Deleuze and Whitehead. She was quite aware of the research done by sociologists of science, but she preferred a "hyper-internalist", "anti-anti-Whiggish", and normative-oriented approach[23]. Latour was immediately interested in Stengers' work, especially in her lesser known writings about drug legislation and hypnosis. In a sense, she represented an appealing alternative to the British sociologists who were hostile to actor-network theory. Additionally, Stengers had already worked with the maverick psychoanalyst León Chertok and had recently made acquaintance with the ethnopsychiatrist Tobie Nathan – who proudly mixed suggestion, witchcraft, and psychological interpretations in his treatments. Stengers, then, performed a crucial diplomatic gesture by introducing Latour to Nathan. That unlikely crossing triggered a deep intellectual symbiosis and engendered three fascinating books[24]. In them one can find

[22] The sole author who gives this encounter proper attention is Philippe Pignarre, *Latour-Stengers* (Polity, 2023), 61.
[23] For a comprehensive assessment of her philosophical style, see Bruno Latour, "Foreword," in *Power and Invention*, comp. Isabelle Stengers (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), viii.
[24] Tobie Nathan and Isabelle Stengers, *Doctors and Healers* (Polity, 2018), Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult*

complex discussions of overreaching themes such as the rise of biologic psychiatry, the anthropology of belief, the role of countertransference in behavioral sciences, the possibilities of a new polytheism, the alleged universality of the unconscious mind, and the conceptualization of human agency beyond the active/passive dichotomy. The three authors also questioned how iconoclasm and militancy became the basic repertoire of social scientists and psychoanalysts – something akin to the 'critique of critique' previously exposed.

A close reading reveals that it was Stengers who first defined the diplomat and made a direct link between this figure and the cosmopolitical proposal[25]. To be sure, the Belgium philosopher has extensively written about cosmopolitics and probably will not stop doing so anytime soon[26]. Nonetheless, diplomacy is neither about creating converging spaces – like Gertrude Stein's house at 27 rue de Fleurus – nor about establishing univocal definitions. Hesitation is the privileged mean for enabling pluralistic dialogues between different ontological and epistemological domains. Accordingly, it should be said that Tobie Nathan was the prototype of the diplomat avatar, since the quotidian activities of his ethnopsychiatric team took place at the intersection of psychology, law, culture, and religion. Nathan notes that each professional incarnates the knowledge habits (i.e., paradigms) and artifact networks (i.e., instruments) of a peculiar clan, which cannot be easily assimilated by outsiders[27]. He also indicates a clear distinction between the modernized patient – capable of navigating somewhat smoothly the different niches of factories, churches, malls, and so on – and the immigrant devoid from his native tongue, symbols, customs, and forced to tumble throughout the plethora of Western institutions[28]. These cases reveal the violent effects of colonialism: the immigrant is cut off from his own networks and must learn the inner workings of modernity in order to adapt and thrive in his new home. It goes without saying that it rarely happens the other way around. Ethnopsychoanalysis, first proposed by Georges Devereux, was the application of psychoanalytical theories to non-Western collectives, albeit carefully preventing any kind of

of the Factish Gods (Duke University Press, 2010) and Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Note that the original books were published in French back in 1995, 1996, and 1997, respectively. Albeit Nathan and Stengers were merely starting to gain international recognition, Latour had already gained his *lettres de noblesse*. It is somewhat baffling that his writings on psychiatry had to wait more than a decade to be translated, given that most of the times he published first in English and then in French!

[25] The Belgium philosopher devised an encompassing conceptual system that could be simultaneously used for epistemology and politics, based on the notions of 'obligations', 'requirements', 'faithful representation', 'negotiations', and 'betrayal'. See Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, 374.

[26] Recently, Stengers rehearsed her original argument, even though she has left behind the Whitehead parlance and has adopted some of Carl Schmitt's and John Dewey's vocabulary to better engage with current debates in political theory. See Isabelle Stengers, "We Are Divided," *e-flux* no.114 (2020): 3.

[27] Tobie Nathan, "The immigrant, his shrink, his judge, his social worker, and other representatives of the Occult," *Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies* 1, no.1 (1997): 311.

[28] Nathan, "Occult," 313.

cultural assimilation. Ethnopsychiatry, in the sense given by Nathan, is the rehabilitation of the immigrant's own native psychological networks in order to establish a more symmetrical exchange with modern institutions. Thus, the ethnopsychiatrist must frequently go to schools, prisons, and hospitals to discuss with the array of teachers, guardians, and doctors who constitute the new support system of immigrants patients. Unsurprisingly, diplomacy is always denser in practice than in theory. Also, note that this kind of work recognizes the immense difficulty of offering good translations, but still escapes the pitfalls of hyper-individualism. In other words, diplomacy can be understood as a low-level form of political representation – unlike the left-wing utopia of absolute self-representation considered above.

The second moment was the special issue of *Common Knowledge* titled "Talking Peace with Gods: Symposium on the Conciliation of Worldviews". As the editor explains, this collection presents a displacement from the theoretical disputes over (in)commensurability to the practical quest of commensurating different perspectives[29]. The symposium was arranged in two parts: 1) a debate between Ulrich Beck and Bruno Latour about cosmopolitanism; and 2) some contributions from Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Jeffrey Kripal, and Tobie Nathan. Beck's main argument was that a realistic cosmopolitanism cannot take the form of either universalism or relativism[30]. The former usually leads to the eradication of cultural differences, while the latter amounts to an irremediable mutual ignorance. Interestingly, the German sociologist also revisited the controversy between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas, signaling it as the starting point of the cosmopolitical project. Nowadays, Beck argued, globalization has reached a point where ethnicity, nationalism, and multi-culturalism have ceased to be useful references to deal with otherness[31]. Albeit Latour agreed on this point, he complained that Beck falls into a sort of "mono-naturalism" by assuming that non-humans play no active role in the composition of the cosmos and that disagreements between human societies were merely an interpretative issue[32]. Furthermore, the French philosopher also lamented that religion was completely missing in Beck's proposal:

> [R]eal peace is unattainable if negotiators leave their gods, attachments, and incompatible cosmos outside the conference room. [...] Hence the need for a second dimension to peacemaking, one that does not require detachment from the divinities that make us exist. This second dimension requires another protocol, another investigation, to answer another question: Through what sort of test do you render possible the distinction between good and bad

[29] Jeffrey Perl, "Preface to an Introduction," *Common Knowledge* 10, no.3 (2004): 426.
[30] Ulrich Beck, "The Truth of Others: A Cosmopolitan Approach," *Common Knowledge* 10, no.3 (2004): 431.
[31] Beck, "Truth of Others," 441.
[32] Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck," *Common Knowledge* 10, no.3 (2004): 453.

attachments?[33]

Here, Latour integrated Nathan's spiritual sensitivity and Stenger's normative philosophy. This conjugation of research and intervention became a defining trait of the new diplomatic role of the social scientist. The diplomat must be able to absorb dissents involving humans, non-humans, and divinities, avoiding any premature arrangements that foreclose the heterogeneous practices of each actor. Still, diplomacy does not equate to relativism insofar it does not stop at the recognition of equality. The diplomat is "capable of telling good from bad fabrications [and of] compar[ing] their goods with those of others so that the standards of their own products improve"[34]. Under this light, the diplomat goes beyond the role of translator and aspires to become a *bricoleur* unafraid of mixed media and motley resources.

The other essays of the special issue directly addressed the cosmopolitical question in a more explicit engagement with religion. Viveiros de Castro further developed the distinction between mono- and multi-naturalism, using Amerindian cosmology' stress on spiritual unity opposed to corporeal diversity as a counter-example to modernity[35]. Indeed, shamanism could be seen as an inversion of the modest witnessing of 'Nature'. While the experimental scientist seeks to render invisible the biases of his mind in order to achieve objective knowledge, the shaman aims to momentarily abandon his peculiar body to adopt the perspective of animals, deceased relatives, and divinities. Certainly, to cross ontological boundaries is a risky endeavor, for the shaman might become distorted beyond any possibility of return or might be overpowered by all kind of more-than-human entities[36]. While the diplomat and the shaman are not exactly homogeneous, they both share an awareness of the Protean quality of the sage who participates in politics. Passing to Nathan's contribution, we find a curious comparison between the practical guide of religion to reconcile with God and the existentialist idleness of secular psychology and its isolated *cogito*. For Nathan, diplomacy is ultimately incompatible with the absolutism present in both religion and science[37]. Believers must surrender to the power of their God and modern subjects must submit themselves to non-negotiable scientific truths. To counteract this impasse, the ethnopsychiatrist proposes a "parliament of Gods" which openly admits polytheism and carefully designates the humans who shall represent each

[33] Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Whose Cosmopolitics?" 457.
[34] Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Whose Cosmopolitics?" 461.
[35] Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies," *Common Knowledge* 10, no.3 (2004): 466.
[36] Viveiros de Castro, "Exchanging Perspectives," 468.
[37] Tobie Nathan, "The Phasmid and the Twig," *Common Knowledge* 10, no.3 (2004): 524.

divinity[38]. This suggestion is obviously an extension of Latour's "Parliament of Things"[39] – but it is not quite aligned with the diplomacy project devised so far, since it falls into the politics of deliberation and representation akin to classic critique. Finally, we have Kripal's essay, where he shared Latour's concern about opening a space for religious experience in our apparently secularized world. He also engaged with diplomacy in its traditional meaning, closer to international relations rather than philosophy. Kripal proposed mysticism as a deeper layer in which unambiguous communication is achievable[40]. Unfortunately, this argument goes against Latour's warning about the absence of meta-languages that might shortcut the task of the diplomat. The *Common Knowledge* special issue did not achieve any consensus, but it allowed the co-presence of many figures – Beck's cosmopolitan, Latour's diplomat, Viveiros de Castro's shaman, Nathan's Parliament of Gods, and Kripal's Gnostic scholar – that shaped each other's contours.

The third moment in our genealogy was the Taipei Biennial 2020, entitled "You and I Don't Live on the Same Planter". Latour was the co-curator of the exhibition and then the editor of a correlative special issue on *e-flux*. This time, the gathered pieces focused more explicitly on climate change and political theory. Of special interest are two essays by Paul Beatriz Preciado and Adam Tooze, who are partially suspicious about the overreaching application of diplomacy and its alleged radical rapture with modern politics. First, concerned with contemporary politics of reproductive rights, Preciado alerts that diplomacy cannot be so naive as to hope to negotiate with regimes that exert violence upon non-binary bodies. Mixing Wittgenstein's language games and Foucault's bio-politics, s/he redefines the diplomat as epistemic messengers "who would not sit at the table with representatives of the patriarchy, but who through their practices of memory, struggle, survival, and resistance invent another epistemology of the living body that displaces the very table of the binary and heteropatriarchal epistemology"[41]. Secondly, Tooze actively engages with Latour's recast of Schmitt's political theory for the Anthropocene, adverting that diplomacy never stands alone as it is usually accompanied by other modes of sovereignty. We can observe a difference between theology, economy, and jurisprudence – which appeal to a supreme order to sort out conflicts – and the

[38] Nathan, "Phasmid," 530.
[39] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 142. Although Latour rejected the image of a mystical unified 'Nature' and insisted upon the plurality of non-humans, he was still embedded in the 'ideology of culture' insofar he devised a legislative role for scientist. The displacement from law-making to diplomacy might indicate that the French philosopher saw his first proposal as something still falling into the modernist constitution.
[40] Jeffrey Kripal, "Comparative Mystics: Scholars as Gnostic Diplomats," *Common Knowledge* 10, no.3 (2004): 485.
[41] Paul Beatriz Preciado, "The Hot War." *e-flux* no.114 (2020): 6.

Schmittian trio politics/diplomacy/war – that designate allies, enemies, and projects in a radically contingent fashion. For Tooze, "[t]he challenge is not to pick one side or the other, but to negotiate how we distribute issues around this circle of options"[42]. In his view, the diplomat ought to have a much more constrained role in public discourse, since other 'older' forms of modern strategies might still be useful. Both Preciado and Tooze are sympathetic about Latour's invitation to reinvent the role of philosophers in the New Climate Regime, but they seem to have some reservations about the alleged end of the modernist parenthesis.

To summarize, the diplomat figure emerged from the crossing between actor-network theory and ethnopsychiatry. In other words, the diplomat is, at his core, a mixture of empirically informed sociology of science and a multicultural approach to therapy. A decade later, it took root in the interdisciplinary debates on cosmopolitics. Nowadays, it is a full-blown political proposal that has received widespread attention. Initially, the diplomat was supposed to serve as translator between actors coming from different spheres. Then, it became an eclectic artisan able to compare dissimilar skills and methods to solve practical problems, such as immigration, international warfare, and ecological policies. Even though diplomacy had a long tradition in international relations, Latour tried his best to characterize it in a non-modern fashion beyond the narrow frame of critique and deliberative politics. Predictably, his proposal met both support and skepticism. It goes beyond our scope to determine whether the diplomat archetype is suitable for the titanic task of saving humanity in the times of the Anthropocene[43]. But it suffices to point out that the diplomat is the latest shape in the Protean cascade of figures taken by philosophers in their ever-lasting quest of being 'socially committed'.

III - Therapy

Almost half-century ago, Richard Rorty distinguished between constructive and therapeutic philosophies: the former aims for systematic formulations which could be used as interpretative

[42] Adam Tooze, "After Escape: The New Climate Power Politics," *e-flux* no.114 (2020): 3.
[43] "The attitudes and attachments of a person of faith occupying the role of communicant or theological apologist are crucially different from those of a scholar of religion comparing practices from Papua New Guinea to Vatican City. Emic and etic, inside and outside, the experienced and the observed: the differences between them cannot be bridged; they can only be finessed. This, the "hard problem" of the philosophical tradi- tion, is also the hard problem of anthropotheological diplomacy. As simultaneously anthropologist of and missionary to the Moderns, Latour has attempted to solve or negotiate it by forging an original idiom—a way of speaking—that joins compelling evocations of religious experi- ence to passionate theorizing in the service of a prophetic summons to worldwide conversion. There is good reason to think the mission will fail. What has been constructed along the way, however, will reward our exploration for some time to come." Barbara Smith, "Anthropotheology: Latour Speaking Religiously," *New Literary History* 47, no.2&3 (2016): 347.

frameworks for reality, while the latter "is designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophizing" in a given way about certain issues[44]. Rorty enlisted the work of Heidegger, the second Wittgenstein, and Dewey as exemplars of therapeutic philosophy. Perhaps the first gesture of therapeutic philosophy would be Socrates' dialogue with Theaetetus, characterized by a grave concern about the way sophists indoctrinated the youth and the search for an alternative form of philosophy modeled after midwifery. In Ancient Greek, *therapon* was the term designated for the squire of royal warriors, a special kind of relationship that included mutual training, trust, and even erotic feelings – for instance, Patroclus and Achilles. We invoke this pre-modern allusion to go beyond the usual connotations of therapy as the 'psychological' process restrained to the inner world. Additionally, by expanding Rorty's list to include authors such as Latour, Nathan, and Stengers, we wish to explore any possible connections between therapy and diplomacy.

But before we need to distill both therapy and diplomacy from their remaining critical undertones. As noted in the first section, critical thinking was once liberating but then it became suffocating. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud are regarded as the masters of suspicion – and for good reason! Revolutionaries have no patience for those moderate left-wing parties willing to compromise with their opponents; iconoclasts merciless denounce the way theology still infuses our sense of morality; and psychoanalysts persist on their dismissal of any notion of rational, autonomous self. By the twentieth century, to be a philosopher – either analytical or continental – amounted to endorse the *ethos* of suspicion. That is why the return to scientific realism promoted by science and technology studies was so shocking for classic epistemology. For their part, diplomats and therapists cannot allow themselves to believe everything they hear without inquiring for hidden motives. Yet, too much skepticism would render futile any sort of negotiation or healing process. Diplomacy and therapy are about crafting better forms of life, not about dismissing beforehand any proposal for still having the scent of earlier struggles.

We saw that Latour and his colleagues have tried to dismount critical thinking and to offer suitable alternatives employing metaphysical arguments. But another possible path would be the mangle between feminism and affect studies, where the question of critique has been formulated as a case of paranoid feelings. With a sharp pragmatism, Sedgwick suggested that critical theories – which started to look quite similar to conspiracies – should not be addressed in terms of being truth or false. Rather, by asking "what does knowledge do – the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows?",

[44] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton University Press, 1979), 5.

we can leave behind any sort of cause-effect rationale and start to consider the affective dimension of theorizing as an activity. The problem with critical theory is that it became intoxicated with too much paranoia and whoever trying to step outside of it will be accused of naivety or complicity with the enemy[45]. To be in constant alertness to wolves in sheep's clothing equates to creating an emotional atmosphere where everything is predictable and nothing is surprising. Indeed, social science in late modernity has become a frenzy of mistrust. Marxists see potential exploitable markets even more than capitalists do and Foucauldians spot emerging disciplinary regimes quicker than governments. In order to avoid any humiliating ambush, the critical theorist forbids himself of an active seek positive affects such as care, trust, and vulnerability[46]. The sole pleasure allowed for paranoia is to expose the grotesque interests of those holding power. Moreover, critical theory produces an imaginary dialectical dance between a passive, credulous, and simple-minded masses mercilessly deceived by hypocritical master puppeteers – but, actually, both are chimerical cartoons[47]. Again, what kind of diplomacy or therapy could we expect from this apprehensive tone?

Maybe we should become comfortable with being qualified as 'a-critical' if we are to become philosophers-diplomats-therapists. However, beneath the machinery of critical thinking we find the ideal of progress – arguably, the very quintessence of modernity. This aspiration is what gave critique its steam in the first place[48]. Militancy is only meaningful if it is embedded in the (kitsch) discourse and sentiment of the "Grand March towards a better future", to borrow Kundera's expression[49]. In fact, this attitude is still present even among contemporary scholars sympathetic to ecology and post-colonialism. For instance, Renzo Taddei applauds that indigenous leaders have visibilized their cosmologies by occupying high-rank positions at government[50], while Boaventura de Sousa Santos rejoices in defining himself as a "rearguard intellectual […] at the end of the marching collectives, assisting those who are

[45] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 128. In a similar vein, Latour claimed: "What a surprising and almost contradictory question: how does one emancipate oneself from the hard drug of emancipation?". Latour, *Factish Gods*, 56.
[46] Feminism has provided valuable insights on positive affects – see, for instance, María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), Ángela Calvo de Saavedra, "La confianza: ¿categoría mediadora entre la obligación y el cuidado en filosofía moral?" *Universitas Philosophica* 26, no.53 (2009), and Nelly Oudshoorn, "The Vulnerability of Cyborgs: The Case of ICD Shocks," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 41, no.5 (2016).
[47] "How television-starved would someone have to be to find it shocking that ideologies contradict themselves, that simulacra don't have originals, or that gender representations are artificial?" Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 141.
[48] Martin Savransky, "After progress: Notes for an ecology of perhaps," *ephemera* 21, no.1 (2021): 270.
[49] Milan Kundera, *Unbearable Lightness Of Being* (Harper & Row, 1984), 235.
[50] Renzo Taddei, Davide Scarso e Nuno Castanheira, "A necessária Indomesticabilidade de termos Como 'Antropoceno': Desafios epistemológicos E Ontologia Relacional," *Revista Opinião Filosófica* 11, no.3 (2020): 10.

moving slowly, hesitating about whether or not abandon the fight"[51]. What is the point of rejecting classic philosophers – yes, those rationalist, bourgeois, Eurocentric authors we all had to read at one point or another – if we are still eager to incarnate the very role of the 'socially committed intellectual' devised by them? Philosophy is terrified by the accusation of being isolated in its Ivory Tower – and it should be, of course. But what should we do when dated militants accuse us – hybrid diplomats/therapists – of being 'reactionary' or 'regressive'? Next time, we might as well reply 'we are not so sure you are marching forward, for the old coordinates have become obsolete'.

To further illustrate these points, I will provide two brief auto-ethnographic vignettes extracted from my own experience as a psychotherapist working at a general hospital. These cases are from recent years, when I first encountered the bibliography about cosmopolitics and diplomacy. However, this does not mean that I deliberately acted in a 'diplomatic' way seeking to test Latour's and Stenger's intuitions. Still, I find some parallelism between my casuistry and the treatment illustration provided by Nathan – minus the multiculturalism, of course. Also, it must be noted that my way of proceeding 'diplomatically' is something completely absent from any clinical psychology curricula. In other words, I confess that I received no formal training whatsoever in the art of translation, bricolage, or conflict management. Furthermore, it might as well be the case that these cases reflect poor medical judgment and a flagrant transgression of the basic tenets of therapy. I myself ask me whether I acted correctly, but the outcome of the cases seems to ratify that. There have been cases of failed diplomacy, of course. And, ironically, those failures have taken place when I had to negotiate with psychiatrists, cardiologists, and other physicians. Pitifully, *nemo propheta in patria*.

M. is a male patient, around his forties, father of two daughters, who was a truck driver working in construction sites until he had an accident that left him partially immobilized. Doctors told him that pain would be chronic, just as the legal dispute between his employer and the insurance company. His life has greatly deteriorated ever since. One day M. arrived at my consulting room with a mixture of depressive, anxious, and somatic symptoms. "When will the pain stop?" and "When will I be able to go back to work?" were his recurrent questions during the first year of therapy. The notion of progress was the template he employed to interpret his new reality, so he inevitably felt angry for not being able to improve. While treating this patient,

[51] Joaquín Perren, Andrés Spongardi, Silvia Montenegro, Nicolás Welschinger Lascano, Santiago Conti, Maria Marta Quintana, Mariana Loreta Magallanes Udovicich e Lia Zóttola. "Reflexiones para la construcción de un intelectual de retaguardia. Conversaciones con Boaventura De Sousa Santos." *Estudios Del ISHiR* 4, no.9 (2014): 78.

Haraway's uncanny phrase frequently came to my mind: "The task of the Speaker for the Dead is to bring the dead into the present, so as to make more response-able living and dying possible in times yet to come"[52]. If I was of any service, it was that I helped M. to better communicate with his wife and kids about his pain; to defend himself when his employer pressured him to renounce and draw back the demand; to shamelessly request wheelchairs and priority use for elevators when he was in public spaces. Sadly, nothing more. Then, unexpectedly, during the third year of therapy, M's father died from an aggressive cancer. This situation shook M, who realized that he had let the shadow of his prior accident to paralyze his life, robbing him of many opportunities to maintain significant relationships and experiences. Along with the grief for his father, he started to properly mourn his broken back. If Dead is a truly divinity, would argue Nathan, then it is important to make peace with it.

J. is a female patient, around her fifties, mother of a boy and a girl, who used to work as a dance teacher before she got married. Her husband convinced her to leave their hometown due to a job opportunity for him. Gradually, he cut every tie with family and friends, isolating J. in the golden cage they had for home in an upper-class suburb. Years went by, until she found out about a love-affair her husband had with a gym trainer. J. had a nervous break-down – which, on top of her histrionic personality traits, led her to a constant sensation of alertness and despair. Paranoia is a pervasive affect, as Sedgwick noted. During the divorce trials, the husband recorded many interactions between J. and the kids seeking to portray her as a bad mother. Obviously, these and other sucker punches only reinforced her paranoia. Despite the emotional holding I provided her in therapy, her mistrust persisted. Since J. had no income or savings, she only had access to a public defender who was not very attentive of her case. For that reason, I had to actively engage in jurisprudence – first, to learn myself the basics of the trade and, then, to explain to her about the admission of evidence and other elements of standard procedure. Reluctantly, I also had to assume a pedagogical position and taught her how to write a CV, apply for jobs, deal with issues at the kid's school, and so on. The trials are still ongoing – something quite frequent in Latin America – but nowadays she is more suited to navigate through several challenging scenarios trusting herself and others. She even started a new romantic relationship with an old dancer colleague.

Both vignettes, necessarily fragmentary, are not meant to signal clinical success or academic erudition. On the contrary, they reveal the intimate liaison between diplomacy and therapy – both endeavors imply a displacement from the initial point of reference, a somewhat

[52] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Duke University Press, 2016), 69.

blind exploration into a foreign domain, and a willingness to compromise when an ideal solution is not entirely available. The case of M. reveals the difficulties of deconstructing our inherited intuitions around progress and J's story illustrates the pervasiveness of paranoia as the affective undertone of critical thinking. Avoiding these modern tropes is indeed a challenging feat, but pursuing care, trust, and fragility is a worthy goal. One final remark[53]. It might seem that my auto-ethnographic materials are provincial, since they portray philosophy-as-therapy on an entirely individualistic level in contrast with the wide-range quest of cosmopolitical diplomacy. This is a critique that we clinical psychologists receive all too often. Is our work, case by case, enough to transform society as a whole? Or, in a more charitable tone, what would this kind of therapeutic approach look like if applied to larger communities? I have a twofold answer. On the one hand, taking actor-network theory seriously, one must insist that the usual distinction between micro- and macro-levels of analysis is not a matter of qualitative dichotomies but rather an issue of scale. In other words, the distribution of methods according to these levels is more a disciplinary habit, rather than a consequence of the phenomena as such. Sociologists and economists, for instance, are accustomed to dealing with large populations, while ethnographers and literary critics are more at easy navigating local settings. If my vignettes strike as microscopic, perhaps a fellow psychologist working at a school or in human resources might retell experiences with bigger collectives. On the other hand, even though conventional therapy seems less rhizomatic than Nathan's ethnopsychiatry, it is far from being an isolated practice. Beyond the obvious fact that auto-therapy is not feasible and the presence of other interlocutor is required, both M. and J. cases reveal that the diplomat-therapist must deal with other legal, educative, and medical actors as well. Their presence might be indirect, but nonetheless it becomes pivotal in the healing process of the patients. And this is precisely what is meant by the diffusion of conventional coordinates in the cosmopolitical world. Dichotomies such as center/periphery, global/regional, or macro/micro simply cannot do justice to the intricate way in which diplomacy and therapy are mutually included.

Conclusion

In this essay we explored the Protean mutations of the public intellectual and the multiple metaphysical, political, and affective tensions derived in each case. In our cosmopolitical

[53] This question was posed by the anonymous reviewer of the essay. I am grateful to him and the journal editors for their questions, comments, and insight, which greatly helped me in crafting this piece.

world, older forms of social commitment call for renewal. We explored the diplomatic proposal, sketched by Bruno Latour alongside many intellectual allies. Then we examined if this role could be merged with philosophy modeled after therapy. It should not be an injunction for philosophy to assume the form of militancy. Philosophy as therapy is an equally valid position. Also, therapy should not be understood solely in terms of subjective emotional conflicts, but as the mutual fabrication of care, trust, and vulnerability dynamics. In this sense, therapy is political and, therefore, diplomacy could be seen as therapeutic. Humanity is eager to find new ways to compose the common world before it is too late. The answer is still unclear, but whatever it might be, it should be healing rather than oppressive, trustful rather than skeptical, and cautious rather than unerring.

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