Articles

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Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER

Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

12th Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts
7-10 June 2021, Athens, Greece

The Arts & Culture Unit of ATINER is organizing its **12th Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts, 7-10 June 2021, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of visual and performing arts, and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2021/FORM-ART.doc).

Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

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Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **9 November 2020**
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- Submission of Paper: **10 May 2021**

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24-27 May 2021, Athens, Greece

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The Reel (Re)Presentation of the Artist in Late Twentieth Century American Film

*By Dena Gilby**

Throughout the twentieth century, American films were not only a potent site of reflection, contention, provocation and contemplation of social, political, and religious mores, but also of the search for identity in the world. There were, additionally, a number of films that attempted to outline the character of the artist. Some romanticized the artist's life—one can think of Donald Sutherland's portrayal of Paul Gauguin as an almost tragic hero in A Wolf at the Door (1987), or the doomed anti-hero of Jeffrey Wright's Basquiat (1996). Others, such as Legal Eagles (1986) and I Shot Andy Warhol (1996), recreated the milieu of the art world, especially that of New York City. This presentation provides a comparison of A Wolf at the Door to Basquiat and Legal Eagles to I Shot Andy Warhol to reveal a deep-seated set of notions about artists and art, Modernism and Postmodernism to which the film industry of the last years of the twentieth century may be viewed as a response. The films capture traditional American views not only on the nature of the artist, but also larger issues; indeed, these films purportedly present to the viewer insights into the origins and manifestations of human creativity.

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, American films were a potent site of reflection, contention, provocation, and contemplation of social, political, and religious mores, of the search for identity in the world.[1] There were, additionally, a number of films that attempted to outline the character of the artist. Some romanticized the artist's life—one can think of Donald Sutherland's portrayal of Paul Gauguin as an almost tragic hero in *Oviri* (*A Wolf at the Door*) (1987), or the doomed anti-hero of Jeffrey Wright's limning of the titular character of *Basquiat* (1996). Others, such as *Legal Eagles* (1986) and *I Shot Andy Warhol* (1996), recreated the *milieu* of the art world, especially that of New York City. *Legal Eagles* and *I Shot Andy Warhol* treat a limited period of time in order to examine the "microhistory" of the art world of the late 1960s in New York. Arguably, however, the subtext of these films is not a particular location at a specific time, but the character of the artist throughout time and a simplified version of the nature/nurture debate. This paper provides a comparison of *Oviri* to *Basquiat* and *Legal Eagles* to *I Shot Andy*

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*Professor, Endicott College, USA.

1. For an exploration of the "social-ideological value of film" see Richard Dyer, "Introduction to Film Studies," in *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, ed. John Hill, and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford and NY: Oxford University, 2000), 4-8.

Warhol to reveal a deep-seated set of notions about artists and art, Modernism and Postmodernism to which the film industry of the last years of the twentieth century responded.[2] This reaction seems to encapsulate American views not only on the nature of the artist, but also larger issues; these films purportedly present to the viewer insights into the origins and manifestations of human creativity.

It is not the purpose of this paper to parse the historical accuracy and inaccuracy in the filmic texts. While this is a useful and enlightening exercise and pertinent details will be pointed out, it will not ultimately bring the viewer closer to understanding the representation and reception of the celluloid construction of the artist. What such an enterprise can do is delineate the historical conditions of an artist in his/her time by highlighting where films fail to capture historical specificities. Moreover, this paper is not concerned with the aesthetic elements of these productions. This facet is too immense to be handled in this venue; instances in which the aesthetics help to construct the artist's character, note will be taken. Finally, it is not the author's intention to denigrate the medium of film; only the mis(sed)representations about artists that seem to dominate American Hollywood cinema at the end of one century and beginning of another; rather, the point of departure in this essay is the idea of representation: that film both reflects and defines the object of representation. Moreover, the image, itself, has been sieved through many layers, both culturally and societally specific and individually perceived. The artist as subject, in this way, seems an apt canvas for the American filmmaker. He or she is able to encapsulate myriad notions about creativity, art, the art world, as well as to explore what many believe to be a uniqueness in the artistic individual through providing a few broad strokes on the artists' character. Related issues include the following: what do audiences really believe about artists? What do they derive from viewing an artist's life on film and is "truth" what they are after? Do they identify with the artist? Do they wish to be the artist? Ultimately, these issues rest on "the "theory of identification," that is outlined by Christian Metz, in which viewers are seen to identify primarily with the camera and secondarily with a character.[3] Thus, in these films, the secondary identification will be with the artist, causing the viewer to sympathize or empathize with his/her circumstances. Of concern, too, are the psychoanalytical theories that Laura Mulvey proved to be so seminal to film images. Through theories of the gaze that Mulvey parses, the artist becomes the viewed upon which the viewer can play out their own fantasies of genius and creativity without the sting of rejection.

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2. David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, (eds.), *Post-theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1996); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2000); Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

3. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).

Literature Review

The literature on the depiction of artists in mainstream films; that is, not documentaries but studio and independently produced biopics, demonstrates a consensus that these films are less about the facts of an artist's life and more about capturing the personality of the artist.[4] Some address that, because of the medium, feature films often focus on a limited story – even if the themes are quite lofty or complex – in order to examine the "microhistory" of the art world. Arguably, however, the subtext of these films is not a particular location at a specific time, but the character of the artist throughout time and a simplified version of the nature/nurture debate.[5] Additionally, a number of authors focus on the fact that artists' biopics more often than not construct the personality along several stereotypes, the most compelling of which to filmmakers (according to a majority of the critical texts) is the myth of the artist-genius, as well as the idea that creativity comes from mental anguish.[6] Finally, a few authors emphasize how the art world is the emphasis of the film rather than the artist him/herself.[7]

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4. Carolyn Anderson and Jonathon Lup, "Off-Hollywood Lives: Irony and Its Discontents in the Contemporary Biopic," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 102-112; Bernard Beck, "Real Genius: *Pollock* and Portraits of Artists in Movies," *Multicultural Perspectives* 3, no. 4 (2001): 11 -14; Doris Berger, *Projected Art History: Biopics, Celebrity Culture, and the Popularizing of American Art* (NY and London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Anne Billson, "The Art of Film: Galleries in the Movies," *The Telegraph*, posted January 9, 2015, accessed May 23, 2020, https://goo.gl/NYi31M; David Bovey, "The Artist Biopic: A Historical Analysis of Narrative Cinema, 1934-2010" (PhD. diss., University of Westminster, 2015); Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Jim Leach, "A Matter of Life and Art: Artist Biopics in Post-Thatcher Britain," in *Rule, Britannia! The Biopic and British National Identity*, ed. Homer B. Pettey, and R. Barton Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 163-181; Bronwyn Polaschek, *The Postfeminist Artist Biopic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Belen Vidal, "Feminist Historiographies and the Woman Artist's Biopic: The Case of Artemisia," *Oxford Journal* 48, no. 1 (2007): 69-90.

5. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 6; Bovey, 2015; Leach, 2018.

6. Beck, "Real Genius," 11-14; Laura R. Grasso, "Misery, Then Tragedy: The Rise and Fall of an Artist's Myth in Relationship to the Culture Industry" (Master's Thesis, Sotheby's Institute of Art, 2015); Rivka D. Mayer, "Transformations of Cinematic Signifiers of the Myth of Genius," Master's Thesis (University of Liverpool, 2001).

7. Billson, 2015; Berger, 2014; Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Jim Gaylord, "10 Things Hollywood Teaches Us About the Art World," *Art in the Movies*, posted December 24, 2014, accessed May 23, 2020, https://goo.gl/XzKPfX; Steven Jacobs, "Strange Exhibitions: Museums and Art Galleries in Film," in *Strange Spaces: Explorations into Mediated Obscurity*, ed. André Jansson, and Amanda Lagerkvist (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 297-316; Peter Plagens, "Biopics Mix Shticks, Kitsch," *ARTnews* 105, issue 11 (December 2006): 118-121.

Methodology

This essay uses cultural analysis to parse the films' intended and subconscious levels of meaning.[8] Such an analysis of the cultural, ideological, and political messaging implicit in the various products offers insight into the ways that these films both reveal and construct stereotypes about artists and the nature of the creative life.[9]

Plot Summaries

As an aid to gleaning the film-going public's conceptions of the artist, fostered by filmmakers (and perhaps even created by them), a mapping of the plots of these films is necessary. A cartography of the narrative line clearly demonstrates how academic discourses on Modernism and Postmodernism filter into how filmmakers conceive and present concepts of the nature of the artist's life and creativity.[10] *Oviri* chronicles the years 1893-1895 in the life of Paul Gauguin. He has returned from his first sojourn in Tahiti (1891-92) and is desperate to return to the South Pacific.[11] The film focuses on Gauguin's efforts to secure the funds to do so, while simultaneously exploring the roots of his creativity through his relationships, especially with women. *Basquiat*, like *Legal Eagles*, treats the 1980s New York art scene. However, the focus is on a single artist and the film reads like a monograph of an artist's life and *oeuvre*.[12]

After a young woman, Chelsea Dearden, is caught attempting to steal a painting, the New York City Assistant District Attorney (played by Robert

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8 Karen Gocsik, Dave Monahan, and Richard Barsam, *Writing About Movies*, fifth edition (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 55-57.

9. Gocsik, Monahan, and Barsam, Ibid. As a trained art historian, I also draw on the new art history in which art is examined as intimately connected to the society in which it is created. See, Anne D'Alleva, *Look! Again: Art History and Critical Theory* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2005), 72-76; Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction* (London and NY: Routledge, 2001), 1-34.

10. Peter Brunette, "Post-structuralism and Deconstruction," in *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford and NY: Oxford University, 2000), 89-93.

11. Françoise Cachin, *Gauguin: The Quest for Paradise* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1992); Gabriele Crepaldi, *Gauguin: A Restless and Visionary Genius—His Life in Paintings* (NY: Dorling Kindersley, 1999); Stephen Eisenman, *Gauguin's Skirt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

12. Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Basquiat* (Milan: Charta, 1999); Phoebe Hoban, *Basquiat: A Quick Killing in Art* (NY: Penguin, 1997), Richard Marshall *et al.*, *Jean-Michel Basquiat* (NY: Abrams, 1995); Glenn O'Brien, *Basquiat* (NY: Tony Shafrazi Gallery, 1999).

Redford) and a young, independent defense attorney (played by Debra Winger) are drawn into the New York art world in search of the truth about the "theft" in *Legal Eagles*. What they uncover is a web of fraud and homicide stretching back almost twenty years, from 1986 to 1968. *I Shot Andy Warhol* similarly follows a single female character, Valerie Solanas, as she circles the ultra-hip art *milieu* of Andy Warhol from the fall of 1966 through the spring of 1968, at which point she shoots Warhol and is incarcerated in a mental institution.[13]

Artist Stereotypes: The Modernist/Postmodernist Divide

The artist in films that are essentially biopics is usually presented in what may be called a truly Modernist idiom: misunderstood, anti-*bourgeois*, suffering, genius. In *Oviri*, for instance, Gauguin is limned at the Durand-Ruel Gallery showing of his misunderstood Tahitian works. In this venue he endures the coarse comments of the uncomprehending masses, and the film viewer is introduced to the concept of the wolf. [14] The title of the film, furthermore, acts as a summary statement. Gauguin is the wolf at the door of late nineteenth century Parisian salon society.[15] As the creature who would rather die than exist in captivity, he cannot allow himself to be fettered by the constricting chains of *bourgeois* domesticity. One scene in particular demonstrates this contention. It is the scene of Gauguin with his wife and a coterie of respectable Danish couples riding in a haywain. Gauguin is trussed up in a "monkey suit," his hair slicked down unnaturally. Suddenly, he leaps from the vehicle, tears off the offensive clothing and escapes down the road to freedom, shocking the imprisoned (unaware of their chains) passengers.

Part of Modernism's creed is that the artist lives innately, is not tamed—and therefore stripped of his/her natural abilities. Basquiat is limned as such a

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13. For an instructive example of what the Factory was like, confer with the photographs of Billy Name, *All Tomorrow's Parties: Billy Name's Photographs of Andy Warhol's Factory* (NY: Powerhouse Cultural Entertainment, 1997). Additionally, Matthew Collings offers up pithy tales about the scene, one of which is this interesting insight on Solanas: "She ended her days in a welfare hotel, dying alone in the 80s sometime. Her book *The SCUM Manifesto* is fantastically well written with an intelligent condensed style and sharp humour [sic]. Although shooting people is bad, it's an injustice that history doesn't recall how good a writer she was [. . .] " (*It Hurts: New York Art from Warhol to Now* [London: 21 Publishing, 1998]), 14.

14. In a letter to the critic André Fontainas, Gauguin recounts the tale about the wolf. He states that Degas, at the Durand Ruel show of November 1893, described a fable by La Fontaine as apt to Gauguin's character. The wolf, according to the tale, would rather starve than be placed in a collar and pampered, for then the wolf is not free. Cachin, *Gauguin*, 146 reproduces the letter.

15. John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capitol of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

wild child, the product of the streets, and a "natural" artist untouched by the pretentious, overly educated, no talent masses.[16] The viewer's first glimpse of him, in fact, is when he emerges from a cardboard box in which he has obviously slept. Hence, in both *Oviri* and *Basquiat*, the artist is someone who is untrained or innately genius; this genius causes him to be misunderstood and to suffer, for it is in true suffering that art emerges. This idea is perpetuated in Jeffrey Wright's performance: Basquiat is a man whose abilities transcend verbal articulation; while he cannot speak a sentence without stuttering, repeating or pausing in odd places, he can and does paint creative verve onto the canvas. In these two films both Gauguin and Basquiat are, in many ways, misfits. Gauguin, though admired by his compatriots, is not understood by mainstream French society of the era; within his peer group, he is not a shocking and provocative figure; he is the dominant figure, the man to whose genius everyone defers. While this may seem an enviable position, none of his colleagues have the courage of their convictions, and he is left to sail for Tahiti alone. Basquiat loses all his friends because they cannot really understand the mind of this genius. They reject him when he fails to live by *bourgeois* rules; such as holding down a job, being faithful or arriving on time for appointments.

Oviri and Basquiat

In developing the Modern/Postmodern, heroic artist, one element that both films cover is the issue of race and the art world. Gauguin is beyond the petty, colonial attitude toward "others"—on the one hand, he defends the honor of his half-Javanese model/mistress against a bunch of ruffians, on the other, he is enmeshed in the European male's objectification and exploitation of the open sexuality of the exotic, non-European woman.[17] Basquiat is delineated as someone who the art world saw as an "exotic" because of his blackness, and they both admired him and despised him for it. In one restaurant scene, for example, a group of middle-aged white businessmen stare and snicker at Basquiat; he pays for their meal. Therefore, the artist is someone who is not bound by the prejudices and injustices of the society from which he emerges. In this way the artist transcends time to become a universal being with whom

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16. It is not only films that promote this view. Hoban's chronicle of Basquiat is subtitled "A Quick Killing in Art," which clearly perpetuates the idea that Basquiat was destroyed by the avarice and disregard of in Basquiat's circle of friends, associates, and dealers (both art and otherwise).

17. Ambroise Vollard probably introduced this woman, Annah le Javanaise, to Gauguin. In December of 1893, she became Gauguin's model and mistress. This arrangement lasted until her return from Pont-Aven in the fall of 1894; moreover, every major text and this film on Gauguin retells the story of Gauguin versus the sailors and stevedores of Pont-Aven, defending the honor of his little Annah. See Cachin, *Gauguin*, 97-98.

anyone could relate.

Artists disregard, moreover, the hypocritical sexual mores of mainstream, heterosexual society. Gauguin cannot be tied to one woman; Basquiat must follow his impulses in this regard as well. Henning does not acknowledge that Gauguin's sexual promiscuity was very damaging to women: even after finding out he had syphilis, Gauguin continued to pursue young women and to do nothing to prevent their contraction of the disease.[18] Schnabel, too, has selective memory of the events and effects of Basquiat's sexual being because Schnabel does not tell the whole story.[19] Basquiat had a number of relationships with both women and men and he carried on simultaneous, multiple relationships. Schnabel presents a conglomerate character for Basquiat's girlfriend; Schnabel then provides Courtney Love in a cameo as a one-night stand to intimate Basquiat's promiscuity. Nowhere within the film do we hear about the many people he infected with gonorrhea or the multiple times he did so.[20]

In order to preserve, perhaps, the tragic element of the life of Basquiat, the film *Basquiat* fails to focus on how excessive drug use in many senses destroyed Basquiat, the man. Perhaps Schnabel as writer and director felt this was too simple an answer and one that was too *cliched* to deserve notice. Thus, in several instances, Schnabel prefers to water down or ignore characteristics of Basquiat that some may find unappealing; perhaps he does this to heighten the viewer's sense of sadness at Basquiat's demise by making the viewer believe Basquiat to have been a "victim of circumstance" and of the craven attitudes of his dealers and collectors. Schnabel carries this hagiography of Basquiat to its conclusion in the culminating scene of the film. Basquiat wanders aimlessly—in his pajamas—along the streets of New York City as an almost operatic aria by John Cage swells behind our fallen hero. Then, he "surfs" from the car of his friend, Al Diaz (played by Benicio Del Toro), looking like the *Statue of Liberty* and jammin' to the Postmodernly hip *Pogues*. Shortly after this episode, authoritative text reveals that Basquiat died at age twenty-seven from a heroin overdose. Hence, the implication of this scene is not that Basquiat has lost, not only his friends, but also his mind, but rather that external forces killed him.

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18. Eisenman, *Nineteenth Century Art*, 1997.

19. Schnabel narrates a moving tale of the solitary genius, the tragicomic *pierrot* or operatic clown thereby creating the romance in the words of David Bielejac, "artists as unique individuals who feel more deeply and have a burning, inner need to communicated spiritual truths [. . .]" and by transmitting this idea "[. . .] he effectively promoted his heroically scaled paintings as valuable handmade objects." See David Bjelajac, *American Art: A Cultural History* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 386.

20. Hoban, *Basquiat*, 1997.

Legal Eagles and I Shot Andy Warhol

Filmmakers' treatment of female characters is much less kind and infinitely less hagiographic. For instance, Chelsea Dearden—a completely fictional character—is rather one-dimensional. Instead of her artistic talent, it is her sexual allure that is played up within the narrative because she seduces one of the two main characters, Tom Logan, played by Robert Redford. Even her art emphasizes her sexual being: Dearden performs using over-lifesize photographs of herself, fire, and her own body writhing on the floor. Her art emanates from trauma and pain, because one can equate her physical actions as obsessively recreating the central trauma of her life: the death of her father from a fire in their studio/living quarters when Dearden was eight years old. Although the film is, ostensibly, about art, artists and the New York art scene of the mid-eighties, no one in the film is very interested in Dearden's art. Even though Dearden performs for Redford, they never substantively discuss the performance. Moreover, the galleries they visit are populated with works of Modern "masters": Picasso, Miro, Mondrian, and Dearden's father who plays a major part in the film although he is absent physically. One sees Victor (Dearden's father) from the back in flashback scenes, or so far away that his visage is obscured. Ironic, too, is the fact that his art is spoken about, but it is invisible: glimpsed only from the back where only the stretcher is in view. His work is ranked among the Modernist masters; whereas, Dearden's Postmodern performance is denigrated within the film. Hannah's Chelsea Dearden states about the one Postmodernist work that is even remarked upon, "Victor hated the Bertolini, he thought it was ridiculous…".

The subsidiary, yet ubiquitous, characters of *I Shot Andy Warhol* are as one-dimensional as those of *Legal Eagles*; artists at The Factory are presented as aesthetes and spoiled children in *I Shot Andy Warhol*. At the Factory people work on their art, yet they do not appear to have or even need to earn money. Money is not discussed, except in a very abstract way. This is contrasted with the many scenes of Solanas' hustling, prostituting, selling her words on the streets to whomever will pay. This mercantilism extends from and binds Solanas and Warhol. Warhol incessantly seeks out journalists, wealthy aristocrats and publicity. In one scene, he strolls around his studio discussing how everything must look a certain way for the press coming to interview him. Although Solanas is neither an aesthete, nor a spoiled child, she is complicit in this commodification of art and the art world. Her daily struggles to survive and to sell her work (soul?), moreover, imply that the "true" artist makes no distinction between art and the "real" world; therefore, every action of the artist—including violence—is an act of art.

When filmmakers choose to focus on women artists, the sexual politics of the films dictate that, instead of innate genius, female artists derive their creativity from insanity, or at least a fragile mental stability. This stands in stark contrast

to male artists whose genius does not derive from imbalance; these artists are simply misunderstood by a philistine social environment. In *Frida*, for instance, Frida Kahlo is displayed in the last few hours of her life as a woman out of her mind, seeing only the past and her immanent death. Likewise, *I Shot Andy Warhol* explores Solanas' insanity, hyper-sensitivity and/or unhinging creativity. Thus, this film refuses to indulge in Modernist pronouncements of "truth" (in the sense of overall impression of the era, or in keeping with the "historical conditions") commonly seen as a criterion for historical films.[21] At points, for instance when Valerie is panhandling or soliciting, she seems perfectly sane; in fact, perhaps the only sane person in her environment. At other times; specifically, when she is engaged in the production of her art, the *SCUM Manifesto*, she appears aggressive and unhinged. In other words, it is creating that imbalances Solanas, not society's incomprehension of the nature of creative genius. Finally, the director, Mary Harron, intercuts, in typical Postmodern collage, black-and-white scenes in which Valerie "explains" herself, using the words of the manifesto.[22] In one particularly disturbing sequence, one sees Solanas creating her manifesto, followed by a black and white scene of her reading it which the cuts directly to a scene of a man shoving money into Solanas' mouth and then screwing her up against a brick wall. While one can view the overall sequence as theatrical and flattering to the character of Solanas by focusing exclusively on her as she works tirelessly on her manifesto, one can also say that these scenes appear like police line-ups with the criminal standing–alone and spotlighted–in a drab and indistinct interior. The blankness of the wall, therefore, contrasts with the raving of the character to create a sense that the character is off-balance, too animated.

Whereas the artists in *Oviri* and *Basquiat* are bound by their connections to "woman as muse," in *Legal Eagles* and *I Shot Andy Warhol* the issue of character cannot be divorced from that of sexual politics. In examining films about artists in general, it is clear that there is a strongly gendered reading by filmmakers that breaks down both in the titles and in the overall presentation of the artist. In addition to the disconcerting resort to insanity as creative font of women, even when a film is professedly about a sane woman, the plot often centers on an important male figure. *I Shot Andy Warhol* is presented ostensibly as a first-person narrative; however, there is little connection between the "I" of the title and the character of Solanas herself, in that the discourse is generally "told" in the third-person. The character of Warhol is given as much screen time as the figure of Solanas. The first scene, for example, is one of Warhol's

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21. Dudley Andrew, "Film and History," in *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford and NY: Oxford University, 2000), 174-187; Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 9-15, 127-136, 138-140, and 157-160; Rosenstone, *Visions*, 201-205; Maria Wyke, *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema, and History* (NY: Routledge: 1997).

22. A copy of this manifesto can be found on the internet at Tom Jennings, *Valerie Solanas' Scum Manifesto*, posted January 1994, accessed 17 May 2020, https://bit.ly/3d99PVT

twitching legs. Subsequently, Solanas accosts a police officer to declare, "I shot Andy Warhol." The implication is that Solanas gains celebrity not for her accomplishments, but for her act of violence toward a well-known male artist. The film concludes in the same way, bringing the viewer full circle and diminishing Solanas' agency.

Warhol in this film is as much of a focus as is Solanas and this is not unusual in films that ostensibly treat women artists; for example, in *Camille Claudel* and *Artemisia*, August Rodin, Orazio Gentileschi and Agostino Tassi, respectively, play major roles; the creativity and artistic accomplishments of the women, on the other hand, are seen as products of the training the men have provided. Warhol is also the only person with whom, on some level, Solanas feels a connection. In the pivotal Factory party scene, Warhol and Solanas form a sort of island among the insensate beings lying about. This connection is illusory, however, because Warhol exploits, betrays and tacitly condones others' ridiculing of Solanas. Within this context it is clear why Solanas shoots Warhol. Simultaneously, by this point the film reverses its implicit critique of Warhol's treatment of Solanas, because the violence manipulates the viewer to identify with Warhol. Solanas is presented in the end as completely insane, believing her publisher has inserted an electronic tracking or controlling device into her uterus. The film, therefore, reads at the end as the biography of one woman's fall into insanity. The ending texts also inform us that Solanas died in a welfare hotel; when "cured" of her malaise, she became unproductive, destitute not only of goods, but also of creativity. She is thus unmasked as ordinary, not extraordinary and average, not genius.

In *Oviri*, women are little more than another object Gauguin uses to create his art. His Danish wife, Mette, who no longer serves his art, is displayed as severe, grasping and mercantile. She sells his paintings and hounds him for money, not because she is a woman trying to raise five children with little support from their father, but because she is a symbol of the *bourgeoisie* that can only appreciate the utility of art, not its beauty. Furthermore, Gauguin's half-Javanese model, whom he takes as a lover soon after her arrival at his studio, eventually desecrates one of his paintings and steals his money. The innocence of his landlord's daughter—who also provides some voiceover narrative—entices Gauguin to consider staying, but staying means being imprisoned in the petty values of mainstream French society. Moreover, in *Oviri*, the women have no names, while all the men are named, even minor and fleeting characters.

In *Basquiat*, too, women have little place beyond serving the ego of the artist. Gina, Basquiat's girlfriend, is long-suffering and indistinctly limned. During the time of the film she is transformed from an attractive, seemingly well-adjusted waitress/painter to a vamp in some scenes and a skeletal (perhaps drug-addled) shadowy background figure in others. Just as Basquiat is embroiled in his fall from grace—symbolized by the dark, black and rancid looking spots that appear

on his face—he invites "Gina," (a character who is an amalgam of the plethora of Basquiat's girlfriends) now his ex-girlfriend, to eat in a chic restaurant. She is once again young and fresh looking and, apparently, happy. However, what emerges from their conversation is that the lesson she took from her relationship with Basquiat is that she is not a "true" painter. Thus, Basquiat is limned as the isolated genius, while "Gina" is just ordinary and only truly happy when she can be useful to the men in her environment: she is working for René Ricard and will attend law school the following term.

An extremely important element of the metanarratives of filmic texts on artists is their approach to the material. Although none of the films under discussion is a period drama or epic, it may be said that almost all of these films encourage a reading of them as some sort of historical document: presenting a vision of an artist or art environment in or of the past.[23] A major ramification of treating these films as "historical documents" without being concerned much with history, is the willful omission of the complexities of the historical periods the filmmakers examine. A powerful example of this occurs in the contrast between the actual, diverse segment of avant-garde elements present in late nineteenth century French culture and how *Oviri* (re)presents this period as *haute bourgeois* and stifling on the one hand and bohemian in the extreme on the other.[24] By setting up a strict polarization of the two, society is the misfit, not the artist.

A second element of the metanarratives is their critique of the motives of the art-buying public, as well as the stereotypes they bring to their purchase of art. For Basquiat, at least according to Schnabel, eighties consumerism was a powerful force. Even though people are willing to pay fabulous sums for Basquiat's work, made available through commercial networks such as the Annina Nosei Gallery, New York society does not understand Basquiat, the man.[25] Basquiat becomes, therefore, as much a product as his works; his image—wild, unkempt, and "exotic" interests the art buying public as do his works. In reality, it cannot be said that buyers and artists were merely carried away with "hype"'; rather, they were knowledgeable and had been engaged in art criticism since, at least, World War II. The New York City art scene; particularly relating to postmodern artists, had been growing exponentially since World War II. Galleries handling twentieth century artists went from ninety to 290 in the years between 1949 and 1977. In 1984-85, the height of Basquiat's popularity, 1900 one-person exhibitions were held in New York City alone. Additionally, over one million people were identifying themselves

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23. Andrew, "Film and History," 174-187; Robert Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Rosenstone, *Visions*, 1996.

24. Eisenman, *Gauguin's Skirt*, 1994; Milner, *Studios of Paris*, 1990 examine the myriad art movements, avant-garde trends, and societal upheavals of late nineteenth century Paris.

25. Hoban, *Basquiat*, 114, 127-28, and 157.

as artists on the 1980 Census; on the 1990 Census 1.7 million self-identified as artists. The patrons for art were also evolving. From 1940 to 1980 there was a sixty-seven percent increase in corporation funding of new museums.[26] Similarly, the discourses of *Legal Eagle* and *I Shot Andy Warhol* explicate the notion that the art world of the 80s is crass and materialistic, while the artist is someone who is sensitive and must be protected from the crass materialism of the art scene as a whole. The filmmakers stress this concept repeatedly: parties abound where people wander aimlessly, seemingly more interested in other people than the art; each room of the galleries is filled with Modernist masterpieces, yet the work is never spoken of, it just exists as icons of the taste of the characters and of their rarefied world. The art world of the 60s, likewise, is superficial and populated by fawning dilettantes as the many scenes of the Factory, restaurants and bars of *I Shot Andy Warhol* make clear.

Conclusions

Finally, in attempting to understand these films, it is crucial to address the Modern/Postmodern divide (if there are truly points of identifiable split). In their individual narrative discourses, these four films, when compared and contrasted, do divulge Modernist and Postmodernist ideas about art and artists.[27] In this context it can, perhaps, be said that while a Modernist believes in absolute truth, a Postmodernist is sure there is no such thing. If a Modernist can "trust the process" to convey the meaning, the Postmodernist disregards process and prioritizes content.[28] If the Modernist believes in masters, the Postmodernist believes in the pluralism of experience of the art object. Lastly, if the Modernist knows that art has its own value, the Postmodernist is sure that context is art's value.

The emphasis on the "misunderstood master" of *Oviri* and the tragic hero of *Basquiat* display the artist in a Modernist manner. The focus on the commerce of art and Postmodern forms of performance art in *Legal Eagles* appear Postmodern in conception. However, the multivalency of *Basquiat* and the constant display of modern masters in *Legal Eagles* belie their artist presentations. This adds a level of discomfort and ambiguity for the viewer that the straightforward Modernist *Oviri* does not: is *Basquiat* Modern or Postmodern? Given that the film is only four years old and the *milieu* of the film—the excessive,

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26. Bjelajac, *American Art*, 330.

27. John Hill, "Film and Postmodernism," in *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford and NY: Oxford University, 2000), 94-103.

28. Bjelajac, *American Art*, 2000; Cachin, *Gauguin*, 1992; Crepaldi, *Gauguin*, 1999; Collings, *It Hurts*, 1998; Eisenman, *Gauguin's Skirt*, 1997; John Rewald, *Studies in Post-Impressionism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986).

über-Postmodern, cynical, satirical, ironic *mélange* of 80s New York— one expects the film to have a more Postmodern thematic and theoretical underpinning than a standard tale of a genius done in by the forces of evil and his own ego (all grist of the Modernist mill). *Legal Eagles*, too, is essentially Modern in that it is the art of Dearden's Modernist father that is really lauded in the film, although the viewer never actually sees his paintings. Dearden's art is known largely *in absentia*, except for the scene enumerated above. That scene appears more mocking than serious, thus decimating respect for Postmodern aesthetic forms. *I Shot Andy Warhol* is the only truly and consistently Postmodern of the four films in its steadfast refusal to allow the viewer to identify one unbroken truth about art, the art world, Valerie Solanas and life itself. In an authentic Postmodernist vein, *I Shot Andy Warhol* is engorged with irony, or the satiric stance. The culmination of Solanas' ruminations in an act of violence as art is the supremely ironic element of the film, for destruction and creation are rarely linked so explicitly.

In terms of American culture at the beginning of a new millennium, this essay demonstrates that filmmakers are attempting to create an image of the perfect artist. That artist is male, genius, suffering (but not from insanity) and supremely misunderstood. The trope "artist" does not acknowledge the possibility of adding successful and well-balanced individuals the canon of "Greats." For all of these reasons, it is unlikely that Hollywood will anytime soon create the biopic "Georgia of the Desert." It is because of this inability to allow for a diversity of images of artists that the American viewing public will continue to believe a number of stereotypes the ramifications of which are immense. Some Americans may believe that one does not have to promote and support art programs; nor does one need to feed starving artists. The reasoning, inferred from the themes and characterizations in Hollywood films, would be that artistic ability is innate and cannot be augmented through education. Concomitantly, one does not have to feed a starving artist because it is the nature of the artist to be starving, it is suffering, instability, addiction and abuse that reveal the celluloid artist as worthy of the title "Artist."

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"Like a Battering-Ram":
The Place of Language in Levinas's Thought[1]

*By Dorit Lemberger**

The writings of Levinas address several existential questions, which relate to the primacy of ethics as "first philosophy," [2] and set up language as a system that enable ethical behavior in a concrete manner. However, there is no separate discussion of language, so it might seem that it derives from the transcendent intentionality that precedes it. As a result, there is a blurring of the connections between the ways in which language functions as a point of departure, at whose basis lies the freedom of choice between a commitment to the "I" and responsibility towards the "Other." This article extracts from Levinas's writings examples of the turning point and shows how language makes it possible to formulate possibilities, and select among them. Levinas's talmudic readings are a special and central example of this process.

Introduction: The Double Function of the Linguistic Medium

To thematize is to offer the world to the Other in speech.[3]

In this article I will show that, for Levinas, language constitutes the foundation on which ethical action is possible, based on a choice in a meaningful world. Hence, according to Levinas, Language is an objective platform, a set of signs that makes it possible to replace indirect relations with direct relations and even to liberate the subject from the use of words, to distinguish among individuals, and to serve as the medium that reflects the ethical perspective towards the Other and provides it with meaning. Language makes it possible for the Other to appear before us even before we are able to express its appearance; it enables us to take note of alterity, and, in the end, to choose to relate to it in an ethical manner.

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1. Emmanuel Levinas, "Language and Proximity," in: *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987): 109–27, 122.

2. "It is in the laying down by the ego of its sovereignty […] that we find ethics and also probably the very spirituality of the soul, but most certainly the question of the meaning of being, that is, its appeal for justification. This first philosophy shows through the ambiguity of the identical, an identical which declares itself to be I at the height of its unconditional and even logically indiscernable identity, an autonomy above all criteria" (Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 85.)

3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 209.

Levinas scholars have discussed the aspects of ethics and metaphysics at length; in practice, though, language is the basis for the conceptual discussion of these two fields. Levinas presents language as a self-evident foundation for both perceptions that goes "beyond what is given" and the ethical tie to the Other, who remains in his alterity, and which cannot be narrowed to identity or identification. Inherent in this perspective is a tension between the description of language as a technical and universal system that supports every conceptual discussion, including of the ethical, and language as a system that constructs the possibilities of choice. A salient example of this can be seen in his meeting with philosophy students at the University of Warwick in 1986, in which Levinas was asked whether the link between the use of language and the "face" is necessary:

> *Is it necessary to have the potential for language in order to be a 'face' in the ethical sense?*
>
> I think that the beginning of language is in the face. In a certain way, in its silence, it calls you. Your reaction to the face is a response. Not just a response, but a responsibility. […] Language does not begin with the signs that one gives, with words. Language is above all the fact of being addressed, … which means the saying much more than the said. […] But there is something which remains outside, and that is alterity. Alterity is not at all the fact that there is a difference, that facing me there is someone who has a different nose than mine, different color eyes, another character. It is not difference, but alterity. It is alterity, the unencompassable, the transcendent. […] Men can easily be treated as objects. We speak to the other who is not encompassed, who, on the contrary, is the one who offers his face to you.

Levinas' ambivalent answer exemplifies the problematic that leads me to propose an additional discussion about the place of language in Levinas' ethics in general, and the place of the talmudic text in this mechanism in particular. In the first part of his response, Levinas uses language to say that the beginning of language is in the face, or in the intention of the speech that expresses responsibility towards the Other. My main assertion is that the Warwick students did not raise the question of the necessary connection between ethics and language by chance; rather, they were expressing the tension between an intuitive certainty about the necessity of language in Levinas' ethical discourse and the fact that he never discusses that necessity directly.

Levinas refers to many different aspects of the language act, such as signification and sense (in *Humanism of the Other*), dialogue and manner of speaking (in *Of God Who Comes to Mind*), and language as opposed to discourse (in *Totality and Infinity*). Megan Craig asserts that there is a correspondence between Levinas's ethics and the way he states it, because both demand an effort

by readers, starting with the trivial activity of using everyday language.[4] Levinas's language forces readers to slow down and reinterpret the relations between words. According to Craig, Levinas creates two types of defamiliarization. In the first type, he forces readers to rethink simple and everyday words like "face," "understanding" and "experience," which in his discourse become opaque and strange. Levinas shows the meaninglessness of meaning, or how language deconstructs itself, as in the language of poetry.[5] In the second type of defamiliarization, he revives forgotten forms of thought. However, the fusion of the discussion of language with discussions of other topics makes it more difficult to extract the actual nature of the concept of language.

This difficulty creates a major interpretative challenge in many contexts, two of which will be discussed below. The first context is the relationship between ethics and freedom. The initial assumption is that for voluntary ethical choice to be possible, it is necessary to articulate the state of mind that precedes it, which includes at least two possibilities: concern for oneself and concern for the Other. Hence the state of mind that precedes the ethical choice must include the possibility of various meanings, including the meaning of seeing the face of the Other and concern for the Other. Below I will linger over several passages in which Levinas addresses the junction at which the choice takes place. I will suggest broadening them, inspired by the philosophers of the linguistic turn, Ferdinand de Saussure (on whom Levinas drew extensively), Wittgenstein and Peirce.

The second context relates to clarifying the role of the linguistic system in interpreting talmudic texts. Levinas approached these texts from a universalist philosophical perspective, supplementing the value he placed on studying the Torah as a sacred religious text.[6] The common denominator of these two contexts is that awareness of the function of language makes it possible for us to grasp the contingency of Levinas's religious and ethical positions, which is hidden and blurred in many discussions, by means of the heteronomic voice that calls for the (supposedly) necessary recognition of the "face" and the ethical obligation towards it. This article's main assertion is that in order to ground freedom of choice on the responsibility and obligation to the Other, one must try to separate the characteristics of language as a neutral and contingent system from its embodiment in ethical concepts like the face.

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4. Megan Craig, *Levinas and James, Toward a Pragmatic Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 8.

5. Ibid., 153.

6. Elisabeth Goldwyn summarizes the state of the research on the link between Levinas's philosophy and his talmudic readings and proposes an integrated description of the unique characteristics of his hermeneutic midrashic approach. See Elisabeth Goldwyn, *Reading between the Lines: Form and Content in Levinas's Talmudic Readings* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011), 154-207. Although she refers to language, she does not consider it in its own right but only as a dependent part of the hermeneutic approach.

The Face as a Denotated Imperative

> The face orders and ordains me. Its signification is an order signified. […] If the face signifies an order in my regard, this is not in the manner in which an ordinary sign signifies its signified; this order is the very signifyingness of the face.[7]

The importance of the distinction between the neutral characteristics of language and their function in the ethical processes that Levinas formulates is evident, for example, in the preceding quotation, taken from a dialogue between Levinas and Philippe Nemo (1982). The meaning of the face can be understood by means of two linguistic elements: the command and the existence of the denotated. If we fail to understand the meaning of these two we will not be able to understand the plain sense of Levinas's assertion. Levinas goes on to clarify the nature of the command he means: "[The face] orders me as one orders someone one commands, as when one says: 'Someone's asking for you.'"[8] The face, as a grammatical and ethical subject, orders and commands; that is, it performs two speech acts whose purpose is to arouse recognition of it and the responsibility towards it. Language makes it possible to command and order, to understand the denotated, that is, the content of the order as "being asked for," and to produce an active response, a speech act that expresses response:

> When in the presence of the other I say "Here I am!" This "Here I am!" is the place through which the Infinite enters into language, but without giving itself to be seen. Since it is not thematized, in any case originally, it does not appear. […] The subject who says "Here I am!" *testifies* to the Infinite.[9]

Before the transition to the infinite, the transcendent, the addressee performs a double speech act: He responds to the call by the addresser, the Other, and in his response references Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah:[10] Abraham

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7. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity,* trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 98.

8. Ibid.

9 . Ibid., p. 106 [emphasis in original].

10. "Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, 'Abraham,' and he answered, '*Here I am*'" (Gen. 22:1); "And in the dream an angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' '*Here,*' I answered" (Gen. 31:11); "When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: 'Moses! Moses!' He answered, 'Here I am'"(Ex. 3:4); "The Lord called out to Samuel, and he answered, 'I'm coming.'" (1 Sam. 3:4). In the prophecy of consolation in Isaiah 52:6, it is God who responds to His people's call; "Assuredly, My people shall learn My name, Assuredly [they shall learn] on that day That I, the One who promised, Am now at hand." (All NJPS; in each case the Hebrew word translated as "Here I am" or similarly is הנני, *hineni*).

before the Binding of Isaac, Jacob in the dream-revelation when the angel enjoins him to return to Canaan, Moses at the Burning Bush, Samuel when called to take the place of Eli, the priest as the leader of the people, and the prophecy of consolation in Isaiah in which God is called upon by the people to return them from their exile. Levinas's response, enclosed in quotation marks, as a quoted speech act, bears with it the most miraculous passages of response in the Bible. Thanks to language's ability to allude to previous contexts, the passages alluded to by the response *hineni* ("here I am") indicate that a concrete response is not only a personal and individual decision, but also a link to a long series of previous symbolic responses by the greatest prophets and by God Himself.

The biblical passages that contain the response word *hineni* prove an assertion that is important for our discussion. Seeing and responding to the face of the Other can take place concretely or metaphorically. Abraham hears a voice, Jacob sees an angel in his dream, Moses encounters a burning bush, Samuel hears a voice, and Isaiah reports God's words in the language of prophecy. All these testimonies are transcribed in the biblical language. For Levinas, as quoted above, the face of the Other demands response and responsibility. To reach this understanding, a person must recognize himself as an addressee, must choose to respond to the call for responsibility, and must internalize the fact that the Other always remains beyond his grasp.

The connection between the face and language is discussed in John Llewelyn's "Levinas and Language."[11] In his presentation of Levinas's ideas, Llewelyn describes the face as a statement and as responsibility—as the essence of language—and opposes the "totality of language" that he attributes to structuralism. For Levinas, structuralists see language as constituting the person; in its totality it is the first and last thing that speaks. According to Llewelyn, ethics produces the possibility and potential of responsibility towards the Other, going beyond rational knowledge and doubt.[12]

Following Llewelyn, what is important for our purposes is to show that Levinas bases himself on Saussure's comparative method and takes it as a given when he describes the constitution of the awareness of justice:

> Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the visibility of faces, and thus intentionality and the intellect, and in intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a copresence on an equal footing as before a court of justice[13]

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11. John Llewelyn, "Levinas and Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas,* ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), 119–138.

12. Llewelyn, ibid., 132.

13. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 157.

Edith Wyschogrod describes the entire process of the statement and the stated as a process intended to constitute a system of justice for all human beings, not only between one particular person and another.[14] At this stage, however, this paper aims to emphasize that the features of the linguistic system and the method for investigating it, are the concepts that Levinas uses to describe the process of recognition that constitutes justice.

Levinas defines the self-constitution of freedom and justice as the final meaning of knowledge: "The subject is "for itself" […] [but] The Other imposes himself as an exigency that dominates this freedom, and hence as more primordial than everything that takes place in me."[15]

The subject is "for itself" and seeks to continue to live as such. This is the essence of freedom, according to Levinas. But the Other "imposes himself"; that is, it forces the subject, by aggressive action, to respond to his demand. As a result, many scholars have thought that the mere existence of language is an ethical event.[16] However, we need to demonstrate the relativity of this conclusion in Levinas's writings, as described by Ephraim Meir.[17]

This leads to two questions. First, how is it possible to distinguish in language the three stages that Levinas describes (being for myself; the Other's imposition of himself and the face's demand; and the ethical choice)? Second, how is the subject's freedom maintained in Levinas's thought, when in practice Levinas denigrates its existence?

The method of the present article is to extract from Levinas's writings expressions of these three stages of consciousness that constitute the ethical choice, in order to show the chronological process and to emphasize the speaker's freedom, as a factual aspect of human consciousness.

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14. Edith Wyschogrod, "From Ethics to Language, the Imperative of the Other," *Semiotica* 97(1/2) (1993): 163–76.

15. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 87.

16. "The existence of language is an ethical event that reflects the possibility of closeness between people and the possibilities of giving and acting on behalf of another person" (Hanoch Ben-Pazi, *Interpretation as Ethical Act: The Hermeneutics of Emmanuel Levinas* [Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012], 76 [Heb.]).

17. Ephraim Meir, "Teaching Levinas on Revelation," in *Paradigms in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Raphael Jospe (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), pp. 257–79, 261.

Peirce and Levinas—States of Consciousness:
Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness

According to Levinas, the chronological process of the development of meaning, including ethical choice, is made possible by language and its attributes. However, it is difficult to extract this from Levinas's work, because of his circular mode of presentation. Hence, I will turn to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and his definition of the three stages of the creation of meaning, and show how these three stages appear in Levinas's writings.

Peirce, the founder of modern American Pragmatism, distinguished pragmatism that includes the categories of consciousness from the normative sciences—logic, ethics, and aesthetics.[18] He asserted that the main goal of philosophy should be to analyze individual experience; the categories of knowledge provide the method for analysis of any individual experience. By contrast, the normative sciences are needed to direct human behavior, but their principles can change because they do not reflect any human experience per se, but rather a causal and practical choice.[19] It is clear, then, that for Peirce ethics cannot be first philosophy, in the sense of an experience that precedes its linguistic representation. To understand this better, we must refer to the three categories of thought that Peirce proposed—firstness, secondness, and thirdness—and show their correspondence with Levinas's approach.

Firstness is feeling, a state of consciousness that cannot be analyzed or compared, neither in itself or as part of another process.[20] This state of consciousness has a quality (a key concept for Peirce) that does not depend on anything else but is but is there instead as a whole. This quality is the possibility that depends on what a person can imagine in isolation from any set of rules.[21] Peirce explains that this is not a concrete feeling or emotional experience, but a monadic element that is complex, heterogeneous, and sui generis, because it includes the possibility of sensation, of what our senses take as their ground when they react to something.

Secondness is a state of consciousness that represents an encounter between the internal world of fancy and the external world of fact:[22] the "rudimentary fragment of experience" that can be observed, which results from struggle and

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18. Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958): 1:281.

19. Ibid..

20. "By a feeling, I mean an instance of that kind of consciousness which involves no analysis, comparison or any process whatsoever, nor consists in whole or in part of any act by which one stretch of consciousness is distinguished from another, which has its own positive quality which consists in nothing else, and which is of itself all that it is" (ibid., 1:306).

21. "A feeling, then, is not an event, a happening, a coming to pass" (ibid., 1:307).

22. Ibid., 1:321.

the resistance to something external. When we experience objects that are external to us, at some point the experience becomes a special experience, an event, beyond the mere perception involved, compulsion and constraint to think otherwise than we are used to be involved in. This is a force without regularity or causality, merely brute force[23]

Thirdness is the state of consciousness in which meaning is constituted on the basis of the first two states of consciousness.[24] Thirdness includes individual and cultural modes of thought, various systems of rules (grammatical, biological, etc.), and ethical and religious decisions. In thirdness a goal of action is defined; or in Peirce's terms, a specific "interpretant" of some sign, which depends on two previous elements: the sign and the fact or object, which have a dyadic relationship. The "third" functions, for example, in the operation of the symbol, which is "a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object."[25]

One can summarize Peirce's three states of consciousness as a gradual movement from the internal world to the external world. This is also a gradual process of choice: from the lack of choice in firstness, through a forced encounter in secondness, to the choice of a relationship, which has a particular meaning, towards an external object, in thirdness. It is important to add that Peirce created modern semiotics as an activity within the framework of a system of emotional, sensory, and verbal signification (corresponding to his three states of consciousness). Semiotics is based on signification and the interpretation of signification, which endow our thoughts and actions with meaning. In other words, ethical choice has a meaning only at the level of thirdness, through the interpretation of the triadic relationship between sign, object, and interpretant.

Several passages will be quoted from Levinas's philosophical writings and propose that we see the process of ethical choice as a Peircian process in which individuals initially exist in their internal world; in the second stage, the face appears as a "denotated imperative" (as described above). It is only in the third stage that an ethical choice takes place.

The first stage, for both Peirce and Levinas, is the monadic stage. In the second stage there is an encounter with the world that may lead to the development of existential meaning, which is constituted by means of a choice in the third stage. As Peirce expresses it, "Existence […] is dyadic; though Being is monadic."[26]

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23. Ibid., 1:336.
24. Ibid., 1:337.
25. Ibid., 2:249.
26. Ibid., 1:329.

Firstness: "At Home with Oneself"

For Levinas, firstness, the foundational position of consciousness, is atheism:

> One can call atheism this separation so complete that the separated being maintains itself in existence all by itself, without participating in the Being from which it is separated – eventually capable of adhering to it by belief. […] One lives outside of God, at home with oneself; one is an I, an egoism. The soul […] is naturally atheist. By atheism we thus understand a position prior to both the negation and the affirmation of the divine, the breaking with participation by which the I posits itself as the same and as I.[27]

Levinas describes a state of consciousness that exemplifies an experience of firstness in Peirce's sense. Individuals live by themselves and with themselves, separated and detached from the world. They do not yet choose or make any distinction between themselves and any Other. In the next passage, which emphasizes the private and monadic state (the same term Peirce applies to firstness), Levinas juxtaposes firstness and secondness:

> I see the other. But I am not the other. I am all alone. It is thus the being in me, the fact that I exist, my *existing,* that constitutes the absolutely intransitive element, something without intentionality or relationship. One can exchange everything between beings except existing. Inasmuch as I am, I am a monad. It is by existing that I am without windows and doors, and not by some content in me that would be incommunicable. If it is incommunicable, it is because it is rooted in my being, which is what is most private in me.[28]

In the contrast he draws between *seeing* the other and *being* the other, Levinas is in effect distinguishing between firstness and secondness: we see the Other in the stage of secondness, and this perception is distinct from the sense of the self as a monad in the stage of firstness. Here it is important to sharpen an important difference between Peirce and Levinas, which sheds light on the place of language and its use for each of them. Whereas Peirce was the first to articulate the interpretive process in modern semiotics, and highlights that there is an experience that is prior to language, Levinas operates within the linguistic tradition of semiology founded by de Saussure, who, as shown above, did not allow the possibility of preverbal consciousness.

In his article "Language and Proximity," Levinas articulates a complex position that maintains both the primacy of language and the firstness of the

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27. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 58.

28. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other,* trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 42.

experience that precedes seeing the Other and the ethical choice. According to him, language can function in four different ways and in several ways in parallel: as the manifestation of truth, as a communicative act; as the operation of signs on the transcendent level; and as a universal infrastructure for making contact.[29] Levinas proposes two important innovations about how language enables recognition of the other by means of the multiple levels of language, on both the level of existence and that of performance. A person can employ two levels of language—the everyday and the transcendent. With regard to how it functions, language can act in a universal way that crosses the boundaries of culture, as well as in a private and unique fashion for a particular person. In the next passage, Levinas uses the stunning metaphor of language as a "battering ram" to illustrate how language is a force for making contact even before its actual use in a concrete situation. In this formulation, Levinas expands the domain of what language can do but does not subordinate language to ethics; quite the opposite, in fact:

> A sign is given from one to the other before the constitution of any system of signs, any common place formed by culture and sites, a sign given from null site to null site. The fact that a sign, exterior to the system of evidences, comes into proximity while remaining transcendent, is the very essence of language prior to every particular language. […] Language is the possibility of entering into relationship independently of every system of signs common to the interlocutors. Like a battering-ram, it is the power to break through the limits of culture, body, and race.[30]

Levinas distinguishes language's primary function, which expresses the fact of a statement, from its secondary function, which includes identification and specification and depends on a system of signs. It is possible to see the parallel between Peirce's state of firstness, which is articulated through language but lacks distinctions and generalizations, and Levinas's "language prior to every particular language," which does not occupy a defined space and which precedes a system of cultural signs (the source of habits and rules, according to Peirce). In such a situation, according to Levinas, language includes the possibility of developing a relationship even before any action using the system of signs. This formulation is parallel to Peirce's description of the stage of firstness, which includes "may-bes" that can come to fruition at a later stage if a person chooses to give them meaning in the stage of thirdness.

Later in "Language and Proximity," Levinas writes that the stages of the development of ethical meaning in the process of consciousness are based on the characteristics of language *ab initio*, even before the subject sees himself as such; every state of consciousness is based on some quality or qualities of language:

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29. Ibid.., §§1, 2, 6, 8 (respectively).
30. Levinas, "Language and Proximity," 122.

If the thought behind speech is to remain a consciousness, it retains the structure of speech. We are thus brought to discover the place that language has in thought from the moment of the first movement of identification […]. In its running after what has already escaped through the original flowing of time, identification is borne by a discourse consubstantial with consciousness. Speech and universality will be born in the separation between feeling and felt, where consciousness awakens. This consciousness is, to be sure, without a subject; it is a "passive activity" of time, which no subject could claim to have initiated, a "passive synthesis" of what "passes," which is born in the flow and divergency of time, an anamnesis and a rediscovery and consequently an identification, in which ideality and universality take on meaning.[31]

Language enables one to act in a way that expresses time, in an ideal and universal fashion, even before the subject acts through it. As in Peirce's firstness, the subject does not perform any action that expresses separateness or subjectivity, but can feel that he has an experience of presentness that contains "the universal essence of truth"[32] and is a foundation for all future communicative activity.

The second stage is the stage of proximity. Peirce describes the transition from the ocean of possibility in the inner world of fancy to the "rudimentary fragment of experience" that can be observed, which results from struggle and the resistance to something external. Levinas, too, describes the process of coming closer to the Other as expressing the transition from "the tranquility of the perseverance of my being" to an encounter with the external and foreign:

To address someone expresses the ethical disturbance produced in me, in the tranquility of the perseverance of my being, in my egotism as a necessary state. […] A going outside oneself that is addressed to the other, the stranger. It is between strangers that the encounter takes place; otherwise, it would be kinship.[33]

Levinas emphasizes that this is not a case of familial closeness but rather of a closeness between strangers, which requires an encounter that necessarily subjugates thought to the ethical relation.[34] But the internal drive does not yet have the sense of ethical choice, which coalesces only in the third stage. Levinas emphasizes that the Other's appearance on the scene is the appearance of a

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31. Ibid., 114.
32. Ibid., 115.
33. Emmanuel Levinas, "The Proximity of the Other," in *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 97.
34. Ibid.

"third": a neighbor, a face, ungraspable otherness—and this thirdness creates the proximity of human pluralism.[35]

The parallel between Peirce's thirdness, in which meaning is provided and receives a practical expression such that it becomes a habit, and Levinas's ethical choice occurs when the communication between inner experience and the Other as a sign becomes an experience that has ethical meaning; in other words, a theme. If we connect the three stages, we see that language enables each of them. In the first stage, language constitutes objectivity; in the second stage, it creates separateness and proximity; and in the third stage, the Other and the person who makes a choice become themes:

> A meaningful world is a world in which there is an Other through whom the world of my enjoyment becomes a theme having a signification. Things acquire a rational signification, and not only one of simple usage, because an other is associated with my relations with them. In designating a thing I designate it to the Other. […] Utilizing a sign is therefore not limited to substituting an indirect relation for the direct relation with a thing, but permits me to render the things offerable, detach them from my own usage, alienate them, render them exterior. […] Objectivity results from language, which permits the putting into question of possession. […] The thing becomes a theme. To thematize is to offer the world to the Other in speech.[36]

In contrast to Peirce, for whom language appears only in the stage of thirdness, for Levinas language constitutes the ground on which the ethical act is possible, through the choice of a meaningful world. Language exists as an objective platform, as a set of signs that makes it possible to replace indirect relations with direct relations and even to free the subject from his own usage and see other possibilities, and serve as the medium that supports the ethical move towards the Other and gives meaning to this move.[37]

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35. Ibid., 101.

36. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 209.

37. Elisabeth Goldwyn asserts that Levinas refers to "saying" as preceding speech and language and as already including the calling on the Other and the exclamation *hineni*. She interprets this as a consciousness of obligation that stands at the foundation of all language, an obligation that precedes its role of describing the content of the mind or reality. The "saying" contains the infinite, which is compressed into written and spoken language (*Reading between the Lines*, 62-63). In practice, this description, too, is made with more than the words that make it understandable and is based as well on the role of language.

Language as a Situation and Discourse as a Speech Act

At this stage, we may ask whether the language of each of these states of consciousness is the same system, with different mechanisms operating in each state of consciousness; or whether, according to Levinas, there are different types of language at work. Edith Wyschogrod resolves the difficulty of "language prior to every particular language" by finding four types of language in Levinas's thought: (1) the face of the Other, which is "always already language [… and] intrudes into the totality that has been historically constituted and issues a call to responsibility"; (2) "language as a gift, a bestowal of signification upon another, […] the 'dionysian' language of art and of a certain poetics"; (3) "an ethics that becomes discourse, a discourse that becomes ethics"; and (4) "a language that is prior to speech, one that is always already ethical […] in its relation to propositional discourse, the language of linguistic practice and 'semantic glimmerings.'"[38] This suggests that there are different types of language. But an alternative interpretation can be proposed, following Peirce: for him, all three states of consciousness are required to create the interpretation, although they could be described separately. In Levinas's writings, too, there is evidence—as it has been shown above and will show again below—that language can be seen in a similar way. Language is a state of firstness that gives rise to the interpretive process, which also includes the ethical choice that is the apex and finality of the interpretive process:

> Truth is sought in the other, but by him who lacks nothing. […] The separated being is satisfied, autonomous, and nonetheless searches after the other with a search that is not incited by the lack proper[39] to need nor by the memory of a lost good. *Such a situation is language*. […] Language, which does not touch the other, even tangentially, reaches the other by calling upon him or by commanding him or by obeying him, with all the straightforwardness of these relations.[40]

The presentation of language as a "situation" reflects Levinas's personal ontology. This infrastructure includes the languages that Levinas knew (his parents spoke Yiddish; he was fluent in Hebrew, Russian, and German, had some Greek, Aramaic, and Latin, and wrote his philosophical works in French). He describes language as a situation that does not derive from psychological

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38. Edith Wyschogrod, "Language and Alterity in the Thought of Levinas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, 188–205, 190.

39. There seems to be a problem with Lingis translation and here is the original French: "L'être séparé est satisfait, autonome et, cependant, recherche l'autre d'une recherche qui n'est pas aiguillonnée par le manque du besoin ni par le souvenir d'un bien perdu une telle situation est langage".

40. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 62 [emphasis added].

motivations (the satisfaction of a psychological or physical drive) or an idealistic theory (as in the Platonic concept of memory), but emerges as a system of speech acts. This system is based on a permanent (and total) separation between individual human beings and the possibility of communication through illocutions and perlocutions, such as calling, commanding, and obeying. This possibility, and not necessity, reflects a person's freedom to respond to or ignore a call or command.

To "language as a situation" Levinas adds the concept of discourse. Discourse is not another type of language, but rather a certain speech activity that includes a move towards the transcendent. Discourse is the creation of a meaning that is the result of the bridging to and the relationship with the external being, which is revealed as the living presence of the face:

> A being is not placed in the light of another but presents itself in the manifestation that should only announce it; it is present as directing this very manifestation – present before the manifestation, which only manifests it. *The absolute experience is not disclosure but revelation:* a coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses. […] The face is a living presence. It is expression. […] The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse. […] Discourse is not simply a modification of intuition (or of thought), but an original relation with exterior being. […] It is the production of meaning.[41]

Language itself, Levinas asserts, being the most basic state, makes it possible to grasp the difference between individuals and also to connect to the transcendent.[42] Language enables the use of the vocabulary and rules that are shared by speakers without committing oneself to one's interlocutor. The speech act of calling, commanding, or obeying makes it possible to focus the activity of two individuals in a concrete context that does not influence their separate persons. Nonetheless, mutual knowledge, of a sort that is still very far from mutual relations and an ethical demand, becomes possible.

The distinction between "language as a situation" and discourse as creating a relationship with the transcendent sharpens the question at the basis of the current discussion: How does language enable human freedom? Levinas's answer to this question is demonstrated most clearly in his talmudic readings, his concept of the Torah and talmudic texts, and in his interpretation as the embodiment of "ethical discourse."

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41. Ibid., 65–66 [emphasis in original].

42. "*Absolute difference*, inconceivable in terms of formal logic, is **e***stablished only by language*. Language accomplishes a relation between terms that breaks up the unity of genus. The terms, the interlocutors, absolve themselves from the relation, or remain absolute within relationship. Language is perhaps to be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being or of history. […] *Discourse* relates with what remains essentially transcendent" (ibid., 195 [emphasis added]).

Freedom as an Embodiment of Humanity

In *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, Levinas places freedom at the forefront, as a possibility that constitutes both the individual and all modern nations:

> Freedom with regard to the sedentary forms of existence is, perhaps, the human way to be in this world. For Judaism, the world becomes intelligible before a human face and not, as for a great contemporary philosopher who sums up an important aspect of the West, through houses, temples and bridges. […] Is it not these consciously willed and freely accepted links […] which constitute modern nations, defined by the decision to work in common much more than by the dark voices of heredity?[43]

Levinas criticizes Heidegger, who expanded the domain of technology in human life instead of focusing on the human face. It is important to emphasize, pace the common position among students of Levinas as to the ostensibly self-understood nature of the ethical choice, that Levinas was explicitly aware of the tension between the contingency of the ethical choice and its ostensibly self-understood nature. It is important to emphasize that the manifestations of this tension, like its resolution, are embodied in linguistic mechanisms: speech in the first, second, and third persons. First-person speech enables self-knowledge, whereas the focus on the second or third person is directed towards seeing the Other and the ethical obligation towards the Other:

> If "know thyself" has become the fundamental precept of all Western philosophy, this is because ultimately the West discovers the universe within itself. […] Only the vision of the face in which the "You shall not kill" is articulated does not allow itself to fall back into an ensuing complacency or become the experience of an insuperable obstacle, offering itself up to our power. For in reality, murder is possible, but it is possible only when one has not looked the Other in the face. The impossibility of killing is not real, but moral. The fact that the vision of the face is not an *experience,* but a moving out of oneself, a contact with another being and not simply a sensation of self, is attested to by the "purely moral" character of this impossibility.[44]

Levinas formulates the two possibilities available to an individual in the West, and in these words already begins to point towards the ethical choice. This direction is strengthened when he clarifies why this ethical choice is universal but

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43. Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom,* trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 23.

44. Ibid., 10 [emphasis in original].

imposes a greater obligation on "the person who receives this revelation."[45] At the end of the book, Levinas presents the Other as "the first intelligible, before cultures and their alluvions and allusions,"[46] who exists even before the revelation of the face, which appears in language:

> The epiphany of that which can present itself so directly, outwardly and eminently is *face.* The expressing of the face is language. […] But the infinite in the face does not appear as a representation. It brings into question my freedom, which is discovered to be murderous and usurpatory. But this discovery is not a derivation of *self-knowledge.* It is heteronomy through and through. In front of the face, I always demand more of myself; the more I respond to it, the more the demands grow.[47]

Language as the Starting Point in the *Talmudic Readings*

Levinas preferred not to be identified as a Jewish thinker, so it is interesting to see that it is in his talmudic readings that language receives the place it deserves. In other words, the writings that are taken as sacred texts embody the power of language to function on Peirce's three levels: as a state of consciousness that includes possibilities of choice, without any decision or distinction; as a state of consciousness that reflects closeness to and a conflict with the world and the Other; and as the choice of a particular interpretation that bears an ethical meaning. The examples of talmudic readings presented below manifest each of these states of consciousness.

The Verse as a State of First Consciousness

Levinas describes the primary character of the holy texts as a mystery that precedes the diverse roles and activities that characterize language as a set of tools. This mystery articulates the divine word even before it is formulated as a command:

> The enigma of the verse and the line is not, therefore, simply a matter of imprecision which […] gives rise to misunderstandings. […] *Language here no longer has the simple status of an instrument.* Language which has become Holy Scriptures, and which maintains its prophetic essence—probably *language par excellence—the Word of God that is already audible or still muffled in the heart of*

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45. Ibid., 21.
46. Ibid., 295.
47. Ibid., 294 [emphasis in original].

every act of speech, is not solely a matter of the engagement of speaking beings in the fabric of the world and History. […] In language a signified does not signify only from words which, as a conjunction of signs, move towards this signified. Beyond what it wants me to know, it co-ordinates me with the other to whom I speak; *it signifies in every discourse from the face of the other,* […] from the expression before words my responsibility for-the-other is called upon, […] a responsibility in which arise my replies. […] Writing is always prescriptive and ethical, the Word of God which commands and vows me to the other, a holy writing before being sacred text, […] extending beyond information—a break, in the being that I am, of my good conscience of being-there. [...] It brings into question the "self-care" that is natural to beings, essential to the *esse* of beings.[48]

The verse functions as a primary state of consciousness because it is prior even to the most basic natural state of concern for the self, as well as to any objective distinction or interpretive distinction that involves a semiotic relation (a link between the object, sign, and interpreter). Levinas sheds light on the situation that precedes speech, which he calls "responsibility," and from which the response to the Other emerges. In a critical reading, however, it is possible to see that the function of language is not amorphous; rather, "it signifies […] from the face of the other." And this signification creates the link of responsibility from which obligation stems. In practice, latent in Levinas's words is a key feature of language, on which his ethics is based: the separation created by language enables recognition of the Other in the most primary meaning as well; only such a separation creates the minimal space necessary to create a sense of relationship, responsibility, and response. With regard to the mode of action, Levinas distinguishes between "writing" and "text," which refer to two different methods of expression by means of linguistic mechanisms. Writing represents the divine word that teaches the ethical directive; the text embodies this teaching, not by saying it directly, but by formulating it implicitly in the talmudic narratives.

For example, in "On Religious Language and the Fear of God," Levinas refers to the paradox in the Mishnah found in B *Berakhot* 33b:"If one (in praying) says 'May thy mercies extend to a bird's nest,' 'Be thy name mentioned for well-doing' or 'We give thanks, we give thanks,' he is silenced."[49] He leaves aside the accepted interpretations of these lines and notes the astonishment at the meaning assigned to a verse when it appears in prayer: Why is it inappropriate to glorify God's mercy on animals? Why is it forbidden to mention God's name after mentioning the Good? Why is it inappropriate to double "We give thanks [to You]"?

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48. Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse,* trans. Gary D. Mole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii–xiii [emphasis added].

49. Ibid., 88–92.

Levinas reinterprets the concept of the appropriate love and explains that there are two types of good: the first corresponds to our virtues and satisfies our needs; the second is the ethical good that expresses gratitude for the closeness we feel to God, "as if the possibility of the ethical good, above and beyond the difference between natural good and evil deeds, were the opening to transcendence and the source of religious language."[50]

Religious language is the ground of the talmudic text and guides readers/interpreters to how to read it at intersections that raise questions of where they point, by creating the estrangement that presents an interpretive difficulty concerning recognition of the ethical good latent in the lines and that demand an effort of discovery and decoding. Talmudic language, like freedom, is "difficult," and the textual meaning, like the ethical meaning, requires an individual effort of understanding and interpretation.

"The Verses Cry Out: 'Interpret Me'": "The De-structure – of Transcendence"[51]

A clear expression of the importance of language in the constitution of the ethical, can be seen in the midrash about the "agreement between the human court and the heavenly Court."[52]

In the first chapter of *New Talmudic Readings*, "The Will of God and the Power of Humanity,"[53] where Levinas analyzes a passage from B *Makkot* 23–24, he quotes Exodus 24:12, in which God calls on Moses to ascend Mt. Sinai and receive the Tablets of the Law.[54] Levinas sees this verse as indicating that the text, the language of Scripture, grounds Scripture's authority and does not depend on it.

Levinas refers to the midrash on the verses as an "adventure" and asserts that he is expressing "the very way in which another voice is heard among us—the very way of transcendence."[55]

This possibility comes to fruition through language's ability to sustain meaning, "as if the sense of thought were carried—meta-phor—beyond the end which limits the intention of the thinker. […] It is said outside of the sayer. Its folded wings of the germ of innumerable lives promised in it […] are also lodged

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50. Ibid., 92.

51. Emmanuel Levinas, *New Talmudic Readings,* trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 69.

52. Ibid., p. 70.

53. Ibid., 47–78.

54. "'Go up on the mountain and tarry there, I will give you tablets of stone, the doctrine and the precepts, etc.' (Exodus 24:12)" (Levinas, ibid., 68) [correcting the incorrect verse reference in the book].

55. Ibid.

in the letters of the text—metaphors of a thought exceeding what it thinks."[56]

Language can function metaphorically, and metaphor (whose literal sense is "carry across") is one of the mechanisms of language. Levinas praises the talmudic sages' devotion to the written word, a devotion he sees as an attempt to penetrate more deeply into the text's meaning in its concrete occurrence, through reading and through midrash. But the clearest example of reliance on the power of language to constitute an ethical move comes later in the discussion, where Levinas describes how language passes from one speech act to another as a demonstration and preface to the passage from one to the other, through an expansion from the conveyance of information to interpretation. Thus, in the hermeneutic act, ethics becomes an activity for its own sake when it speaks of interpersonal relations and makes it possible for transcendence to disturb us and shake up our lives so that we are forced to propose a meaning. He proves this from a passage about three rulings by the human court that were ratified by the heavenly court: reading the book of Esther, employing the divine name to greet another person, and bringing tithes to the Temple (B *Makkot* 23b). Levinas sees the freedom to institute these three practices as an expression of openness and freedom, pure deed, without the command or promise of reward, an openness to the infinite through human generosity.

In conclusion, I would like to present a talmudic reading that is astonishing even to those who are familiar with Levinas's ethical move throughout his writings. In "Toward the Other," Levinas interprets a well-known Mishnah (*Yoma* 8:9, trans. Danby):

> This did R. Eleazar b. Azariah expound: *From all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord* (Lev. 16:30)—for transgressions that are between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement; but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of

Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow.

Evidently transgressions between a man and his fellow are worse than those between man and God, because there is atonement for the latter through observance of Yom Kippur; but if a person transgressed against his fellow, he must appease him in order to win divine forgiveness. In other words, this atonement depends on the Other, and this dependence creates a lack of confidence. On the other hand, "not to depend on the Other to be forgiven is […] to be sure of the outcome of one's case."[57] But in practice, Levinas asks, rhetorically,

> Perhaps the ills that must heal inside the Soul without the help of others are

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56. Ibid., 69.

57. Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 16.

precisely the most profound ills. […] In doing wrong toward God, have we not undermined the moral conscience as moral conscience? The ritual transgression that I want to erase without resorting to the help of others would be precisely the one that demands all my personality.[58]

Levinas surprises us with his conclusion that a ritual transgression is more destructive than an interpersonal transgression,[59] especially in light of the place in his system of the face, proximity and alterity, responsibility, and compassion towards the Other. Here Levinas casts the spotlight on the need for "a healing of the self by the self,"[60] which is both the relationship to God and a wholly internal event. The focus on a person's inner life and on the need for self-healing as the broad foundation of which the responsibility towards the Other is based on two pragmatic principles to which Peirce referred: first-person certainty, which is the basis for every act of giving meaning and is founded on the stage of firstness;[61] and the understanding of the metaphysical as the broad and overarching context of giving meaning.[62]

Conclusion

The article traced the place of language in Levinas's thought, which is based on his declaration that ethics is first philosophy. This statement creates a strong tension between the freedom that Levinas attributes to the individual and the uncompromising demand for closeness to and responsibility towards the Other. We have examined various linguistic mechanisms and features of Levinas's writings that reflect the fact that language includes both that which enables the articulation of ethical or other meaning, and the possibilities of choice, through identification, separation, distance, and closeness, and, ultimately, talmudic interpretation. Understanding the place of language makes it possible for us to see it as the basic state of consciousness, from which later states of consciousness coalesce, as Peirce stated clearly. The concepts of firstness, secondness, and thirdness allow us to understand the gulfs, in the word that Levinas studies, between freedom and the problems it raises.

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58. Ibid., 17.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Peirce asserted that the possibility of recognizing the existence of another person derives from the certainty of the first person, which compares itself to another. See Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.160.

62. "Metaphysics has to account for the whole universe of being. It has, therefore, to do something like supposing a state of things in which that universe did not exist, and consider how it could have arisen" (ibid., 6.214).

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The Importance of Arts Education:
Graduation and Dropout Rates at a School of Music in the Bronx, New York (2007-2011)

By Nicolás Alberto Dosman[*]

Arts education as a part of the curriculum is not viewed as a priority by many government leaders. During the Global Recession in 2007, arts education programs in the United States and around the world may have been eliminated. As the world-wide economy recovered, some arts education programs may have been reconstituted. However, arts education programs in less affluent communities, may not be valued by civic leaders. Although the U.S. and world economy are relatively stable, there are indicators that a recession may be approaching. This paper discusses the graduation rates and dropout rates of the Celia Cruz High School of Music in comparison to other public schools in the Bronx, the City of New York public school system, and other arts focused schools during the height of the Great Recession. The data during this time period indicate that Celia Cruz High School Music had consistently higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates in comparison to the average of the city of New York and the Bronx schools during this period. The case can be made that arts education is a fundamental part of one's education and the arts can be a vehicle to assist socioeconomically challenged students realize their potential. Arts education programs may be perceived as an "extra" or non-essential in many parts of the world. Even when arts education is valued as a part of the educational system, it is often reserved for those that have the means to afford it. Communities around the world as well as world leaders should consider the importance of arts education, particularly in communities that experience socioeconomic challenges. Existing data can make a compelling case for continuing arts education programs especially in less affluent communities.

Introduction

Music education and the arts in general have been under scrutiny for many years in the United States. In economically challenged urban areas, the arts are generally a low priority and sometimes minimally included or absent from the school curriculum[1]. Socioeconomically challenged areas could have music schools or schools with an arts focus, while the surrounding schools which are generally comprehensive may not be able to provide any arts or music instruction even if

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1. James Rohner, "Rally The Troops," *The Instrumentalist*, 2010

administrators value the arts[2]. The absence of music programs may affect schools that do not have the financial resources to support these programs in large urban areas, even when the national economy is relatively healthy.

The data presented in this paper was at the beginning of the recovery period of the Great Recession. Prior to the Great Recession, subjects that were tested were valued because of the federal funding associated with these subjects. Student performance in these subject areas affected the level of federal funding and even state funding in some cases. Because of this connection to federal funding, schools in urban areas may have experienced a reduction or even long-term elimination of arts and music programs[3]. In some cases, enrichment courses replaced arts courses and other electives for students. However, broad elimination of arts programs, fail to recognize that schools in socioeconomically challenged areas may be able to showcase an arts-intensive school in their neighborhood and possibly demonstrate that the arts enhance student performance on multiple levels. This argument may speak volumes to lawmakers, even during turbulent economic times.

The state of the U.S. economy in 2019 is stable and has since recovered from the Great Recession. However, according to some economists (Moore, 2019), there are economic warning signs that indicate that a recession may be looming ahead[4]. The signs that are cited for a future recession are as follows: the yield curve inversion in 2019 - the inversion is becoming deeper and broader (models based on the current yield curve indicate a 30-40% chance of hitting a recession in a year), global growth is slowing, talk of recession has been increasing; and although unemployment is currently low in the U.S. (3.7% as of July 2019), if there is an increase of 0.5% to 4.1% this could be yet another indicator of a recession Additionally, trade wars and other global events may have an effect on the U.S. and global economy.

The Trump administration has not enacted any new educational laws. The last law to have passed Congress with respect to education, was Every *Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* (passed on December 10, 2015 and signed by President Obama). President Obama's education agenda was targeted at improving schools in impoverished areas, but the focus was primarily on tested subjects like science and mathematics. Although impoverished areas may benefit from increased funding at the federal level to address the academic performance of their student body, they may still need to contend with budget shortfalls at the local and state

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2. Carlos R. Abril and Brent M. Gault, "The State of Music in the Elementary School: The Principals Perspective," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54, no. 1 (2006): 6, https://doi.org/10.2307/3653452.

3. David E. Gullatt, "Research Links the Arts with Student Academic Gains," *The Educational Forum* 71, no. 3 (2007): 211-220, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720709335006

4. Simon Moore, "What Key Recession Indicators Are Telling Us Today," Forbes Forbes Magazine, August 20, 2019, https://bit.ly/2YMnGMH.

levels. Budget shortfalls in impoverished areas may lead to further cuts in the arts, particularly in urban areas that underperform academically. However, arts programs, especially magnet schools or talent academies in low-income or schools that are considered to be academically failing, have documented success in the form of increased graduation rates (tied to state testing) as well as increased attendance.[5]

In the U.S., both educational funding and school prestige are linked to tested subjects. Such academic subjects can show measurable student progress which may be valued by politicians and school principals alike. However, music education and arts education are in jeopardy because of this lack of a tie to testing. Urban areas may not have the funding to continue programs, particularly if they are experiencing an economic downturn and funding for these programs may no longer be available at local, state, and federal levels. Conversely, state and federal funding are generally directed towards tested subjects.

The heart of this research revolved around the Celia Cruz Bronx High School, a musically focused high school, which was created for the purpose of allowing students to realize their artistic and academic potential. The musical and artistic nature of the school is the primary focus of the institution which may in and of itself enrich the lives of the students it serves; this philosophy may fit well with some ideology within the profession. However, decision-makers such as superintendents and politicians may be swayed by other arguments. For example, President Obama acknowledged in his 2011 State of the Union address that America must continue to be creative and innovative. Despite this apparent nod to creativity which could be construed as inclusive of the arts, the Obama administration's educational agenda focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) initiatives. STEM appears to exclude the arts as well as the potential that schools like Celia Cruz in the Bronx and similar schools around the nation that were specifically created to nurture and foster artistic creativity in their students [6].

The *Common Core Standards*, another educational initiative under the Obama administration, is focused on academic performance in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. STEM and the *Common Core Standards* may have goals in improving the performance of students in American public schools but the arts are noticeably excluded from these initiatives. The goals in federally mandated initiative such as STEM or the *Common Core Standards* may be to better prepare graduates for the workforce and college, assuming that they will remain in school to complete their education. However, it is does not address the fact many students do not complete their education particularly in urban schools. If these

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5. James J. Kemple, Corrine Herlihy, and Thomas J Smith, "Making Progress Toward Graduation," MDRC, April 24, 2017, https://bit.ly/2N5FQnl.

6. Diane C. Dawood, "College Readiness and Academic Success for Arts Magnet and Traditional High School Graduates" (dissertation, 2009).

programs are to be effective in socioeconomically challenged areas, it is essential that students remain in school and ultimately complete their high school education particularly in areas where dropouts are higher than the national average. The federal initiatives under President Obama may have been well intentioned; the narrow focus of these programs may need to be reexamined especially when urban schools with limited resources are being scrutinized and assessed.

Literature Review and Political Climate in the United States

The Trump administration has not passed any new legislation with respect to arts education or education in general. However, there may be signs that the arts and potentially arts education may be at risk. According to *The Washington Post*[7], the Trump administration's 2020 budget plans to severely cut or eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Moreover, it appears as though the administration's FY 2017 and FY 2018 budget proposals called for an elimination of the NEA. Despite the efforts of the current administration to undermine arts organizations like the NEA, both the NEA and NEH still exist. Additionally, it appears as though the Trump administration plans to cut funding for the Department of Education. The administration's FY 2019 budget proposal was $59.9 billion, a $7.1 billion decrease from 2017. This action, during strong economic growth in the U.S. may be a strong indication of the administration's priorities[8]. Although the administration's budget proposal decreases funding for the Department of Education, it appears to prioritize STEM "The Budget supports STEM education through a variety of programs including those that test and replicate what works in education and a new, $20 million grant program for STEM-focused career and technical education programs (p. 43)".

Some have suggested that the lawmakers change their focus from STEM and similar initiatives, to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math)[9]. This change would be inclusive of the arts as well as serve the goals of creativity and innovation that the Obama administration espoused. The case for STEAM is based on the premise that cutting or eliminating the arts from the national curriculum will limit the creative potential of future generations. Proponents of STEAM refer to China as having this model. According to White, all teaching programs in China have included courses in music and fine art, featuring singing,

7. Peggy McGlone, "For Third Year in a Row, Trump's Budget Plan Eliminates Arts, Public TV and Library Funding," *Washington Post*, March 18, 2019.

8. U.S. Office of Management and Budget (2019). Budget of the U.S. Government Fiscal Year 2019. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3hGCmFZ.

9. White, Harvey, "White Paper: STEAM Not STEM," n.d.

musical knowledge and appreciation, painting, arts and crafts, and appreciation of fine arts in their contents. Although STEAM proponents may make valid arguments in favor of arts education, other arguments such as a decrease in dropout rates and increase in graduation rates in socioeconomically-deprived areas like the Bronx may be equally valid. Based on the cuts to the NEA, NEH, and Department of Education the current administration may not be as open to STEAM despite evidence of its success.

During the period known as the Great Recession in the United States, the Bronx was the poorest borough in New York City, with the highest rate of poverty as well as a higher poverty rate than the national average. According to the U.S. Census[10], the majority of the population in the Bronx at that time was 53.8% Hispanic, 11.2% White non-Hispanic, and 43.3% Black; 29% are foreign-born as opposed to 11.1% nationwide, and 52.7% speak a language other than English at home in contrast to 17.9% nationwide. Moreover, 27.3% of the Bronx population were living below the poverty line, as opposed to 13.7% in New York City and 13.2% in the United States. The 2011 estimate of the percentage of persons in the Bronx over the age of 25 holding a high school diploma or higher was 62.9%, in New York City 84.6%, and nationwide 85.4%. These data indicate that the economic conditions of residents in the Bronx were worse and the educational attainment was lower than in the city and the national average. The socioeconomic conditions and poverty level of the Bronx demonstrate that students in this borough may have been social-emotionally, socioeconomically, or academically deprived. If one were to base the future of high school graduates from the Bronx on past Census results, their likelihood of graduation compared to New York City and the nation is lower based on the percentage of high school graduates over the age of 25 ().

In the latest census estimate[11] the three largest ethnic/racial groups in the Bronx were 56.4% Hispanic, 9.1% 43.6% Black and White non-Hispanic (no significant statistical shift from 2011) 35.3% are foreign born (statistically significant change from 2011) and 59.3% speak a language other than English at home. The population of the Bronx over the age of 25 holding a high school diploma or higher was 71.5% (statistically significant change from 2011). The poverty rate was estimated to be at 27.9% (no statistically significant change). Most of the conditions of the Bronx have remained relatively the same from 2011 with the exception of the foreign-born population and educational attainment (both higher).

At the time of Celia Cruz's creation, over half of the high schools in the Bronx had failed to meet state standards, and educational leaders were looking for

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10. "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States." Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed April 4, 2020, https://bit.ly/2CjEwLr.

11. U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Bronx County (Bronx Borough), New York," Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed April 4, 2020, https://bit.ly/37GFfSu.

solutions to address this problem. Many larger schools in the New York City area were being revamped into several smaller schools within a building where a larger comprehensive school had previously existed in order to better service their students. This movement at the time was a popular trend and was anticipated as becoming the educational norm in New York City and other large urban districts. Small schools had the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which also funded similar initiatives in Chicago[12] (p. 12). These schools would not be designed to merely mirror large schools with a reduced population, but rather to significantly change teaching and learning as well as improve graduation rates (p. 35). Smaller schools appeared to be more successful than larger schools and offered more intimate contact among school personnel, students, and parents. However, these schools did not address the needs of students who wanted to focus on a musically intensive curriculum throughout their high school career.

Dr. William Rodriguez successfully included a proposal to include a high school of music, created as a small school. Celia Cruz became part of the small school movement under the Bronx New Century High School Initiative and was the means of offering students in the Bronx a musically intensive community while retaining the tenets of the small school movement. Rodriguez conducted a qualitative study which documented the journey of Celia Cruz High School from its inception. He found that the Bronx needed a school of music, according to the voices of the community, parents, educators, and students. Although New York City had many schools of music and the arts, Rodriguez found that many parents and students would never audition for schools that were not in their borough; this became another rationale to support the creation of Celia Cruz High School (p. 133).

Studies of talent-focused schools, particularly in poor urban areas, have yielded positive results. For example, one key finding of the MDRC (formerly Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation) report[13], were that graduation rates and attendance rates had improved dramatically as a result of high school-aged youth participating in a talent academy in an urban setting . Conversely, other studies suggest that all students regardless of their setting may benefit from arts education[14]. Similar studies indicate that instrumental experiences help

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12. William Rodriguez, "Creating a School of Music: a Bronx New Century High School Initiative" (dissertation, 2003)

13. James J Kemple, Corrine Herlihy, and Thomas J Smith, "Making Progress Towards Graduation: Evidence from the Talent Development High School Model," (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, May 1, 2005), https://bit.ly/2AFwJqW.

14. Harold Abeles, Judith Burton, and Robert Horowitz (Center for Arts Education Research Teachers College, Columbia University, July 1, 1999), https://bit.ly/2UTbj04

students develop self-regulation[15]. Research also suggests that music may help students' self-regulation, but is not limited exclusively to instrumental music. In his research, Freer found that self-regulation can also be experienced in a vocal or choral setting[16]. The ability to self-regulate and make informed choices for oneself is a transferable life skill that can benefit students in a range of disciplines. All of these studies suggest that regardless of genre of music education, setting or discipline, music education clearly appears to benefit students. Skills such as self-regulation are important for all students, particularly those who lack stability in their lives because of socioeconomic hardships. In short, research supports the idea that arts enrichment may advance educational outcomes for at-risk children regardless of race and ethnicity[17]. Schools like Celia Cruz High School were created for this purpose (p. 117).

Despite convincing evidence of the relationship between students participating in music classes and higher academic performance and social adjustment, music programs continue to struggle for their place in the curriculum[18]. Therefore, further research may help build a stronger case for music education, particularly in urban settings that have limited funding and may be underperforming as defined by state testing criteria. Celia Cruz High School in the Bronx was examined to determine if a school with a musical focus would yield higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates than other schools in the same borough and city.

The purpose of this investigation was to compare their graduation rates and dropout rates of students enrolled in Celia Cruz with similar schools in the New York City public system as well as to make comparisons between this school and its borough and the New York City public school system as a whole. To address these issues, data collected from the New York City Department of Education that included graduation rates and dropout rates were analyzed over a five-year period. Additionally, data comparing this school with the state of New York average was to give a broader comparison between the school, the district, and the entire state that includes other urban communities, suburban communities, and even rural communities. Because this study is non-experimental in nature, it

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15. Barry Oreck, Susan Baum, and Heather McCartney, "Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning," (National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented University of Connecticut, Storrs, 1999), https://bit.ly/3dhh6CZ.

16. Patrick K. Freer, "Boys' Descriptions of Their Experiences in Choral Music," Research Studies in Music Education 31, no. 2 (December 1, 2009):. 142-160, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X09344382.

17. Eleanor D Brown, Barbara Benedett, and M. Elizabeth Armistead, "Arts Enrichment and School Readiness for Children at Risk," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2010): 112-124, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.07.008.

18. Cecil Adderley, Mary Kennedy, and William Berz, "A Home Away from Home': The World of the High School Music Classroom," Journal of Research in Music Education 51, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 190-205, https://doi.org/10.2307/3345373

is designed to highlight existing data rather than generate new data. The data in this study is designed to highlight facts about Celia Cruz high school and its history of academic performance.

The conceptual framework behind this study acknowledges that family background, language and cultural diversity, poverty, crime, drug-ridden neighborhoods, and single-parent, mostly female-headed households may determine the opportunity to learn, but not the capacity for learning[19]. In framing the parameters of this investigation, the researcher is working under the perception that some schools in urban areas may view eliminating arts programs instead of more academic programs as a solution to the problems that some urban schools face with low test scores and limited funding. However, studies show that students in grades 8-12 who are highly involved in the arts and come from low socioeconomic backgrounds have higher grades, perform better on standardized tests, and are less likely to drop out of school by the tenth grade. Arts enrichment may also advance educational outcomes for children at risk, regardless of race and ethnicity. Finally, Celia Cruz was chosen because of its exclusive focus on music and its unique circumstance; their admission criteria is based on musical ability and does not account for academic performance. Celia Cruz High School was created as a school of music to advance the educational outcomes of students from the Bronx who may have socioeconomic limitations. Although many students enter schools with a given family background and history, music programs can influence the students and may be a factor that motivates them to stay in school and subsequently graduate from high school despite any economic or social limitations.

Research Questions

1. What was the graduation rate of Celia Cruz in comparison to other schools in the Bronx?
2. How did the dropout rate compare to other schools in the Bronx?
3. How did Celia Cruz graduation rates compare to other schools in the City of New York?
4. How did Celia Cruz dropout rates compare to other schools in the City of New York?

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19. Beverly E Cross, "Urban School Achievement Gap as a Metaphor to Conceal U.S. Apartheid Education," *Theory into Practice* 46, no. 3 (October 31, 2010): 247-255, https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840701402299.

Methodology

Non-experimental statistical data available from the New York City Department of Education were used to present the graduation rates and dropout rates of Celia Cruz High School. The quantitative data presented in this study are ex post facto data, that is, information on the academic performance of Celia Cruz High School as compared with other schools in the New York City Public School System.

Comparisons were made across and within data samples. Data specifically regarding graduation rates and dropout rates were compared for students in their borough, district, and similar schools. Graduation data were compared on a Graduate/Non-Graduate basis based on a four-year cohort. Performance on standardized test scores were not taken into consideration to make similar comparisons. The data from Celia Cruz students were compared with borough, district, and state averages.

Results - Comparisons within the Bronx, New York City and New York State

The following numbers compare Celia Cruz High School graduation rates with the borough of the Bronx as well as the overall graduation rate of New York City.

For graduation rates of Celia Cruz High School:
  2006-2007: n = 76 and grads = 60
  2007-2008: n = 72 and grads = 42
  2008-2009: n = 74 and grads = 50
  2009-2010: n = 82 and grads = 61
  2010-2011: n = 85 and grads = 60

For the borough of the Bronx
  2006-2007: n = 13,632 and grads = 6,389
  2007-2008: n = 14,364 and grads = 7,448
  2008-2009: n = 15,175 and grads = 8,229
  2009-2010: n = 15,579 and grads = 8,524
  2010-2011: n = 15,987 and grads = 8,421

For New York City graduation rates:
  2006-2007: n = 73,888 and grads = 38,990
  2007-2008: n = 75,009 and grads = 42,313
  2008-2009: n = 77,378 and grads = 45,615
  2009-2010: n = 78,346 and grads = 47,786
  2010-2011: n = 79,476 and grads = 48,380

The graduation rates below are based on cohorts that graduated within four years in the month of June Table 1 shows a five-year average comparing Celia Cruz High School, the Bronx, and the New York City Public school system.[20] Celia Cruz consistently had higher graduation rates than the Bronx by a considerable margin over a five-year period. Additionally, Celia Cruz High School's graduation has been consistently higher than the New York City public school average during this period. Although the gap between Celia Cruz High School and New York City schools had been very wide in some years, particularly in 2007 and 2010, the gap had not been as wide as that of the Bronx borough average. In 2008, the graduation rates of Celia Cruz, the Bronx, and New York City were low across the board and the graduation rates in this particular year were most similar.

Table 1. *Graduation Rates Percentages—Celia Cruz High School, Bronx Borough, New York City*

	2007	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Celia Cruz High School	78.9%	58.3%	67.6%	74.4%	70.6%
Bronx Borough Average	46.9%	51.9%	54.2%	54.7%	52.7%
New York City Public School Average	52.8%	56.4%	59%	61%	60.9%

Table 2 shows a 4-year average comparing Celia Cruz High School, the state of New York, and the New York City Public school system. Celia Cruz had lower graduation rates than the state of New York, the graduation rates of students increased over time to match state averages over time. Additionally, Celia Cruz High School's graduation had been consistently higher than the New York City public school average for the last four years. Although the gap between Celia Cruz High School and New York City schools has been very wide in some years, particularly and 2010, the gap had not been as wide as that of the Bronx borough average. In 2008, the graduation rates of Celia Cruz High School and New York City were low. The graduation rates in this particular year were most similar between city of New York and Celia Cruz. However, the differences between the city of New York, Celia Cruz High School and the state of New York were the greatest.

Table 2. *Celia Cruz, New York State, New York City Graduation Rates 2008-2011*

	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Celia Cruz High School	58.3%	67.6%	74.4%	70.6%
New York State Average	71.0%	74.0%	76.0%	74.0%
New York City Average	56.4%	59.0%	61.0%	60.9%

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20. "Cohorts of 2001 through 2007(Classes 2005-2011) Graduation Outcomes," Cohorts of 2001 through 2007 (classes 2005-2011) Graduation outcomes § (n.d.), https://on.nyc.gov/2 BipvJm.

Graduation rates were compared over a 3-year period between Celia Cruz and all specialized schools in the Bronx. Tables 3, 4, and 5 respectively, show the graduation rate of Celia Cruz High School compared to all schools of the Bronx in the New York City public school system from 2009-2011. Celia Cruz's graduation rate was most similar to many of the arts schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn. However, the graduation rate of Celia Cruz high school was lower than the average of tall of the arts schools in the New York City public school system. In general, the arts schools within the New York City public school system had higher graduation rates when compared with the average of all public schools in New York City

Table 3. *Graduation Rates 2009—Celia Cruz, New York City Schools of Arts, Borough*

Bronx	Year	June	N	Grads	%
Celia Cruz High School	2009	4 Year	74	50	67.6
Fordham High School of the Arts	2009	4 Year	89	63	70.8
Brooklyn					
Brooklyn High School of the Arts	2009	4 Year	154	106	68.8
Brooklyn School for Music & Theatre	2009	4 Year	98	80	81.6
Dr. Susan McKinney High School	2009	4 Year	100	46	46.0
Edward R. Murrow High School	2009	4 Year	879	611	69.5
Forth Hamilton High School	2009	4 Year	1,044	628	60.2
Juan Morel Campos Secondary School	2009	4 Year	94	46	48.9
Manhattan					
Choir Academy of Harlem	2009	4 Year	84	47	56.0
F.H. LaGuardia High School of Music	2009	4 Year	655	631	96.3
Professional Performing Arts High School	2009	4 Year	100	95	95.0
Talent Unlimited High School	2009	4 Year	92	82	89.1
Wadleigh School for the Performing Arts	2009	4 Year	128	90	70.3
Gramercy Arts High School	2009	4 Year	68	50	73.5
Queens					
Bayside High School	2009	4 Year	1,085	854	78.7
Forest Hills High School	2009	4 Year	946	758	80.1
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts	2009	4 Year	162	156	96.3
Humanities and Arts Magnet School	2009	4 Year	107	82	76.6
Staten Island					
Susan Wagner High School	2009	4 Year	865	605	69.9
TOTAL ALL BOROUGHS	2009	4 year	6,824	5,080	74.4

Table 4. *Graduation Rates 2010—Celia Cruz, New York City Schools of Arts by Borough*

Bronx	Year	June	N	Grads	%
Celia Cruz High School	2010	4 Year	82	61	74.4
Fordham High School of the Arts	2010	4 Year	82	60	73.2
Brooklyn					
Brooklyn High School of the Arts	2010	4 Year	100	72	72.0
Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre	2010	4 Year	88	65	73.9

Dr. Susan McKinney School of the Arts	2010	4 Year	81	66	81.5
Edward R. Murrow High School	2010	4 Year	938	702	74.8
Fort Hamilton High School	2010	4 Year	986	650	65.9
Juan Morel Campos Secondary School	2010	4 Year	100	40	40.0
Manhattan					
Choir Academy of Harlem	2010	4 Year	39	22	56.4
F. LaGuardia High School of Music	2010	4 Year	646	627	97.1
Professional Performing Arts High School	2010	4 Year	80	74	92.3
Talent Unlimited High School	2010	4 Year	136	126	92.6
Wadleigh School for the Performing Arts	2010	4 Year	127	71	55.9
Gramercy Arts High School	2010	4 Year	93	68	73.1
Queens					
Bayside High School	2010	4 Year	902	723	80.2
Forest Hills High School	2010	4 Year	959	811	84.6
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts	2010	4 Year	171	162	94.7
Humanities and Arts Magnet High School	2010	4 Year	94	72	76.6
Staten Island					
Susan E. Wagner High School	2010	4 Year	912	692	75.9
All Combined Boroughs Total	2010	4 Year	6,616	5,164	78.1

Table 5. *Graduation Rates 2011—Celia Cruz, New York City Schools of Arts by Borough*

Bronx	**Year**	**June**	**N**	**Grads**	**%**
Celia Cruz High School	2011	4 Year	85	60	70.1
Fordham High School of the Arts	2011	4 Year	69	57	82.6
Brooklyn					
Brooklyn High School of the Arts	2011	4 Year	96	78	82.3
Brooklyn School for Music and Theater	2011	4 Year	88	60	68.2
Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts	2011	4 Year	72	56	77.8
Edward R. Murrow High School	2011	4 Year	987	710	71.9
Fort Hamilton High School	2011	4 Year	1,144	740	64.7
Juan Morel Campos Secondary School	2011	4 Year	99	40	40.4
Manhattan					
Choir Academy of Harlem	2011	4 Year	45	30	66.7
Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music	2011	4 Year	601	586	97.5
Professional Performing Arts High School	2011	4 Year	100	90	90
Talent Unlimited High School	2011	4 Year	85	79	92.9
Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing Arts	2011	4 Year	122	73	59.8
Gramercy Arts High School	2011	4 Year	72	53	73.6
Queens					
Bayside High School	2011	4 Year	972	811	83.4
Forest Hills High School	2011	4 Year	1,027	840	81.8
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School	2011	4 Year	138	123	89.1
Humanities and Arts Magnet High School	2011	4 Year	107	77	72.0
Staten Island					
Susan E. Wagner High School	2011	4 Year	761	603	79.2
All Boroughs Totals	2011	4 Year	6,670	5,166	77..5

Table 6 compares the dropout rates of Celia Cruz and all schools of the arts that require an audition for admission in New York City over a three-year period. Celia Cruz's dropout rate was similar to most schools of the arts. Table 7 shows the dropout rates of Celia Cruz, the Bronx, and New York City public schools over that same period. Celia Cruz's dropout rates are much lower than the city and borough throughout all three years.

Table 6. *Dropout Rates—Celia Cruz, All Arts Schools New York City Public Schools 2009-2011*

Bronx	2009 %	2010 %	2011 %
Celia Cruz High School	2.7	2.7	2.7
Fordham High School of the Arts	3.0	1.0	1.0
Brooklyn			
Brooklyn High School of the Arts	2.0	1.0	2.0
Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre	1.0	3.0	4.0
Dr. Susan McKinney Secondary SOTA	2.0	4.0	2.0
Edward R. Murrow High School	2.0	3.0	3.0
Fort Hamilton High School	4.0	6.0	5.0
Juan Morel Campos Secondary School	3.0	5.0	5.0
Manhattan			
Choir Academy of Harlem	5.0	5.0	0.0
F.H. LaGuardia High School of Music	0.0	0.0	0.0
Professional Performing Arts High School	0.0	0.0	0.0
Talent Unlimited High School	0.0	0.0	1.0
Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing Arts	1.0	3.0	8.0
Gramercy Arts High School	4.0	2.0	2.0
Queens			
Bayside High School	3.0	2.0	2.0
Forest Hills High School	3.0	1.0	3.0
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School	N/A	0.0	0.0
Humanities and Arts Magnet High School	1.0	2.0	2.0
Staten Island			
Susan E. Wagner High School	3.0	3.0	2.0

Table 7. *Dropout Rates—Celia Cruz, Bronx, and New York City Public Schools 2009-2011*

	2009	2010	2011
Celia Cruz	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Bronx Borough	14.1%	15.4%	15.8%
New York City	11.8%	12.1%	12.3%

Discussion and Implications

Celia Cruz High School, a musically focused high school, was created for the purpose of allowing students to realize their artistic and academic potential. The

musical and artistic nature of the school is the primary focus of the institution which may in and of itself enrich the lives of the students it serves. Music educators and arts education advocates may agree that arts education should be important in its own right. Decision-makers such as superintendents and politicians may be swayed by other arguments. It is clear that the Trump and Obama administrations' education agenda are focused on STEM and the *Common Core Standards* that appears to omit the arts. However, President Obama had stated in that he wanted Americans to remain creative and innovative[21]. The educational initiatives under the current administration are designed to generate better-prepared graduates for the workforce and college. A complete education, which is inclusive of the arts and music education, may actually spur creativity and innovation. Additionally, arts education as a part of the school curriculum may have the potential to encourage some of the nation's most disadvantaged youth to remain in school and ultimately earn a high school diploma. Educators in both arts and academically-focused schools can and should make the argument that the arts may be beneficial for students who may be disenfranchised.

Given the tie between graduation and state testing, this study reaffirmed prior research that focused exclusively on testing, even though testing per se was not examined here. For example, Johnson and Memmott[22] examined the standardized test scores of music students in middle schools from the South, East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast of the United States. (n = 1,119) who participated in programs of differing quality. The middle school data indicated that for both English and math, students in both exceptional music programs and deficient instrumental programs scored better than those in non-music classes or deficient choral programs; however, the sample sizes were not large. Similarly, the 1999 *Champions of Change* study examining performance on standardized tests taken by low socioeconomic urban public-school students enrolled in the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) found that 8 out of 12 high schools showed CAPE schools increasing their lead in math scores and 7 out of 12 showed CAPE schools increasing their lead. Although this study did not specifically focus on standardized test scores but rather on graduation rates, given that graduation rates are tied to standardized tests for math and reading, there is an apparent relationship between these studies and the consistently high graduation rate found when comparing Celia Cruz students against borough or city averages.

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21. Barack H Obama, "State of the Union Address," (January 25, 2011)

22. Christopher M Johnson and Jenny E Memmott, "Examination of Relationships between Participation in School Music Programs of Differing Quality and Standardized Test Results," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 293-307, https://doi.org/10.1177/002242940605400403.

The dropout rates of Celia Cruz students were consistently lower than the New York City and the Bronx borough averages. Dropout rates in New York City and the borough of the Bronx consistently were in the double digits while the graduation rates of Celia Cruz remained consistently at 2.7% for a three-year period. Given the economic realities of the Bronx and New York City, it is clear that Celia Cruz students are able to complete their high school education and earn high school diplomas at a much higher rate than the average students in the Bronx or New York City. The lower dropout rate may also be linked to the higher graduation rates of Celia Cruz high school that were most similar to most arts-focused schools in New York City and the Bronx. The dropout rate difference compared to the city and the borough may be an indication that Celia Cruz is advancing the educational outcomes of at-risk students, which is part of its mission (Rodriguez, p. 117) and which coincides with other studies of arts programs advancing the educational outcomes of students[23]. The consistently low dropout rate of Celia Cruz and other arts-focused schools compared to the city may be attributed to multiple factors, including having better resources. Nonetheless, compared to similar schools, counterparts, and the city at large that include areas that are socioeconomically more affluent than Celia Cruz, this school had a low dropout rate. Perhaps, in the context of a public school that may not be focused on the arts, music/arts educators may notice these same trends in their schools and may be able to make the case for their programs.

The apparently high graduation rates and low dropout rates that Celia Cruz and similar schools of the arts suggest that schools with an arts focus in the New York City Public School system are performing better than the average school in the district in terms of academic achievement. This study addressed the performance of schools of the arts and focused on the Celia Cruz High School of Music. However, the study may have implications for arts programs within the context of public schools that are not arts-focused. Earlier research suggested that students enrolled in arts programs within their schools might be academically more successful than the average student in their school.[24] Given the plight and struggles of large urban school districts, students that participate in arts programs appear to persevere and eventually graduate from high school at a higher rate. School administrators, politicians, and educators should consider these findings and similar findings when determining the relevance of the arts within the curriculum. In urban settings where funding may be scarce, it is especially important to consider these

23. Sharon Davis Gratto, "Arts Education in Alternative School Formats," *Arts Education Policy Review* 103, no. 5 (2002): 17-24, https://doi.org/10.1080/10632910209600300.

24. Sandra Ruppert, "Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement," *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement* (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2006), https://bit.ly/2BirxsY.

findings as well as similar findings when determining the place of the arts in these districts.

The limitation of this investigation is its narrow focus on a small school of music. Given the narrow focus of this investigation, it is impossible to generalize any of these facts to any other setting. The data presented in this document is not comprehensive and does not give a comprehensive picture of Celia Cruz High School nor does the data present comprehensive statistical analysis beyond the data provided by the New York Department of Education. However, some of the data presented demonstrated the arts-focused school outperforming the city and borough averages. Given that this data only presented music within the context of a performing arts school, further research should be done in similar schools with music programs that are not arts-focused or specialized. If music education and arts education programs can consistently show a relationship between (high) graduation rates and (low) dropout rates, arts educators and advocates may be able to make a strong argument that may speak volumes to lawmakers and school administrators alike. Similar investigations should be careful to avoid making claims that attempt to prove that music or the arts is the primary factor or that music or the arts makes one smarter. This study merely states that the arts could be *the* factor for *some* students in terms of motivation and the perseverance that it is required to complete a high school education, in particular for youth that may find themselves in challenging economic circumstances. Educators, whether they are in arts schools or comprehensive high schools, should make the argument for the arts especially if they are teaching in socioeconomically diverse communities.

Conclusions

The data in this investigation is only one case in a socioeconomically challenged area in New York City during 2007-2011. However, the statistical data (obtained by the New York City Department of Education) clearly show a pattern of success in comparison to similar schools. Similar programs around the world have appeared to be successful such as El *Sistema* (founded in 1975) which originated in impoverished areas of Venezuela (similar models exist around the world now). Maestro Gustavo Dudamel is perhaps one of its most accomplished alumni and has supported similar programs in the United States. It appears that including the arts in socioeconomically challenged areas even in less developed countries have yielded some success.

The data presented in this investigation focused on Celia Cruz High School and its success. However, if one looks at the data closely, Fordham School of the Bronx, also outperformed the borough average during the same period. The average graduation rates were higher and dropout rates lower

than the borough average and New York City average. Other data that compare similar arts schools in New York in other boroughs had similar success rates. One of the most notable schools, and perhaps famous school of the arts that had an exceptional graduation rate (above 95% from 2009-2011) and virtually no dropouts during this same period was the Fiorella LaGuardia School of the Arts.

Although one cannot draw a correlation to studying music or the arts to academic achievement, the data from this investigation and anecdotal data suggest that arts education can be a positive force for underprivileged youth. One cannot and should not conclude that music or the arts increases one's intelligence outside of its own sphere. However, competence in the arts may be a motivating factor that allows youth with limited economic means to complete their education and even thrive in their educational endeavors.

Societies around the world invest in education in some form to ensure that the members of their communities can be productive and contribute to a given society. Arts education may be a vehicle for individuals to find success and contribute to society even if they pursue other endeavors outside of the arts. In the United States, STEM education is one of the areas that both major political parties can agree on. However, an emphasis on STEM without regard for arts education is myopic and fails to consider the benefits of arts education throughout the socioeconomic spectrum. If arts education programs are eliminated, it may create an unintended obstacle for social mobility in underprivileged communities that are already lacking in resources.

Arts and arts education are valuable in and of themselves; they are a defining characteristic of civilization and societies throughout history. However, politicians and civic leaders may need to demonstrate their value beyond its own intrinsic worth to their constituencies. When resources are scarce in a community making the case for arts education may be challenging. Success stories in at-risk communities that have provided arts education for youth are not limited to Celia Cruz High School or the developed world. World leaders and local leaders should consider the value of these programs in their civic planning. There is evidence to suggest that the arts can enhance the lives of individuals and society.

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The Power of Greetings in African Christianity

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This is an original study of greetings among Christians in an African setting. Greetings have played a major role in the spread of Christianity in Africa and not much study has been done on this simple gesture of interaction. Greeting is not unique to the Africans it is a common phenomena. A common way of greeting within the Greek culture is 'Hello', Γεια (Ya), hence Γεια σου (Ya su) is the way of greeting one person, on the other hand Γεια σας (Ya sas) is commonly used, when greeting more than one person. In Africa one uses greetings as a way of self introduction to a new person or even to an acquaintance. In both the Bible and modern Africa greetings have played a major role in the daily life of the people. It is a fundamental element among African Christians to greet one another in the name of God. 'Praise God' or 'Bwana asifiwe' (Kiswahili). Such are the most common words in greetings among African Christians. If one does not greet fellow Christians through these words something is terribly wrong and one is taken to be an enemy of God, people and the cross of Christ. African Christianity has used greetings as a way of expressing one's faith. In almost every Church you visit you will discover a common style of greeting. In some Pentecostal churches one will say 'God is good' (Ngai ni mwega) and the congregation will reply 'all the time' (hingo ciothe). Then one who is greeting will repeat 'And all the time' (hingo ciothe), congregation will reply 'God is good' (Ngai ni mwega). In the Catholic Church, one will say 'let us praise the Lord' (tumukumie yesu kristo) and the one being greeted will reply 'let us paise him all the time (tumukumie hindi ciothe) and so on. The Bible legitimates greetings as a way of mission either to already founded churches or churches to be. Recent studies have shown that greetings do not necessarily lead to mission, however, but to an ever greater encounter between two human beings. In particular, the relationship that develops between people who embrace greetings result into a fellowship of everyday life. This essay argues that the future of church mission will necessitate a reorientation from crusades in market places to living as mission oriented people at face level of individual relationships of house churches. The dialogue taking place on the plain of greetings and socialization is explored both ib Bible and African culture, along with a critical survey of various greetings and missioned stances towards it. At the end practical theological reflections are offered towards developing a style of life for mission centered on greetings.

Introduction

Greetings in the Bible as well in African Christianity are not a dry act performed for the sake of it. It is something both theological and contextual, with consequences that range from blessings, praises to punishment and curses[1]. Even

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1. H. Waweru, *African Theology in a Postcolonial Perspective* (Limuru, Kenya: Franciscan Kolbe Press, 2020): 153.

in the Greek culture they often greet one another with a friendly and casual "*yasou*" (*yasoo/yassou*), the greeting is multi-purpose meaning 'how is your health' in Greek and meant to imply a well-wishing of good health to the person being greeted. Sometimes, in informal settings like a casual bar, the Greeks might also say "yasou" in the same way Kenyans say '*mambo*' or Americans say 'cheers'. A good African Christian greets people well and is honored and praised in the society while one who does not is taken as a bad person, arrogant and proud or a scandal.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that greetings have turned out to be a religious ritual in African Christianity and a process rather than a single act or an event. In this case of greetings a religious ritual is understood as a celebration of life that affects those involved by touching their inner spiritual personalities by connecting them with the spiritual world through a procedure involving a series of activities, bodily gestures, and symbols[2] which have already been formalized by the society. This is what greeting means in African Christianity. The research question is how we can enhance greetings as a tool for evangelism in the Church[3].

Purpose of Greetings

When two people meet and say 'Praise God' to each other, it means joy not only because you are alive but also because you are still praising Jesus the savior of the world, hence a reason to rejoice and celebrate. It would also mean that you are both in full gratitude to God who brings everything into order and his light has continued to shine upon you. So when one says '*Bwana a sifiwe*' and the other replies '*asifiwe Yesu*' these are pregnant statements with no questions but both are answers to a number of questions, Are you still there, are you still existing, are you still alive, and the answer is, we are still alive, God is still in charge, and we are happy for his continued protection. So greeting a person in African Christianity is performing a whole ritual in a minute. Greetings are not only part of Christian theology but also a specific set of moral attitudes and behaviors that went along with mission in Africa[4].

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2. See Anthony P. Cohen (1985) who concludes that, symbols give the limits of cultured thought whereby people of the same culture rely on such symbols to frame their thoughts and expressions in intelligible terms. Nowhere else can this be better expressed than in greetings? For Cliford Geertz (1973) and Victor Tuner (1967) symbols are both the practices of social actors and the context that gives such practices meaning.

3. See Mercy Oduyoye "Claiming our Heritage: Africa in World Christianity (Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Lecture 2008)," in Journal of African Christian Thought, 12, no. 2 (2009): 7, wherer she argues that to assess or describe Christianity in Africa today, should be a question of research rather than a matter of pronouncements.

4. For Ruth Njeri Ndamaiyu aged 80 years interviewed on 1st January 2020, greetings are part of 'popular Christianity' in Africa that embodies beliefs and practices that are the hallmark of the historic missionary enterprise.

In Africa ritual is very important in that it is a 'key' or a 'bunch of keys' to unlock an understanding of the deepest values of a culture of the people[5]. Within African Christianity greeting points to nearly all basic needs of African Christianity such as hospitality, respect of human life, spirituality, societal aspects of life as well as connectedness of each other in the society. Greeting is a drama performed freely by all good-hearted people in a very short moment on the stage of humanity, actors being two or more people celebrating the joy of being alive, being in God who has made it possible for them to meet. During this short drama people ore overjoyed with gratitude because their creator and the giver of wisdom has continued to bless them. So in a short testimony people will quickly explain what has been of them for the last few days they have not met. Some will explain about rains or harvest or even sun for that matter in their areas[6].

It is interesting to realize that although greeting in African Christianity has been given much value by the community nothing so far has been documented by African theologians and philosophers concerning this interesting area of life people share with the world[7]. So here we will explain greetings by looking at different ways of greeting, reasons for greeting and the behavior of those involved with greetings, But before that we need to reflect on the biblical foundations for greetings.

Greetings in the Bible

The Bible is a heritage for the African church which is at its disposal and it cannot afford to ignore. However the biblical theology will have to reflect the African context and understanding for it to offer an original contribution to the theology of the Church as a whole. This is best expressed in greetings as Paul and Peter demonstrates[8].

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5. See A. Shorter, (ed.) *Church and Marriage in East Africa* (Eldoret: A.M.EC.E.A, 1975), 61.

6. See David A. Brown, *A Guide to Religions* (London: SPCK, 1975), 3, where he argues that human beings are always looking for ways by which to improve their relationship with the world around them.

7. For Mercy Oduyoye (2009: 7), the attitude of contemporary spiritualism towards an intellectual grounding of the faith is not encouraging.

8. See John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), 189, 190; John S. Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology," in G. F. Vicedom, ed., *Christ and the Younger Churches*, Theological Collections no. 15 (London: SPCK., 1972), 51; and John S. Mbiti, "The Future of Christianity in Africa (*2000),"* *Communio Viatorum* 13, no. 1-2 (1970): 32-33.

Case of Paul and Greetings

1. Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. All the saints send you greetings especially those who belong to Caesar's household (Phil 4:21-22). Paul sends greetings as a sign of his social connection with the Churches he had either visited or started earlier.

2. Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts (Col 4:7-8). In this case Tychicus will not only carry greetings, but the whole information on how the mission works has progressed. He was given the task of encouraging the brethren with the greetings now not necessary in any letter but in his presence to them.

3. Greet all brothers with a holy kiss (1Athess 5:26). According to the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem greetings are purposed to reunite Christians in a special way. "The Kiss therefore is the sign that our souls are mingled together and banish all remembrance of wrongs" (On the Mysteries V, Lecture 23, NF).

4. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the house hold of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Melitus. Do your best to get here before winter Eubulus greets you, and so do pudens, linus, claudia and all the brothers (2Tim 4: 19-21). So for Paul greetings is the singlehandedly the simplest way of inform brethren that you have been thinking about them. It is through greetings do the receipts appreciate the relationship already maintained between distanced people.

5. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers (Philemon 23-24). Even in prison greetings will do the reuniting magic of togetherness with free brethren. So receiving greetings from prisoners makes those who are free part of the fellowship already in prison.

Case of Peter and Greetings

1. With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love (1Peter 5:12-13). Peter a great apostle emphasizes the significance of greetings to the brethren as a way of becoming one through the holy kiss.

African Different Styles of Greetings

When the Bible arrived in Africa, it found a fertile ground to germinate on[9]. One such ground was in greetings which was cultural among the African people[10]. African Christians like many other peoples of the world use different styles to express their greetings such as word of mouth, embrace, handshake, waving, winking, patting on the shoulder or on the head, smiling, kissing as well as singing. Greetings expressed the African worldview[11]. No wonder majority of our people are feeling hard hit by Corona Virus, demand of social distancing. Africans are not able to comprehend how, to keep a social distance, perhaps because of what Mbiti says 'I am because you are, and because you are therefore I am'[12]. He was a distinguished pioneer in the systematic analysis of traditional African religious concepts.

Throughout the continent African Christian greetings are expressed through the word of Praise to the almighty. Almost every Christian group has a formal verbal formula expressing greetings[13]. Either one will great by saying 'praise the Lord', and the rest will reply 'Amen' or by a chorus 'God is good' and people reply 'all the time' and 'All the time' they reply 'God is good'. In most cases the word of mouth is not enough. Greetings are generally accompanied with a good hand shake; a good hug particularly if people have not seen each other for a long time[14].

If one entered a big gathering and while walking in, notices a close friend particularly in Kikuyu society one can easily wink (*kuna riitho*) as an expression of greeting and recognition of the presence of the other in the same meeting[15]. In

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9. See Waweru *The Bible and the African Culture: Mapping Transactional Inroads* (Eldoret-Kenya: Zapf Chancery, 2011) ,5

10. Every society has its own culture, which simply means patterns of behavior, which are customary in any given society. Such distinguish that culture and the society to which it belongs. Cultural patterns are passed are passed on from one generation to another through time (Waweru 2011:5). Interestingly no one knows how greetings emerged within African traditions.

11. See Waweru (2005: 165-166) who says that, a worldview is a picture of the way things appear in sheer actuality, people's concept of nature, of self and society, where comprehensive ideas of order of life are expressed.

12. See John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (African Writers Series. Heinemann, 1969), 108.

13. See Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind, Rediscovering the African seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP,2007), 146.

14. Says Peter Njenga, a retired Anglican bishop of Kenya Interviewed on 1oth January 2020 on the importance of greetings in spreading the Gospel.

15. H. Waweru, *African Theology*, 155.

other Christian groups it may not be acceptable to wink to somebody[16].

In almost all African Christian groups waving is acceptable as an expression of greeting when one is greeting another person at a distance and physical contact is hindered by distance. Greeting in such a circumstance is accompanied by a word of mouth or a smile depending on the situation. If it is in a garden where people are working a bit far from the road a word of mouth follows waving, but if the greeted was in a congregation where talking would be a bother then a smile comes in handy. A good smile is a real treasure to Christians; it enhances the human vital force of both the giver and the recipient.

Another common type of greeting is patting or laying of the hand on other peoples head or shoulder as an expression of happiness while greeting someone. Patting is mostly for people of the same age in Christianity. A young man may not feel comfortable to pat an old lady while a young woman may also not be comfortable patting or laying hands on the shoulders of elderly people. So this kind of greeting is specifically for birds of the same feathers. But in African tradition Maasai people do greet their young ones by laying hands on their hands, but not on shoulders[17].

In African Christian circles kissing is specifically left to husbands and wives or to women alone. During marriages a number of pastors will allow the groom to kiss the bride as a way of greeting. In other words what the pastor allows in public must then continue to be practiced at home and during their years of marriage. Rarely would people use kissing as a way of greeting to other friends unless a daughter to a mother or a woman age mate[18]. This is not publically practiced although Paul advocates it.

Reasons for Greeting in Africa

There are a number of reasons why African Christians greet each other. As explained earlier greetings are not meaningless or empty rhetoric phrases in themselves. They are meant to convey special relationship to the one being greeted. African Christian greetings borrow heavily from the African culture and they contain the various basic contents.

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16. Explains, Rev. Samuel Capt. Mwangi, winking may mean different things to different people, during a discussion of Christian greetings held early this year on 9th February 2020.

17. Waweru, *African Theology*, 156.

18. Waweru, *African Theology*, 155.

Message of Peace and Blessings in Greetings

As Jesus departed this world, one thing he promised his people was peace. 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid' (John 14:27). Christianity throughout the world is known as a religion of peace. African people are naturally lovers of peace even though the continent may portray different images. At the meeting point between Christianity and African culture peace is realized and enhanced. As we juxtapose these two seemingly unrelated-even antagonistic texts the meaning is found in greetings. In Africa meaning is not isolated 'inside' the text, for no text is an island'. Meaning is in the space 'between' texts. For Boer, a New Testament scholar biblical study is in itself a subset of religion, which belongs to the superstructure of the totality of society, sharing that space with art, culture, philosophy, politics and ideology[19]. In African Christianity such is best expressed in greetings.

For one to be peaceful within the community, one has to greet people whenever they meet. At the moment of waking up in the morning people have to greet even before they call for prayer. Greeting is given more priority to prayer. When people wake up in a new day it does not matter whether they slept in the same bed or not but they have to start their day by greeting each other. It is usually taken that on the sleep people were very far and waking up is a special come back that requires welcome from each other. In African Christianity greetings makes Jesus Christ as "the centre of our life". This is comparable to what John Stott in his book, The Incomparable Christ, describes Jesus Christ as 'the centre of history', the 'focus of Scripture', and the 'heart of Christian mission'[20].

In African Christianity the very height of Christ's full stature is reached only by the coming together of the different cultural entitles into the body of Christ. They belong together as one of them is incomplete without the other; such is best expressed in greetings as a form of fellowship[21].

What the above description points is the fact that the coming together of different people in greetings creates something new. Waking up is a wonderful thing and even a good reason to rejoice, so one greeting will say 'praise the Lord that we have woken up' so people will quickly respond to affirm the joy of waking up and having survived the darkness of the night. So this new day becomes an occasion to celebrate and thank God for it. Greeting in African Christianity involves asking questions about how the other people slept. In case these people greeting each other did not spend the night in the same home, then

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19. See R. Boer, "Remembering Babylon: Postcolonial and Australian Biblica studies," in *Sugirtharajah* (ed.) The Postcolonial Bible (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 43.

20. John Stott, *The Incomparable Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 15-16.

21. Cf. A. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002: 77).

the greeting will go beyond them to all other members of the family left at home. The greetings may even last for over ten minutes. The greetings will express love and concern about the wellbeing of the other members of the family. Bible information held by Africans comes from socialization in the churches themselves as they listen to prayers and sermons; such is expressed best in greetings as a way of engaging each other. While luke warns such may even engage in gossip as part of greetings. Christians will evangelize as they greet[22].

If by any chance some members of the family were undergoing hardship or trouble of any kind, messages of sympathy and consolation are passed to them through greetings[23]. So greetings become part of love to the brethren. People who often greet you will sympathize with you and show solidarity at the time of need. When people frankly greet you in African Christianity, they are simply saying 'you are good'. It is good that we have met. It is good that you have value. It is good that we are friends and so on. Greeting becomes an affirmation and appreciation of the other. So greetings do affirm people as people[24].

The greeting of person serves as an invitation to share in the life of the other. When one spares time to greet you it means the person values you and the heart is opened to you. When faced with problems then you are assured of help by the one who greets you. And when one responds well to your greetings the person is assuring you of the same. If one is visiting a family, the family will show appreciation by saying you did well to come and greet us. Greetings are very important in African Christianity; they are the point of entry for people who are new to each other. It is in greeting that they open their hearts to each other for a conversation to begin. Greetings show a force which is immanent in all human beings, something as intangible and pervasive as 'the other'[25]. This is African spirituality which is enshrined in a belief; spirituality is the source of mission.

Greetings as a Mission

Therefore greetings are used in African Christianity for acceptance and reconciliation, this is a mission. If two people are not in talking mood, greeting each other would mean they have been reconciled or they are willing to be reconciled and cultivate friendship. In any reconciliation a hand shake will conclude the process. In this case humility is also expressed through greeting. Greetings as a mission brings a spirit of togetherness, love for others' relatives, neighbors and God. They show care for both loved and unloved as well as the

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22. See Waweru, *African Theology*, 156.

23. See Waweru, *The Bible and African Culture*, 97, where he argues that, every faithful Christian must practice Christianity within a particular context.

24. Waweru, *African Theology*, 159.

25. See Waweru, *The Bible and African Culture*, 130.

elderly.[26] The relationship between family members as well as other community members is enhancing in greetings, which is an African mission, 'you are because I am and because you are I am'. This is an African 'mantra' which is embraced in the context of African mission systems.1

Greetings as a mission maintain community discipline. People are taken to be proud and arrogant if they don't greet others. For Ochieng-Odhiambo African Philosophy centers' on a person and his social context[27], such could only be expressed through greetings as people evangelize each other. The individual is not taken as an impenetrable entity that lives in glorious isolation. The individual as Mbiti argues in his African Philosophy, is meaningless for one is because others are[28]. In African Christianity one will make sense only as part of the totality, for to be is to participate as. Mbiti puts it, 'there is already a dialogue taking place between the Christianity and the African religiosity[29]'.

Greeting in this way of life require meeting. So when one meets the other in an African Christianity context, one must show the difference of meeting an animal or an object from a person. The person is not a thing, an object, a plant or even a tree. Failure to greet the other would imply you have reduced the other into an object. Hence greeting the other is an acknowledgment of the other as a live, valuable and present. When you hug or embrace the other, the message is clear you are not a thing, but somebody of value beyond even words. It would also imply you understand the other not as opposed to you but as to objects. Greetings in Africa mean that there must be something beyond creation and beyond our explanation. This can only be the God who is the source of their being[30]. This living power is beyond human comprehension and it transcends and permeates all being as expressed in the mission of greetings.

In African Christianity God is Spirit and is the source of greeting. Greeting comes from the Spirit of mission. This spirit connects you with the other. So greeting is one major way of expressing love to the other as you enquire more about the other. In greeting we do not just do it there is a formula inherited from our African cultural way of life. Greetings expresses the spirits as an integral part of the religious heritage for African mission, where people are deeply aware of the spirit world as affecting life experiences for better and for worse. Greeting come with meeting the other, a pronouncement of the formal verbal welcome, a brief enquiry about life past, present, and future and then parting wishing each other God's blessings. These four steps of greeting are vital to the whole process

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26. See Waweru, *The Bible and African Culture*, 137.

27. See Ochieng'-Odhiambo, *African Philosophy: An Introduction* (Nairobi Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 1995), 43.

28. See J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*,109.

29. See Mbiti, *New Testament*, 189, and Mbiti, "Future of Christianity," 32.

30. See Waweru, *The Bible and African*, 143.

of greeting and evangelizing Africa[31].

When greeting another person your conduct is very important. People must conduct themselves in a respectful way. It will also depend with whom you are greeting. For an age mate you do not need to be very formal. But when you are greeting people of other classes as well as ages carefulness is required in order to portray your utmost respect for them. Because greeting is sacred and puts you in touch with your inner self. And then moves you beyond self to connect you with mysterious other in the spirit world. The mysterious other has sacredness that also moves you when you meet compelling an urge to recognize the presence. Every Christian in Africa has a moral obligation to respond to this urge[32]. Greeting is not a tool of oppression but of freedom. The irony and paradox of greeting is that when we do not fulfill it, we feel burdened with a moral obligation which then burdens our hearts to do it in order to feel happy and peaceful.

Greetings as a Fellowship

It is one thing to envision a life of oneness in a community, and have the intention to pursue it through greetings; it is yet another thing to actually put this into practice. African wisdom teaches that the gap between individuals can be bridged through greetings. When two or more people greet each other with the explicit purpose of sharing life deeply, they can help one another discern the presence and leading of the spirit, and hold one another accountable for the life of obedience that flows from it[33]. What emerge from good greetings is the encouragement, admonition and exhortation of regular Christian fellowship which ends up becoming the heartbeat of mission oriented people. The bond created through greetings is of spiritual friendship which becomes the center of any community that seeks oneness in God[34].

Greetings as fellowship, therefore, are rooted in the experiences that this kind of African Christian encounter develops. This mission oriented greetings becomes a real fellowship that makes Africans not only miss each other but seek that fellowship in order to help them envision their spiritual lives and remain faithful to their mission. Greetings are able in a unique way to create new areas of missions, by changing what may first appear as superficial contacts to face to face reality of fellowship, through thick and thin, for better and for worse. Greetings

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31. Cf JNK. Mugambi, *The African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity* (Nairobi: Longman, 1989), 48.

32. See Mbiti, *New Testament,* 189, who argues that in carrying its mandate the church has to be loving, forgiving, reconciling, worshiping, and a living mission.

33. See P. R. Meadows, "Mission and Discipleship, in a Digital culture. Mission Studies," *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies,* 29, no. 2 (2012): 179.

34. See Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 108.

throughout the centuries have demonstrated a Christian fellowship of penetrating the depths of true fellowship with others, in the common pursuit of knowing God[35].

Those who use greetings for mission must then be concerned with exploiting the full potential of fellowship for building a spirituality that embraces all people as brothers and sisters. Our participation in the mission of God is substantially expressed through greetings, in which God's love for our neighbors reaches out through us in a holistic way. From a biblical perspective Paul uses greetings to enhance his fellowship with the churches he had established during his missionary journeys. This way of life calls us to read the Bible contrapuntally[36]

Paul uses Greetings to Enhance Mission

Paul commonly greets the churches and individuals, greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. All the saints send you greetings especially those who belong to Caesar's household (Phil 4:21-22). He greetings to enhance fellowship among brethren. He even sends individuals to specifically take greetings to some people. Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts (Col 4:7-8). So greetings do not only inform about our context they also encourage as well as educate other people. He further instructs Christians not to just greet but to do it in a way that will create impact. Greet all brothers with a holy kiss (1Athess 5:26). At times Paul will single out some people for the purpose of encouraging them. Greet Priscilla and Aquilla and the house hold of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Melitus. Do your best to get here before winter Eubulus greets you, and so do pudens, linus, Claudia and all the brothers (2Tim 4:19-21). Africans using greetings for mission is letting the texts both the Bible and the African culture play each other[37].

While in prison Paul sent greetings to the church and equally uses them to inform them of the help he has received from other people. Epaphras my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers (Philemon 23-24). With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon,

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35. See Waweru, The Bible and African Culture, 144

36. See Waweru, "Reading the Bible Contrapuntally: A theory and a Methodology for a Contextual Bible Interpretation in Africa," in *Swedish Missiological Themes,* 94, no.3 (2006): 333-348.

37. See Waweru,Reading the Bible Contrapuntally, 339.

chosen together with you, sends you greetings and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love (1Peter 5:12-13). The text here is calling upon Christians to re-examine their fellowship with other people; is there someone you need to forgive? Chose to do so rather than to punish them. Allow Christ to work through you to bring reconciliation between individuals and people groups. Greetings are powerful they allow a dead fellowship to be restored.

Conclusion

Therefore greeting as a tool for mission is able to bring people face to face with the other indefinable most mysterious of all creatures as a counter point[38]. Who is the mirror of my image and the reflection of my life whose actions and reactions goes deeper into my mind. Greeting moves the person beyond their ego into the heart of the other for blessings and warmth of Christianity. Greetings puts person into a relationship not only of the other but also with God who is the source of all life and goodness, hence the conversion. So greeting is a religious ritual, a religious performance and a religious experience that climaxes in worship to the almighty God. Greeting puts humanity in touch with the very being of the other spiritual world which makes the people end up in worshipping the creator. God is good that we have meet greeted and praised. When two people embrace each other in greeting something deep happens, their hearts are opened to each other and are made to perceive the power of fellowship. Greeting brings two hearts together that break into the worship of God. Therefore, when we examine greetings as a tool for mission leading to conversion, it is important to think in terms of indigenous systems of knowledge that could enhance mission in all areas of life.

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that greetings can be used as a tool for mission in Africa as well as other parts of the world. It is reasonable to expect that upon investigation, scholars may find many such instances in which the initial object of greetings becomes the means by which mission is enhanced as a process of transformation initiated by the missionary encounter. Furthermore, thinking of greetings in terms of mission can deepen our understanding of both the process of evangelization as well as the process of behavior change. Thus important connections between greetings and mission become a theology of transformation which is not merely unidirectional favoring the traditional African greetings but is rather dialectic between indigenous practice and the Christian message.

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38. See Waweru, Reading the Bible Contrapuntally, 341.

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