



Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy

#11 | December 2016

Editorial

The eleventh edition of the ESJP brought many great changes to the journal. To start with the most exciting one: the ESJP has started cooperating with the Erasmus University College (EUC). Our ex-editor-in-chief and Advisory Board member Julien Kloeg, who is also part of the EUC-staff, often praises the quality of the philosophical papers written by students of the Humanities program of the EUC. So, when he mentioned the possibility of cooperating, we were immediately interested. The submissions we received from the EUC for this issue were indeed of high quality and covered various philosophical topics we had never encountered during our years at the Faculty of Philosophy. We are more than curious to see what our cooperation with the EUC will bring in the future.

We were surprised and delighted to receive so many submissions this issue. With our fourteen submissions, we nearly broke the record of the first edition of the ESJP, for which fifteen papers were submitted. The great range of philosophical subjects addressed in these papers assured us once more of the immense diversity of the philosophical climate in Rotterdam. The three papers selected, 'Amorality and Banking', 'Too Little, Too Late' and 'The Public Sphere in China' were already of great quality the moment they were sent to us. We want to state our gratitude and admiration towards the authors who have put so much time and effort in improving them even further.

Although the editorial board is in constant flow, it is always sad to see a talented editor leave. Sadaf Soloukey was with us since the ninth edition of the journal, and continuously impressed us with her great talent and critical skills. However, she has decided to focus on her studies in medicine and philosophy, a decision we can only applaud. We wish Sadaf the best, and look forward to seeing her during future ESJP reunion drinks.

During the preparations for the previous edition, the editorial board decided to start using a more open application procedure. Thus, when we started looking for new editors at the beginning of this academic year, we sent out a call for applications to every single student of the Faculty of Philosophy and the Humanities program of the EUC. We received many reactions by very talented and motivated students. In fact, we received so many applications that we were forced to reject several more than eligible applicants. Though this was a difficult task (and I would therefore like to thank the Advisory Board, and especially Thijs Heijmeskamp, for their advice), we have welcomed four new editors to the board: Manon Dillen, Art van Houwelingen, Merel van de Poel and Jan-Philipp Siebold. Every single one of them has proven themselves to be an invaluable addition to the editorial board. We were constantly surprised by the knowledge, editorial skills and diligence of the new editors. There is no doubt in my mind that this new team of editors will continue the great work ESJP has been doing for years.

Fabian van Dijk
Editor-in-chief

About the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy

The Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy (ESJP) is a double-blind peer-reviewed student journal that publishes the best philosophical papers written by students from the Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam and from the Humanities Program of the Erasmus University College. Its aims are to further enrich the philosophical environment in which Rotterdam's philosophy students develop their thinking and bring their best work to the attention of a wider intellectual audience. A new issue of the ESJP appears on our website every July and December.

To ensure the highest possible quality, the ESJP only accepts papers that (a) have been written for a course that is part of the Faculty of Philosophy's curriculum and (b) nominated for publication in the ESJP by the teacher of that course. Each paper that is published in the ESJP is subjected to a double-blind peer review process in which at least one other teacher and two student editors act as referees.

The ESJP encourages students to keep in mind the possibility of publishing their course papers in our journal, and to write papers that appeal to a wider intellectual audience.

More information about the ESJP can be found on our website:

www.eur.nl/fw/esjp

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ISSN: 2212-9677

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Disclaimer

Although the editors of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy have taken the utmost care in reviewing the papers in this issue, we cannot exclude the possibility that they contain inaccuracies or violate the proper use of academic referencing or copyright in general. The responsibility for these matters therefore remains with the authors of these papers and third parties that choose to make use of them entirely. In no event can the editorial board of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy or the Faculty of Philosophy of the Erasmus University Rotterdam be held accountable for the contents of these papers.

In this issue

In 'Amorality and Banking', Felix den Ottolander reacts to Dutch anthropologist Joris Luyendijk, who argued in *Swimming with Sharks* (2015) that we should not hold bankers personally responsible for the financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath. Instead, Luyendijk thinks we should look at the immoral structure of the banking system. In contrast, Ottolander argues that bankers are inclined towards exhibiting low moral self-awareness, and that we should therefore not only look at the nature of the banking system, but also at the individual level.

'Too Little, Too Late' is Edwin Lokker's reaction to Dutch expert on seventeenth-century philosophy Wim Klever's controversial claim that Spinoza's Latin teacher was the 'hidden agent' behind Spinoza's philosophy. Lokker gives a short biography of the teacher, Franciscus van den Enden, and counters Klever's claim by arguing that Van den Enden could not have influenced Spinoza to this extent before his political awakening by Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy, which only occurred six years after Van den Enden met Spinoza.

'In 'The Public Sphere in China', Dennis Prooi starts from the observation that Hong Kong has an exceptionally vibrant public sphere in a country that otherwise lacks anything resembling one. Prooi analyzes Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement using Hannah Arendt's and Jürgen Habermas' conceptions of the public sphere, and argues that a Confucian conception of the public sphere is a theoretical possibility. He thinks that the shared tradition of Confucianism may provide Hong Kong and mainland China with the kind of vocabulary needed to overcome their current political differences.

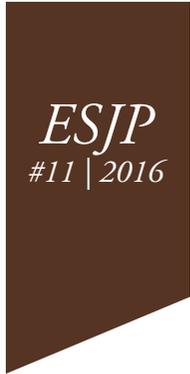


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Amorality and Banking

Dysfunctional Conscience as Additional Explanation

Felix den Ottolander

“Who is without sin cast the first stone.” – The Bible (John 8:7)

§1 Introduction

This is one of the last sentences in the highly controversial and disruptive book *Swimming with Sharks*¹ (2015) by the Dutch anthropologist and investigative journalist Joris Luyendijk. If nothing else, it characterizes the current state of the public debate about the issue of morality in the global banking sector. Consensus has been reached about what exactly happened during the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath.² There is less agreement, however, on who should be blamed for the destructive events. According to a commonly held view among bankers, it seems as if everyone had a part to play in the build-up of the events – not just bankers but also politicians, financial regulators and even ordinary citizens. Bankers may be portrayed as scapegoats but since we all kept dancing while the music was playing³, at least some leniency is permitted.

Luyendijk partly endorses this argument when he claims the stigmatization of bankers as ‘greedy bastards’ is misguided. Instead of targeting bankers as morally corrupt individuals, one should look at the system of banking as a whole. He argues the banking sector is subject to influences from an amoral system, in which bankers internalize behavior that does not include any moral considerations. In a world of zero job security, for instance, bankers tend to lose empathy for their colleagues and clients. Knowing this, it becomes clear how the sale of high-risk, complex financial products like subprime mortgages was perceived to be permissible.

Yet, the existence of an amoral system is only one way of looking at the lack of morality in the banking sector. In this essay, I claim that the lack of morality can additionally be explained by way of dysfunctional conscience on an *individual* level. Dysfunctional conscience can roughly be defined as lacking the ability to reflect on one’s own behavior and judge whether it is morally permissible or not. A key aspect of a dysfunctional conscience is low moral self-awareness. Low moral self-awareness implies a high degree of moral disengagement, which should be perceived as a psychological mechanism that results in a person’s disengagement with his or her moral considerations. Applying this mechanism of moral disengagement to the practices described by Luyendijk (2015), I will argue that bankers are prone to exhibit poor moral self-awareness. This in turn indicates the conscience of individual bankers to be dysfunctional as moral self-awareness is indispensable to a well-functioning conscience.⁴ Thus, besides systemic amoral factors, the lack of morality in the banking sector can also be explained by individual dysfunctional conscience. Admittedly, both explanations interact and overlap to some degree, but it is nevertheless useful for the participants in the debate – and especially policy makers involved in the reform of the financial sector – to identify both systemic and individual causes of amorality.

The essay is structured as follows. In section two, I briefly summarize and endorse Luyendijk’s argument for the banking sector as an amoral system. Section three explains what is meant by having a dysfunctional conscience using a Kantian conception. The fourth section elaborates on the process of moral disengagement, relating actual behavior of bankers to different aspects of this process. Section five concludes.

§2 Banking as an amoral system

The main conclusion from Luyendijk's book (2015) is that the banking sector is an amoral system. That is, the collection of institutional rules, practices and norms within the financial industry encourages its participants to ignore moral considerations. Ethical terms such as 'good' and 'bad' do not enter into personal deliberations at all, nor can they constrain the behavior of the people who operate in this moral-free zone. An amoral system does not require its participants to act according to any ethical standard – be it political, professional, religious or what have you. Instead, it completely ignores moral commitments *as such*, supposing one is operating in an ethical vacuum.

This situation is aptly sketched by Rainer Voss, a former German investment banker, when he explains how the concept of maximizing shareholder value⁵ facilitates an amoral mindset: "Management does not care whether market conditions have changed, temporarily or structurally. They demand a ten percent revenue growth, every year – *I don't care how you do it*" (Bauder, 2013). Thus, the only criterion that is taken into account in the course of these practices is whether bankers achieve some specific goal, thereby ignoring any moral considerations that might be involved.

In the case of the banking sector, Luyendijk (2015) raises several factors that contribute to the existence of an amoral system.⁶ One important factor is the principle of *caveat emptor*, which roughly translates as 'buyer beware'. In our context, this principle holds that the client who buys a financial product is ultimately responsible for the consequences that derive from the transaction. Clients are assumed to be reasonably informed about what it is they are buying, which shifts the burden of moral responsibility away from the seller and towards the buyer. This allows bankers to disregard the ethical aspects of transactions because they assume their counterparties are fully aware of the transactions' good or bad aspects. As a result, bankers tend to institutionalize amoral behavior through a principle that operates in the financial system as a whole.

Another systemic factor that incentivizes amoral behavior is the banking sector's erratic hire and fire culture. This practice entails that bankers

may be fired immediately and on the spot, for a variety of reasons: a banker could be unproductive compared to his colleagues, engaged in a non-lucrative business sector, or be victim of a regularly initiated layoff. The point is that bankers hardly have any job security, which feeds an amoral logic of engaging in activities that are strictly profitable, but may be morally reprehensible.⁷ Moreover, questions about the moral permissibility of layoffs are irrelevant as most considerations are primarily based on competitiveness and profit.

At the same time though, sacked bankers have a good chance of being rehired by a different bank. In addition to forced layoffs, many employees in the banking sector quit their job voluntarily in search of higher compensation elsewhere.⁸ This aspect of the hire-and-fire culture raises loyalty issues that suggests uncommitted employees are less likely to take the interests of their clients into serious consideration. As a banker, if changing jobs is relatively easy and the prospect of being sacked is ever present, then there is little reason to uphold any moral principles towards other parties – including colleagues and the bank itself – because you simply have no incentive to do so.

Amorality is, however, a double-edged sword. Although there are, strictly speaking, no moral standards in an amoral system like the banking sector, bankers are still constrained by at least one kind of morality: the law. The fact that there are hardly any moral standards to adhere to within a specific system, does not automatically mean one is allowed to transgress the moral standards within that system. In other words, the near absence of morality does not justify *immoral* behavior. Assuming that a counterparty has full information about a transaction plausibly lacks proper moral considerations. It is not, however, an immoral assumption. That is, bankers do not intentionally try to break the law, whereby they would engage in explicit immoral behavior.

Importantly, immorality presupposes the presence and knowledge of moral standards, and whenever a person does not adhere to these moral standards he or she can be said to behave immorally. For instance, a banker who is told to increase company revenue by whatever means necessary would still refrain from illegal activities, as these are deemed to be immoral. The issue of amorality versus immorality was raised by many

bankers that Luyendijk interviewed: “Profit is indeed the only criterion, not how you make it. Yet you have to act according to the law. After all, our organizational principle is amoral, not immoral” (Luyendijk 2015, p. 91).

Here, the legal system acts as an explicit moral standard that clearly indicates which activities are morally permissible and which are not. Yet, arguably, this standard is rather rudimentary and porous. As Luyendijk shows in his book, there is a large range of banking activities that are perfectly legal (i.e. not immoral) but still have reprehensible consequences from a broader, moral point of view (amoral).⁹ Despite the fact that immorality suggests the existence of (at least one kind of) morality, a system like the banking sector can nevertheless be characterized as amoral because the connotation of immorality relates in this case to a legal framework that merely functions as a fundament of morality. There are, in short, ample incentives for bankers to behave amorally without engaging in immoral behavior.

§3 Conscience and its functionality

So far, I have endorsed the argument for the existence of systematic amoral factors within the banking sector. This amoral system is significantly different from an immoral one, and this is an important insight since participants in the debate too often unjustly refer to the latter. It is clear that bankers are exposed to, and have to a substantial degree institutionalized systemic amoral principles and practices.

However, amorality in the banking sector cannot be solely attributed to systemic factors. In addition, the banking sector exhibits similarities with the characteristics of a dysfunctional conscience brought about on an individual level. This claim requires a different approach, for it focuses on developing an explanation in the domain of individual moral psychology. To substantiate this claim, I will draw on two specific accounts in the moral philosophy and moral psychology literature. The first account is primarily used to conceptualize dysfunctional conscience, while the second illustrates how and to what extent the concept of dysfunctional conscience is applicable to actual practices in the banking sector.

To explain what a dysfunctional conscience means in general, I will refer to the Kantian conception of conscience elaborated by Marijana Vujošević (2014).¹⁰ According to this conception, “conscience is the capacity of moral self-appraisal that triggers certain emotional responses” (Vujošević 2014, p. 3). Conscience is not the sensual disposition to feel comfortable or uncomfortable in case of some moral or immoral act, respectively. Rather, it is the ability to reflect on one’s own behavior and judge whether it is morally permissible or not. To clarify his conception, Kant involves two qualifications of conscience, which will be explained in turn.

The first qualification is related to a kind of moral self-awareness. This primarily entails reflection upon one’s own behavior, which stimulates feelings of comfort and discomfort. For Kant, being aware of the consequences of your actions is necessary to distinguish between morally appropriate ends and merely self-seeking ends. The former would trigger feelings of comfort as behavior is in line with our moral knowledge of right and wrong, while the latter could (but not necessarily has to) lead to feelings of discomfort, depending on the situation and the degree of selfish interests. This way, certain moral maxims are developed which constrain self-seeking ends and help to adopt moral ends. Without the ability to develop these moral maxims we would be amoral egoists, unable to realize that moral ends are applicable to us. Thus, by way of self-awareness and reflection, a well-functioning conscience makes us responsive to our moral knowledge and capable of self-constraint.

It is important to note that the qualification of conscience in terms of moral self-awareness is not the source of knowledge about what we consider to be right and wrong; rather, it presupposes this ethical knowledge. Put differently, without a properly functioning conscience we would still know which kinds of behavior are right and wrong *hypothetically*, but we would not have the ability to become aware of whether our *actual* behavior is morally permissible. A person with a dysfunctional conscience could be perfectly able to point out moral dilemmas and distinguish moral from immoral behavior in specific situations, but only when these situations are of a hypothetical nature. When reflecting on one’s own behavior, however, a person’s low degree of self-awareness prohibits the development of genuine moral judgment.

The second qualification of conscience is the presence of an inner judge that assesses the moral permissibility of certain behavior. To have a well-functioning conscience is to be in a position to judge whether one can be held accountable for the behavior in question. In effect, conscience does not only “stimulate moral feelings; it also triggers feelings of guilt or relief” (Vujošević 2014, p. 4). So, conscience directly supplies us with appropriate emotional responses to the moral aspects of our behavior. According to Vujošević, moral feelings are a manifestation of moral judgment, and the former can therefore be taken as evidence for the presence of the latter.

Judging the rightness or wrongness of behavior helps to develop moral maxims that can be used to assess past behavior. Yet, conscience also assesses the judgement formation process itself. In other words, by making moral judgments, we not only judge the moral aspects of our behavior but we also examine the relevant psychological conditions – such as personal values, interests, prejudices, etc. – that influence our judging capabilities *as such*. For instance, through this process we would be made aware “of some morally unacceptable incentives for our actions, or obstacles we have to avoid if we are to form morally correct maxims” (Vujošević 2014, p. 5). According to the second qualification of conscience offered by Kant, the ability to assess our judgment-formation process is necessary for behaving morally. As opposed to accepting certain behavior based on mere *legal* grounds, we have to be genuinely convinced our behavior has a *moral* foundation.

The two qualifications of conscience emphasize the importance of self-awareness, ethical knowledge and self-reflective moral judgment. It has become clear that the first qualification is most important for conscience to function properly, because it is moral self-awareness that enables the capacity for self-reflective moral judgment. Thus, according to Kant, moral self-awareness is a necessary condition for a well-functioning conscience.

The question now is how moral self-awareness is influenced so as to make conscience dysfunctional. One plausible answer is formulated by Frank Hindriks (2014), who claims a person’s self-awareness is inversely related to his or her tendency to moral disengagement. Put differently, a high degree of moral disengagement implies poor self-awareness. When this is the case, a low level of self-awareness will lead to a dysfunctional

conscience, since the former is an indispensable part of the latter. Figure 1 sketches the relationships of these concepts with regard to conscience. The next section will elaborate on the crucial aspect of this framework, namely the causal factors underlying moral disengagement and their resemblance with actual practices by bankers.

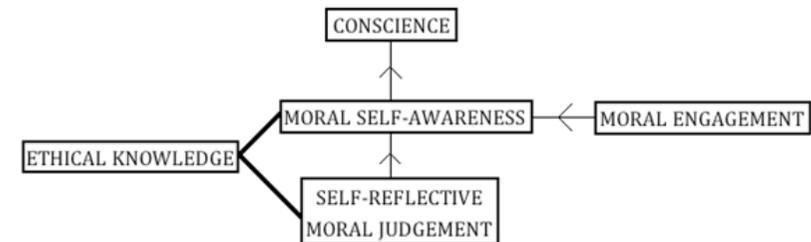


Figure 1: The relationships between conscience, ethical knowledge, moral self-awareness, self-reflective moral judgment and moral engagement. The arrows reflect a causal relationship, while the thick lines imply something is presupposed. The two qualifications of conscience, namely moral self-awareness and self-reflective moral judgment, both presuppose ethical knowledge. Together they constitute a well-functioning conscience. Moral engagement, however, implies moral self-awareness, which in turn contributes to a well-functioning conscience.

§4 The process of moral disengagement

Now that the conceptualization of dysfunctional conscience has been clarified, I will turn to the process of moral disengagement. The aim of this section is twofold. First, I will briefly explain the causal mechanism that underlies moral disengagement. Secondly, and most importantly, I will show to what extent the practices within the banking sector are similar to the factors that contribute to moral disengagement. Once it is established that bankers are prone to moral disengagement, it will become clear that banking lacks morality due to individual dysfunctional conscience.

In the context of moral psychology, the process of moral disengagement is primarily based on the study of actual behavior. In contrast to the metaphysical account by Vujošević (2014), the expression of dysfunctional

conscience through the process of moral disengagement has a more concrete foundation. This allows one to apply the described practices in the banking sector directly to the moral disengagement mechanism, since the practices are sufficiently concrete to be used as evidence for the existence of moral disengagement. Therefore, I will go through the different causal factors of the mechanism one by one, in each case emphasizing the resemblance between some particular practices described by Luyendijk (2015) on the one hand, and a specific causal factor of moral disengagement on the other hand.

Originally developed by Albert Bandura (1986), the mechanism of moral disengagement was subsequently used in his paper *Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency* (Bandura 1996). This mechanism entails the moral self-sanctions of behavior that are selectively activated and disengaged from, and collectively form a self-regulatory process. The essence of this mechanism is that a person disengages from moral self-sanctions due to a range of different psychological factors. According to Bandura, these include four distinct factors: reconstruction of behavior, distortion of personal responsibility, misrepresentation of consequences and dehumanization of recipients.

Reconstruction of behavior

First of all, with regard to moral justification certain behavior is reconstructed so as to appear morally acceptable. People try to portray their behavior in a more favorable manner, often according to some social value or moral standard. One way of doing this is through euphemistic language, which “provides a convenient tool for masking reprehensible activities or even conferring a respectable status upon them” (Bandura 1996, p. 365). Consequently, the moral implications of behavior are effectively mitigated and the actor believes to be relieved of any wrongdoing.

Moreover, behavior can also be morally justified by placing it in an advantageous comparison with an even more reprehensible kind of practice. This way, the behavior in question is rendered to be of little significance or might even come out as the more favorable option. The larger the contrast

of the comparison, the more likely it is that the person is to justify his or her own behavior, as well as the behavior of people who engage in similar activities.

Moral justification through the reconstruction of reprehensible behavior is the most effective factor in the process of moral disengagement, because it not only disengages a person from reprehensible behavior but it also transforms the morally censurable into an active source of self-appreciation. As will be shown below, the banking sector is rife with practices that show strong resemblance with this factor of moral disengagement.

For example, the notion of ‘enhanced severance’ is actually a euphemistic expression of a type of blackmail, commonly used during layoffs. In Luyendijk (2015), a human resource employee describes how a bank would pay their sacked employees many times more than the normal rate, in exchange for which they would not sue the bank for any reprehensible activities. Another example is ‘legacy issues’, a term often used by the bank’s management to refer to actions by traders that wrongly try to cultivate an extremely successful reputation, but the term actually includes the many scandals that have recently surfaced, such as the LIBOR¹¹ fraud and cases of rogue trading.¹² A final example is the ‘regulatory and law enforcement matters’, short for fines related to money laundering by banks. Despite the obvious reprehensible nature of these practices, they are reconstructed according to euphemistic terminology and, in effect, portrayed as neutral, morally permissible activities.

With regard to advantageous comparisons, some of the dubious practices in the banking sector are compared to outright objectionable behavior so as to make the moral controversies of the former appear less significant. For instance, the amoral, but legal practice of ‘revenue responsibility’ – that is, every banker having the obligation to generate some predetermined amount of revenue – is compared with cases of rogue trading. It is tempting to focus one’s attention towards the ‘rotten apples’, thereby disregarding the moral considerations that are clearly inherent to both practices. By stressing that rogue traders are exceptions to, rather than characteristic of the integrity of bankers in general, the direction of reasoning is reversed: instead of questioning the morality of their behavior, bankers blur their lack of morality by contrasting their behavior with cases of obvious immorality.

Distortion of personal responsibility

The second factor in the mechanism of moral disengagement relates to the distortion of personal responsibility. People disengage from self-sanctions when they do not, or only partly acknowledge their responsibility for reprehensible behavior. This could take place in both the displacement and diffusion of responsibility. Under displacement of responsibility, “people view their actions as springing from the social pressure or dictates of others rather than as something for which they are personally responsible” (Bandura 1996, p. 365). When people believe they cannot be held accountable for their actions, their psychological self-sanctioning processes will not be activated. As a result, behavior they might normally condemn on moral grounds is now deemed acceptable.

Additionally, personal responsibility can also be distorted by the diffusion of responsibility. The division of labor within an organization naturally leads to a diffusion of responsibility because highly subdivided activities have relatively little overall responsibility. People that perform one specific task in a large organization do not genuinely feel a burden of responsibility because they perceive the lion’s share of responsibility to lie somewhere else. This aspect might seem harmless when taken per separate activity, but can become destructive in its totality because no one acknowledges full responsibility for the performed actions.

Both the displacement and diffusion of personal responsibility is prevalent in the banking sector. Most significant is the displacement of responsibility in the hands of external parties. Supervisory authorities and government institutions are easy targets in this regard, as they impose regulations that indicate the legal boundaries for banker to operate in. Since these are taken to be the absolute standards of morally acceptable behavior, any harmful consequences are directly attributed to the originators of the regulations. One of the ‘Master-of-the-Universe’¹³ type of banker that Luyendijk introduces, was firmly convinced the 2008 financial crash could not be blamed on the banking sector, nor on the banks and their employees. Instead, he considered the crash to be “a perfect storm, owing to market-disrupting policies by politicians and especially the incompetence of insurer AIG”¹⁴ (Luyendijk 2015, p. 153).

Furthermore, due to its highly hierarchal structure, individual bankers tend to diffuse the responsibility of their actions over higher management levels. Importantly, the relationship between the consequences of behavior and personal responsibility are not properly aligned. That is, the hierarchal structure is actually turned upside down: “the people who can cause serious damage [in terms of selling incomprehensible financial products] are at the bottom of the chain of command” (Bauder 2013). Thus, bankers tend to distort personal responsibility by diffusing it to other people *within* the banking sector as well.

Misrepresentation of consequences

Thirdly, the process of moral disengagement often includes the misrepresentation of consequences. When people pursue activities that can potentially be harmful to others, or have done so in the past, they are inclined to misrepresent the consequences of their actions. In the case of previous reprehensible behavior, people “readily recall prior information given to them about the potential benefits of the behavior, but are less able to remember its harmful effect” (Bandura 1996, p. 365). So there is a bias towards the positive aspects of certain behavior, while the negative aspects are largely ignored. In addition, people tend to actively discredit the evidence of their detrimental behavior. Even if harmful effects are taken into consideration, people do not sufficiently acknowledge them due to the questionable nature of the evidence that has led to the consequences.

The banker that embodied the ‘Master-of-the-Universe’ mentality, was also highly skilled in the art of misrepresenting the consequences of his own behavior. Somewhat predictably, he claimed his job to be “useful, legal and of vital importance to the economy [...]” (Luyendijk 2015, p. 151). Be that as it may, his statement does not address the consequences of amorality in the banking sector at all. Rather, he emphasizes the supposed benefits of the work bankers are involved in, and completely ignores the harmful effects that have resulted (or may result) from this kind of business.

Moreover, many individual bankers commented on the original blog posts¹⁵ that most of the negative aspects of their profession were aired by ex-bankers, or by employees who presumably had no authority over these matters. From this, they argued the purported amoral aspects of their behavior were merely a form of ‘banker bashing’ and should therefore not be taken seriously. Although it is true that those who spoke out about morally reprehensible behavior were often no longer employed in the banking sector, they were by no means the only ones who did so. For instance, our Master-of-the-Universe banker is illustrative of individuals who considered themselves to be of the “happy” sort, in stark contrast to their “miserable” counterparts (Luyendijk 2015, p. 153) – where “miserable” refers to the ex-bankers who had lost their jobs and therefore developed a grudge against their former employer and colleagues, while the “happy” ones are those who have continued their banking careers without such envy.

Dehumanization of recipients

Finally, the dehumanization of recipients contributes to the process of moral disengagement by depicting the people who are subject to the consequences of certain behavior as insufficiently human. That is, actors of potentially harmful behavior do not view their actions to be as such, or only to a significantly lesser degree, because they perceive their recipients to lack human qualities, like cognitive ability. Once dehumanized, recipients “are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes and concerns, but as subhuman objects” (Bandura 1996, p. 366). Due to the inhuman nature of recipients, morally reprehensible behavior is effectively detached from the self-censuring processes.

A key feature of the dehumanization process is the attribution of blame upon the victims of reprehensible behavior. Victims are blamed for bringing the negative consequences on themselves due to their lack of one or more human qualities. This way, questions of responsibility and guilt are skewed towards the recipients, and the roles of instigator and victim are turned around: the original actors of reprehensible behavior now see themselves as the victims of the consequences of that same behavior. In other words, the instigator is victimized through the fallout of his dealings with the recipient.

To illustrate this last point, let us go back the principle of *caveat emptor*. Given that the buyer of a financial product is ultimately responsible for any of the consequences that derive from the transaction, blame for negative effects such as losses must not be attributed to bankers, but to their clients. By law, all information about a financial product is disclosed, so the client ought to be aware of the risks of the transaction. In case of severe losses or outright bankruptcy, the buyers of the financial products that have led to these unfortunate results can be held accountable. Thus, instead of a systemic amoral feature, *caveat emptor* is actually an expression of moral disengagement through the attribution of blame to people other than oneself.

In the process of dehumanization, arguing that bankers are to blame for the financial malaise is to victimize the wrong party. Since clients are assumed to know what they are buying, they can be considered to possess certain cognitive abilities. Arguments that question this assumption indicate that clients lack sufficient cognitive ability in order to be viewed as proper humans. Although this sounds quite radical, a particular practice in the banking sector actually confirms this line of reasoning. Greg Smith, who wrote the disruptive article *Why I am Leaving Goldman Sachs* (2012), vividly described why clients of his bank were called ‘muppets’:

Integrity? It is eroding. I don’t know of any illegal behavior, but will people [bankers] push the envelope and pitch lucrative and complicated products to clients even if they are not the simplest investments or the ones most directly aligned with the client’s goals? Absolutely. Every day, in fact. (Smith 2012)

Notice how bankers – at least at one leading investment bank – deliberately try to sell complex financial products to their clients. They can do so for two simple reasons: one, it is completely legal; and second, *caveat emptor*. Consequently, it is the client’s responsibility to judge the moral aspects of transactions, i.e. whether it is ‘good’ to engage in a particular transaction. A client’s failure to conform to this principle has led to criticism *towards bankers*, which is perceived to be misdirected from the latter’s point of view. It is, however, this form of victimization that is in fact unjustified, for it is primarily based on the dehumanization of recipients.

§5 Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued in favor of an additional explanation for the lack of morality in the banking sector. In addition to the existence of an amoral system, banking exhibits the effects of dysfunctional conscience on an individual level. According to the Kantian conception, a conscience is dysfunctional when it lacks proper moral self-awareness. In turn, poor moral self-awareness implies a high degree of moral disengagement. The application of Bandura's mechanisms of moral disengagement (1996) to actual behavior by bankers described by Luyendijk (2015) has shown how bankers are prone to the reconstruction of behavior, distortion of personal responsibility, misrepresentation of consequences and dehumanization of recipients. This evidence suggests that bankers tend to exhibit amoral behavior brought about by a dysfunctional conscience.

This conclusion should not be viewed as a substitute for, but rather as complementary to the argument that the banking sector is amoral. As I have argued, the banking sector can be characterized as amoral due to the dysfunctional conscience of at least some of the individuals whose behavior was described by Luyendijk (2015). This does not mean, of course, that all bankers can be accused of being amoral. While I have endorsed Luyendijk's claims about the amoral aspects of the banking sector as a system, I have claimed that this phenomenon can be further understood by looking at the psychological processes of individuals as well. The aim of this essay has been to enrich to the current (public) debate about morality and banking by way of taking a different point of view: instead of solely focusing on the *systemic* factors, regulators and other policy makers should also consider the *individual* aspects that contribute to a lack of morality in the banking sector.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank prof. dr. Maureen Sie for nominating my essay for publication. I am also grateful for the valuable comments that the ESJP referees and editors have provided me.

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'Amorality and Banking: Dysfunctional Conscience as Additional Explanation' was originally written for the elective course The Moral Brain by prof. dr. M.M.S.K. Sie.

Notes

1. The original Dutch version of this book was published with the title '*Dit kan niet waar zijn*', which was used for this essay. Throughout the essay, I will draw on different examples of practices used by bankers that were described in this particular book. Although the book was written for the general public to be able to understand the problems related to morality in the banking sector, it accurately and quite objectively describes the morally controversial practices over the course of two years by way of more than two hundred interviews. Luyendijk interviewed a wide range of people who had either worked or were still working in the City, London's financial district. They mostly included bankers who were active in investment divisions, but also employees of insurance companies and regulatory institutions. Here I follow Luyendijk in taking this selection of interviews to be representative of the *global* banking sector since the operations mentioned above often take place internationally. As Luyendijk emphasizes, what I call the global banking sector is actually an intricate web of financial institutions that are highly integrated and mutually dependent. For this reason, practices that take place in the investment banking branch are likely to have significant effects on the operations of other kinds of institutions, such as insurance and retail banking.
2. For an early description of the crisis and potential policies, see Blanchard (2008); for a later and more detailed account, see Hancock & Zahawi (2011) for instance.
3. This metaphorical phrasing refers to the famous quote by Charles Prince, former CEO of Citigroup: "As long as the music is playing, you've got to get up and dance." (2007). This means that despite signs of instability in financial markets, banks (and indirectly the public at large) had to continue their operations because of the simple fact that their competitors were also doing so.
4. To emphasize, I do not claim that all bankers – roughly including those active in the fields of investment banking, insurance and financial supervision – exhibit a dysfunctional conscience. Rather, the evidence from moral philosophy and moral psychology referred to in this essay indicates that at least the bankers who are involved in the practices described by Luyendijk (2015) tend to exhibit behavior brought about by a dysfunctional conscience.
5. Maximizing shareholder value is one of the cornerstones of modern capitalism, in which companies ought to maximize the value of their shares that are traded publicly. The reason-

ning behind this concept is that shareholders are the ultimate owners of a company, who should be compensated for the risks they are taking accordingly.

6. For the sake of clarity, I do not claim the existence of an amoral system in the banking sector to be unique; of course, there may be other business sectors that exhibit systemic amoral characteristics as well. Here I limit the discussion to the banking sector, leaving other possible cases of amoral systems aside for subsequent studies.

7. Although the lack of job security mostly applies to the situation in the City, its implications range much wider. Even if bankers enjoy relatively more job security in other countries – take the less flexible labor contracts in The Netherlands, for example – knowing that their British or American colleagues are operating within an extremely competitive system does not take away the amoral logic. For if they want to compete with these Anglo-Saxon type of banks they are forced to adopt a similar attitude, and engage in the same kinds of harmful activities.

8. Some recent developments in the global banking sector suggest that it is becoming *more* difficult for bankers to be rehired, let alone to obtain higher compensation at a different bank. One survey (2012) shows, for example, that between 2008 and 2012 more than 120.000 bankers have lost their job. Moreover, many American and European banks are currently forced to cut costs (i.e. jobs) due to a range of economic conditions. Most of the redundancies, however, apply to administrative and other low-end positions. At the same time, the Financial Times (2016) has recently reported that bonuses are back at their pre-crisis levels, which implies that the situation of investment bankers and other high-end personnel has remained very lucrative in terms of job prospects and compensation.

9. Some of these activities will be discussed in section IV.

10. For this purpose, she uses the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (1992). Despite the fact that her paper specifically addresses the dysfunctional conscience of psychopaths, the main aspect of this conception provides an appropriate framework for explaining the lack of morality among bankers – without going as far as to claim all bankers are psychopaths, of course. The reason for relying on this particular account is that it emphasizes the distinction between legally and morally correct actions, which closely relates to Luyendijk's difference between immoral and amoral behavior.

11. The London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) is a benchmark interest rate for lending between banks. It has been manipulated several times in the past few years by employees from a range of different banks, many of the investigations leading to substantial fines and even criminal convictions.

12. A foremost example is the 'London Whale', a JPMorgan Chase trader who personally lost over six billion US dollars by deliberately covering up his high-risk investments. Besides the immoral character (i.e. violation of the law) of both the LIBOR and London Whale cases, the fact that they are often formulated euphemistically suggests the moral disengagement through the reconstruction of reprehensible behavior.

13. A loose term used to characterize the complacent, snobbish type of banker that is often encountered in investment banking divisions at large (international) banks. Luyendijk also illustrates other loosely defined type of bankers, such as 'Neutrals' and 'Delusional Bankers'.

14. American International Group (AIG) is a multinational insurance corporation that had to be bailed out by the US Federal Reserve Bank during the financial crisis.

15. These formed the input for Luyendijk's book (2015) and can be found on: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/joris-luyendijk-banking-blog>

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Too Little, Too Late

Why we should see Franciscus van den Enden as a follow-up of Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy instead of the mastermind behind Benedictus de Spinoza

Edwin Lokker

Historian and Spinoza-specialist Koenraad Oege Meinsma once argued: if you are neither burning down cities and churches during your lifetime, nor building statues for yourself, nor signing thousands of papers, it could happen that after a while, despite all your achievements, you enter the shadows of the caverns of history (Meinsma 1896, 125). In such cases, like in the case of Spinoza's Latin teacher Franciscus van den Enden, there is fruitful ground for the most glorious rumors. For example, some suggested that Van den Enden played a role in the diplomatic settlement between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Empire in the period 1645 – 1648 (Meinsma 1896, 128 – 129). Others claimed that Van den Enden was offered a chair as professor at the age of eighteen, still being a student (Meinsma 1896, 126). It has also been suggested that he rejected an offer to become an employee at the court of the Hungarian King (Meininger & van Suchtelen 1980, 13). In addition, the Dutch expert on seventeenth century philosophy Wim Klever claimed that Van den Enden was 'the hidden agent behind Spinoza's genius' (Klever 1991, 631). He argued that Van den Enden had a major influence on the young Spinoza. This influence is twofold. According to Klever, Van den Enden had a mediating role between the philosophy of René Descartes and Spinoza and Van den Enden convinced Spinoza of his own political views (Klever 1991, 617; 631).

In this paper, I will first give a short biography of Franciscus van den Enden and try to shine a different light on who he actually was. Second, I will outline the claim of Wim Klever that Van den Enden was the 'hidden agent' behind Spinozism. Third, I will attempt to counter this argument. This will be based on the facts that there is too little evidence and that the political awakening of Van den Enden came too late to back up the claim

of Klever. Fourth, I will give also a short biography of the political idealist Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy and I will argue that it is more fruitful to see Van den Enden as a successor of this contemporary, if we want to get a better understanding of what Van den Enden actually tried to accomplish in his two books. In that paragraph I will show that the political awakening of Van den Enden came after he met Plockhoy in 1661 and not before met Spinoza in 1655. Finally, I will close with the conclusion that Van den Enden was most likely triggered by Plockhoy to develop a political career that would eventually end at the gallows.

About Franciscus van den Enden

In this chapter I will give a biography of the main character of this paper: Franciscus van den Enden. He was born in Antwerp in 1602, on February the 9th. In his youth, he became a Jesuit and therefore he left Antwerp to become a 'noviciate' at Mechlin in 1619. In 1629, he went to Louvain to study grammar and theology, only to be dismissed four years later from the Jesuit order (Mertens 2003, 295). Between 1633 and 1642 his whereabouts are unknown.

The first time we hear from Van den Enden again is in 1642. In this year he gets married to Clara Maria Vermeren (Meinsma 1896, 127). Together they had five children (Klever 1991, 618). In 1645 he arrives in Amsterdam for the first time, only to leave it again shortly after his arrival (Meinsma 1896, 127 – 128). According to Meinsma, we do not know how he fed his family in the meantime (Meinsma 1896, 128). This is also the basis for the first rumor mentioned in the introduction. Perhaps he was earning some money working as a diplomat for the Dutch

Republic in Madrid (Meinsma 1896, 128). The only source that confirms this rumor is a poem by Antonides van der Goes (Meinsma 1896, 128).¹ Theoretically, it is possible that he worked as a diplomat in Spain, because he spoke Spanish (Israel 2002, 181). In addition, it is noteworthy that he was abroad between 1645 and October 1648. The poem of Van der Goes suggested that it might have been connected to the negotiations leading up to the Peace of Münster (Meinsma 1896, 129). After he returned to Amsterdam he opened a bookshop (Meinsma 1896, 129). When he had to close down his bookshop, he opened a Latin school. This undertaking showed to be more successful. After a while his school had a better reputation than the official Latin school in Amsterdam (Meinsma 1896, 130). In the Latin school, Van den Enden expressed some very progressive ideas concerning education. According to Van den Enden, the easiest way to learn something is to learn it playfully (Meinsma 1896, 132). For example, in the mid-fifties of the seventeenth century he taught his students Latin by letting them perform a play in a theatre (Meinsma 1896, 134).

It was in this period that he became the Latin teacher of Spinoza (1655 – 1657) (Klever 1991, 628). The first year Van den Enden was nothing but a teacher to Spinoza. But this changed when the young Spinoza's life fell to ruin. His family business, which consisted of importing and selling Mediterranean fruits, got bankrupted (Van Bunge 2003, 931). Shortly after that, he was kicked out of the Jewish community in Amsterdam for reasons we still do not know. It was Van den Enden who looked after him and gave him a place to stay (Klever 1992, 21). That year, Spinoza became a really close associate of Van den Enden (Klever 1991, 628). According to Klever, this must be the period in which Van den Enden influenced Spinoza on a large scale.

It was only during the second half of his adult life that Van den Enden began to utter his political ideas. Contemporaries considered him to be an atheist (Israel 2002, 175). According to historian Jonathan Israel, he was considered to be the leader of the philosophical 'atheists' in the city of Amsterdam (Israel 1998, 788). The Amsterdam magistrates also forbade him to discuss his ideas in public (Israel 2002, 175). In 1662 he published his first book called: *Short Narrative of New Netherland's Situation, Virtues, Natural Privileges, and Special Aptitude for Population; Together*

with Some Requests, Discourses, Deductions, etc. for That Purpose at Various Times around the End of the Year 1661 Presented by Some Interested Persons to the Honorable Lords Burgomasters of this Town, or their Honorable Lords Delegates, etc. See more broadly after the Preface the Short Contents, together with the Warning to the Booksellers, next to this on the other or opposite side (Klever 1991, 622).

Fortunately, the title has been mostly shortened to *Short Narrative of New Netherland's* (Klever 1991, 622).² In this work Van den Enden presented the idea of settling a commonwealth in North America (which was actually not his own idea, but an idea of Ploekhoy) (Israel 2002, 177). The ideological fundament of this ideal state was, as he described it, 'the foundation of strict equality' (Klever 1991, 623). It should be noted that he did not intend to implement a leveling system in his commonwealth (Klever 1991, 623). Nonetheless, the commonwealth was based on the idea that all laws were commonly profitable to all people (Klever 1991, 624). Van den Enden presumed that all people strive for the highest level of well-being, even if this harms the well-being of another person (Klever 1991, 624). In order to deal with this negative side effect of pursuing maximum well-being, Van den Enden proposed complete openness of affairs. In this way it is impossible to become corrupted (Klever 1991, 624). In addition, people should receive proper education (Klever 1991, 624), because 'reasonable, enlightened' inhabitants, understand that pursuing the 'common best' is also in their own best interest. Finally, within Van den Enden's commonwealth, there should also be freedom of speech and religion (Klever 1991, 624). If all features of his ideal society are summed up, it must be concluded that his ideas were surprisingly modern. The same can be said about his second work as published in 1665 (Israel 2002, 175).

His second work *Vrye Politijke Stellingen (Free Political Institutions)* was strongly egalitarian and democratic in voice, which also made it anti-monarchical. Moreover, it was also anticlerical (Israel 2002, 175). He was not so much anti-monarchy for the perversity and arbitrariness of kings; rather, he argued that monarchy and proper education could not exist next to each other (Israel 2002, 176). Through good education he wanted to overcome inequality, because he believed that when you enlighten the

people, you will destroy the preconditions of a monarchy, which, according to Van den Enden, are greed, superstition, and obsequiousness (Israel 2002, 176). When the people are all equal and, moreover, enlightened, this would be a problem for organized religion, because organized religion, a statement which Van den Enden copied from people like Machiavelli and Vanini, is just a political instrument to control the people (Israel 2002, 176). Thus, a free commonwealth and organized religion are not compatible with each other. To come back to his idea about equality, he did not only want to pursue this for men, but also for women, boys, and girls (Israel 2002, 177). This far-reaching idea about equality was probably based on his high expectations of the capabilities of mankind (Israel 2002, 177). He was convinced of the idea that someone's private interest would be much alike the common good in his utopian commonwealth (Israel 2002, 177). But his belief in the capabilities of the everyday man was even greater. Van den Enden believed that when you translate knowledge from disciplines such as medicine, science or philosophy from Latin into the everyday language, it would also be understood by the common everyday people, and not only by experts (Israel 2002, 176). Thus every human being is not only equal from a moral point of view, but they are also equal in their capabilities.

In 1661, Plockhoy and his followers, who wanted to establish a community based on the principles of equality and liberty (Mertens 2003, 796), asked Van den Enden if he could be their spokesman in the negotiations with the Amsterdam city government for the establishment of a new state in North America (Israel 2002, 179). Both were part of a larger group (a radical tradition if you will), who called themselves 'Collegiants'. Among them were people like Jarig Jelles, a longtime friend of Spinoza, and Adriaan Koerbagh, who advocated the democratic idea of a 'government by the people' (Van Bunge 2012, 13; 17; 23). To return to the request of Plockhoy: Van den Enden accepted and, moreover, he was successful. In 1663, a group of 'Plockhoyists' went to North America to establish a new state. This, however, ended in a tragic disaster as they were overrun by the English army a year later (Israel 2002, 179). In addition to this expedition, Van den Enden also wanted to launch his own expedition, but he failed his attempt (Van Bunge 2011, 35). However, the dream of establishing a 'free republic' was still alive (Israel 2002, 181).

In 1668, the Amsterdam magistracy summoned him to leave Amsterdam because of his 'malign influences in the city' (Israel 2002, 181). In 1671, he left Amsterdam and went to Paris, where he opened a Latin school (Israel 2002, 181 – 182). During his time in Paris, he, along with some French noblemen, came up with the idea to liberate Normandy from the kingdom of France (Israel 2002, 181). In order to achieve this, he tried to persuade the Spanish governor in Brussels to collaborate (Van den Enden at the age of 72(!) actually went to Brussels to meet him) (Israel 2002, 182). But, King Louis XIV got wind of this idea and when Van den Enden returned to Paris he was arrested with his fellow conspirators (Israel 2002, 182 – 183). The noblemen were beheaded, because this was 'the more elevated' form of execution (Israel 2002, 183 – 184). Van den Enden, however, was not a nobleman and was executed by hanging (Israel 2002, 184).

Wim Klever's claim

I have to admit that Van den Enden was a very remarkable man. He had some very progressive ideas for a seventeenth-century Latin teacher and he was also involved in some very interesting political activities. Based on these facts, Klever can easily conclude that Van den Enden was a 'radical democrat' (Klever 1991, 625), but the question is: is there more than meets the eye? According to Klever, there is. About the relationship between Van den Enden and Spinoza, Klever argued that we must interpret Van den Enden as 'Proto-Spinoza' (Klever 1991, 630). He even called Van den Enden 'the hidden agent behind Spinoza's genius' (Klever 1991, 631). And after that, he proclaimed the following about Van den Enden:

The origin of Spinoza's anomalous philosophy is no longer a riddle. It was a former Jesuit, sent down on account of his errors, who inculcated the principles of reason in Spinoza's mind and who was the mediator between Descartes and Spinoza. (Klever 1991, 631).

How did he come up with that conclusion? He uses four arguments to prove his point which I will present in the following paragraphs.

First, there are great similarities between the works of Van den Enden and the works of Spinoza. When we look at the political theory of both authors, we can only conclude that the foundations are quite similar (Klever 1991, 627). According to Klever, both authors are political realists and both favor democracy (Klever 1991, 627). However, there is more. Klever mentioned ten different similarities in the introduction of his translation of Van den Enden's *Free Political Institutions* (Klever 1992, 102 – 109). I will name the four most important ones. Firstly, both in the vision of Spinoza and that of Van den Enden, God and nature are the same. Spinoza stated in his book *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that: "if we say that everything happens according to the laws of nature or by the power of God, we say the same thing"³ (Spinoza 2008, 138). Van den Enden has a similar phrase in his work *Short Narrative of New Netherland's Situation*, which predate the works of Spinoza, namely "of God or nature's way"⁴ (Klever 1991, 628; 1992, 102) (Van den Enden 1662, 69). Besides that, it is unquestionable that there are some traces of determinism in the ideas of Van den Enden. He said: "The necessity (Nootdwang) is of a kind that it is not possible for a human being that he could have done something else, then that he did"⁵ (Van den Enden 1992, 231). The third similarity is revealed in Van den Enden's rejection of the idea of Descartes that mind and body are two substances (Klever 1991, 629). Van den Enden said about this:

A man consist of body and soul and because of that he strives after two forms of well-being, but these are that much intertwined, that if one of them has a lack of well-being, the whole human being more or less is suffering,... (Van den Enden 1992, 144).⁶

Maybe the quote is a bit ambiguous, but to Klever this proves that Van den Enden rejects the mind-body dualism of Descartes. Finally, according to Klever both authors had the same ideas about the so-called three kinds of knowledge (Klever 1991, 629). Both authors also used the same names for these kinds of knowledge, namely 'fancying', 'believing' and 'clear knowledge'. Therefore, it is indeed possible to conclude that there are, besides the political matters, some similar ideas in the works of Van den Enden and Spinoza. However, this still does not mean that

Van den Enden was the great inspirer of Spinoza. Are there any arguments that could substantiate that claim? According to Klever there are.

In his second argument Klever stated that Van den Enden was already involved in some political matters in the early fifties of the seventeenth century, long before Spinoza published his political ideas (Klever 1991, 628). There are three sources that suggest some political interest of Van den Enden. The first is the poem of Van der Goes. This poem claimed that Van den Enden was a diplomat during the war and that he had some interaction with the court of the Hungarian king. But there are no other sources that can confirm this. In other words, the credibility of this source can be questioned. The second source is a political pamphlet. Van den Enden republished a political pamphlet in 1650, when he worked as a publisher in his bookshop. This political pamphlet is titled *Korte verthooninge* (Klever 1992, 18). In this pamphlet, which dates from 1587, you could find a defense of the sovereignty of Holland against the tyranny of the Spanish Empire (Klever 1992, 19). Klever argued that this proves that Van den Enden was already interested in political matters in the 1650s (Klever 1992, 19). The third source is a letter from 1665 in which Van den Enden explains to *grootpensionaris* (the highest civil servant in the Republic) Johan de Witt that he had been involved in political negotiations concerning, what we nowadays call, Lithuania (Klever 1992, 67). Klever argued that this was probably during the Nordic War in 1659 -1660.

Besides, in 1657 Van den Enden wrote and conducted a play called *Philedonius* in Amsterdam (Klever 1991, 630). According to Klever, Van den Enden expressed in that play a great deal of anthropological knowledge (Klever 1991, 630). For example, it contains a theory of the passions which is comparable to that of Spinoza (Klever 1991, 619). In the *Ethica* of Spinoza we can find a theory in which human behavior is explained by human passions (Klever 1992, 105). The play *Philedonius* is a great representation of that idea. However, this play was written some time before Spinoza became known as a philosopher. In addition, the two political works of Van den Enden, in which this theory of the passions is also expressed, are from an earlier date than the works of Spinoza (Klever 1991, 630; 1992, 105). For that reason, Klever argued that Spinoza was indeed inspired by Van den Enden.

Finally, according to the contemporaries Jean Charles du Cauzé de Nazelle and Olaus Borch Van den Enden was an excellent debater (Klever 1991, 630). As we know, his first work appeared in 1662. However, this does not mean that he did not express his ideas to his pupil Spinoza in the late fifties (Klever 1991, 630). In his time, he was seen as man of the spoken word, rather than a writer (Klever 1991, 630). Therefore, it is not impossible that Van den Enden uttered his political and anthropological ideas and influenced the young Spinoza in his Latin School long before he published his first work.

The arguments of Klever reconsidered

I think that there are just two arguments that are necessary. If Van den Enden really is the hidden agent behind Spinozism and Spinoza's genius, then the second argument, that Van den Enden was politically active before he met Spinoza, and the third argument, that it is possible that he taught Spinoza on metaphysical and anthropological matters, have to be true. Because if these arguments are not true, then we have to conclude that the remaining arguments may be important, but it is not enough to prove that Van den Enden is the hidden agent. In that case, you can only prove that there is a connection and that they might have influenced each other. If Van den Enden is the hidden agent, then he has to be a forerunner on political, metaphysical and anthropological matters. Thus, if I want to test how strong the argumentation line of Klever is, I have to try to falsify the second and the third argument.

The second argument that is used by Klever is weak, for it lacks sufficient evidence (just two if we disregard the poem). Besides, I think that there are two major problems with this argument. Firstly, the sources that Klever uses do not demand Klever's interpretation, but allow different plausible explanations. Secondly, Klever has denied a source in which Van den Enden himself denies the claim.

According to the first problem, the explanations of Klever of the evidence are just plausible explanations. It is also possible to come up with other plausible explanations for the two events. Let us first look at the publication of that pamphlet. I think that if we add some context there,

it is possible to come up with an explanation that is much more suitable to the situation of Van den Enden than stating that he was involved in political matters. When we look at what happened in that period, we can name two important things. First, in 1648, the Peace of Münster was signed (Meinsma 1896, 129). Besides that, there is the bankruptcy of his bookstore on September 12th in 1652 (Meininger & Van Suchtelen 1980, 22). Another possible purpose of the publication of the pamphlet could have been a last attempt at saving his bookshop. This possibility is backed by the fact that the research of Frank Mertens proved the popularity of the pamphlet. He stated that in the year 1650 there were at least three editions published of the same pamphlet (Mertens 1994, 728). This could be proof of the idea that he was trying to make some money out of it, instead of being 'politically active'. Secondly, we have to look at the claim that he was involved in some political matters during the Nordic war of 1659 – 1660. To state this, the literal words of Klever are: "The interference with 'Lijf-land' or Lithuania could have taken place during the Nordic War in 1659 – 1660"⁷ (Klever 1992, 68). Accordingly, even Klever himself is not that sure about this and he is not able to back up this thought with evidence. Besides that, this still took place after he tutored Spinoza. Thus, even if it is true, this cannot be counted as evidence that Van den Enden was already involved in political matters in the early 1650s and that he therefore must be the influence on Spinoza on this topic.

Lastly, I want to talk about the second major problem of this argument. In his claim that Van den Enden was already involved in political matters in the early fifties, Klever did not speak about the fact that Van den Enden himself had said something about that. In the preface of the book *Free Political Institutions*, Van den Enden said that there were some shy people who asked him to help with some interaction with the City of Amsterdam, because they wanted to become colonists in New Netherland (Klever 1991, 621; Van den Enden 1992, 125). But before this he said something about his political interest in the period before this encounter, and I quote: "Before the end of the year 1661, I did not think about writing something about political matters and publish it one way or another..."⁸ (Van den Enden 1992, 125). So even Van den Enden denies some involvement in political matters in the fifties. Therefore, I think we can conclude that the second argument supporting Klever's claim is falsified.

To falsify the third argument we have to prove that Van den Enden did not have any metaphysical or anthropological knowledge whatsoever in 1655 or that Spinoza did already have that knowledge before that time. We have to admit that there are some metaphysical and anthropological traces in his play *Philedonius*. In this play we can read about the rejection of the so-called *Deus Procul*. This means that he did not believe that there was a god in a far place (Klever 1992, 102). Later this will be translated in his work as *God or nature*. He also talked about the idea that a human being is capable of holding different types of knowledge (Klever 1992, 103). Much later we will see a similar reasoning in the work of Spinoza (Klever 1992, 104). Thus, if this argument can be falsified, than there is just one way to do that. We have to search for some sources that prove the idea that Spinoza already had some philosophical background before he met Van den Enden.

He met Van den Enden in 1655 shortly before he was banned from the Jewish community (Klever 1991, 628). Is it possible to find traces of the philosophical works of Spinoza before this year? In fact it is. Jarig Jelles, a friend of Spinoza who already knew him before he was banned from the Jewish community, proclaimed that Spinoza immersed himself in Cartesianism before he turned against his teachers in the synagogue (Israel 2002, 164). But what is more striking than the deposition of Jelles are the words of Spinoza himself. In his oldest surviving work, *Improvement of the understanding*, he tells us that in his youth he was already becoming a philosopher ('highest good'), but he did not want to break with the everyday life (that was all 'vain and futile'), because he did not want to give up his life that was certain for a life full of uncertainties (Israel 2002, 164). Finally, the son of the publisher of Spinoza once stated that in the year of 1656, when Spinoza met people like Van den Enden, Spinoza already had enough philosophical knowledge to persuade others (also Van den Enden) to adopt his views (Israel 2002, 171). I think this is not enough to claim that Van den Enden did not influence the young Spinoza and vice versa, but the third argument cannot back up the claim of Klever anymore. Because there was already some philosophical knowledge in the mind of Spinoza, for example Cartesianism, we cannot say that Van den Enden is the mediator between Descartes and Spinoza and therefore the hidden agent behind Spinoza's genius anymore.

What is left are the following two arguments: that there are many similarities in the works of both authors and it was told that Van den Enden was an excellent debater. But I think this is not enough to claim that Van den Enden was the hidden agent behind Spinozism. All the more because these similarities are not systematically constructed and applied in the works of Van den Enden like they are in the works of Spinoza (Van Ruler 1992, 50). Actually, the ideas that were considered similar to those of Spinoza are sometimes a little vague in the works of Van den Enden, when you compare them to the same ideas in the works of Spinoza (De Dijn 1994, 74). Thus, we cannot see Van den Enden as if he was the mastermind behind Spinozism, but if we look at his work and his remarkable life story we also cannot see him just as a regular Latin teacher in the seventeenth century. To put him in the right perspective I think we should compare him to Plockhoy. But before we do, I think it is necessary to explain who Plockhoy was and what were his ideas.

About Pieter Cornelisz. Plockhoy

Earlier, we saw that the first forty-five years of Van den Enden's life were quite a mystery to us. We know some characteristics but that is about it. But compared to what we know about Plockhoy, it is quite a blessing. It is assumed that he was born in Zierikzee, because of his name: Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy van Zierikzee, and he is probably born in the 1620s (Mertens 2003, 794). We first hear from him when he arrived in Amsterdam in the late forties or the early fifties of the seventeenth century (Mertens 2003, 794 – 795). In this period, he also became famous because of his ideas (Mertens 2003, 795). One of these ideas was his controversial stand on polygamy. He defended, on biblical grounds, the idea that a married man could easily sleep with other women (Mertens 2003, 795). An intriguing thought to say the least, but for this paper his political ideas are far more interesting. When he was in London in the mid-50s he met Oliver Cromwell (Van Bunge 2011, 34), who was Lord Protector at the time (Mertens 2003, 795). Cromwell was really interested in the idea of Plockhoy to establish some cooperative communities in England. However, Cromwell died in 1658, before the plan was executed (Van Bunge 2011, 34).

A year later Plockhoy published this idea in a pamphlet which he calls *A way propounded to make the poor in these and other Nations happy*. In this pamphlet, he explains his political ideas. The reason why Plockhoy wants to establish a 'little Common-wealth' is because of the great inequality he has seen in the world (Plockhoy 1659, 3). He wants to build a community for 'Husband-men, Handy-crafts people, Mariners and Masters of the Arts and Sciences' (Plockhoy 1659, 3). Because in the world he lives in they are not only suppressed by kings and rulers, but also by clergymen who think that they can persuade the good people by telling them that they can take care of their souls and therefore that they have to toil for such a clergy-man (Plockhoy 1659, 4). According to Plockhoy, it is time for a change, because he said: "... to the end that we may the better eschew the yoke of the Temporal and Spiritual Pharaohs, who have long enough domineered over our bodies and souls..." (Plockhoy 1659, 3). Plockhoy thinks that those who are now suppressed would benefit more from mutual love instead of suppression (Plockhoy 1659, 4).

So this is the problem he wants to solve with his new society, but what is this society going to look like? The society he wants to create is what we would call nowadays a 'socialist society'. Except for the day of the Lord, everyone who is able to should work six hours a day (Plockhoy 1659, 4). The socialist aspect is most present in the healthcare system. Where the rich have to pay for healthcare it is free for the poor (Plockhoy 1659, 7). There are also some socialistic tendencies in his economic policies, because everyone gets the chance to get the job which is most suitable for her or him and every product will be sold for such a price that it could be bought by anyone (Plockhoy 1659, 8). But that is not all. Every six or twelve months the things that are overproduced (above necessity) will be given to the people. So everyone is able to give something to the poor or to give something as a gift to a friend (Plockhoy 1659, 9). He also thought about the children of the poor. They should have the same treatment as the children of the rich, so the poor do not have to work harder or even will be forced into slavery to give their children the same education (Plockhoy 1659, 11). Besides the socialist tendencies of his work, there are also some democratic tendencies. Every year a man about forty years old should be chosen as chief Governor

(Plockhoy 1659, 9). There should also be a Government of about ten to twelve men and women. Every six months five to six of them should be replaced by others. So the remaining six could teach the new governors what governing is all about (Plockhoy 1659, 10). Six months later the other governors should be replaced by other new governors, and so forth. To rule out corruption there is not just one man for the treasury. Three of the 'uppermost' in the government should have a part of the access to the treasure, so one or two are not able to open the locker (Plockhoy 1659, 9). Finally, everyone must be allowed the freedom of speech, even about things that are contrary to Scripture (Plockhoy 1659, 16). In this case, you cannot force others to embrace your opinion as their own (Plockhoy 1659, 16). Therefore, there is free speech in this commonwealth and there is even some sort of freedom to choose your own religion. When it comes to education in his commonwealth, children should not be taught humane forms of religion (Plockhoy 1659, 15). For example: there is no need to learn a clergy-man's opinion about Scripture. They only need to be taught the writings of the Saints, natural arts, sciences and languages (Plockhoy 1659, 15). Because when it comes to spiritual matters, only Jesus Christ can be considered as Master and not those clergy-men (Plockhoy 1659, 16).

In 1661 he went back to Amsterdam, where he met Van den Enden (Israel 2002, 179) (Mertens 2003, 796). Plockhoy had caught up the idea of a new ideal settlement, this time it was located in what is now known as the United States of America on the banks of the Delaware river (Mertens 2003, 796). Van den Enden helped Plockhoy and his friends to get into contact with the magistracy of Amsterdam (Israel 2002, 179). In 1663 they actually went with 41 so-called 'Plockhoy-ists' (including Plockhoy himself) to the New World (Israel 2002, 179). We do not know if they were able to establish their ideals, but they did establish a community there, so it was a quite success (Mertens 2003, 796 – 797). However, the village was overrun a year later as I mentioned above. The settlement was completely destroyed. It is said that Plockhoy survived the attack and lived in the vicinity of the destroyed town until 1682. The last time we hear about him is when he arrived with his wife in Germantown in 1694 (Mertens 2003, 797). After that he probably died in this village.

My claim

Again, like in the case of Van den Enden, we have to admit that Plockhoy was a remarkable man with some very progressive ideas and very interesting political deeds. But I want to go a step further. I think we should consider him as the influence on Van den Enden through which the latter is inspired to a political career. Here I will show that Van den Enden only became politically active after he met Plockhoy in 1661 and not before 1655 when he met Spinoza, like Klever argued. I will try to prove this with a comparison between the political pamphlet *A way propounded to make the poor in these and other Nations happy* of Plockhoy published in 1659 and the political pamphlet *Short Narrative of New Netherland's* of Van den Enden published in 1662, which were already mentioned earlier in this paper. But having the same ideas is not proof enough, like I stated when dealing with the claim of Klever. So I will use two other arguments that back up my claim and will be sufficient in my humble opinion.

First, both authors reveal some sort of an anticlerical voice in their books. Maybe Van den Enden does that in a more explicit way, but we can hear the same voice in the quote on page 22 of this article. There we can see that Plockhoy was very critical on the role of the clergymen. Secondly, both authors created thoughts about how they could rule out corruption. Van den Enden calls this 'Openness of Affairs' and Plockhoy creates a system in which the treasury of the city could not be unlocked by just one person. Thirdly, both authors advocate free speech in their books. Fourthly, both authors have some sort of leveling system when it comes to taxes, but I have to say that there are more social tendencies in the ideas of Plockhoy than in the ideas of Van den Enden. For example, according to Plockhoy medical care should be free for the poor (Plockhoy 1659, 7). Finally, despite of the anticlerical voice in both works, both authors advocate the opportunity to choose your own religion. So there are a lot of similarities, but this is not enough to say that Plockhoy influenced Van den Enden.

The second argument is that the works of Plockhoy predate the works of Van den Enden. The first political pamphlet of Van den Enden dates from 1662, the work of Plockhoy that is mentioned in this paper

dates from 1659, and there are even earlier works not mentioned here. Therefore there is no way that Van den Enden influenced Plockhoy, but this still does not mean that Plockhoy influenced Van den Enden.

To prove my claim, I need a third argument. For that occasion I want to use the moment that Van den Enden became politically active. Earlier in this paper, when I falsified the claim of Klever, I showed that there is no evidence that Van den Enden did have any political activities in the fifties of the seventeenth century whatsoever. As far as we know, he became politically active with his first writing in 1662, shortly after he met Plockhoy. So he was most likely not involved in politics before he met Plockhoy. Van den Enden himself stated that the first moment he became involved in politics is the moment when he met Plockhoy and his friends (Van den Enden 1992, 125) (Mertens 2003, 796).

I think that these three arguments, a lot of similarities in the works of both authors, Plockhoy's work predating the writings of Van den Enden and the exact moment that Van den Enden became involved in political matters, delivers enough proof to claim that Plockhoy most likely influenced Van den Enden to a political career.

Conclusion

To sum up, Van den Enden was not the mastermind behind Spinoza. There is too little evidence that could back up that conclusion. The major problems with Klever's conclusion are that the political awakening of Van den Enden came too late and the philosophical awakening of Spinoza came too early. From this paper we draw another conclusion. We can say that Plockhoy did most likely influence Van den Enden to a political career. However, we have to add that this does not mean that Plockhoy was 'the mastermind behind Van den Enden's genius', whatever that means. Plockhoy was most likely the man who gave Van den Enden a push in the right direction. Shortly after that, they ended their mutual contact. Later on, Van den Enden developed in his writings his own political vision, which differs on certain points with the vision of Plockhoy.

If this paper proves anything, I think that we can say that it is not very fruitful to talk about a certain mastermind who influenced someone else on a major scale. It was definitely not Van den Enden who was the hidden genius behind Spinozism and we also cannot say the same thing about the relationship between Plockhoy and Van den Enden. None of them was a radical thinker on his own. They were all part of a certain radical tradition. Plockhoy, Van den Enden, Spinoza and other thinkers in that period, who are not mentioned in this paper. But we have to make an exception in the case of Spinoza, because we have seen in my critique on Klever's claim that several contemporaries saw him as a great philosopher and as someone who could influence other thinkers like Van den Enden. Moreover, until this day he is seen as the man who developed his own systematical philosophy, which cannot be said about the others. Therefore, when we look at the life and works of Van den Enden, we cannot see him anymore as the big influence on Spinoza's work, but he is part of a radical tradition in which he is most likely pushed in the right direction by Plockhoy to develop a political career which would eventually end at the gallows in Paris.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I am very grateful to prof. dr. L. van Bunge for his usefull feedback and also for giving me the opportunity to publish in the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy. Secondly, I want to thank L. Dee, J. van der Klaauw and dr. D.M. Koppenol for their comments and suggestions on my use of the English language. Finally, I want to thank the anonymous referee and editors who enabled me to improve this paper.

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'Too little, too late. Why we should see Franciscus van den Enden as a follower of Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy instead of the mastermind behind Benedictus de Spinoza' was written for the completion of the master's course 'Philosophy and Enlightenment' taught by prof. dr. L. van Bunge.

Notes

1. The original Dutch version of a part of the poem is as follows (Meinsma 1896, 128):
 "Schoon Spanje (een ander heft daer d'eere van genoten)
 Op uwen raet alleen, den vrede heeft gesloten
 Nae zoo veel stormen, met het vrye Nederlant;
 En d'oorlogsrazerny geslagen in den bant"
2. In Dutch it is called *Kort Verhael van N. Netherlandt*.
3. Translated by the author. The original Dutch version of the quote is as follows: "Of wij dus zeggen dat alles geschiedt volgens de wetten van de natuur, of dat alles door Gods besluit en leiding beschikt wordt, wij zeggen hetzelfde."
4. Translated by the author. The original Dutch version of the quote is as follows: "Godt, of Natuirs wegen..."
5. Translated by the author. The original Dutch version of the quote is as follows: "Welke nootdwangh sich zodanigh heeft, dat geen mensch (zulx zijnde als hy voor die tijt is) anders kan doen, als hy doet..."
6. Translated by the author. The original Dutch version of the quote is as follows: "De mensch uit Ziel, en Lichaem bestaende, heeft dienvolgende dan ook, tweederley interesten van welvaren. Echter zodanigh onderlingh verknocht zijnde, dat d'een of d'anders welvaert komende te missen, den heele mensch min, of meer te lijden heeft..."
7. Translated by the author. The original Dutch version of this quote is as follows: "De bemoeienis met Lijffland of Litouwen zal zich hebben afgespeeld ten tijde van de Noorse oorlog, 1659 – 1660."
8. Translated by the author. The original Dutch version of this quote is as follows: "Voor het laest van 't jaer 1661. had ik noch geenh de minste ghedachte, van oyt eenige de minste letter schrifts over politijke zaken in 't licht, of aen den dach te geeven..."

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The Public Sphere in China

Beginnings of a Confucian Public Sphere

Dennis Prooi

§1 Introduction

In his 1993 article *The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture*, Frederic Wakeman writes:

For Habermas, as for Marx, the emergence of civil society and its attendant public sphere was inextricably connected to the emergence of the bourgeoisie. That linkage alone fixes both ideal types in a particular historical setting; and if we allow ourselves to be hobbled by teleology, then neither concept is going to fit the Chinese case very well. But as terms of social practice, which can be gingerly universalized, civil society and public sphere may afford a better understanding of recent events in China (p. 112).

The 'recent events' Wakeman writes about are the 1978 Beijing Spring and the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. The Beijing Spring lasted until 1979 and was a brief period of political liberalization during which there was greater freedom of speech in China. This freedom was used by the people to voice strong criticisms of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a disastrous period in Chinese history during which the Communist Party claimed to remove all bourgeois elements from its ranks. The Cultural Revolution resulted in millions of deaths and completely halted economic growth. During the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, students occupied Tiananmen Square in central Beijing for one and a half month, starting April 15. They finally had enough of the corruption of the Chinese Communist Party and demanded further liberalization of the country's political structure, drawing their inspiration partly from the Beijing Spring. The students failed to have their demands met. On June 4, the protests turned deadly when the government ordered a crackdown, causing an unknown number of deaths.¹

If Wakeman were to rewrite his article today, he would undoubtedly take a keen interest in the case of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. This city became Chinese territory only in 1997, after the so-called handover had transferred sovereignty from the United Kingdom to China. That Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy is the result of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, ratified at the United Nations in 1985, which guarantees Hong Kong's basic freedoms, including the freedom of speech, freedom of press and the right to assembly, to remain in place until 2047. When the Chinese government announced it wants to screen candidates that can run for the office of Chief Executive (the Special Administrative Region's highest political post), many people in Hong Kong felt it had gone too far. They regarded the Chinese government's decision as a means to ensure no progressive democrat could become Chief Executive. In the final quarter of 2014, students gathered in Admiralty, on Hong Kong Island, to demonstrate against the decision (Iyengar, 2014). This particular student protest did not fare well either. On September 28, the police fired tear gas into the protesting crowds to disperse them. This caused even more people to come out and support the students (Branigan & Kaiman, 2014). The resulting occupation of the area around the Central Government Complex in Admiralty, as well as Causeway Bay and Mong Kok (the city's major shopping areas and tourist spots), lasted for more than two months, after which most of the protesters stopped resisting and their camps were cleared by the police. Similar to the students of Tiananmen Square, the students of Hong Kong had none of their demands met (Phillips & Ng, 2014). At the same time, though, Hong Kong managed to show its leaders and the rest of the world that it has a vibrant public sphere that is to be reckoned with.

These two accounts, of the Tiananmen Square protests and the Umbrella Movement, lead to an interesting observation with which I wish to begin this paper: that China, a country where anything resembling a public sphere is almost non-existent, seems to harbor within its borders a city that has a public sphere so vibrant that it is likely to trigger the envy of those struggling to defend the societal value of having a strong public sphere in the West. The problem with Hong Kong's public sphere, however, is that any message it sends out falls on deaf ears. The Chinese government has chosen to ignore the entire Umbrella Movement, not even mentioning a word about it in domestic media. This silence can be explained by realizing that China is teeming with areas looking for independence (e.g. Tibet); giving in to the demands of one region may trigger cries for independence in all others. At the same time, though, the Chinese government appears interested in nourishing civil society in the mainland. More specifically, there are signs that the Chinese state wishes to develop Confucianism into a civil religion – comparable to the Christian church in the United States. Doing so, it hopes to combat the many ills plaguing its society, such as economic inequality and corruption. If this is true, then a unique opportunity presents itself to the people of Hong Kong. Rather than focus all efforts on the democratization of Hong Kong's political structure, those involved with the Umbrella Movement should concern themselves with the promotion of the idea that a strong public sphere is something to value, not only in Hong Kong, but also in mainland China. Such promotion of the public sphere would be all the more effective and consolidating if it could be voiced, not in the language of Western liberal thought, but in the language of a tradition shared by both the people of Hong Kong and mainland China: Confucianism.

I have three aims in this paper: 1) to argue that in the case of the Umbrella Movement, we are dealing with an instance of a public sphere; 2) to demonstrate that a Confucian public sphere is a theoretical possibility; and 3) to show that the Chinese state may in fact be inclined towards developing Confucianism into a civil religion, and therefore might nurture the kind of progressive Confucianism that is outlined in this paper in the nearby future. My use of the term 'civil religion' is similar to that of Robert Bellah in his 1967 article *Civil Religion in America*; I thus sharply

distinguish between civil religion and state religion. While the latter depends on an infrastructure of state-sanctioned institutions (churches, temples, or other such places of worship), the former is carried popularly by the people without necessarily requiring any form of state support. In the case of the ideologically atheist People's Republic of China, however, official recognition of Confucianism as a civil religion would provide the eventual emergence of a Confucian public sphere with a major boost.

I begin the next section by discussing Jürgen Habermas (1929-) and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), two of the public sphere's seminal thinkers, to arrive at a fourfold definition of the public sphere. In the third section, I apply this definition to the case of the Umbrella Movement. I argue that the Umbrella Movement is in fact an example of a public sphere and not merely a protest or demonstration. In the fourth section, I show that the Chinese Confucian tradition does not solely consist of autocratic thinkers. Confucianism is often thought to value central leadership and have a strong disdain for democratic processes. To challenge this perception, I show that the Neo-Confucian scholar Huang Zongxi² (1610-1695) formulated a Confucian political theory that values the existence of what, in terms of the fourfold definition I propose, comes close to counting as a public sphere. In the fifth section, I show why the Chinese state is interested in nurturing civil society. I argue that it is not entirely unthinkable that the Chinese government will ideologically condone a form of Confucianism close to the one Huang envisions in the near future. In the conclusion, I consider the consequences of my findings for the political and ideological gap that currently exists between mainland China and Hong Kong.

§2 Defining the public sphere: Arendt and Habermas

Before I can determine whether the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong is indeed an instance of what can be called a public sphere, or examine whether Huang conceptualizes a public sphere in different terms, I first have to define precisely what the public sphere is. I therefore begin this section by relating the thought of Arendt and Habermas and end it by providing a tentative definition of the public sphere.

In her 1958 work *The Human Condition*, Arendt defines the public sphere in terms of agonistic struggle. Her definition of the public sphere involves two important notions, namely visibility and artificiality. First, to Arendt, the public realm is a space in which people *can appear*. People are powerless as long as they are confined to the private realm, which is governed by intimate relationships. However, as soon as people go public, whatever they say and do gains a kind of reality and intensity it could not have had otherwise (Arendt, 1998, p. 50). This is illustrated by the Tiananmen Square protests. The protesters made use of the fact that many international television crews happened to be present for recording the visit of Mikhail Gorbachev. They knew that the presence of foreign television crews was their chance to *appear* (that is, to leave the private realm and enter the public realm), realizing all too well that the media can provide one with such visibility that one can no longer be ignored by those in power.

Second, the public realm is a common world that has *artificially* been created (Ibid., p. 52). It is a space where people and things are related to each other in a particular way by means of certain artificial elements. We might illustrate this using the example of a table. As something that is literally in between people, a table mediates and constructs certain relationships. Consider having a job interview. If there is no table in between you and your interviewer, you might feel a bit awkward and insecure. A table can make all the difference in that it might cause you to feel more confident and assertive. Since the public sphere is artificial, we are free to design it – but putting something as simple as a table between people will determine the way in which they subsequently deal with each other. The things we create end up shaping us. A public sphere is therefore not a natural given, but something we ourselves design, and are subsequently determined by.

Arendt takes the Greek *polis* as her normative model. She makes a case for the public sphere as a place where equals come to debate all matters, and which is permeated by a 'fiercely agonal spirit' (Ibid., p. 41). The *agora* serves as a location where citizens of the *polis* can go to become visible and let their voices be heard. Similarly to the example of the table just mentioned, the *agora* mediates and constructs certain human relationships. Its

agonal spirit, for example, can be said to be the result of everyone's fundamental equality. This means that as long as people are confined to the *agora*, they have to discursively persuade others of their views – having a higher status than someone else is no longer of any use. Since the *agora* is a place that has been construed by humans, it is governed by rules humans agreed upon. These rules are subject to change, should people want to do so. It might be said that in the *agora*, even what the public sphere itself is, is subject to debate. In Arendt we arguably have a conception of the public sphere as an *end in itself*, rather than as a means to achieve some other good.

Habermas' 1962 *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (translated as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*) paints a different picture of the public sphere, both in terms of its historical development and its function. According to Habermas, the public sphere arises from civil society – historically, it is the product of the bourgeoisie that had economic power but was politically marginalized. Civil society came into existence as soon as economic activity ceased to revolve only around the state as the primary consumer of commodities. From that moment on, the economy became of general interest and soon it was the public that supervised the commodity market. The emergence of the public sphere is therefore closely linked to the rise of capitalism in the 16th and 17th centuries (Habermas, 1991, pp. 14-19). The bourgeois public sphere came into being when private individuals came together to form a public and in doing so wrestled control over the public sphere away from the public authorities (Ibid., p. 27). Since these private individuals did not and often could not hold political office, they were forced to discuss political matters outside of the political establishment, thus triggering the creation of a space that was in between the state and civil society. The places where these debates took place were Habermas' famous coffee houses, which were in principle open to all, regardless of rank or status. The policies of absolutist rulers who had hitherto been able to rule arbitrarily, were suddenly scrutinized by the public's use of reason. Publicity became the bourgeoisie's primary weapon. These coffee houses function as Habermas' normative model of what the public sphere should ideally be like: places where equals have informed, rational debates, without being coerced into having certain opinions. He thinks that the public sphere has, to a significant extent, disintegrated from what

it was in the 18th century, when the bourgeoisie was still personally debating matters related to the common good in the coffee houses. Much of Habermas' defense of the public sphere today rests on the idea that some potential of the bourgeois public sphere has been left unrealized.

One often-heard criticism of Habermas and one that can be extended to Arendt, is that he theorizes a normative model that does not correspond to any historical reality. His account is either too idealistic or simply historically inaccurate. For example, Tim Blanning doubts whether the public sphere was the product of an emancipating bourgeoisie to the extent Habermas would like us to believe. Even those who we would not call progressive or part of the bourgeoisie were active in this new political arena, such as the clergy and the nobility (Blanning, 2002, p. 12). However, Habermas' great feat was that he not only identified the public sphere as a realm fundamentally opposed to state power but also attempted to find the cause of the emergence and subsequent degeneration of the public sphere in the case of Western Europe. I agree with Blanning that Habermas' model might be too oppositional in nature and that the emergence of the public sphere and its subsequent transformation perhaps cannot be solely tied to the existence of an emancipating bourgeoisie. But then again, I would claim that the emergence of the public sphere is ultimately not necessarily tied to any geographical location, class of people or particular historical period at all. As I take Wakeman to put it, the idea of the public sphere, as a universal social practice, may still have relevance for China, even though its emergence there cannot be pinned down to any bourgeoisie (1993, p. 112). The public sphere may require a particular location (coffee houses, or agorae) but having a physical location is only one of a set of *formal* characteristics of the public sphere. One of my aims in this paper is to identify these formal characteristics so that I can apply them to a cultural setting widely different from that of Western Europe.

It should be clear that Arendt and Habermas do not conceive of the public sphere in similar terms. Where Arendt conceives of the public sphere in terms of freedom and contestation, Habermas' public sphere seems to come with an implicit rulebook. In the Habermasian public sphere, people are locked into having a rational discussion on the common good. In Arendt's public sphere, the agenda seems in no way set

(this would indeed violate the freedom that characterizes the public sphere) and equals discursively compete with each other for visibility. With Arendt, we can even argue that the definition of the public sphere is itself a topic hotly contested by those who are in it, meaning that there never is a final definition of the public sphere. What I want to establish in this paper, however, is not a final, but a *minimal* definition of the public sphere. I argue that the public sphere can *at least* be characterized as 1) a physical location where 2) matters of common interest can be discussed by 3) individuals that are in principle each other's equals in 4) opposition to, or a realm that is sharply distinguished from, government. Let me briefly defend this conception of the public sphere.

Concerning 1), I argue that there can be no such thing as a non-physical (i.e. digital) public sphere. Today's informational landscape is made up of a lot of different media, some of which discourage, and some of which encourage participation. To Habermas, media such as the radio and the television were at the heart of the public sphere's demise during the 20th century. To him, these media are meant to do two things: make money (news itself is an important commodity, after all), and manufacture consent. Television and the radio manipulate public opinion to such an extent that rational debate has been marginalized. Manufactured consensus by no means can replace the one reached through "[...] a time consuming process of mutual enlightenment" (Habermas, 1991, p. 195). Habermas, however, was completely unfamiliar with the internet when he wrote *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. The internet, one might say, is not merely used to manufacture consent but also to debate and challenge the *status quo*. Two arguments, drawing on Arendt, can be formulated against the idea that the internet constitutes a public sphere. First, the majority of social media seem to encourage consensus rather than contestation. For example, people on Facebook will, in 'liking' certain posts, only be confronted in their news feed with posts expressing similar opinions. The point of the public sphere, however, is to be able to engage with those who think *differently*. Second, to be able to act in the public sphere one has to first *appear* in it. But social media only feign appearance; people connect from the comfort of their homes and are therefore not exposed to the raw energy that accompanies actual meetings with people. One can here retort that the internet is a

bigger place than just Facebook; there are also online *fora* solely created for the purpose of encouraging debates between parties with opposing views. However, these *fora* face a different problem: the fact that there is a hierarchy of moderators and administrators who can ban users and remove posts. On the internet, people are never each other's equals: there are always those who own or ultimately control any given website. This conflicts with the condition that the public sphere is a place where *equals* come to discuss matters of common interest.

As for 2), the public sphere is a place where matters of common concern can be discussed, if *only* matters of private interest, rather than common interest, are discussed, then this means that some interests are excluded from the picture and that we are thus dealing with a private corporation rather than a public body. Although people can defend their own private interests in the public sphere, these interests should be open to scrutiny by others. People should realize that what they want has implications for others and what others want has implications for them. Inside the public sphere, private interests are therefore commonly discussed (both in the sense that everyone is involved and in the sense, that discussing private interests is what is done frequently and as if it were the natural thing to do).

In the case of 3), individuals in the public sphere are in principle each other's equals, if people were not each other's equals, then there would be a hierarchy in which those who happen to possess the most power are able to dictate what is right. But the public sphere is exactly that place where authority has no intrinsic value.

Finally, 4), the public sphere is a realm sharply distinguished, or opposed to, government, does not mean that the government may not facilitate the existence of a public sphere but does imply that its interests should not spill over to dictate that sphere. As such, the public sphere functions as a check-and-balance of state power and holds those in power accountable for their actions. Without a public sphere, governments can impose on their citizens any law they deem fit. It is for this reason that a well-functioning public sphere is such an important part of liberal democracy.

§3 The public sphere and the Umbrella Revolution

Now that I have established what the public sphere is, it is time to scrutinize the case of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. While we are seemingly dealing here with nothing more than a demonstration that got out of hand, I argue in this section that the Umbrella Movement resulted in a culture of debate similar to the one found in Habermas' coffee houses or Arendt's *agorae*. Let me begin by briefly clarifying what is at stake in Hong Kong and why the city is in such a unique position, before applying Habermas' and Arendt's analyses and finally the fourfold definition to the Umbrella Movement.

According to Wakeman, Western social scientists attributed the failure of the Tiananmen Square protesters to wrestle political power out of the hands of the dictatorial regime to the absence of civil society in China. That is, in the China of the late eighties of the twentieth century, there were no 'dissident intellectual circles, no Catholic church, no autonomous labor unions, no democratic parties' (Wakeman, 1993, p. 109). The reason Wakeman does not mention Hong Kong in his 1993 article explicitly is likely because back then, Hong Kong was still British territory. At first glance, Hong Kong qualifies as a city where civil society is particularly strong. The Catholic Church is quite prominent in Hong Kong; it does have labor unions and democratic parties; and it is notorious in China (to the dismay of the ruling Communist Party) for having many dissident circles – all of which are perhaps mainly relics of the city's past as a British Crown colony. Progressive movements are additionally fueled by the fact that Hong Kong is the only place in China where the existence of subversive organizations is tolerated. Not only is the infrastructure for having a healthy public sphere firmly in place constitutionally (at least for now), there is also ample reason to make use of it, for the simple reason that its very existence is continually put under pressure by the Chinese state.³

In reaction to the 2014 protests, Leung Chun-ying, Hong Kong's current Chief Executive, said the following in his 2015 Chinese New Year's (the year of the sheep) address: 'last year was no easy ride for Hong Kong. Our society was rife with differences and conflicts. In the coming year, I hope that all people in Hong Kong will take inspiration from the sheep's character and pull together in an accommodating manner to work for

Hong Kong's future' (Phillips, 2015). That the people of Hong Kong were not in the least planning to be like sheep had been demonstrated during the protests just months before. These, however, were not ordinary demonstrations. Especially once it became known to those involved that the initial protest was going to turn into an occupation movement that could last for months, the Admiralty site encampment was swiftly reorganized to allow the students to be at the site all the time. Places for the students to study were set up and a certain number of people were present all the time to prevent the police from suddenly clearing the site. A culture of debate on where to take the movement kept people engaged and hopeful for change. Social media were used to spread the latest news and to summon more people to the site whenever things got tense with the police. For a while, the protest site had the same function as a Habermasian coffee house, in that it facilitated the possibility for everyone to have a place to go to in order to engage in rational debate – a place that was not under direct supervision of the government.

A case can also be made that Arendt's agonistic spirit, rather than a Habermasian kind of rational concern for the common good, pervaded the Umbrella Movement. We have seen that Habermas' conception of the emergence of the public sphere is historically closely related to its opposition of absolutist government. And while none of the protesters of the Umbrella Movement were particularly enamored by the Chinese state, only few of them were motivated by the idea of contesting the sovereignty of China over Hong Kong (Yeung, 2014). Exactly what the primary goal of the movement was, was never explicitly clear – rather, different groups had different ideas on where to take the protests. Although the name 'Umbrella Movement' makes it sound as if we are dealing here with a uniform group with a strong collective identity, precisely what the movement stood for is contested up to this day and was indeed heavily debated as the protests themselves unfolded. Some wanted the protests to remain peaceful. Others argued that resorting to violence (for example, by breaking into the Central Government Complex) was the only way to draw the attention of those in power (Branigan, 2014). The different groups making up the movement were headed by different representatives who all tried to steer the movement into a certain direction. Some of these groups (mostly those made up of older participants) wanted people to withdraw from the sites as

soon as they felt their point had been made but other groups (mostly those made up of students) urged people to press on until the resignation of the Chief Executive and promises by Beijing it would no longer interfere with Hong Kong's democratic process (Chan, 2014).

In Arendt's terms, the sites making up the Umbrella Movement were artificially constructed places where one could go to be visible. After some time, those opposing the whole movement in the first place also began visiting the sites to have their voices heard. This echoes Blanning's criticism of Habermas that not only the bourgeoisie made up the public sphere but also those wishing to preserve the *status quo*, such as the clergy and the nobility (2002, p. 12). Since the Admiralty site was mainly built on what is normally an extremely busy highway and the Causeway Bay and Mong Kok sites were situated in busy shopping areas, shopkeepers began to see their profits shrink. This caused them to go out on the streets to protest as well. On some instances, the encounters between the shopkeepers and the students even turned violent.

None of the demands of any of the various interest groups of the Umbrella Movement were met in the end. And although this anti-climactic end of the protests left many disillusioned, the students did demonstrate something remarkable. They showed that, contrary to what Walter Lippmann wrote in his 1925 book *The Phantom Public*, the public is not a mere figment of the imagination of naive democrats. Lippmann's argument still haunts us today, when faith in the public, at least in the West, seems altogether lost and politicians and public intellectuals alike consistently fail to find the mechanisms triggering public engagement. But Lippmann's argument is demonstrated by the protests in Hong Kong to be too simple: there are not only 'agents' (those who actually make policy) and 'bystanders' (those who vote every now and then but know nothing of the complexity of problems and only spectate most of the time; 1993, pp. 30-43)). Once a public sphere instantiates itself on a physical location and that location becomes the center of political gravity, the difference between agent and bystander blurs altogether. In fact, one could even argue that the agents *become* the bystanders and vice versa. For a long time, all Hong Kong's officials could do was watch the situation unfold. The fact that the people of Hong Kong were able to instantiate a public

sphere in a physical location to the extent that they did, is a valuable and commendable achievement in and of itself. Here I concur with Arendt that we should appreciate the public sphere to be an end in itself and that it is so potent precisely because it does not serve some other, ulterior end (this would indeed equate it to government). The ultimate goal of the public sphere is to simply be a place where opposing voices can meet to discuss what should be everyone's common concern. The demonstrations were more than mere protests: the people of Hong Kong had managed to shape a lively public sphere that ultimately had to yield to the pressure of raw state power.

To make up the balance of this section, the Umbrella Movement can be characterized as a public sphere because: 1) it had a physical location, namely the Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok sites; 2) it was a place where common interests were discussed by people with a whole spectrum of private interests; 3) people were in principle each other's equals, since the voice of a student had the same weight as that of a shopkeeper or a government official, at least for as long as they remained at the sites; and 4) the sites making up the movement constituted a realm distinguished from government, as they were not under its direct supervision.

§4 Huang and the Confucian public sphere

Now that I have made my case that the Umbrella Movement can be characterized as a public sphere, I want to move on to the second aim of this paper: establishing that the 17th century Neo-Confucian scholar Huang theorized a public sphere. I do so by applying the fourfold definition of the public sphere developed in the second section. This sets the stage for the next section, in which I show that the Chinese state is interested in nurturing civil society and might turn to a type of Confucianism as envisioned by Huang. Establishing that Chinese traditional thought theorizes a public sphere is important for those struggling in Hong Kong because the protests were voiced in the discourse of Western liberal thought, while the Chinese government stuck to its Marxist-Leninist ideology. If both parties involved realize they can draw on the language of a shared heritage to theorize a public realm in Confucian terms, they may begin to move closer together.

Let me first clear an important obstacle. Confucianism is often considered to be anti-democratic, and, by extension, not in the least interested in fostering (or even capable of conceptually allowing for) anything resembling a public sphere. One of the most damning evaluations of Confucianism in this regard has been voiced by Samuel Huntington, who wrote that '[a]lmost no scholarly disagreement exists regarding the proposition that traditional Confucianism was either undemocratic or antidemocratic' (1991, p. 24). On the same page, he continues:

Classic Chinese Confucianism [...] emphasized the group over the individual, authority over liberty, and responsibilities over rights. Confucian societies lacked a tradition of rights against the state; to the extent that individual rights did exist, they were created by the state. Harmony and cooperation were preferred over disagreement and competition. The maintenance of order and respect for hierarchy were central values. The conflict of ideas, groups, and parties was viewed as dangerous and illegitimate. Most important, Confucianism merged society and the state and provided no legitimacy for autonomous social institutions at the national level (Ibid.).

The problem with Huntington's account, however, is that it simplifies the matter. While 'traditional' and 'classic' Confucianism may indeed be inhospitable to democracy and its institutions, the tradition is sufficiently rich to have developed into what is called Neo-Confucianism at the beginning of the second millennium. Early Confucian political philosophy as propagated by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) himself relied heavily on the idea that a metaphysical principle called *tian* (heaven) was the ultimate source of law. Moreover, Confucius thought that the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 B.C.) had managed to establish a good system of governance that those living in the present should try to emulate (Yao, 2000, pp. 21-26). Human institutions were thus thought to be worthless unless brought into compliance with the will of heaven and the ways of the ancients. In line with Huntington's criticism, in practice this meant that those in power could rule arbitrarily, since they could always resort to the argument that they were merely carrying out the will of heaven. Buddhism and Taoism eventually challenged Confucian ideas and ultimately pushed it into a state of decline. From the 11th century onward, Neo-Confucian scholars success-

fully triggered a renaissance of Confucianism by reinterpreting it. It is this tradition that would dominate East Asian thought until the introduction of Western ideas at the end of the 19th century (Ibid., p. 96-98). Neo-Confucianism produced numerous thinkers that strike us as progressive and liberal – and Huang is most certainly one of them.

The 17th century that Huang was part of, was a particularly turbulent one in Chinese history. In his time, he witnessed the fall of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and saw the establishment of the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) by the Manchus. Huang remained loyal to the Ming refugee regime and never accepted Qing rule, especially since the Manchus themselves were ethnically not Chinese. His *magnum opus*, the *Mingyi Daifanglu* (明夷待訪錄; translated in 1993 by Wm. Theodore de Bary as *Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince*) does not, *pace* Huntington, defend autocratic rule but instead condemns it. Where classic Confucianism stressed only heaven was a legitimate source of law, Huang was innovative in that he advocated the need for human laws and institutions. He reminded the rulers that to rule is a burden, not a gift. A ruler is first and foremost a servant of the people, rather than the other way around. Huang thought up a political structure that would prevent the prince from becoming an autocratic ruler. He placed emphasis on the idea that the prince should pay heed to public opinion by regularly paying visits to the schools, where he was to debate his policies with society's most educated people.

If we are going to look for a theoretical starting point of a Confucian public sphere, Huang is a promising person to begin with. De Bary seems to concur in his introduction; his translation of the *Mingyi Daifanglu* appeared in the same year as Wakeman's article and (not surprisingly) starts with the same pessimistic conclusion that “[w]ords like 'despotism' and 'tyranny' may be out of fashion among social scientists, but not among those who still protest the June 4 crackdown and feel strongly about the deprivation of human rights” (1993, p. 2). De Bary's motivation in translating the book is to show that Chinese history is not all about authoritarianism and tyranny but has also produced its fair share of liberal thinkers (Ibid., p. 3). In what follows, I use De Bary's interpretation of Huang's work to show that Huang does conceptualize a public sphere of the form that I defined in the second section. Let me restate this definition here: the public sphere can be *at least*

characterized as 1) a physical location where 2) matters of common interest can be discussed by 3) individuals that are in principle each other's equals in 4) opposition to, or a realm that is sharply distinguished from, government.

Regarding 1), the Huangian public sphere has a very clearly defined location: the schools. Precisely Huang's discussion of the role of the schools is what he is most known for among sinologists. The problem with China's schools, Huang argued, was that they were serving only a single purpose: getting students ready for the civil service examinations. Schools were thus used by the government to train its own officials. Huang lamented the careerism and the lack of general knowledge this fostered among entire generations of students. He attempted to show that in classical times (that is, during the Zhou Dynasty) schools were centers of all important community and state activities, and that they '...had a major role too [...] *in debating public questions* and advising the prince. Ideally, then, schools should serve the people in two ways: providing an *education for all* and acting as organs for the *expression of public opinion*' (Ibid., p. 31; emphasis added).

As for 2), the public sphere is a place where matters of common concern can be discussed, it is precisely in the schools that matters of common concern are meant to be discussed. But not only are schools, according to Huang's plan, supposed to be centers of critical debate. The prince is also meant to rule from them. When the prince rules from his palace, he is surrounded only by those who wish to rise through the ranks by pleasing him. Here I remind the reader of the example of the table given when I discussed Arendt's notion of artificiality: the space from where people rule determines the way they rule. Without anyone to oppose them, princes come to think that their rule is absolute. When they instead rule from the schools, princes will constantly have to defend their views against the scrutiny of the scholars. Huang even goes as far as proposing that each month, the prince and his ministers should attend a scholarly discussion on important questions – not as participants, but as students (Ibid., p. 33)!

That people are each other's equals in the Huangian public sphere, as per 3), is guaranteed by Huang in two ways. First, the prince and his ministers are in no way hierarchically superior to the scholars. In fact, we have already seen that the prince is rather supposed to be the servant of the people. Second, to Huang, equality of the people in the public sphere goes

hand in hand with providing a universal education for all. He may not allow the uneducated to participate in the public sphere but he compensates for this by making education available to all, especially those with talent. Such universal schooling is supposed to be a means of "[...] promoting the people's self-development, expanding their human resources and enlarging the number of those who could, in an informed way, participate in the cultural and political life of the society" (Ibid., p. 35). In this, Huang stands closer to Habermas than to Arendt: the public sphere comes with rules and has an inherent rationality. Those who do not know the rules or do not agree with its rationality, cannot participate. The fact that education is required to enter the Huangian public sphere means that he is not a full democrat; the public sphere he theorizes is rather republican. Similar to Habermas' public sphere (and this has often been leveled as a critique against him; see Fraser: 1990), Huang's is exclusive in nature.

The Huangian public sphere is also not, unlike Arendt's, an end in itself. His public sphere is ultimately strongly tied to government and serves to fulfill certain political goals, namely those dictated by Confucianism itself. This has certain consequences for 4), that the public sphere is a realm sharply distinguished or opposed to government. While a case can certainly be made that the Huangian public sphere is a realm that is separate from government, it in no way is meant to oppose it. Freedom of expression and diversity of opinion are not ends in themselves – these are means through which Huang ensures that those best qualified, gain authority. This authority has to make sure that the values central to Confucianism are upheld, so that society edges closer to the normative ideal laid out by the classical rulers of the Zhou Dynasty. Huang would also be inclined to ban forms of 'superstitious belief' (De Bary, 1993, p. 35). Huang is thus not very appreciative of difference and not all matters can be an object of discussion. It is here that Huntington's evaluation might expose a central weakness of even the most liberal form of Confucianism: it does not sharply distinguish society from the state and therefore has no means to truly legitimize autonomous institutions. The state is ever-present in the capacity of the upholder and promoter of Confucianism and its primary role is to shape society in accordance with Confucian values which are not up to debate. The Huangian public sphere thus seems to primarily serve government, rather than oppose it.

The previous suggests that Huang ultimately does not conceptualize something that can be recognized in terms of the public sphere as defined in my fourfold definition. However, I think it would be too drastic to conclude that Huang does not theorize a public sphere at all. Only as a normative model (that is, as an ideal) can the public sphere ever be perfectly opposed to government or neatly separated from it. There is a dynamic between the two that make them mutually implicative. The fact that Habermas and Arendt, too, seek their normative model in a place and time long gone by means they (however faintly) realize this simple truth. That is to say, only in a perfect world (the bygone world of the Greeks or the coffee houses of the emancipating bourgeoisie) is there such a thing as a sphere into which government does not interfere. Huang's public sphere, similar to Habermas' and Arendt's, institutionalizes a platform for critical debate and encourages people to concern themselves with public affairs – including policy decisions by their government. That Huang ultimately does not theorize a public sphere that stands in perfect opposition to, or functions completely autonomously from, government can also be interpreted as Huang's realism: people need government and the public sphere is not there to contest government itself but rather its policy decisions.

§5 Confucianism as a civil religion

This leaves me with one last aim: to demonstrate that the Chinese state is interested in developing Confucianism as a civil religion and that it is at least plausible it would consider endorsing the kind of progressive Confucianism Huang espouses. So far, my paper has been mostly theoretical, but theoretical plausibility is of little comfort to those struggling to defend the value of a strong public sphere in China. Are there any hopes that the idea of the public sphere will gain currency in China in the near future?

While the camps set up by the protesters of the Umbrella Movement formed a public sphere and opposing groups met each other to discuss their differences, representatives from one important party were not at all present: the Chinese state. The Chinese state has effectively chosen to ignore the entire Umbrella Movement and let the local Hong Kong government deal with the protests. The Beijing Spring and the Tiananmen

Square protests undoubtedly taught the Chinese state to be extremely reluctant of giving in to demands for liberalization, since it knows such a course is currently likely to undermine state power. At the same time, however, recent developments show signs that the Chinese state itself is interested in nourishing civil society by means of an intellectual tradition of which it can claim to be its own: Confucianism.

What are these signs? As Kang Xiaoguang writes, China's market-oriented reforms have brought great wealth to the country, but this wealth typically disappears into the pockets of the elites who hold all economic and political power. Extreme income inequality and corruption have been the result of economic reform, thereby contributing to the bankruptcy of the official ideology. While the Chinese government has tried to save Marxism in any way it can (a strategy that is now increasingly becoming difficult to credibly maintain), it has at the same time also turned to new sources of thought. In recent years, the Chinese government appears to have become an active stimulator of a renaissance of Confucianism (Kang, 2012, pp. 39-41). That the Chinese government is indeed serious about Confucianism was proven when in January 2011, a thirty-one-foot bronze statue of Confucius had suddenly been erected in front of the National History Museum on Tiananmen Square. The statue had equally suddenly vanished on April 21 that same year (Sun, 2016, p. 86). Although the disappearance of the statue is shrouded in mystery, it is significant that the Chinese Communist Party would allow a cultural (and to some, religious) symbol not affiliated with communism to be put on the country's most important square, for all Chinese citizens to see.

If these signs are in fact true indicators of the ambitions of the Chinese state, then Confucianism might present itself as a way to overcome the ideological differences that currently prevent a dialogue between the protesters of the Umbrella Movement and the representatives of the Chinese government from even happening. Since I have shown that the idea of the public sphere can be legitimized within the Confucian tradition to a significant extent, there is additional hope for the people of Hong Kong and the people of China that the official recognition of Confucianism as a civil religion will lead to more progressive governance. However, it has to be asked here why the Chinese state would be interested in a Confucianism as

progressive as Huang's, when it can also choose to nurture a more classical Confucianism that allows it to preserve its current autocratic ways. I here echo Anna Sun's worries that Confucianism, as soon as it becomes fully endorsed by the Chinese state, might degenerate from a civil religion into a state religion (2013, p. 178). As a state religion, Confucianism may end up being nothing more than a tool for the state to teach people obedience to authority.

While the Chinese state is a highly unpredictable political entity and what I write in this section must therefore remain speculative in nature, I do not think the Chinese government would display an interest in developing an autocratic form of Confucianism when this quite obviously contradicts with its interest in nurturing Confucianism in the first place. That is to say, endorsing autocratic Confucianism makes little sense when precisely the Chinese state's current autocratic ways are the root of the problem. By creating room for a civil religion, the Chinese state hopes to provide the Chinese with a moral compass – one that does not depend solely on state power to be enforced. Corruption runs rampant when officials do not feel like they have to answer to anybody and do not feel responsible for the community they are a part of. Huang envisions precisely the kind of communities, centering around the schools as centers of debate and moral gravity, that could help the Chinese state battle corruption, not only at the top but also at the local level. I therefore think that a Chinese turn to civil society and an accompanying appreciation of a Huangian kind of Confucian public sphere, is not at all unlikely in the nearby future.

§6 Conclusion

I began this paper by providing a fourfold definition of the public sphere through a discussion of Arendt and Habermas. In the third section, I scrutinized the case of the Umbrella Movement using the analyses of Arendt and Habermas and concluded that the Umbrella Movement can indeed be characterized as a public sphere when applying the fourfold definition provided at the end of section two. This model again served me in section four, where I demonstrated that Huang comes close to conceptualizing a public sphere. Finally, in the fifth section, I argued that the Chinese state,

if it is going to develop Confucianism into a civil religion at all, will more likely nurture a kind of progressive, Huangian Confucianism than a classical, autocratic form of Confucianism.

What does this all mean for Hong Kong? In the introduction, I wrote that those involved with the Umbrella Movement should promote the need for a strong public sphere, instead of solely focusing on full democratization. The Chinese state is unlikely to give in to demands for more autonomy (since this may trigger more cries for independence in other areas of the country) but may realize it needs to nurture civil society in order to combat certain problems facing today's Chinese society. However, there is also the problem of discourse. The people of Hong Kong, having been part of a Western power for so long and not sharing the mainland's educational system, are used to voicing political demands in the language of Western liberalism. They almost appear to assume that democracy is by default the best form of government. Needless to say, the Chinese state does not share this view. In a time when China is asserting its own identity in opposition to the Western democratic powers, it may be wise for the people of Hong Kong to search for an alternative way of reaching out to the Chinese state. The intuition guiding this paper has been that the two parties can draw on a shared tradition that at least holds the promise of satisfying the political needs of both. In the case of the Chinese state, a tradition it can claim to be its own (thus enforcing Chinese national identity) and that also provides it with ways of nurturing civil society. For the people of Hong Kong, a tradition that is not all about autocratic rule but also about listening to the critical input of the educated citizenry. If the gap between the two political entities, that currently operate on the 'one country, two systems' principle, can be closed by a Confucian reorientation of values before 2047, then the transition to 'one country, one system' may not be as problematic as it is currently made out to be.

Acknowledgements

I thank prof. dr. Marli Huijer for nominating the original version of this paper, and for her ideas on how to improve it. I am also thankful to the anonymous Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy referees and editors. The paper as it is presented here would have been impossible without their helpful comments.

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'The Public Sphere in China: Beginnings of a Confucian Public Sphere' was written for the master's course 'the on-going making of the public sphere' taught by prof. dr. Marli Huijer.

Notes

1. See also Cheek, 2015, pp. 217-259.
2. Following convention, Chinese names are written with the family name coming first. Henceforth, I will refer to Huang Zongxi as 'Huang'.
3. For an example of this, see the 2015 article in The Washington Post, titled "Possible kidnappings of Hong Kong booksellers put 'one country, two systems' in peril", accessible online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/possible-kidnappings-of-hong-kong-booksellers-put-one-country-two-systems-in-peril/2016/01/05/e0356690-b3d5-11e5-a76a-0b5145e8679a_story.html

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