Entanglements, Political Communication, and Shared Temporal Layers

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Encounters and entanglements are at the core of global historians' work at three levels. Firstly, unlike specialists of regional or national histories, global historians are dependent on collaborative investigations that bring together scholars from different fields, who are likely to have different regional and linguistic skills, often coming from different academic traditions. This requires organizing communication in a way that overcomes historical power cleavages between regions, or at the very least refuses to reinforce them. Secondly, encounters and entanglements are at the core of the problems that interest global historians and which they endeavor to understand and endow with meaning, whether explicitly or implicitly through the analytical concepts and categories they use. If goods and ideas move and actors encounter one another, this raises the question of how such entities communicate across linguistic and regional differences. Thirdly, therefore, global historians need to attend to the ways in which historical actors simultaneously provide the raw material of encounters and related communication—and furnish their own interpretation, which structures the encounter. All three levels come together in the writing of global history. In this article we aim to show how historical actors referred to an earlier textual tradition, and thereby interpreted and created possibilities for transcultural political communication. We argue that these strategies and interpretations form part of the historical encounter, and need to be acknowledged by historians in order to understand how communication works.

How is this approach related to present debates in global history, and contributing to them? Global history writing has been a self-reflexive endeavor from its inception; historians have been well aware of the influence of their own life experiences on the way they have sought to transcend national boundaries in their research. Right from the beginning, global historians have been engaged in writing the history of their own discipline. They traced their genealogy to the foundational texts of Marc Bloch, who underlined the value of a comparative approach both in order to test causalities and to allow for the defamiliarization of known facts and developments.[1] While the first aspect led to large sociological projects that sought to trace universal historical laws—relating, for instance, economic development and revolutions—the second was at the origin of the wave of comparative historical studies from 1970s onwards, which researched two or more cases with the aim of highlighting

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[1] MARC BLOCH, "Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes," *Revue de synthèse historique* 46, 20 Nouvelle Série (1928): 15-50.

similarities and differences and thus allowing for a more sophisticated gaze at each of them. Although it broadened the horizon of the historians beyond their own country, comparative approach hardly challenged the traditional predominance of the national state as the basic entity for history writing. Comparison was a historiographic endeavor, which permitted new interpretations of the past, but which did not claim the existence of interdependencies at the historical level.

In the long run, however, it was the practice of comparative history writing which brought out the degree to which nations did and do not exist in isolation from each other. Much of the theoretical and methodological groundwork for the history of transfers has been developed with reference to the interactions between France and Germany, but has rapidly been taken up for other regions as well.[2] Movements and transfers of goods, ideas, and people across borders were not exceptional instances, but stood at the origin of many developments which had hitherto been interpreted in a national context. If this approach undermined the idea of the nation as the most important analytical frame, the nation still preceded the transfers, chronologically as well as ontologically. In a different historiographical tradition, much of the older colonial history, too, has been written as a history of (unilateral) transfer.

This idea was challenged from two sides. The sophisticated methodology of *histoire croisée* pointed out that transfers were not an add-on, but constitutive for the process of nation building itself. This approach combines attention to the crossovers that occurred between countries in the past—between their historiographic and archival traditions, which prefigured the way present-day historians can approach this past—and the crossing of the gaze of these historians, who approach their subject from their respective geographical and intellectual locations.[3] Such a methodology works best when limited to two, or at most three entities, without too much of a power difference between them.

Entangled history, on the other hand, has been developed for the analysis of colonial history. Again, the central endeavor has been to overcome a history of transfers (in which each transfer had a clear beginning and an end, and proceeded only in one direction at a time) and to replace it with attention to the many multidirectional and entangled transfers, which were central for the constitution of the colonies and of the colonizing societies. Developments were not initiated in Europe and then diffused to the rest of the world, but co-created—a co-creation which could only be shown through a common frame of reference. European history cannot be understood by looking only at European nations and the transfers between them. This claim does not rest on the assumption that the impacts of these entanglements need to be equally

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[2] MICHEL ESPAGNE and MICHAEL WERNER, eds, *Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle)* (Paris: Édition recherches sur les civilisations, 1988).
[3] MICHAEL WERNER and BÉNÉDICTE ZIMMERMANN, "Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, 1 (2006): 30-50.

intense for all the actors involved. Power certainly played a crucial role, but the questions of who influenced whom, in which fields, to which degree and with which effects can only be answered empirically once colonies and colonizers are no longer analyzed in isolation.[4]

Many of these reflections were developed for the nineteenth century and (with the exception of the history of entanglement) for a Western European context. Scholars of Mediterranean history were aware of the problems of transcultural encounters already before the current drive towards global history. Concepts like cultural hybridity aided the development of a sensibility towards the questions of intercultural transfer and the meanings with which the authors endowed these encounters. Simultaneously, this led to diversification in the academic use of analytical concepts and heuristic devices, a process fostered by the diffusion of global history into multiple academic language contexts.[5] Nonetheless, this has not yet led to the displacement of terminology generally regarded as problematic but nevertheless omnipresent—terminology such as 'East and West', or 'Europe and Islam.'[6] The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the Mediterranean region was a melting pot, and, simultaneously, continuously referred beyond itself: heterogeneity and entanglement need to be considered together. Both are premised upon points of reference common to the actors involved in the encounters.[7] Shared references can involve different temporalities—traditions can be lost, discovered, and rediscovered, and these processes need not happen at the same time everywhere.[8]

A look at Ottoman history exemplifies these points. The mobility of actors and the exchanges on the social and cultural level have long been acknowledged,[9] as has the position of the Ottoman Empire as both situated in the Mediterranean and beyond

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[4] FREDERIK COOPER and ANN LAURA STOLER, eds, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[5] GEORG CHRIST et al., *Transkulturelle Verflechtungen: Mediävistische Perspektiven. Kollaborativ verfasst von Netzwerk Transkulturelle Verflechtungen* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2016).

[6] PALMIRA BRUMMET, "The Lepanto Paradigm Revisited: Knowing the Ottomans in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*, ed. by ANNE CONTADINI and CLAIRE NORTON (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 63-96.

[7] WOLFRAM DREWS and CHRISTIAN SCHOLL, eds, *Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse in der Vormoderne* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); ANTJE FLÜCHTER and JIVANTA SCHÖTTLI, eds, *The Dynamics of Transculturality: Concepts and Institutions in Motion* (Cham: Springer, 2015); see also the new DFG priority program, "Transottomanica", accessed 15 May 2017, https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/fb04/institute/geschichte/osteuropa/forschung_neu/Transottomanica.

[8] For this argument in the context of art history see SYLVIA AULD, "Exploring Links Between East and West in the 13th Century: Circles of Coincidence," in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World Trade: Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, ed. by CATARINA SCHMIDT ARCANGELI and GERHARD WOLF (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 131-146.

[9] DANIEL GOFFMAN, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); ERIC R. DURSTELER, "On Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts," *Journal of Early Modern History* 15, 5 (2011): 413-434.

it.[10] Studies have focused on the question how Ottoman and Italian actors made sense of one another on an intellectual level,[11] and how these processes were embedded in political strategies.[12] Taking up Claire Norton's suggestion that the prevalence of shared cultural references in early modern representational culture called for a new analytic framework,[13] we submit that this overlapping of references was, at least partially, the result of a dynamic process drawing on resources that were common to both sides. To show how this process can be conceptualized is the central aim of our article.

In the following we suggest two arguments. First, a common frame of reference is needed for those historians who aim to trace entanglements. Yet, as suggested above, such historians are not the first to engage in this attempt: before them the historical actors already strove to communicate within the space of entangled history, and created means to do so. Rather than assuming the success of this communication to be a matter of course, the actors' creation of a frame of reference needs to be investigated. Second, Reinhart Koselleck's concept of temporal layers allows us to trace one (but not the only) communicative strategy that the actors used—namely their recourse to an earlier common history, or, more often, to historical references they shared or claimed to share. These arguments will be elaborated through two examples of exchanges that used the discussion of virtues in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The first example has as its context the relation between the early Ottoman Empire and the Italian city states in the fifteenth century; the second has as its context the relation between the British colonizers and the North Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century.

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[10] KAREN BARKEY, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); COLIN IMBER, "Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History," in *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age*, ed. by METIN KUNT and CHRISTINE WOODHEAD (London: Routledge, 1997), 138-154.

[11] NANCY BISAHA, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); MARGARET MESERVE, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[12] GÜLRÜ NECIPOĞLU, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople," *Muqarnas* 29, 1 (2012): 1-81.

[13] CLAIRE NORTON, "Blurring the Boundaries: Intellectual and Cultural Interactions between the Eastern and Western; Christian and Muslim Worlds," in *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*, ed. by ANNE CONTADINI and CLAIRE NORTON (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 3-22.

The Creation of a Communicative Space[14]

Entangled history creates a common frame of reference for the interpretation of the past. This common frame is an interpretive device. However, it is not created *ex nihilo* by historians, but draws on entanglements that already took place in history and which cannot omitted at will from historical analyses. What has been underplayed so far is the question of how entanglement across societies and cultures becomes possible at all. This question gains relevance through cultural history's interest in the meaning that actors bring to their actions, a meaning which is not given, but socially created and transmitted.

Entanglements, we suggest, are brought into existence by everyday actions, which are repeated over a certain time and follow specific regularities. These actions are essentially communicative in nature—they are not random, but goal-oriented and endowed with meaning. Movements of actors, ideas, and goods create a need for communication; in turn, communication is a basic precondition for these movements. They are different from *interactions within* a society because the actors are not socialized into the shared meanings and interpretation of the actions right from the beginning, but must develop or create them, either implicitly through their actions, or as a result of conscious strategic thinking.

This concept of communication involves more than the scope encompassed in the narrow definition of the term as 'the successful transmission of information.' Actions are endowed with meaning by the different actors involved in the transaction—the problem is how actors, while pursuing their interests, develop a common horizon of interpretation (or a range of overlapping horizons), which allows them to correctly read the meaning of each other's actions, and to anticipate future moves.[15] This development can be intentional, involving anything from the employment of translators, to making an effort to learn about the others' manners and customs. In most cases, however, it will constitute a constant modification of previous knowledge and assumptions (the pre-mediation that actors bring into an encounter, and which shapes the form of the encounter) through the ongoing integration of new experiences.[16] Historians tend to privilege communication through language, and, so

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[14] For the concept of communicative space see the summary of the work of the Bielefeld research cluster: WILLIBALD STEINMETZ and HEINZ-GERHARD HAUPT, "The Political as a Communicative Space in History: The Bielefeld Approach," in *Writing Political History Today*, ed. by WILLIBALD STEINMETZ, INGRID GILCHER-HOLTEY, and HEINZ-GERHARD HAUPT (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013), 1-11; TOBIAS WEIDNER, *Die Geschichte des Politischen in der Diskussion* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).
[15] Here the history of concepts and temporalities draws on the phenomenological tradition, notably the works of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer.
[16] Inspired by Paul Ricœur's concepts of pre-figuration and re-figuration (PAUL RICŒUR, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)), the concepts of pre-mediation and re-mediation are prominent in ASTRID ERLL, *Prämediation – Remediation: Repräsentationen des indischen Aufstands in imperialen und post-kolonialen Medienkulturen (von 1857 bis zur Gegenwart)* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007). For the interpretation of face-to-face encounters see PHILIPP

far, studies in entangled history have been no exception. It makes sense, however, to explore the possibilities for integrating other sign systems and other media into analysis of how groups of actors develop a shared horizon and interpret one another's meanings.[17]

The development and diffusion of colonial knowledge, which has held such a prominent place in historical analysis of the last decades,[18] can be viewed as part of this creation of a communicative space. In a Foucauldian tradition, this exploration emphasizes the relation between knowledge and the exercise of power. However, it tends to revert to a model in which all agency is concentrated in the hands of the colonials.[19] Our emphasis on communication, we suggest, takes up the emphasis on power. Power is crucial in contestations of meaning and in the enforcement of one interpretation over another. Yet even a very unequal dialogue includes more than one voice. The second voice might not always speak back directly and in the same social space, but at times it will provide its own interpretation of the encounter at different venues and in a different language; hence discovering the second voice might involve different historiographical tools. Moreover, a common horizon of interpretation does not necessarily imply agreement. A correct reading of the meaning that an actor pursues through his or her action does not necessarily lead to consent to the action itself, nor does it prevent the interpreter from continuing to assign a different meaning to the same action. Therefore, the merging of horizons of meaning is both necessary for the development of a communicative space in which entanglements can take place in a regular manner, and always contentious—fraught with tensions and incomplete. Communication involves misunderstanding, whether productive or less so; incommensurability is more often the starting point rather than the endpoint.[20]

NIELSEN, BENNO GAMMERL, and MARGRIT PERNAU, eds, *Encounters with Emotions* (forthcoming), with further references.

[17] The history of concepts, which traditionally was focused on language in order to understand political and social concepts, is currently expanding its scope of interest. This concerns not only the investigation of new categories of concepts, for instance referring to aesthetics or to natural sciences, but also concepts in non-verbal sign systems (for details see MARGRIT PERNAU and IMKE RAJAMANI, "Emotional Translations: Conceptual History Beyond Language," *History & Theory* 55, 1 (2016): 46-65. The possibility of moving even further by opening up the dialogue with anthropology and with other disciplines bringing the body into the picture is currently being debated and will hopefully lead to publications in the near future.

[18] BERNARD COHN, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[19] GAURI VISWANATHAN, *Mask of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

[20] ANTONY PAGDEN, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

Entanglements and Temporal Layers

Koselleck's theoretical reflections on history are currently gaining new international attention; he pointed out that every present was coexistent with layers from different pasts.[21] The resources that historical actors needed so as to endow their experiences and actions with meaning were never drawn only from the present—be it their language and its concepts, which already prefigured certain interpretations and which could not be invented, or even profoundly re-semantized at the spur of a moment; be it the multitude of texts from different centuries, which embodied past experiences and their interpretation. These texts could be read as historical documents. More often, however, their historicity would be forgotten (or lack interest for the reader) and they were deemed to speak directly to the present. This certainly holds true for canonical religious texts—in most cases the Bible or the Quran has been read for what it tells not about the time in which it was written down, but about the interpretation and guidance it can provide for the present. The same is also possible for philosophical texts and, of course, literature, to which actors can refer or from which they have been habituated to draw their orientation for the present. Again, this response need not be restricted to texts, but works also for other sign systems like art and music.

Like geological layers, temporal layers can be the result of a process of sedimentation: layers that were once at the surface are overlaid with new layers, and slowly move downward, without disappearing. The present therefore coexists with many pasts; this is one of the meanings for which Koselleck used the concept of the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous.[22] (The second meaning, referring not to an image of sedimentation but to one of tectonic plates, is omitted in the present article).

Two questions need to be addressed in order to use this figure for investigating the creation of a communicative space for entanglement in more detail. First: how precisely does the drawing on past resources happen? Jacques Derrida discursively developed the figure of the palimpsest—a manuscript that has been erased and overwritten, but still shows traces of the former text—and Sara Ahmed has used this

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[21] For an excellent introduction see NIKLAS OLSEN, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (New York: Berghahn, 2012); REINHART KOSELLECK, *Zeitschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003); specially the chapters: "Über die Theoriebedürftigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaft," 298-316 (English translation: REINHART KOSELLECK, "On the Need of Theory in the Discipline of History," in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1-20) and "Stetigkeit und Wandel aller Zeitgeschichten," 246-265. For recent interventions see JAVIER FERNÁNDEZ SEBASTIÁN, ed., *Political Concepts and Time. New Approaches to Conceptual History* (Santander: Cantabria University Press, 2011); HELGE JORDHEIM et al., "Forum: Multiple Temporalities," *History & Theory* 53, 4 (2014): 498-591.

[22] REINHART KOSELLECK, "Zeitschichten," in *Zeitschichten*, 19-27; WOLF SCHÄFER, *Ungleichzeitigkeit als Ideologie: Beiträge zur historischen Aufklärung* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verl., 1994); ELKE UHL, "Gebrochene Zeit? Ungleichzeitigkeit als geschichtsphilosophisches Problem," in *Geschichtsphilosophie und Kulturkritik: Historische und systematische Studien*, ed. by JOHANNES ROHBECK and HERTA NAGL-DOCEKAL (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 50-74.

figure to show how past hurts continue to mark the present without requiring active recalling or conscious memory.[23] Indeed, thinking along the figure of the palimpsest suggests that deeper layers continue to mark the present. This would mean that texts, for instance, continue to exert an influence on present creations of meaning even if no one reads them, or even if no one knows of their existence, because they influenced texts which in turn influenced texts, and so on, until we finally arrive at texts which are still being read. Thus a particular concept acquires a layer of meaning, and one that actors need no longer be aware of. Alternatively, the texts at some time created an effect in the world which is part of the world as it exists in the present. For instance, certain Neoplatonic debates strongly influenced the way the Greek desert monks thought about virtues and vices. This, in turn, was a formative influence on the concept of the seven deadly sins, which still, it might be argued, shapes some present-day debates. Such influence should not be discarded at a theoretical level. In practice it will be so diluted that it will not always prove worthwhile to trace the chain of influences through the centuries.

This idea of the palimpsest makes it possible to consider earlier texts as actors in their own right that no longer need human agency to produce effects. More important for the problems we are discussing here, however, is the excavation of former layers (to continue in the geological metaphor). Here, too, the past is seen as always co-present, but as a potentiality, which needs activation in order to exert an influence. As long as an old book is kept in a library somewhere, even if no one is reading it or is even able to understand its language, this old book can still be brought to the surface: it can be re-discovered, re-published, and become a shared resource for the interpretation of present experiences. Likewise, a language can be learned, a script deciphered. Without this actualization in the present, however, the influence of the book or the language will be negligible, as will the degree of its presence in the present. To recognize this already significantly reduces the material to be taken into consideration: it is the not the entire past, but the past that the historical actors are actually using, and the interpretation they are giving to it. Contrasting this 'actualized' past to the interpretation the original authors intended might be useful if the historicity of interpretation needs underlining; it does not add to the meaning the texts had in the horizon of the presence of the historical actors. As such, if we wish to trace the influence of an Aristotelian ethics of virtue on debates between Italians and Ottomans in the fifteenth century, what matters is *how they understood* Aristotle, rather than the message Aristotle had originally wanted to convey.

The second question refers more directly to entanglements. The metaphor of the temporal layers was devised within the imaginary of a stable and contained geographical unity: the present is supposed to happen in the same space as the past,

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[23] JACQUES DERRIDA, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); SARA AHMED, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

and it is 'their own' sedimentations that people continue to refer to or excavate. However, even in traditional historiography, this seems more an exception than the rule. The history of Germany or Britain regularly begins in Greece and Asia Minor for that matter (or even in Egypt); the history of Muslims in very different parts of the world is written from a common starting point in Medina; Latin American history posits (or posited) its origin in the Iberian Peninsula. Such narratives can reflect actual migrations (mostly of a numerically small but powerful section of the population). More often these pasts are claimed as part of the historical inheritance without actual continuities. In turn, voicing these claims can be a conscious strategy, based on appreciating that the resources of the past can be used for in the present. Yet this is not a necessary condition: often the link of the past to the present—and the possibility to refer back to that past—will be perceived as naturally and unquestionably given.

The excavation of temporal layers, therefore, can happen in a frame much broader than that suggested by 'the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous.' Specifically, geographical spaces as well as temporal spaces are integrated and brought into co-presence. The fact that experiences, their interpretations, and the creation of meaning in a more abstract context, have been committed to media preserves them; further (but not suggested by the figure of the palimpsest), the same fact allows us to account for their transportation from one place and one society to another. Excavations and the reclaiming of past layers happen not only at the location at which the actor is standing in the present, but can involve traveling, both actual and mental. Temporal layers challenge the temporal coherence of any one period across space. Yet such a challenge leads to a denial of contemporaneity once difference is organized along a uniform timeline, on which certain phenomena correspond to a universal definition of 'stone age,' others to an equally universal 'middle age' or 'early modernity.' Although such temporalization has been the hegemonic interpretation of difference since the Enlightenment, maintaining it is unnecessary—there can be difference without the idea that it implies a lagging behind or an avant-garde.

The possibility of accessing past temporal layers at different places also implies that the same heritage can be activated and claimed as part of one's own by more than one actor. Thus even societies that lack a shared history of previous encounter can share a common horizon of meaning by referring back to and claiming as their own texts, or other media, from a past temporal layer. This claim can be brought about through the encounter as an intentional strategy through which to create or enlarge possibilities for communication; it can also already have a long history of being considered a canonical reference in one or both of the societies. In this case, again, the claim can lead to an explicit recognition that a specific heritage is shared, or the role of this heritage can be downplayed in favor of a more or less explicit universalism.

The Multiple Layers of Reading Aristotle's *Ethics*

We are not interested in the meanings given to Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* in its time and place, nor are we proposing (yet another) history of the reception of Aristotle's work over the last two millennia. Rather, we aim to offer a first glimpse of how the re-reading of the text at different moments and in different places drew on different layers of interpretation, and added to these layers. These newer layers, in turn, constituted a potentiality from which actors at different places could draw, irrespective of whether the text 'belonged' to their history. Layers of entanglement could be constituted by past entanglements; they could also be created in the historical actors' present by referencing and appropriating different pasts. These entanglements constituted an important resource (but certainly not the only resource—there were other texts and other strategies) for the creation of a shared horizon of meaning in later encounters.

As is well known, the epoch of the Abbasid Empire was pivotal for the translation and reception of Greek knowledge—philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy—into Arabic. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was first adapted into Arabic by Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030 CE),[24] and then rewritten in Persian by Nasir ud Din Tusi (1201-1274 CE).[25] The *Akhlaq-e Nasiri* formed the model for many of the medieval and early modern texts written about ethics, both in Persia and in India. These texts have rightly been read as treatises of political philosophy.[26] However, the title of Miskawayh's translation, *Tahzib ul Akhlaq*, or 'the polishing of the habitus/disposition' (*khulq*, pl. *akhlaq*), already pointed to an understanding of politics which was deeply grounded in the creation of a particular ethical self, in which virtues and emotions converge.[27] Many of the *akhlaq* treatises followed a tripartite structure, dealing with the *nafs*, or the soul (corresponding to the Greek *psyche*) in the first part; the *manzil*, or the household (the Greek *oikos*) in the second; and finally with the *madina*, or the polity (the Greek *polis*) in the third. Thus the polity was based on an ethical male subject, who was at the head of his household and managed it competently. This qualified him to take part in 'political' activities in the narrower sense. At the same time, the Arabic and even more the Persian translation also adapted the text from this

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[24] IBN MISKAWAYH, *The Refinement of Character*, trans. by CONSTANTINE K. ZURAYK (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2003).

[25] NASIR UD DIN TUSI, *Akhlaq-e Nasiri* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore, 1891); translated by G. M. Wickens as, *The Nasirean Ethics*, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works, Persian Series (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964); HAMID DABASHI, "Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi: The Philosopher/Vizier and The Intellectual Climate of His Times," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by OLIVER LEAMAN and SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR (London: Routledge, 1994), 1:527-584.

[26] For a detailed analysis on medieval and early modern *akhlaq* literature in India see MUZAFFAR ALAM, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

[27] The *locus classicus* for the relation between the care of the self and the development of ethics is of course MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The Care of the Self*, vol. 3 of *The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin Books, 1986); FOUCAULT, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the College de France, 1981-82* (New York: Picador, 2005).

earlier participatory context to a monarchical setting. Here the text provided guidelines for the virtuous ruler and therby contributed to the legitimation of his rule. Both interpretations continued to exist side by side, and could be drawn upon at different occasions.

Medieval Western scholasticism could draw on a broad range of translations, transmissions, and traditions of reading Aristotle, many of them originating from Sicily—only recently Christianized—and from culturally heterogeneous Spain.[28] Equally important were translations as well as commentaries produced in Constantinople, from where Thomas Aquinas eventually received them.[29] Aquinas among others played an important role for the integration of Aristotelian ethics of virtue-emotions as a central paradigm in Western European Ethics.[30]

In early fifteenth-century Italy, Aristotelianism was taught through scholastic commentaries and was accessible only through translations of minor quality. Aristotelian ethics was ubiquitous, but increasingly came to be criticized as doctrinal.[31] Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs led the Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) to engage in a thoughtful retranslation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* from Greek into Latin, bringing the work back into focus for humanist moral discussion and political thought.[32] Instead of approaching Aristotelian virtue ethics in terms of a static Greek philosophical model, humanists such as Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503), began seeking to discover the practical relevance of such ethics for their own times. This 'new' Aristotle then became accessible at universities, but also at courts, the houses of the nobility, and in merchant cities. And while notions such as 'virtue' remained contested, they 'shaped political, social, and intellectual practices, while they were themselves strongly affected by these same practices.'[33]

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[28] CHARLES BURNETT, "Arabic into Latin: the Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. by PETER ADAMSON and RICHARD C. TAYLOR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 370-404; DAG N. HASSE, "The Social Conditions of the Arabic-(Hebrew-)Latin Translation Movements in Medieval Spain and in the Renaissance," in *Wissen über Grenzen: Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. by ANDREAS SPEER and LYDIA WEGENER (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 68-88.

[29] PETER FRANKOPAN, "The Literary, Cultural and Political Context for the Twelfth-Century Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics," in *Medieval Greek Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by CHARLES BARBER and DAVID JENKINS (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 101-145.

[30] SIGRID MÜLLER, "From Virtue Ethics to Normative Ethics? Tracing Paradigm Shifts in Fifteenth-Century Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics," in *Between Creativity and Norm-Making*, ed. by SIGRID MÜLLER and CORNELIA SCHWEIGER (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9-30.

[31] JAMES HANKINS, "The Ethics Controversy," in *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, vol.1 (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2003), 193-239.

[32] *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni. Selected Texts*, trans. and ed. by DAVID THOMPSON, GORDON GRIFFITHS and JAMES HANKINS (Binghamton: The Renaissance Society of America, 1987).

[33] MATTHIAS ROICK, *Pontano's Virtues: Aristotelian Moral and Political Thought in the Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 121; see also: JAMES HANKINS, "The Virtue Politics of Italian Humanists," in *Beyond Reception: Renaissance Humanism and the Transformation of Classical Antiquity*, ed. by PATRICK BAKER, JOHANNES HELMRATH, and CRAIG KALLENDORF (forthcoming), available via:

Aristotle in Political Communication between the Italian Courts and Mehmet II

After Mehmet II had conquered Constantinople in 1453, he created an imperial household that would resemble the heterogeneous nature of his emerging empire. Ottoman rule had always been marked by the ability to function as a central hub, creating transcultural dependencies through permeability and mediation.[34] Mehmet II's court needs to be understood with reference to Islamicate traditions, within which patronage of philosophy and art were crucial.[35] So sources for knowledge of Aristotle went beyond Ibn Sina and al-Farabi—a discussion of the virtue ethics took place through Ahmed Amasi, who translated Tusi and al-Ghazzali as early as 1406.[36] But the court must also be understood in terms of a continuous accumulation of cultural layers. Newly integrated Greek scholars were not the first to introduce Aristotle, but they participated in bringing different traditions together.

The Fall of Constantinople shook the politically fragmented Italian peninsula, but calls for military intervention were soon given up. Some saw the economy in the Mediterranean as reliant on Constantinople's pivotal position; for others the Ottomans presented a chance to shift the fragile political balance in their own favor. As a consequence, ways of engaging in successful communication needed to be found, a process which was as concerned about being heard as it was about being understood. These entanglements happened on three levels.

First, Aristotelian notions of virtue ethics were known to both sides. The same four cardinal virtues can be found in fifteenth-century Italian and Ottoman political or ethical works: prudence (*prudentia*/*hikmet*), courage (*fortitudo*/*şecâ'at*), honesty (*sinceritas*/*'iffet*), and justice (*iustitia*/*'adâlet*).[37] Tursun Beğ (1420-1499), the chronicler of Mehmet II's rule, introduced his *Tarih* by including a theory of State and rulership, referring to the concept of emotion-virtue derived from Miskawayh and Tusi: to Beğ a virtue is achieved when the forces of the self are paired with temper, habit, and education, and are subjugated to the human will.[38] On the Italian side, Pontano

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https://www.academia.edu/30007286/The_Virtue_Politics_of_the_Italian_Humanists (accessed May 15, 2017).

[34] BARKEY, *Empire of Difference*.

[35] ANNA AKASOY, "Die Adaptation byzantinischen Wissens am Osmanenhof nach der Eroberung Konstantinopels," in *Wissen in der Krise: Institutionen des Wissens im gesellschaftlichen Wandel*, ed. by CARSTEN KRETSCHMANN et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 43–56.

[36] MARINOS SARIYANNIS, *Ottoman Political Thought up to the Tanzimat: A Concise History* (Rethymno: Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas, 2015), 30-32.

[37] MARINOS SARIYANNIS, "The Princely Virtues as Presented in Ottoman Political and Moral Literature," *Turcica* 43 (2011): 121-144.

[38] TURSUN BEĞ, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. by HALIL INALCIK and RHOADS MURPHY (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978); KENAN INAN, "On the Sources of Tursun Bey's Tarih-i Ebu'l-Feth," in *The Ottoman Empire: Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes': Contributions in Honour of Colin Imber*, ed. by EUGENIA KERMELI and OKTAY ÖZEL (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2006), 75-109.

employed the same idea of the tripartite human soul, and virtue as a habit and a median while linking these to the notion of the importance of being virtuous *and appearing virtuous*.[39]

Second, the actors became increasingly aware of the fact that they shared these notions. Already early eyewitnesses arriving from the Ottoman court reported on a Sultan who employed teachers (*medicos*) in Latin and Greek, listened to recitations of classic epics, and engaged in philosophical discussions.[40] Humanists engaged attentively with these reports; the same descriptions also seemed validated by accounts—like that of the travelling Greek scholar Georg Amiroutzes—of personal conversations with the ruler, who appeared well-versed in Aristotelian thought.[41] When Amiroutzes's compatriot George of Trebizond sought employment at the court of Mehmet II, the Italians intercepted his letters. They found a description of Mehmet II as possessing *prudentia* and *iustitia*, together with a treatise on 'The Difference between Plato and Aristotle,' showing that this was indeed the discursive tradition to which discussion of these virtues belonged.[42]

Finally, these shared references provided the language for political communication. This could happen through the transmission of texts, as was the case when the Florentines, choosing an appropriate gift for the Sultan, decided on the works of the aforementioned Leonardo Bruni.[43] In addition, Aristotelian concepts could be used to build political arguments: when Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, argued for an alliance with the Sultan, he structured his letter through the Aristotelian notions of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.[44] And such serviceable invocations of Aristotle could happen in the visual realm: portrait medals, important media of diplomacy, depicted the Sultan embodying virtues—as seen, for instance, on a medal linking the image of Mehmet II with Pegasus, the sign for the victory of virtue over vice, and the symbol for prudence.[45]

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[39] ROICK, "Virtue, Inside Out," part 3 of *Pontano's Virtues*, 121-178.

[40] Account of Nikolaos Sekundinos, the text can be found in VIKENTI V. MAKUŠEV, *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium Vicinorumque Populorum*, vol.1 (Warsaw: s.n., 1874), 295-306.

[41] ASTERIOS ARGYRIOU and GEORGES LAGARRIGUE, "Georges Amiroutzes et son *Dialogue sur la Foi au Christ tenu avec les Sultan des Turcs*," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 11 (1987): 29-221.

[42] ANGELO MERCATI, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 9 (1943): 65-99.

[43] BENEDETTO DEI, *La cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, ed. by ROBERTO BARDUCCI (Florence: Francesco Papafava Editore, 1974), fol. 53r.

[44] The letter can be found in transcription in GIOVANNI SORANZO, "Una Missione di Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta a Maometto II nel 1461-documenti," *La Romagna* 6 (1909): 93-95.

[45] The analysis of this hitherto unresearched medal forms part of Luc Wodzicki's dissertation-in-progress. The medal can be found in G. F. HILL, *A Corpus of the Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, 2 vols (London: British Museum, 1930), no. 1203. Julian Raby suspects the medal to have been manufactured at Mehmet's court. See: JULIAN RABY, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," *Studies in the History of Art* 21 (1987): 171-194.

Aristotle in the Colonial Encounter in India

Delhi had been one of the most important centers of the Mughal Empire since the seventeenth century. After the British had conquered the city and the last emperor in 1803, they continued to use the Persian language and symbolic universe, while attempting to stabilize their power in what was still an undecided struggle with the French and the Marathas. By the 1830s, however, a new generation of colonial administrators had arrived; they intended to use their new power to effect changes in the administration of the country, and in education. Their aim was the creation of a new generation of Indians who were familiar with British culture, with its literature as well as its values, and who were able to translate these to their compatriots. While in Bengal this had led to a harsh cultural policy, aimed at discarding the Indian heritage that the British despised, in North India and especially in Delhi, these efforts were more dialogical in nature. From 1840 Delhi College became a symbol for this policy— according to which British knowledge was to be taught, but through the Urdu language, and parallel to a continued emphasis on Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit. Teachers and soon also former students engaged in translations, edited journals and newspapers, and were at the center of the traditional and the colonial forms of sociability. The British strategy paid off: in the Revolt of 1857 the professors and students of Delhi College sided with the colonial power, and in the following decades they worked in the colonial administration, and took up major educational projects that gave an important place to British knowledge.[46]

Delhi College has often been hailed as a symbol for a creative cultural encounter, yet it was hardly a power-free zone. All of the important decisions—from the allocation of funds for the Oriental and English branches to the curricula for both— were taken by the colonial power. The list of books taught included scientific and literary works, those of history, and a broad introduction to Enlightenment philosophy: from Thomas Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind* and Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, to John Abercrombie's *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth*. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, too, was taught, while his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* formed part of the program of the Translation Society.[47] It is notable that Smith drew extensively on the Aristotelian tradition, but the same tradition was present in the other texts as well, though often unmarked The officers creating the curriculum were less interested in the political message of the Enlightenment (the creation of a civil society), and more interested in the texts that concerned the workings of the human mind, the emotions, and virtues. These matters were central to the creation of a political subject, which, in this context, was also a colonial subject.

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[46] For more detail see MARGRIT PERNAU, ed., *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State and Education before 1857* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[47] ABDUL HAQQ, *Marhum Delhi College* (Delhi: Anjuman-e taraqqi-e Urdu, 1989), 98-104, 149-155.

The Delhi College makes a fascinating case study for our argument because the students who were introduced to this tradition—which was designated as Western knowledge—were already familiar with the Persianate tradition starting from Nasir ud Din Tusi's thirteenth-century rendition of the *Tahzib ul Akhlaq*. This text was widely circulated among the North Indian elites, but even those who had not read it had at least read more popular versions that drew from it. Since the Mughal period such versions had been part of the upbringing of young men of respectable Muslims households (and of the Persianized Hindu communities).[48] Unlike the Ottoman-Italian case from the fifteenth century, in this instance the process of drawing on a common reference was not flagged, nor was it part of a strategic move to facilitate communication. Both the books of the Delhi College curriculum and the Persian ethical literature drew on Aristotle. Yet each referred to markedly different temporal and spatial layers of the transmission and interpretation of Aristotle's work.

Students may or may not have been aware that the Aristotelian tradition formed the common strand between what they were taught at home and at Delhi College. That this did not preclude the efficacy of the ideas is shown in the work of Maulawi Zakaullah, a prominent alumnus of Delhi College, who worked as a professor, translator, and writer after 1857. He produced a monumental history of India in ten volumes, and also a massive concordance of philosophic and theological approaches to ethical thinking in Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism.[49] Zakaullah sought to prove that the values promulgated by the colonial power were not alien to Muslims, but corresponded with aspects of their own heritage. In Zakaullah's view, the universality of ethical teaching fostered the encounter in which he had enthusiastically participated since his student days. This universality was less an invented category, as has been claimed at times, than the result of a shared appropriation of different strands of the Aristotelian heritage.

Conclusion

As pointed out at the beginning of this article, actors moving in space and involved in cross-cultural entanglements are faced with problems of communication. The solutions they develop are an important topic for historians who are interested in the fact that connections transcending cultural borders existed in the past, and in how and why these connections worked. To study these topics implies neither seeing cultures

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[48] RAJEEV KINRA, *Writing Self, Writing Empire. Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

[49] MARGRIT PERNAU, "Maulawi Muhammad Zaka Ullah. Reflections of a Muslim Moralist on the Compatibility of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity," in *Convictions religieuses et engagement en Asie du Sud depuis 1850 (Études Thématiques No. 25)*, ed. by CATHERINE CLÉMENTIN-OJHA (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2011), 31-47, with further references.

as incommensurable and exoticizing their differences,[50] nor glossing over the differences. Historical actors certainly developed strategies for successful political communication (if only because the alternative was too costly), but this involved a process drawn out over time, which could be more or less consciously devised.

The creation of common horizons of meaning through referencing shared textual traditions has long been an important strategy of communication. The two examples discussed above—of the interactions between Mehmet II and the Italian courts, and between North Indian intellectuals and the colonial power—show Aristotelian ethics as the shared textual tradition. Using Koselleck's concept of temporal layers, we have identified these references to Aristotle's thought as belonging to earlier strata of meaning, which was part of the intellectual inheritance of all the groups, whose political communication we investigated: Aristotle was as important a tradition in the Islamicate world as in Europe.

However, the powerful image of temporal layers, derived from geology, should not lead us to ascribe immovability and an unchanging nature to the deeper layers. The examples reveal that the meanings of emotions and virtues, and the ways these could be applied in everyday ethics, were constantly negotiated and reconfigured. Nevertheless, the ethics still preserved a sufficient family resemblance to be recognizable across borders, and thus to allow for communication and the possibility of understanding. This encompassed not only the selection of emotions and virtues relevant to political activity (or, more generally, to activity in the sphere of the *polis*, the *civitas* or the *madina*), but also what it meant to be courageous or compassionate, to take just two examples. Although not identical, the understandings of these emotion-virtues were similar enough to contribute to the creation of shared horizons. (Even so, this does not yet say anything about the use that these shared horizons would be put to.)

Such an approach allows us to bring together the three entanglements mentioned in the introduction: entanglement at the level of the historians of different regions; entanglement at the level of the actors, and the entanglement between these two levels which arises once we take into consideration the actors' interpretation. The concepts and temporalities that historians draw on reflect their own present-day questions and positionality, and global historians have achieved a high degree of self-reflexivity in this respect. But they are not the first to endow political communication between actors with meaning—the historical actors themselves have already provided multiple interpretations of their own experiences, and these interpretations inform their practices, communicative and otherwise. Accordingly global historians are involved in a twofold communication process: with one another, across the borders of regional studies; with the interpretations of the historical actors (who in turn needed to transcend borders of their own in order to communicate). As pointed out by Dipesh

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[50] SEBASTIAN CONRAD, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

Chakrabarty and others following him, the extent to which the experience and interpretation of historical actors can enter the present-day debate depends very much on past and present power relations: while European experiences easily enter the supposedly universal language of present-day social sciences, the same is much more difficult, if not impossible, for concepts and languages from other regions of the world. Global history needs the provincializing of European concepts and the provincializing of entanglements. And this asks that global historian actively engage with historical concepts and with interpreting communication by all the actors involved in the encounter and entanglement under consideration.[51]

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[51] DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); MARGRIT PERNAU, "Provincializing Concepts. The Language of Transnational History," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, 3 (2016): 483-499.