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In medias res: the diminishing of historical continuity in modern thought

Innovation and future predictions are discussed as the main goals of modern technology. Living in this empirical, modern world set on the future has the possibility of diminishing the value of historical continuity as observation and outcome-based theory take precedence over contemplation and tradition. It is proposed that the forgetfulness of modernity creates a stilted perception of time and thought which results in a dissonance between the perceiving subject and their surroundings. This is exacerbated by digital media as it mostly frames information as an attractive or trending source of amusement rather than as a possibility for edification. The result of this dissonance between the subject and their surroundings and the influence of digital media can be seen in the thoughtless or repetitive action and the abdication of action altogether in favour of escape from reality. This is problematised in as far constructive action for the well-being of the individual cannot be sustained in terms of the current engagement with digital technology.

Drawing on thinkers such as Connerton (1989, 2009), Davidson (2004), Habermas (1987, 1989), a discussion follows regarding how the diminishing historical continuity in thought can lead to the manipulation and a lack of rationality discussed in Horkheimer's and Adorno's culture industry thesis. To adopt the approach of continuity as embodied in the phrase *in medias res* (in the midst of things) in interpretation, rather than an observation assuming novel activity, may bring an alternative

consideration for how modern technology (specifically the digital) can be used to assist the individual in taking contextual action rather than trying to escape action altogether while reframing the potential of digital technology towards a constructive, achievable standing rather than resigning it to a problematic system of distraction and degradation of thought.

Keywords: digital media, modernity, manipulation, rationality, contemplation, action

Introduction

There are an ever-increasing number of critiques regarding the development and use of technology in contemporary society, with unstoppable innovation in directions that are just as questionable. The adaptations of food, weapons, medicine, or even “necessities” as a result of technological innovation have proven to be just as destructive as they have been helpful. Attention can be drawn to each individual instance of innovation; however, a broader argument to be introduced regarding the emerging thought pattern that allows this type of detrimental innovation can point towards a way to alter the deviation we consider so detrimental.

The overarching aim of this paper is to outline the way in which historical continuity is problematically undermined by the overemphasis of individual autonomy (and subjective experience) in modern thought. This will be achieved through the discussion of modern thought using the work of Immanuel Kant on the individual's autonomy (being the admirable starting point of the assumed modern perspective), and the subsequent way in which this individual autonomy develops in contemporary society with reference to the public sphere, and finally, comparing this progression of modern thought to the approach of the historically continuous intersubjective negotiation of experience. This paper aims to highlight the disparity between the Kantian (1881) *a priori* as the basis of contextual knowledge and the *in medias res* approach of a historically continuous intersubjective basis of contextual knowledge, as outlined by Connerton (1989) (2009) and Davidson (2004).

The problem of modern thought

Modern thought is a continually critiqued innovation, working to find more applicable and effective ways of communicating, understanding, expressing, and acting. The most effective starting point for this discussion is Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), in which he aims to understand the relationship between knowledge and experience. Specifically, his discussion of transcendental

deduction forms the basis for an understanding of the modern perspective. Transcendental deduction is still debated as one of the most complex parts of Kant's proposed theories on rationality – but as it is so complex, there are almost infinite ways of understanding its application and boundaries. With this in mind, the understanding of transcendental deduction for the purposes of this argument can be posed as the intuitive categories (the Kantian *a priori*) that gives rise to universal perception/understanding of an experienced reality (Kant [1781]1881). This intuitive approach to reality is an indication of the individual autonomy that must be recognised for these categories to be universal (if autonomy is not universal, all categories of understanding would be ascribed according to external, and thus relational, standards). Kant sees this autonomy as the ability to recognise the distinction between the self and the surrounding environment (as Kant's notion of apperception: the accompaniment of the individual with the environment, not the absorption of the individual into the environment), as well as the ability to create and integrate representations of the surrounding environment for it to be cohesive interpretation between individuals (as Kant's subsequent discussion of judgement: the integration of apperception so that it can be more generally or universally understood) (Kant [1781]1881).

Kant also describes the role of autonomy in action in his short essay *What is Enlightenment?*. Autonomy, as something possessed by each individual, also becomes a call to action in that it can only exist if we are both thinking and acting on our own intuition (Kant 2002). If we do not act on this intuition, our autonomy is replaced by a submission to external standards/opinions and the reason attached to intuition is replaced with (potentially out-of-context/inapplicable) tradition.

As such, the motivation for such an enquiry into modern thought (as this essential autonomy found in the aforementioned work of Kant) and the critique of the influence on society is evident in the problems that have emerged in social environments today, for example, the manipulation of the individual through algorithms on digital platforms,¹ the cultural amnesia of modernity that contributes to the degradation of cohesion in society,² and the dissension within social groups stemming from the emphasis of the subjective interpretation rather than intersubjective agreement.³

The radical autonomy that emerges in modern thought, although accessible to all individuals, does not include the accumulated intuition of passive exposure

1 This will be discussed as an extension of the arguments put forth by Marcuse, Pariser, and Adorno and Horkheimer.

2 This will be discussed as an extension of arguments put forward by Connerton.

3 This will be discussed as an extension of Husserl and Hegel's understanding of intersubjectivity, and Habermas's discussion of the public sphere.

to specific environments as described in the work of Connerton (1989) (2009). Specifically, a polarisation and increasing intolerance for viewpoints that differ from mainstream social trends, as seen in the rising presence of neo-fascist groups.⁴ This polarisation is noted in the digital landscape of social media – a public domain that allows for individuals to interact with information independently (e.g. reading news articles, searching for information/events, reading critiques and reviews of film, television series, events, places, products, etc.), as well as allowing individuals to interact with one another in a public manner (e.g. comments on posts/videos, public posts of their own creation, livestream videos, etc.). Social media has become a new public arena in which individuals interact with one another and gain some type of social cohesion. I argue that this interaction is stunted and problematic as it lacks the continuity that is found in the cohesion of physical space; accordingly, I present a starting point for a more constructive and sustainable form of cohesion within the digital social sphere that could reinvigorate a historical continuity within the social sphere itself. As highlighted by Connerton, *cultural amnesia* (or the active forgetting of historical continuity in the social sphere) affects the individual in that they become absorbed into the present situation, similar to what Kant emphasises with the importance of apperception being part of self-awareness, as mentioned above. When an individual loses their ability to distance themselves from their environment so that they recognise their autonomy from it, they can no longer apply the Kantian judgement that allows for contextual application of knowledge.

If contextual knowledge diminishes, and action becomes less intentional with the incapacity for judgement, it is then essential to first outline the way in which the modern perspective falls short of providing an adequate basis for rationality and contextual action and to allow for a greater consideration of the ways we can reintroduce historical continuity to combat this current inadequacy and hopefully restore a sense of autonomy to contemporary minds.

The modern and the historical approach

It may seem as if a paradox forms in modern thought – we gain a greater appreciation for autonomy, independence, and creativity in thought, but at the same time we lose our autonomy to the creative inventions that result from us. This has been the tension underlying debates on technology since its foundation. Mumford (1934) discusses this at length in his book *Technics and Civilization*,

4 The discussion of neo-fascist groups is notable, but with regards to this discussion the focus will remain on the conditions that allow for thought processes such as neo-fascism to be produced. A breakdown of the specific mentality, structure, and consequence of neo-fascism is better discussed in more detail in an independent analysis.

where different developments in automation and technical mastery took hold of the very idea of civilisation, and as a result, drove innovation through science into the heart of every endeavour present in the modern world. From medicine and the treatment of the human body and mind to mechanical industry, even to the lifestyle choices and political views of citizens, technology has played an essential role in enabling people to represent themselves and their values through material things, or scientific enhancements of their current possessions.⁵ Technology has become the means to achieve the end goal of our *new* ideas rather than focusing on maintaining practices of the past.

Although there is merit to achieving innovative projects (for example, the innovation in mobility aides for people with disabilities has rapidly increased life satisfaction in the last century), the vast majority of newer technological innovation has been centred on the exploitation of the individual by creating the idea that experience can be achieved through the technological itself, rather than enhancing aspects of an already present experience.

Modern society is under great influence by technology in that our experience of information is already presented in a biased format (Pariser 2011). We engage with the material that is determined to be the most relevant for us, and our engagement in turn influences any subsequent information we search for (Pariser 2011). Our interactions with others are impersonal and removed from our immediate conditions (Turkle 2011). If our main purpose for digital technology is to access information with the purpose of improving our lives, the way in which we begin to frame our problems will be in relation to the information we are exposed to. For example, the popularity of WebMD, a website with generic, unspecific descriptions of illnesses, has influenced the way in which individuals gauge their own illness before seeking professional advice. This is detrimental in that patients gain further psycho-symptomatic ailments that they perceive to be connected to their problem, or they will completely misunderstand and misclassify their ailment altogether. This is a problem that can be easily avoided by simply not using the site and rather contacting a medical professional, however, popularity of the site skews the validity of the information it portrays.

Identification or framing of problems in modernity can be summed up in the same way that we can discuss the perspective of different projections of light on to objects, as discussed by Viktor Frankl in his analysis of constructive and healthy ways of developing meaning.⁶ The changing perspective of different projections

5 This will also be discussed in terms of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of technology achieving the same manipulation later in the essay.

6 The full discussion frames the construction of meaning in survivors of the holocaust and can be found in Frankl's book *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy* (2010).

of light is explained as a form of dimensional ontology. Simply put, dimensional ontology is an approach to explaining the phenomena of perspective with the assumption that our classifications are social creations rather than objective truths independent of our intervention.

The laws of dimensional ontology, as discussed by Frankl (2010), can show how we categorise or separate thought levelled at the same unified reality based on a singular experience. There are two laws of dimensional ontology that are illustrated by the projection of light on to objects for the purpose of observing the changes in the shadows they produce. The first law states that “One and the same thing projected into different dimensions lower than its own, yields contradictory pictures” (Frankl and Batthyány 2010: 75). In this way, prisms with the same structure in a two-dimensional perspective (such as a sphere and a cylinder) will appear as the same object when perceived in a two-dimensional fashion with emphasis on the vertical angle. This is then contradictory since the objects are not the same as each other, but it can be argued that they are essentially the same object. As for the second law, dimensional ontology states that “[d]ifferent things projected into one and the same dimension lower than their own, yield ambiguous pictures” (Frankl and Batthyány 2010: 75). This observation aims to show that if the same objects were perceived from a horizontal perspective, there would no longer be a similarity between the objects that were previously matched with one another (a sphere and a cylinder), but there would be further conflicting information with the presence of other objects (such as the cylinder may appear to be the same as a rectangular prism).

The argument concerning dimensional ontology, however, cannot remain at the observation of perspective resulting in differing experience as it causes a conflict with no intent on acknowledging intersubjectivity. Essentially, intersubjectivity is understood as a social connection that allows for cohesion in the way we interpret our surroundings and create meaning within it. Specifically, to consider Husserl's ([1936]1970) discussion of the intersubjective, our surroundings are the world that we understand and can function within, while unfamiliar surroundings are alien to us, and we would not be able to function optimally within them. The intersubjective is the glue that holds the familiar environment together, while also allowing for a distinction from another environment. When navigating an environment, we are faced with customs, values, and repetitions of certain tasks that were negotiated as reasonable among the citizens. This is present in greetings that are familiar to us (such as a handshake rather than a kiss), or in the way social activity is organised in different spaces (such as university campuses, informal settlements, etc.) (Connerton 1989). Our engagement with an environment further contextualises the approach towards the lifeworld that exists and is renegotiated over time as our interaction with it may change (such as the repurposing of buildings, renaming of areas/roads, etc.) (Connerton 1989).

There is a clear parallel between the observations made in this idea of dimensional ontology and the way in which current experience and reality is viewed. An overemphasis of individual autonomy tends to handicap the individual, as well as the society, in that it only takes into account the individual instance of experience while negating the experiences of others as wholly separate from our own. This overemphasised autonomy has the potential to break down collaboration with others within their environment and denies the possibility of an intersubjective reality to be formed⁷ if it succumbs to cultural amnesia.

In contrast to this, when we approach experience from an intersubjective standpoint, we are able to identify different elements that all contribute to a multidimensional reality we experience rather than isolating it to a single classification that can only exist from the subject's identification/description (Connerton 1989). In this way, we can see the historical continuity vanishing in discussions among individuals while a type of tunnel vision forms in its place when looking at the type of engagement that occurs over social media (as a new public space that allows for engagement) (Turkle 2011). Continuity between the lives of individuals and others who came before them is undermined by the right of the individual to be wholly unique. There is a negative impact on public discussion as there seems to be no way to interject into the opinion of another person as long as their experience is taken as a justification for their viewpoint, and individuals become intolerant to any viewpoint that seems to be an opposition in its two-dimensional presentation. This may affect the way in which we structure our social environment and how public spheres encourage or limit the individual's ability to integrate different perspectives into a holistic worldview. It is then important to consider how this public social structure facilitates judgement, or limits the capability for judgement.

The public sphere and the cohesion of historical continuity

The way in which we structure our surroundings in order to accommodate individual and social action gives some insight into the priorities of the current time and context. Habermas (1987) (1989) points to this in his discussion of the transformation of the public sphere – essentially discussing how the previously exclusive group who maintained excessive power (in comparison to the capabilities of other citizens) was undermined due to a shift in the way people communicated with one another. Again, we are faced with another transformation of public spaces due to a change in communication, although this time we enter into the abstract realm of the digital.

7 A full psychological analysis on the isolation of the individual in modernity can be found in Turkle's book *Alone, Together* (2011).

Habermas discusses the application of technology in this first transformation which allows for information to be commodified in a more freely accessible way for the general public (Habermas 1989: 16–18). The role of information becomes a powerful tool for the betterment of the average citizen and allows for a new social environment to emerge – a unifying public interest centred on gaining knowledge made possible by the democratising tool of mass media (Habermas 1989: 31–41).

However, the increasing availability of mass media and the free expression of individuals through these modes of communication allow for a greater acceptance of the *interpretation* of the knowledge that individuals are presented with rather than mere factual presentation of events/phenomena.

Habermas explains that this open platform of sharing information forms an “opinion climate” that allows for the fast spread of *popular* opinion rather than a more considered debate between informed individuals with reasonable education on the topic at hand (Habermas 1989: 217). In this climate, open communication and presumed objectivity are not jointly expressed, as the interpretation of information and the emotions of the self-published critic are not always separated from the critic’s full knowledge on the topic up for discussion.

The merging of opinion and preference is seen in the discussion Habermas outlines, in that public opinion was aimed at “rationalizing politics in the name of morality” (Habermas 1989: 102), highlighting the tendency of mass media to validate underlying ideologies of the society through a popular opinion that integrates subjective opinions into an objective landscape (or knowledge base from which to draw debate) (Habermas 1989: 108–120). This is further supported by Habermas’s use of the “natural order” with reference to this new societal environment. The natural order is not something that is a fixed structure, external to the individual (as say the perceived natural order of societies such as ancient Greece and Rome), but rather the emergence of a natural *tendency* to be in agreement with others in the society so as to form a unified group on the basis of expression (of reason), despite differences between individual experiences (Habermas 1989: 130). While this natural order of social groups is not to be understood as being a standardised structure for all groups of people, there remains a general tendency of agreement on specific, shared foundational values/principles that form the moral basis for “rational discussion”.

If this tendency towards agreement exists, and the rational discussion is based on public interest, then the discussion would seem to centre around which popular opinion seems to be the most agreeable, rather than making assumptions based on objective reference points to be assessed by the rational individual. The creation of knowledge is overshadowed by the influence of interpretation, and our

references become two-dimensional (with reference to the dimensional ontology of Frankl) in that our experiences dictate what will be the most agreeable truth.

The phenomena of the 'popular opinion' society is discussed in more detail by the critical theorists Horkheimer and Adorno, in their essay encompassing what they term a *Culture Industry* (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). Their argument highlights for us the universalisation of culture through this popular agreement instigated by mass media and the mass production of cultural artefacts (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 94-98). The individual is then presented with a predetermined truth of reality, of value, and of connections with others who they would consider to be their equal in taste and cultural background. The frame of reference is no longer an amalgamation of different experiences that can be debated in their dimensional ontology but is rather another reproduction of a predetermined reality that values the predictability of sameness.

This universalisation may also give rise to what Connerton refers to as *cultural amnesia* (Connerton 2009: 87). The amnesia that Connerton refers to is a structural kind that emphasises objects over the lifeworld that they are able to exist within (Connerton 2009: 88). This creates a hyper-present⁸ where individuals have no time to contemplate any of their actions as part of a continuous and interconnected lifeworld, and their experiences become disjointed and unprocessed which only worsens the amnesia and reinforces the predetermined reality⁹ of Horkheimer and Adorno's *sameness*. Our value is reduced to commodity, and we accept it in the name of convenience and entertainment¹⁰ (Connerton 2009: 57) (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 115-116).

It is clear that resistance to the sameness of modern society indicates our ability to be aware of this falsehood and disagree with it but does not incite any alternative life that would be more receptive to a holistic life (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 136). Some of the resistance against traditions was noted by Horkheimer and Adorno as the rebellion of the Avant Garde in their attempt to redefine rules guiding action and to reimagine structures put in place to support

8 The hyper-present is the extreme version of Benjamin's argument that enhanced focus can be associated with the emergence of cinema in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* ([1935]2003).

9 As discussed above in relation to the Kantian apperception and judgement.

10 This is evident in modern standardisations in fields such as architecture and city planning with mathematical coordinates determining value over the character and movement within a space (Connerton 2009); communication becoming universal with coding and presentation of information in binaries (and this is relied on to have all digital communication); technology being driven by innovation and prediction rather than creative problem-solving; and media being influenced by the technological medium to promote innovation/change that entrenches us in commodity cultures (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002).

the traditional ideologies (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 101). However, these types of rebellions remain retrospective in their fantasy, as the traditions become the defining point of what their ideology is, through negation of traditional ideology (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 101-103). A type of *Romantic seclusion* emerges as the subjective experience becomes the value/principle on which social structures are founded (Connerton 2009: 43-48). In doing this, the subjective experience becomes a new universal in which each individual has the right to their experience being wholly true without having to recognise the wholeness and value of the difference of others (Connerton 2009: 48).

If our rationality can indeed overcome sameness, and these misapplications of the Avant Garde and romantic seclusion can be regarded as ineffective and redundant, it is then a question of whether or not our rationality itself has become passive, rather than abdicating responsibility for these misapplied actions in the face of the all-powerful machine of society.¹¹ This would ultimately mean that the Kantian autonomy is abandoned through the abandonment of apperception. Essentially, we lose the ability to perceive our environment as separate to us as we become absorbed in the idea that our digital public space (through our personal devices) is an extension of the self (Turkle 2011). Our rationality is then linked to external circumstances rather than the integration of different perspectives to form a cohesive representation of the environment.

If we are to assume that autonomy and rationality are not entirely abandoned in modernity, Davidson discusses the role of rationality to be an active application of knowledge in that it needs equal emphasis on both classification (as an empirical identification of characteristics) and interpretation (as the relation between the thing/experience and the interpreting subject) (Davidson 2004: 15-16). The duality of knowledge shows the importance of intersubjective reality, as knowledge cannot be formed unless it is seen as valuable between people and it cannot be useful if its boundaries are not drawn with classifications (Davidson 2004: 17-18). When social environments emphasise the individual experience or interpretation at the expense of a definitive classification, our experiences only exist as a potential¹² outcome rather than as a valid judgement with a frame of reference to measure it against (Davidson 2004: 9). This is not necessarily to say that a valid judgement becomes a universal for everyone to accept, but rather that it needs a boundary or limitations to measure other experiences/contexts/applications so that our connections or distinctions

11 The idea of the universal experience and the machine of society can be found in greater detail in the work of Lewis Mumford (1934).

12 The distinction between the potential and the actual is further discussed by Pierre Lévy in *Becoming Virtual* (1998).

remain constructive rather than being combative and isolating. This is made clear in Davidson's statement that:

The importance of holism rests only in a small part on its dynamic flow. Its real importance rests on the fact that the content of any given attitude depends on its place in the whole network (Davidson 2004:15).

The network, or social environment, determines how we can validate our interpretations through different applications.¹³ This sentiment is further expressed in the hermeneutic approach outlined by Gadamer, in that our lifeworld provides us with experiences that inform our attitudes or pre-judgements on how we interpret new information ([1975] 2004: 27-28). This can be seen in the phenomena of "culture shock" that individuals experience when being placed in an environment that is entirely different to that of their primary socialisation. This shows that although we are capable of creative and independent thought, we rely on reference points in order to make appropriate and contextual decisions.

This universalisation process that occurs through mass media is discussed by Adorno and Horkheimer in their Culture Industry thesis (2002). The universalisation process occurs through the mass production of commodities where mass-produced commodities essentially remove any distinguishing markers for the individual to classify different experiences/things, which forces them to turn to a pseudo-reference of their own specific experience generalised to represent a universal experience (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). This drives the individual into a self-reflective process (without exposing them to the holism found in Davidson's rationality, or the affirming/negating experience of Gadamer, the holistic approach of Kant's self-awareness, or the intersubjective approach of Husserl, Hegel, Habermas, or Connerton) (as discussed above).

In the attempt to gain independence from these limiting environments individuals attempt to escape the modern systems, but fail to create any sustainable alternative to the technologically embedded reality of modernity. One can argue that this is an indication of the diminishing reference point of individuals as a rejection of a collaborative, intersubjective negotiation of reality. Consequently, the degradation of a constructive social environment occurs as subjectivity is emphasised over a collaborative worldview. However, there is no definite answer towards an alternative that is given with reference to this critique, but there can be further consideration for an approach towards a more holistic and sustainable engagement within individual thought and social interaction.

13 This can be interpreted as similar to the Kantian notion of judgement as the amalgamation of information into a cohesive representation of the real (as outlined at the beginning of this paper).

In medias res – the proposed solution for modernity

We can now finally draw from the discussion of this problem of restricting our rationality and engaging with incomplete forms of knowledge through Davidson's work that tries to address the phrase *in medias res* (in the midst of things) (Davidson 2004: 5). He frames this phrase as an approach to knowledge, questioning, and action that emphasises reflection on historical context and the interpersonal component of our environment through which we can interpret these things (Davidson 2004: 14, 17–18). This ties together the notion of the intersubjective reality that is spoken about in Connerton (1989) (2009), Habermas (1989), Husserl (1970), as well as addressing the way that Kant includes judgement as part of the individual's autonomy. The contextualisation of information can only occur when considering that which surrounds it, and how it can be useful and coherent to the individual who experiences it.

In this way, we need to consider the use of technology in relation to this expression of our rationality and our ability to draw connections between different experiences, phenomena and objects with a holistic approach. The use of technology is guided by algorithms that restrict and manipulate our exposure to the information that exists (Pariser 2011), while advertisements and carefully placed and highlighted information aim to reinforce the status quo that Adorno and Horkheimer discuss. In turn, digital technology limits our exposure to alternative viewpoints and guides us further towards an interpretation of events and phenomena rather than allowing us to form our own relation to the original event/phenomena in question¹⁴. Marcuse (1991) discusses this as a one-dimensionality that occurs as a result of this status quo pervading all parts of social and personal life. It may seem as if there is no way of escaping this predetermined status quo since the technology that maintains its presence and necessity in our lives is almost completely pervasive. The critiques placed against this type of modern outlook have only potential solutions that may never be actualised.

In truth, there cannot be a new, innovative solution to our current problems concerning a vanishing reference point that informs our actions – as one can argue from the above that this would merely plunge us into further catastrophe. We can only recognise that our knowledge cannot be reduced to informative data points only useful through popular interpretation, and individual experiences cannot become a way of standardising or valuing information on behalf of others. Instead, we need to approach our experiences and all information left for us to come across with the approach of understanding it *in medias res* (in the midst

14 An example of this includes conflicts, protests, or public displays of personal expressions being publicised through mass media while ignoring the goals or outcomes of the group itself (such as peaceful protests being overlooked in favour of violent ones for the shock factor of the content).

of things). Our focus may then shift from a state of narcissism to a holistic view of reality that considers experience as a three-dimensional whole rather than a two-dimensional categorisation. Hopefully then we may escape the repetition of our failings if we can recognise that they are part of a history and of a network, and we reinstate the reference point to its rightful place as a probability to be actualised through our engagement with it.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to outline the way in which modernity undermines historical continuity in favour of the subjectivity of the autonomous individual. Although modernity began with the illumination of Kant regarding the autonomy of the individual resting on both their self-awareness (or apperception) and on the judgement that allows for contextual integration of information into a cohesive representation of reality, modernity perverts importance of the autonomous individual into a hyper-present subjective island that disregards the value of the intersubjective reality in favour of being their own self-proclaimed expert. This is achieved through the introduction of digital public spaces that do not need a collective input for the individual to experience a “reality”. Although this is discussed at the most extreme portrayal of the individual’s experience, it would be beneficial to proceed with caution so that the individual’s autonomy does not become an asynchronous, out-of-context subjectivity that cannot be sustained. Rather, we need to reemphasise the intersubjective negotiation of reality found in the notion of *in medias res* (or in the midst of things) that allows us to be more aware of our autonomy in the sense of the Kantian foundation that calls for both awareness and contextualisation of our information for it to sustain, and hopefully edify, contemporary individuals.

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