



**Mrs & Mr Motley
and other myths**

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Melancholy as a genuine force
in Contemporary Art

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Abstract

Melancholy is a genuine force in contemporary art; rather not as a depressive state, but as a state that embraces poetics and surreal situations within reality.

Its powerful introspection has a deep knowledge of the wealth gained through experience. A fact that in current socio-political and cultural whirlpool, seems a peremptory need to once again create and reform terms.

‘...Is a twilight state.

Suffering melts into it and becomes a somber joy.

Melancholy is the pleasure of being sad’

Victor Hugo, *Toilers of the Sea* vol.3, p.159

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Introduction

Elusively sliding between space and time, melancholy takes many guises and colorings through out history. Surprisingly though, haven't undergone major changes. Despite its evading multi-layered definitions and accretions, the very core of the state, staying profoundly the same from its very first Hippocratic studies.

Melancholy's definition finds some alternations through posing different questions. Some answers deal with it as a mental disorder and other as a state of being. For this reason, it is necessary to clarify that, in this essay the word 'melancholy' will be used as an emotion and a state 'to be'; a flow of 'becoming'. Modern psychiatry describes the condition of 'melancholia' as a principle connection to a mental disorder; while the prime goal here is not clarification between mental disorders and their political correct - ness. Rather, focus on which social parameters the melancholic state have influenced life in general and particular how art practice affected cultural history. Refined pieces of work in different art fields contributed to humanity and culture, creating new perspectives in the spectrum of movements around the world. Digging upon established ideologies around melancholy in order to find and determine '*the optimism of melancholy*'¹, its connection to creation and to new possibilities.

The analysis of the history and meanings of melancholy from a cross-cultural psychology, linguistics and art practice, maybe give slight different meanings and contradictions. A variety of multi layered, heterogeneous characteristics that will all articulate for the main intention of this writing. '*To present the richness of melancholy as it slips and slides through a range of languages*'² and in particular for this essay,

¹ Slavoj Zizek, 'the optimism of melancholy', video. Analyzing the attitude of the main character of Lars Von Trier movie, making a remark on how this attitude of inner peace and acceptance is a strong point of ethical activity. Despite the catastrophic near future.

² Jacky Bowring "A field guide to melancholy".

to underline how the perpetual character of melancholy, applicable to its influences in art practice become an imperative need to reform and create terms. Here, I would like to underline that the word '*language*' used by J. Bowring, is interpreted in a multi-layered way; therefore, when we mention '*language*' we are talking about any mean of expression or definition; from its pathological and psychoanalytical references to the art practice; from the historical and linguistic interpretations to the cultural ones.

Melancholy is a profound interdisciplinary concept that ranges across fields as diverse as medicine, literature, art, design, psychology and philosophy. It is over two millennia old as a concept, and its development predates the emergence of most disciplines as such. While a breadth of similar discipline such as philosophy, art and literature has also tackled enduring concepts, melancholy's extends across the spectrum of arts and sciences, with significant discourses in fields like psychiatry, as much as in art.

Yet, finding a concrete, absolute and literal meaning of melancholy is not enlighten our path on analyzing the subject. It is still necessary to define and introduce the multiple façades it has taken throughout the past two and a half thousand years of research. Is mandatory to the subject of analysis to have comprehension of its historical alternations, cross cultural meanings and the different and diverse definitions that took upon; through out time and history. Further, this research will focus and react upon melancholy as an organic body in both psychoanalytic and philosophical reason. Analysis on the influences in art practice as source of inspiration with a focus on the opposed questions that rose and the influences on sociopolitical and cultural diversity through cultural history and particularly in contemporary art.

Despite the psychiatric world defended with passion only the clinical outcome of the subject, essay's research defines the subject's parameters in forming an optimistic past, present and future; A state that through history of psychiatry but also some times in psychoanalysis, seemed ignored as a modern obscurity; in modern psychiatry the ground was armed by the hip of medicines, commercialization of depressive symptomatology and of taxonomic impersonal clinical state. The psychiatric managements approximate the affected individual into a

clinical attitude to suffering. On the other hand, the psychoanalytic reason attempted to give a meaning of melancholic object of pain, the clinical situation of loss, towards a social and political complexity that transforms the forms of pain, the requests for help and consequently the very social institutionalism of the state. On the contrary, the philosophical world has more sympathy to the state of melancholy. Being closer to the subject of mourning through literature and the arts, a profound way to look at the mourning of loss was established, far away and detached from clinical and pathological reason. Philosophy addressed the issue from its aesthetical emotion. Kantian sublimity and emotional duality of melancholy's character made it an explicit subject of philosophy. What is specific, perhaps even unique, to melancholy, is the role it can play in our everyday life, in contexts that are not aesthetic in the *prima facie* sense. *'When mourning transforms into melancholy, when the desperation of a loss has calmed down and is mixed with pleasurable memories, then we have an instance of melancholy, which in itself seems to create an aesthetic context. The calmness and reflection involved in melancholy resemble the traditional requirement of contemplation in the aesthetic response. Melancholy in this everyday context refines harmony, a significant aesthetic feature. The pleasure of melancholy does not come from excitement or intensity, but indeed rather from overall harmony that is experienced. When feeling we have won both overwhelming sorrow and joy'¹. Underlining the 'aesthetic values' of this system, we will examine how, why and which social parameters makes these values have extraordinary power and will on established systems.*

'Mrs. and Mr. Motley and other myths' is in itself an aphorism to my own melancholic tendencies. An aphorism created as a reminder when the blues hit the door. An aphorism that is well spoken by Robert Burton's quotes *'I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy'* ². Melancholy's character is contradictory and elusive, embracing impossibility and futility. Its intangible assets and the possibility of the impossible are triggered aspects of its magnetism. Yet,

¹ Emily Brady. Thesis conclusion on subject 'Melancholy as an aesthetic emotion'.

² Robert Burton's quote on 'The anatomy of Melancholy', 1621

melancholy in this essay is treated as an important point of balance, a counter to the loss of sadness. Not grief, not mourning, not sorrow, yet all of those things. It still feels as a desirable condition, sought for its 'sweetness' and intensity. Recalling Joseph Campbell's version of the Buddhist advice to: *'Joyfully participate in the sorrows of the world'*¹.

¹ A phrase used by Campbell in his lectures, for example on the DVD Joseph Campbell (1998) *Sukhavati.Aca cia*.



Albrecht Dürer. 'Melencolia I'. 1514. Engraving.

Etymology and Definition

In order to comprehend the meaning of the subject in wonder, we have first to find the etymology of it and the roots that derives from. As Heidegger¹ argued '*language is the house of Being*', focusing upon the etymology of words and research the roots of words in order to recover their original meaning. Therefor, the primary focus stands on Melancholy's etymological and linguistic meaning: Greek: μελαγχολία, *melan-cholia*, 'sadness', compound of two words: μέλανα, meaning 'black' and χολή – *choli*, meaning bile, as of a literal definition. From the Latin '*lugere*', means also '*lugubriousness*'. From the Latin '*morosus*', '*to mourn*'- *moroseness*: self-willed, fastidious habit. From old English '*wist*' – *wistfulness*.

Translation is considered by many as an ultimate betrayal, but is an essential condition to identify our subject's origins and etymological meaning. The original '*melana*' despite its identification as '*black*', it does not mean that literally. Its actual meaning is a deep hue of color, dark as black. The Greek word for ink is 'μέλανι' - *melani* but doesn't necessarily mean black as of the known color. The English word '*melanin*' (Greek: μέλας)² is a natural pigment of almost all animals including humans, having brown-black and red brown polymers. So, the word described as 'black' (in black bile) has the meaning of a dark saturation of color and therefor, any dark color that has black in its substance could mean the 'black', dark color that the literal translation of melancholy: black bile describes.

¹ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' 194, BasicWritings, end David Farrell Krell, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978:1937

² The most common form of biological melanin is eumelanin, a brown-black polymer of dihydroxyindole carboxylic acids. Another common form of melanin is pheomelanin, a red-brown polymer of benzothiazine units largely responsible for red hair and freckles. Colours can vary include black/brown, yellow, red and violet. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanin> & <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/melanin>.

According to the humoral theory of Hippocrates, (Greek: Ἱπποκράτης; c. 460–c. 377 BC)¹ the body contained four humors, each of which determines our temperament. In ancient Greek medicine, doctors believed that every disease was caused by an imbalance in one of the four main bodily fluids or humors. Melancholy was characterized therefor as an excess of black bile that caused imbalance of the fluid system, a mood disorder. These four humors are blood, the lymph, the yellow bile and black bile. The temperament is blood when the blood is dominant, where the lymph node, for bilious yellow bile, and finally for the black bile melancholic. Or, as else stated, the four bodily fluids affecting human personality traits and behaviors and consist of the four

¹Hippocrates or Hippokrates of Kos, (Greek: Ἱπποκράτης; c. 460–c. 377 BC), was a Greek physician often called the founder of medicine. Important Hippocratic ideas include cleanliness (for patients and physicians), moderation in eating and drinking, letting nature take its course, and living where the air is good. He believed that health was the result of the 'humours' of the body being in balance; imbalance caused disease. He was born and practiced on the island of Kos, where he founded a medical school. He travelled throughout Greece and Asia Minor, and died in Larisa, Thessaly, and GR. He is known to have discovered aspirin in willow bark. The Corpus Hippocraticum/Hippocratic Collection, a group of some 70 works, is attributed to him but was probably not written by him, although the works outline his approach to medicine. They include Aphorisms and the Hippocratic Oath, which embodies the essence of medical ethics, still relevant and in use today. The Corpus Hippocraticum remains impressive for its focus on observation and the description of symptoms. Diseases are seen as being caused by an imbalance of the four basic ingredients, or humours, of the human body. This remarkably influential idea perhaps gained credence by analogy with the theory of the four elements of matter of Zeno of Elea and Parmenides. Being vague, the theory of humours was also widely applicable, for instance in its link with the seasons (winter illnesses being characterized by cold and wet discharges). Where given, the treatment suggested consists of eating compensatory food such as hot and dry foods in winter. The Hippocratic tradition in medicine remained dormant until the 18th–19th century, when it was replaced by the germ theory of disease, but the image of Hippocrates as the ideal physician remains today. Source: <http://encyclopedia.farlex.com/Hippokrates>

The Corpus Hippocraticum, a wealth of information on biomedical methodology and offer one of the first reflective codes of professional ethics. Hippocrates and the other associated writers provide the modern student with a number of different sorts of insights. On the biomedical methodology side, these writings provide the most detailed biomedical observations to date in the Western world. They also offer causal speculations that can be knitted together to form a theoretical framework for diagnosis and treatment.

temperaments to ‘create’ indicated as: the choleric, the sanguine, the phlegmatic and melancholic, accordingly. The most important concept of the Greek ancient thought was that these humours must be kept in balance and that health entailed possessing these bodily fluids in equal measure. Hippocrates puts the first founding of the pathology of melancholic soul, its conditions and treats. The famous natural philosopher Aristotle, (Greek: Ἀριστοτέλης, Aristotélēs, c.384 BC – 322 BC)¹, two generations younger than Hippocrates, also considered

¹ Aristotle is a towering figure in ancient Greek philosophy, making contributions to logic, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, biology, botany, ethics, politics, agriculture, medicine, poetics [as of art]. He was a student of Plato who in turn studied under Socrates. He was more empirically minded than Plato or Socrates and is famous for rejecting Plato’s theory of forms. As a prolific writer and polymath, Aristotle radically transformed most, if not all, areas of knowledge he touched. In his lifetime, Aristotle wrote as many as 200 treatises, of which only 31 survive. Unfortunately for us, these works are in the form of lecture notes and draft manuscripts never intended for general readership, so they do not demonstrate his reputed polished prose style, which attracted many great followers, including the Roman Cicero. Aristotle was the first to classify areas of human knowledge into distinct disciplines such as mathematics, biology, and ethics. Some of these classifications are still used today. As the father of the field of logic, he was the first to develop a formalized system for reasoning. Aristotle observed that the validity of any argument could be determined by its structure rather than its content. A classic example of a valid argument is his syllogism: All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal. Given the structure of this argument, as long as the premises are true, then the conclusion is also guaranteed to be true. Aristotle’s brand of logic dominated this area of thought until the rise of modern propositional logic and predicate logic 2000 years later. Aristotle’s emphasis on good reasoning combined with his belief in the scientific method forms the backdrop for most of his work. For example, in his work in ethics and politics, Aristotle identifies the highest good with intellectual virtue; that is, a moral person is one who cultivates certain virtues based on reasoning. And in his work on psychology and the soul, Aristotle distinguishes sense perception from reason, which unifies and interprets the sense perceptions and is the source of all knowledge. His work enjoyed another rediscovery in the later Middle Ages, when it was studied by medieval scholars; called “Ille Philosophus” (the philosopher) by his medieval followers, and his work was discussed as the eternal truth (barring any of his writings that may have contradicted the Bible). Known as Scholasticism, Aristotelian philosophy reconciled with Christian doctrine became the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church. Scientific discoveries of the Middle Ages and Renaissance paid heed to Scholasticism, or suffered harsh criticism. Plato theorized that ultimate reality is only knowable through reason and reflection, and he located it in ideas or eternal forms. Aristotle differed from his teacher, theorizing that

anatomical study critical to medical knowledge and practice. He was among the first, to discuss in detail and elaborated the state of melancholy's creative attributes and make the explicit association of melancholy with genius, found for the first time in history in his writings. It is important to note which term Aristotle uses for indicating the man he designates as melancholic. The English translation reads that these men have become 'eminent' being the rendering of *περιττοί* (singular: *perittos*). In ancient Greek, *perittos* has a number of remarkable and ambivalent meanings. First, it means 'great beyond measure'. Second, this can turn into two directions. The 'beyond measure' can mean 'exceptional' (in the sense of extraordinary), 'excellent', 'outstanding' on the one hand, but it can also mean 'exaggerated', 'excessive', and therefore 'superfluous' or 'useless' on the other hand. A third meaning is 'remaining', 'left-over', 'residual'. And a fourth use refers in the context of numbers to 'odd' or 'uneven'. 'Perritos' is moreover related to 'perritoma', meaning 'remainder' or rather 'surplus', since in antique medicine the term is used to indicate surplus substances in the body, e.g. a surplus of black bile. The one, who is '*perittos*' deviates from the norm, is characterized by exaggerated, excessive or eccentric behavior.

Plato, (Greek: Πλάτων, Plátōn, 429/347 BC)¹ in the fourth century, was the first to find a silver lining in the nimbus cloud of melancholy,

ultimate reality is knowable through experience, residing in physical objects, and his writings were often based on first-hand observation. Aristotle's objects (which include organisms) are comprised of form and matter, or their reality and their potential. Aristotle identifies the form in living creatures with the soul, and describes a hierarchy of souls where plants have the lowest kind, animals a higher kind because of their ability to feel, and humans the highest because of their ability to reason and rationalize. Change was cyclical to Aristotle, like the cycle of water through evaporation, rain, rivers, oceans and deserts. He imagined an eternal universe without beginning or end, and this is the most basic difference between his work and that of both medieval and modern thinkers. Source: <http://www.egs.edu/library/aristotle/biography/>

¹ Plato (429–347 B.C.E.) is, by any reckoning, one of the most dazzling writers in the Western literary tradition and one of the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential authors in the history of philosophy. An Athenian citizen of high status, he displays in his works his absorption in the political events and intellectual movements of his time, but the questions he raises are so profound and the strategies he uses for tackling them so richly suggestive and provocative that educated readers of nearly every period have in some way been influenced by him, and in practically every age there have been

becoming the first philosopher to associate it with the now well known flip-side of depression, namely mania. In Plato's taxonomy of mental health, a surplus of black bile made one prone to such frenzy that divine inspiration could be achieved in music and poetry. In the dialogue *Phaedrus* Socrates states, "...in fact frenzy, provided it comes as the gift of heaven, is the channel by which we receive the greatest blessings" [Plat, p.46]. This notion became immediately popular, and this popularity was to be sustained for more than a millennium. What Plato had hit on was the timeless conceit that those sensitive enough to be affected by the fundamentally oppressive nature of life are those who can and do express it in their art. Galen (130-200 c.e)¹, a contemporary,

philosophers who count themselves Platonists in some important respects. He was not the first thinker or writer to whom the word "philosopher" should be applied. But he was so self-conscious about how philosophy should be conceived, and what its scope and ambitions properly are, and he so transformed the intellectual currents with which he grappled, that the subject of philosophy, as it is often conceived—a rigorous and systematic examination of ethical, political, metaphysical, and epistemological issues, armed with a distinctive method—can be called his invention. Few other authors in the history of philosophy approximate him in depth and range: perhaps only Aristotle (who studied with him), Aquinas, and Kant would be generally agreed to be of the same rank.

¹ Galen (130-200CE), a prominent ancient physician and a philosopher, practiced upon biological science and made some key anatomical observations. This inclination toward observation moved his theory into the class of critical empiricism. Galen's pluralistic method, it is appropriate that (for the most part) his own method draws upon his predecessors with additions and corrections. Galen employed the four-element theory (earth, air, fire, and water) as well as the theories of the contraries (hot, cold, wet, and dry). Though Aristotle interrelated these two descriptive accounts in his work *Generation and Corruption*, it is Galen who attempts to create a more gradated form by making quasi-quantitative categories of the contraries to describe the material composition of the mixtures (*On Mixtures*). From the perspective of modern science, this is advancement upon Aristotle. This work on mixtures is also used to account for the properties of drugs (*On Simples*). Drugs were supposed to counteract the disposition of the body. Thus, if a patient were suffering from cold and wet (upper respiratory infection), then the appropriate drug would be one that is hot and dry (such as certain molds and fungi—does this remind you of penicillin?). The use of broad-reaching natural principles enhanced the explanatory power of Galen's theory of biological science. Galen speaks at length about the philosophers Plato (from whom he accepts the tri-partite soul) and Aristotle (whose biological works are well known to him). In medicine, he is also greatly influenced by historical figures such as Hippocrates. In his avowed work on

commented that humour had become "a disease of heroes." The idea was coopted and refined by the systematic Aristotelian view of natural philosophy, which synthesized by Galen's medical conception of melancholy with the Platonic conception of frenzy. Furthermore, Aristotle's theory came in contradiction with Plato; Plato suggested that the creative genius presupposes by inspiration. The 'poets' are invaded by an external source of inspiration; the divine will is what drives the creativity. Plato's articulation was about the randomness of divine act. Aristotle's theory came to an antithesis with Plato and distinguish his theory from the external divine creativity force, suggestion that it derives from the core of the human existence, from in within the body and soul; and brought the problem of the destiny of the physiology of man. Therefore, what commands creativity comes from in the Self; he explicitly connected melancholy's existence within the body, as a reflection of the tragic dimension of human existence. Here we touch something of the fate of melancholy, between the intelligent and creative maniac there is no qualitative difference, but varying degrees, different of the scale. This fragile boundary between the pathological and normal, that Freud came to undermine us, is already in the reasoning study of Aristotle. The disillusionment of the pathological aspects of melancholy, makes Aristotle the precursor not only of depressive romantic and the poets who gave absolution to the poetic soul, but also crushed these heretics psychiatrists of the medieval, which by declaring melancholy as a mental illness, lured it away from pathology, and gave a higher value and ideological blindness. In his writings *'Problemata Physica XXX 1'1*, Aristotle described a form of melancholic constitution that is both characterized as a mean, as a way of a state of 'being' and also thought to lead to intellectual outstandingness. He brought up the following question and made the explicit association of melancholy with genius, found for the first time in history in his writings. The Aristotelian dilemma of how a person could be both great and sick was posed directly as:

biological theory, On the Natural Faculties, Galen goes to great lengths to refute the principles of Erasistratus and his followers.

1 Aristotle, The Works of Aristotle, Vol. VIII: *'Problemata Physica'*, Books I and XXX, ed. W.D. Ross, trans. E.S. Forster (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927)

*“Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry are clearly of an atrabilious temperament, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile, as is said to have happened to Heracles among the heroes”*¹

By applying this question he made the explicit association of melancholy with genius, found for the first time in history in his writings. The action of black bile being variable, means melancholy [ies] is variable, for the black bile becomes very hot and very cold. Since it is possible for this variable mixture to be well tempered and well adjusted in a certain respect, therefore all melancholy persons are out of the ordinary, not owing to illness, but to their natural disposition. The concept of frenzy as the sole basis for the highest creative gifts was Platonic. The attempt to bring this recognized mysterious relationship between genius and madness, which Plato had expressed only in a myth into the bright light of rational science, was Aristotelian. This union led to a shift of values through which the 'many' were equated with 'average', and which stressed the emotional 'be different!' rather than the ethical 'be virtuous!' Divine frenzy came to be regarded as a sensibility of soul, and a man's spiritual greatness was measured by his capacity for experience and, above all, for suffering. The author worked a long tradition that linked the ideal state with the state of melancholy, conceived as a proportion between two opposites or more, among: logos, symmetry, harmony, isonomy etc. There is no denial in his writings that the melancholic genius reaches frenzy situations that can lead to a mental disorder; nevertheless, what is remarkable in his writings and still in issue after two and a half thousand years, is that the melancholic state can create genius but also divined inspirational modes, that can provide a persistent thread in cultural theory. *‘Even the artistic and scientific poles of melancholy concur on the coincidence of exceptional creativity’* Jacky Bowring states *‘and the melancholic condition – irrespective of weather it*

¹ Aristotle, The Works of Aristotle, Vol. VIII: ‘Problemata Physica’ I & XXX, ed. W.D. Ross, trans. E.S. Forster (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927).1, 953a10-14

*is considered a mood or a mental illness allied with bipolar disorder in some extent, have the same characteristics and in the history of the melancholic study has been confused many times as the same disorder*¹.

Despite the fact that concepts with such an extensive period of development (the idea of 'beauty' for example) tend to go through a process of metamorphosis and end up meaning something distinctly different. Nevertheless, melancholy despite it has been under an extensive investigation through the centuries *"...has been surprisingly stable although the depth and breadth of investigation, the questions, ideas and contradictions which form the 'constellation of melancholy', today are not dramatically different from those at any time in its history"* Jacky Bowring states.

*'Nous n'avons qu'une ressource avec la mort c'est de faire de l'art avant elle'*² Rene Char³ states. In its original written language, French, 'avec' signifies the importance to have a shelter 'with' death and not 'from' death. This literally translation points out a big change on how we think about the ways of creation, the metamorphosis of melancholy. A connection thread of two points of departure open the road for the creative individual's identity and bring us to a point of questioning and reasoning melancholy as a genuine force for the creative individual. The compression of melancholy is a dark matter and primordial radiation, *'an integral part of every thought and every creation'*, noted by Friedrich Schelling⁴, the German philosopher of Idealism. Modern civilization

¹ Jacky Bowring "A field guide to melancholy", 1998, chapter 'from Apea to Weltschmerz', p 116-137

² 'We have only one option with death, to create art before it' or 'the only option with death is to create art before its arrival'.

³ Rene Char (1907 - 1988), French poet, essayist and writer who began as a surrealist but who, after his experience with as a resistance leader of WW II, wrote economical verse with moralistic overtones. He was the master of poetic brevity, which he archived by the use of the ellipse, the aphorism, the terse image and the 'heraclitic' phrase- i.e, the merging of contradictory ideas. The result is a poetry that is austere, dense and somewhat difficult. Here, the quote is from his writing 'La Parole en archipel' (1962). Source: www.britannica.com

⁴ F. W. J. von Schelling, (27 January 1775 – 20 August 1854) is one of the great German philosophers of the late 18th and early 19th Century. Some historians and scholars of philosophy have classified him as a German Idealist, along with J. G. Fichte and G. W. F. Hegel. Such classifications obscure rather than illuminate the importance and singularity

translates melancholy as the clinical state of depression. Perceiving it as an error of human psychology and state of being. As a shortage and lack of capacity to adapt to certain norms. The adaptation of human existence into the tooling systems prevalent in western society doesn't leave space to the melancholic 'Mr. Motley'. Within the context of rapid growth, automatism and modern innovating notions of fast growth, the melancholic motley having, by definition, a slow mobility, cannot fit in this fastening vision of modern world. Within these given borders "the subject of grief remains exiled from its own grief" as Foteini Tsalikoglou¹ articulates, *'a stranger to his own self, an empty shell'*. Melancholy hides inside a human psychology that resists analysis. The black sun, this 'dark matter' as is referred to, seems to be an integral part of every thought, every creation. We could say that we were born sad. *'Human existence, means experience of this melancholic state and a vital capacity to*

of Schelling's place in the history of philosophy. This is because the dominant and most often limited understanding of Idealism, as systematic metaphysics of the Subject is applicable more to Hegel's philosophy than Schelling's. While initiating the Post-Kantian Idealism of the Subject, Schelling went on to exhibit in his later works the limit and dissolution of such a systemic metaphysics of the Subject. Therefore, the convenient label of Schelling as one German Idealist amongst others ignores the singularity of Schelling's philosophy and the complex relationship he had with the movement of German Idealism. The real importance of Schelling's later works lies in the exposure of the dominant systemic metaphysics of the Subject to its limit rather than in its confirmation. In this way, the later works of Schelling demand from the students and philosophers of German Idealism a re-assessment of the notion of German Idealism itself. In that sense, the importance and influence of Schelling's philosophy has remained "untimely." In the wake of Hegelian rational philosophy that was the official philosophy of that time, Schelling's later works was not influential and fell onto deaf ears. Only in the twentieth century when the question of the legitimacy of the philosophical project of modernity had come to be the concern for philosophers and thinkers, did Schelling's radical opening of philosophy to "post-metaphysical" thinking receive renewed attention. Schelling is seen from this perspective as a "post-metaphysical" thinker who has widened the concept of reason beyond its self-grounding projection. During the last half of the last century, Schelling's works have tremendously influenced the post-Subject oriented philosophical discourses. During recent times, Schelling scholarship has remarkably increased both in the Anglo-American context and the Continental philosophical context. Source: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/schellin/>

¹ Foteini Tsalikoglou, Professor of Psychology Department of the University of Athens, Gr. source: newspaper article, online edition, original in Greek language: <http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=434264>

overcome it. Within reason, thoughts and feelings, through the diverse processes of creation and ingenuity' George Steiner¹ reminds us.

Modern psychiatrists Akiskal and Akiskal² set out to find proof on the writings of Aristotle about melancholy creating geniuses, on creative fields of life. They formed a research on '*Temperament, Human Nature, Melancholy, Creativity and Eminence*' and questioned whether suffering is associated with melancholy and 'madness' necessary for artistic creativity and eminence? Or do creativity and leadership have something to do with the temperaments associated with affective disease?

Concluding that by integrating concepts dating back to Greek psychological medicine and philosophy – especially work attributed to Aristotle – with modern databases examination, of the role of cyclothymic and related temperaments in the interface between mixed, the bipolar spectrum and normality. '*We place our query*', the scientific duo stated '*within the general framework of evolutionary biology and human nature. In doing so, we propose that affective disease – including mania and associated psychotic states – exist because they serve as the genetic reservoir for adaptive temperaments and the genes for genius.*' Affective disorder can therefor be regarded as the price of exceptional greatness. Thus, creative and eminent individuals, by virtue of their being exceptional, occupy a somewhat unstable terrain between temperament and affective disease.

¹ George Steiner, Francis George Steiner (born April 23, 1929, Paris, France), influential European-born American literary critic who studied the relationship between literature and society, particularly in light of modern history. His writings on language and the Holocaust reached a wide, nonacademic audience. Steiner was born in Paris of émigré Austrian parents and educated at the Sorbonne, the University of Chicago (B.A., 1948), Harvard University (A.M., 1950), and the University of Oxford (Ph.D., 1955). He became an American citizen in 1944 but spent much of his time in Europe. He was a member of the editorial staff of *The Economist* (1952–56) and worked at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University (1956–58) before teaching at Churchill College, Cambridge, and the University of Geneva.

² Akiskal S. Hagop. (& Akiskal. S) Born 1944. Is an Armenian-American psychiatrist best known for his research on temperament and bipolar disorder (manic depression). He is the Co-editor-in-chief of the '*Journal of Affective Disorder*'s, Elsevier. Accessed January 22, 2010.

‘Melancholy hates haste and floats in silence.
It must be handled with care.’

Nick Cave
The Secret Life of the Love Song;
The Flesh made Word

Historical mapping of Melancholy

While in the ancient world of western philosophy and the analysis of the psyche, melancholy was a wistful state embracing poetics and creating geniuses, a ‘unique and divine gift’, inspiring the quality of genius, creativity and proper predisposition of intellectual work, it took up some altered meanings and positions. Indulging human and social perception of the figure of melancholic in more negative abstract and distractive norms that were flourishing through some heavy political and social discourses. Through a clear mapping of the most central and significant notions of the subject’s state, we will try to find the path leading to the conclusion of this essay. Through the course of cultural history and psychoanalysis we will try to underline connections, connotations and effects of the subjects’ personal state, more over with the artistic research through melancholy affecting upon the social, political and cultural counterparts of modern and consequently contemporary history. Attempting to map melancholy through history we will start with a work of art, carefully chosen to be in this chapter more as the beginning of a new era of interpreting melancholy, than analyzing it purely as a piece of art. This artwork has influenced and occupied analysis in the work of art historians, psychoanalysts, artist’s and critics, art lovers etc., for several decades.

At the turn point of the Middle Ages, the engraving of Albert Durer’s ‘*Melencolia I*’¹ is the ultimate manifestation of the psychic state, an

¹ Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528), *Melencolia I*, (1514), Engraving 9 1/2 x 7 3/8 in. (24 x 18.5 cm) Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1943 (43.106.1)

Dürer’s *Melencolia I* is one of three large prints of 1513–14 known as his *Meisterstiche* (master engravings). The other two are *Knight, Death, and the Devil* and *Saint Jerome in His Study*. Though they do not form a series in the strict sense, the prints do correspond to the three kinds of virtue in medieval scholasticism—moral, theological, and intellectual—and they embody the complexity of Dürer’s conception. The winged personification of Melancholy, seated dejectedly with her head resting on her hand, holds a caliper and is surrounded by other tools associated with geometry, the one of the seven liberal arts that underlies artistic creation—and the one through which Dürer

intellectual situation of the artist and is thus, by extension, a spiritual self-portrait of Dürer. In this image, an angel sits in the midst of a construction site, surrounded by scattered hammers, planes and geometrical instruments, wearing a dark and withdrawn countenance while Saturn radiates nocturnal light over the ocean behind. The engraving finds many different ways of suggesting a mysteriously balanced stillness achieved between opposites. Dürer's angel is winged and yet also immobile and heavy. The bell is silent, and the tools are at rest. There is an hourglass with equal amounts of spent and unspent sand. On the same wall hangs a 'magic square' of numbers arranged in rows of four, which always add up to number 34, whether they are counted vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Every detail in this mysterious and enigmatic engraving suggests an arcane cosmological meaning. As diverse scholars have demonstrated, Dürer's *Melancholy* involves considerably more than the obsessive nocturnal ruminations of the insomniac, or a depressed state of mind in which a sense of mortality presses in and all endeavor seems futile. The German art historian Erwin Panofsky, in *'Saturn and Melancholy'*¹ whose work on Dürer and was first published in 1923, initiated the modern reinterpretation of *'Melencolia I'*. It was associated with earth, with its qualities of cold and dry, and it was linked to the planet Saturn². Saturn was the Roman name for the god of agriculture and the harvest, whom Greeks called Kronos. Kronos was the god of the Golden Ages. Saturn is considered the 'Lord of Melancholy', a planet connected with the dark side; The deepest of Greek mythology contains a story of castrating his father, Uranus, and a divine cannibalism, citing also both

hoped to approach perfection in his own work. An influential treatise, *De occulta philosophia* of Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, almost certainly known to Dürer, probably holds the explanation for the number I in the title: creativity in the arts was the realm of the imagination, considered the first and lowest in the hierarchy of the three categories of genius. The next was the realm of reason, and the highest the realm of the spirit. It is ironic that this image of the artist, paralyzed and powerless, should exemplify Dürer's own artistic power at its superlative height.

¹ "Saturn and Melancholy", 1964. Klibansky Raymond, Panofsky Erwin & Saxl, Fritz, studies the history of national philosophy, religion and art".

² Saturn (Latin: Saternus) was the Roman name for the god of agriculture and the harvest, whom Greeks called Kronos. Kronos was the god of the Golden Ages.

the concept of number espoused by Pythagoras¹, and the unity of macrocosm and microcosm established by Empedocles. Kronos was the cruel father of gods that was eating his children by the fear of his succumbs to the cruelty of his own son. His only saved child by Gaia (Earth) Zeus, actually fulfilled the fatal prediction of Kronos destiny and sentenced him to the underworld. Kronos shows two faces, the god of agriculture and harvest as well as the cruelty of all gods, a cannibalism, dark face connected with melancholy; thus manifesting the duality of existence of black bile; the duality of melancholy, the so called Saturnity. On it's explicit essay, many details of Dürer's engraving engage this inherited imagery of Melancholy - the drooped head of the angel, her 'black face' or 'shadowed countenance', the purse and keys, even the clenched fist, which had for long associated Melancholy with avarice. Other details work against these saturnine qualities. The wreath around the angel's brow may conventionally have served as a sign of intellectual powers but, being made of water parsley and watercress, it also counteracts the dryness of the melancholy temperament. So too does the 'magic square' of numbers mounted beside the bell, perhaps intended as talisman to engage the healing influence of Jupiter.

Yet Dürer's engraving also seems to raise Melancholy from its conventional position as the lowest of the four humours, to the highest. It shows Melancholy as the humour of the great and prophetic. No longer 'inert depression' or mere idleness, Melancholy becomes a

¹ Pythagoras of Samos (c.570–c.495 BC, Πυθαγόρας ὁ Σάμιος, Pythagoras the Samian) made influential contributions to philosophy and religious teaching in the late 6th century BC. He is often revered as a great mathematician, mystic and scientist, but he is best known for the Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$). Many of the accomplishments credited to Pythagoras may actually have been accomplishments of his colleagues and successors. Pythagorean ideas exercised a marked influence on Plato, and through him, all of Western philosophy. The cult he founded was devoted to the study of numbers, which the Pythagoreans saw as concrete, material objects. Whether or not his disciples believed that everything was related to mathematics and that numbers were the ultimate reality. They studied figurate numbers, defining them as triangular numbers, pentagonal numbers, hexagonal numbers, etc., based on the patterns that numbers of regularly spaced dots formed (Boyer 1968, p. 59-61). "The so-called Pythagoreans, who were the first to take up mathematics, not only advanced this subject, but saturated with it, they fancied that the principles of mathematics were the principles of all things." - Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1–5, cc. 350 BC

'unique and divine gift', an inspiring quality of Genius, and the proper predisposition of intellectual work. Panofsky finds testimony to this conception in the geometrical elements that are so strongly present in *'Melencolia I'*, with its ladder and compass, its sphere and stone octahedron. *'Geometria'* had long symbolized the *'allegorized ideal of a creative mental faculty'* but Dürer combines this with the image of melancholy as a destructive state of mind. Dürer was bold enough to *'bring down'* timeless knowledge into *'the sphere of human striving and failure'* and, inversely, to *'raise the animal heaviness of a "sad, earthy" temperament to the height of a struggle with intellectual problems'*. He has merged two different worlds of thought and feeling, and as a consequence, *'Geometria's workshop has changed from a cosmos of clearly ranged and purposefully employed tools into a chaos of unused things'*.

Panofsky suggested that *'Melencolia I'* is based on a passage from Henry Cornelius Agrippa's *'De occulta philosophica'*¹, and Frances Yates² further developed this idea, in her book *'The Occult Philosophy in The Elizabethan Age'*. Yates looks at the sleeping and half-starved dog in *'Melencolia I'* and reads it as a sign that the body is under firm control - it represents the *'starved dog of the senses'*. She remarks that Dürer's ladder leads up to Heaven, and certainly not just to the top of a half-made building. Far from being in a state of failure or glowering inertia, Dürer's angel is in a deep visionary trance that is guaranteed against demonic intervention by angelic interference, and linked to the hermetic tradition of alchemy and the Christian Cabala as propounded by Agrippa. Renaissance thought, also linked melancholy with creative genius; thus, at the same time that this idea changed the status of this humor, it

¹ 'Writings of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa' (1486-1535).

² Dame Frances Amelia Yates DBE (28 November 1899 – 29 September 1981) was an English historian who focused on the development of western esotericism. In an academic capacity, she taught at the Warburg Institute of the University of London for many years, and also wrote a number of seminal books on the subject of esoteric history. She wrote extensively on the occult or Neoplatonic philosophies of the Renaissance. Her books Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (1964), The Art of Memory (1966), and The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (1972) are major works. She dealt with traditions whose remoteness she could not eliminate, even while she made them more understandable.

made the self-conscious artist aware of the terrible risks that came with his gift. The winged personification of Melancholy, seated dejectedly with her head resting on her hand, holds a caliper and is surrounded by other tools associated with geometry, the one of the seven liberal arts that underlies artistic creation—and the one through which Dürer hoped to approach perfection in his own work. An influential treatise, *‘De occulta philosophia of Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim’* almost certainly known to Dürer, probably holds the explanation for the number “1” in the title: creativity in the arts was the realm of the imagination, considered the first and lowest in the hierarchy of the three categories of genius. The next was the realm of reason, and the highest the realm of the spirit. It is ironic that this image of the artist, paralyzed and powerless, should exemplify Dürer’s own artistic power at its superlative height.

Sigmund Freud¹ established a further landmark in the map of melancholy and madness in 1917, with his essay *‘Mourning and Melancholia’*². The difference between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ grief is again the foundation for the distinctions he makes, with melancholy identified as a pathological condition, the state where mourning fails to reach completion. The individual, or ego, embeds their sense of loss within themselves, refusing to allow the loss to pass. Freud described how ‘the shadow of the object fell upon the ego’ and ‘the loss of the object had been transformed into the loss of ego’, so that the loss of the object, whether it be a person or an idea, becomes the same as the loss of the self, the ego. Melancholy characterized by a deep painful mood, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of ability to love, suppress any activity and reduce the sense of self, which manifests guilt and self-destruction and reaches paranoid anticipation of punishment. *‘Melancholy shows us something else, a great bankruptcy of Ego. Grief becomes the world around poor and empty, in melancholy the very Ego’* he notes. *‘This manifestation’* in a later critical writing towards Freud idea’s about melancholy, is well spoken that *‘led to the discrediting of*

¹ Sigmund Freud (1856- 1939) <http://www.iep.utm.edu/freud/>

² Freud, S. (1917). ‘Mourning and Melancholia’. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV.

*depression and treated with suspicion and worry that everything that happens in the life of the subject is a mental disorder, named melancholy*¹. The melancholic remains attached to this loss, and does not seek a cure. The rise of psychiatry and psychoanalysis had a major influence on the codification of melancholy, yet the definitions and distinctions remain stubbornly imprecise. In an effort to achieve clinical precision the signs of melancholy were transliterated into medical speak, so that lethargy and listlessness, for example, became *'psychomotor retardation'*.

In 1989 one of the most significant writings that connect melancholy with art through psychoanalytical studies, is the work by Julia Kristeva² *'Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia'*³ where she articulates upon the importance and the therapeutic effect of art to the subject of suffer. She suggests that art secures a *'sublimatory hold over the lost Thing, serving as a 'counterpoise' to loss'* (1989:97); it helps the depressive person to approach the lost Thing, name it, signify it, while at the same time checking its destructive lure in the distancing turn of representation. Kristeva is particularly interested in poetic language as, through prosody, it speaks a *'language beyond language'* (1989:97): Semiotic processes, particularly rhythms, break into the symbolic order of the ego while the latter order *'sign, word, structure, contract, constraint'* (1980:28-29), shapes these processes as being significant. The therapeutic effect of

¹ 'As a weasel sucks eggs. An essay on Melancholy and Cannibalism', Daniel Birnbaum & Anders Olsson, Sternberg press, 2008

² Julia Kristeva, (Boulgarian: Юлия Кръстева; born 24 June 1941) is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, psychoanalyst, sociologist, feminist, and, most recently, novelist, who has lived in France since the mid-1960s. She is now a Professor at the University Paris Diderot. Kristeva became influential in international critical analysis, cultural theory and feminism after publishing her first book *Semeiotikè* in 1969. Her sizable body of work includes books and essays which address intertextuality, the semiotic, and abjection, in the fields of linguistics, literary theory and criticism, psychoanalysis, biography and autobiography, political and cultural analysis, art and art history. Together with Roland Barthes, Todorov, Goldmann, Gérard Genette, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Greimas, and Althusser, she stands as one of the foremost structuralists, in that time when structuralism took a major place in humanities. Her works also have an important place in post-structuralist thought. She is the founder and head of the Simone de Beauvoir Prize committee.

³ *'Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia'*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989

poetic language is also due to the polyvalence or '*polynomia*' (1980:112) of the sign under the poetic function: here, in the unsettling of meaning, in the memory of the body, the subject has '*a chance to imagine the non meaning, or the true meaning, of the Thing*' (1989:97). Poetic language opens up language as a whole, entering into a productive tension with the symbolic. The resulting artifice paradoxically allows the representation, or at least suggestion, of a lost, loved object beyond words.

The most significant part of this essay is the remark that art is by its very nature an '*allegory of that which no longer is remaking nothingness*' (1989:99). As does the surface play of analytic discourse, art's beautiful surface translates a deep, invisible loss. Central to Kristeva's argument is the notion that this completion of mourning requires the processes of imaginary identification and forgiveness opened up in art (as in therapy). We have seen how, through prosody and the polyvalence of poetic language, a way is opened to signify loss and thereby overcome it, both enacting and completing the process of mourning. At a more general level, through the processes of identification and forgiveness the subject both recovers the lost object and comes to terms with separation. Kristeva includes studies of four artists and their works: Hans Holbein the Younger and his painting, '*The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*'; Gerard de Nerval and his poem, '*El Desdichado*'; Fyodor Dostoyevsky and his novels, '*Crime and Punishment*' and '*The Idiot*' and Marguerite Duras in a number of her fictions. In each of these cases Kristeva is concerned with describing the artist's depressive discourse and world view, as manifested in very different forms ranging from Holbein's painting of Christ, the redeemer, an '*emaciated and tortured corpse laid out on a slab*', through Nerval's attempt to speak the "*Black Sun of Melancholia*" and thereby '*assimilate the archaic state into the language of poetry*' (1989:171), through Dostoyevsky's representation of Raskoinikov and his search for forgiveness and renewal under condemnation, to Duras' tale of love enduring in the death of Hiroshima. Kristeva is concerned with the tracing the ways in which these artists, through their art as semiotic and symbolic process, both mourn ambivalently and work through their grief. Mourning needs time to complete itself and become detached, finally,

from its object. If completed, mourning '*remove(s) our morbid lining and set(s) us up as independent, unified subjects*' (1989:257-8).

Furthermore, while Lacanian thought defines the melancholic as a sinner and cowardly resigns from his duty to find his way out with his unconscious, an important question rises: 'but, who has found the edges of the unconscious; and furthermore, his/her way out with it?' In this sense, everybody is involved in this sinful process of grief. The tragic dimension of human existence touches the cores of the destiny of melancholy.

Michel Foucault¹ says that psychology will never achieve to speak about madness; cause madness is *the* state that endures the whole truth about psychology. Analogically to this statement, art embraces melancholy, derives its fundamental instruments and compositions as the truthful holder of the secrets of melancholy. Within art, melancholy transforms into an active silence, where inspiration derives and reforms terms, become a significant part of its substance. Why you let a black sun to thrive your artwork and practice? More tragic that death itself is the existence of a substance without name, more rhizomatic is the existence of an absolute 'before', that as an artist you want, you own to make it yours; to define it through art practice and bridge the gap between the existence of that irrational, inaccessible with the actual.

Meanwhile and for the sake of a further new introduction of the artist in wonder, Claude Rabant² defines a crucial necessity to live the

¹ Michel Foucault, born Paul-Michel Foucault, 5 October 1926 – 25 June 1984) was a French philosopher, social theorist, historian of ideas, and literary critic. His philosophical theories addressed what power is and how it works, the manner in which it controls knowledge and vice versa, and how it is used as a form of social control. Foucault is best known for his critical studies of social institutions, most notably psychiatry, social anthropology of medicine, the human sciences, and the prison system, as well as for his work on the history of human sexuality. His writings on power, knowledge, and discourse have been widely influential in academic circles.

² Claude Rabant is a psychoanalyst and a French philosopher. Former student of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (rue d'Ulm), Philosophy professor, member of the Freudian School of Paris until its dissolution in 1980 by Lacan, Claude Rabant has confused the Freudian circle in 1982 and directed by 1983 to 1989, the journal *Patio* (editions of *Radiance*), and from 1992 to 1997, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Io (Erès editions).

Professor at the Faculty of Letters of Clermont-Ferrand, then at the University of Paris-

experience, 'erweiteroung' in German language, to enlarge into the dynamics of a cosmos that is in constant move, to enlarge the fields of sorrows, of passions and desire. Everything inside humans psychic is in constant motion and that motion is the lust of the artist to gasp and enlarge, make it tangible so as if understandable, intact. *'Practicing art makes possible the contact with the side of myself I could never have, with the center of my loss'*; is one of the central concepts of Rabant's idea about the metamorphosis of melancholy.

VIII (Department of Psychoanalysis), he is the author of 'Delirium and theory' (Aubier-Montaigne, 1978), 'Winks' (Aubier-Montaigne, 1984), 'Inventing the real' (Denoël, 1992) and 'Metamorphosis of melancholy' (collection Psychoanalysis, Éditions Hermann, 2010).

Melancholy and the new optimism

From the subject's individual state to the collective

*'His Melancholia (c.c. Durer's engraving) is neither a miser nor a mental case, but a thinking being in perplexity. She does not hold to an object, which does not exist, but to a problem which cannot be solved.'*¹

Seems here, that Panofsky have grasped not only the dual perspective of melancholy but also its reflective character. Along with the work of German sociologist Wolf Lepenies² demonstrated in *'Melancholy and Society'*, that melancholy is an affect that on and off in the course of the centuries and *'has played a salient role in galvanizing political dissent'*. Historically, the expression of melancholy in literature and art has often given voice to the marginalized and the disempowered, hence the rhetoric contra melancholy that one finds in authoritarian regimes. It has also been linked historically with the imagining of political futures. Robert Burton's *'Anatomy of Melancholy'*³, for example, included the

¹ Panofsky, 'Saturn and melancholy'. p. 163

² Wolf Lepenies, (born 11 January 1941) is a German sociologist, political scientist, and author of *'Melancholie und Gesellschaft'* Lepenies, W. (1992) *'Melancholy and society'*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Rector em. Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Institute for Advanced Study. Scientific writer, biographer, and sociologist, he is the former Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin. He is known for his writings exploring the bankruptcy of European intellectuals, and his book-length analysis of melancholy. His academic career includes countless roles and memberships at the Collège de France, Princeton, the Sorbonne, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the International Institute for Advanced Studies in Kyoto, to name a few. Among the distinctions, the Alexander von Humboldt Prize, the Theodor Heuss Prize, the Leibniz Media.

³ Robert Burton, (born 1577, Lindley, Leicestershire, Eng.—died Jan 1640, Oxford). Burton's book consists mostly of a collection of opinions of a multitude of writers, grouped under quaint and old-fashioned divisions; in a solemn tone Burton endeavored to prove indisputable facts by weighty quotations. The subjects discussed and determined by Burton ranged from the doctrines of religion to military discipline, from inland navigation to the morality of dancing-schools. On its surface, the book is

first known Utopia in English. We seek to shed light on how melancholy consequent disturbances in language, inertia and withdrawal also has this other social life distinguished by its expressivity.

Paradoxically we talk for the melancholic state instead of the optimistic one when referring to social solidarity. Though, analyzing the melancholic aspects and core of existence and its expressions, we place it in an exile context; Dismissively talks teaches the collective mind to stand fearless on the state of morning, grief and consequently melancholy, finding ways to gain strength and understanding of this paradox theme. Leading a state of opening questions, where future developments occur on current post modernistic values. Starting from the subject's personal and individual introspective state, we will be lead to a collective openness to fruitful thoughts, suggestions and solutions. In this chapter the aim is to analyze the artistic research and how this road lead to an understanding, in both the introspective of the artist but also of the collective one. Something that is hidden is not forgotten; it's under minded and becomes stronger in its absolute triumph of difficulty.

Is there a sufficient way to change, to transform melancholy? Can the state of the subject affect the collective and in which degree? What the metamorphosis of melancholy is consisted of?

When the collective ideal, the ideal state of contemporary living shatters within its own creation, a piece of the subject's identity is also dismantled. In current socio political whirlpool, in the current state of a system in its descending, melancholy has influenced not only the individual properties but also the collective ones. There are so many suppressions on the individuals' life that even if the state of melancholy was never a personal issue before, now faces the grief, the loss of his carrier, his savings, his connection to a life he had build; the future is in

presented as a medical textbook in which Burton applies his vast and varied learning, in the scholastic manner, to the subject of melancholia (which includes what is now termed clinical depression). Though presented as a medical text, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is as much a sui generis work of literature as it is a scientific or philosophical text, and Burton addresses far more than his stated subject. In fact, the *Anatomy* uses melancholy as the lens through which all human emotion and thought may be scrutinized, and virtually the entire contents of a 17th-century library are marshaled into service of this goal.

turbulence. Claude Rabant¹ in his writings '*The metamorphosis of melancholy*'² proposes that one of the main parts of this metamorphosis is the creation and establishment of strong links within the social structure; links and connections that will bring the ultimate state where melancholy, individual and collective can be discarded on the level of raising public awareness, striking the creative production and experience a collective 'togetherness' where possibility can yet be born.

The '*Metamorphosis*' by Franz Kafka³ provides another good source of the dual character of melancholy takes upon, in contemporary living as described and theorized by Rabant. We have reached the era of contemporary surreal living and when you enter a surreal world like this, your personal control patterns, all your plans, the whole way in which you have configured your own behavior, begins to fall into pieces. That is partly because of personal/ family raise but we will keep no hold in that, cause here we try to defined the parameters of this melancholy and its social counter parts, and partly on your hard drive core that involved and evolved through experience and knowledge and arrived in a space of surreal situation: wars, environmental one way roads catastrophes with only profit money, harsh irrational social regimes, hanger, discomfort, the ultimate faces of death. So, when you find yourself against a force that does not lend itself to the way you perceive the world, consequently a tender soul that have embraced the black angel and slept in between his furthers, won't give up, can't give up, you don't lie down and die. What you do is struggle against this, employing all possible gears, fight with whatever you have. But of course you don't

1 Claude Rabant is a psychoanalyst and a French philosopher. Former student of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (rue d'Ulm), Philosophy professor, member of the Freudian School of Paris until its dissolution in 1980 by Lacan, Claude Rabant has confused the Freudian circle in 1982 and directed by 1983 to 1989, the journal *Patio* (editions of *Radiance*), and from 1992 to 1997, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Io (Erès editions). Professor at the Faculty of Letters of Clermont-Ferrand, then at the University of Paris-VIII (Department of Psychoanalysis), he is the author of '*Delirium and theory*' (Aubier-Montaigne, 1978), '*Winks*' (Aubier-Montaigne, 1984), '*Inventing the real*' (Denoël, 1992) and '*Metamorphosis of melancholy*' (collection *Psychoanalysis*, Éditions Hermann, 2010).

2 Claude Rabant: *Métamorphose de la mélancolie*, 2010, book, publication by Hermann.

3 <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5200/5200-h/5200-h.htm>

stand a chance. That is a Kafkaesque point of view. Now, if we sum up this attitude of Kafka's reality and the possibility of a collective melancholy as from Rabant, then there is standing a chance to provide to oneself and to the society a possibility of change, of chance, of a situation that has more potentials and possibilities of change.

The paradox of melancholy been translating social forms and forces and its expressions in the cultural realm, reframing the subject's state as a productive affect, finds ground and reason to the work of German sociologist Wolf Lepenies. Analyzing Melancholy as a social and cultural phenomenon that can be of considerable help in understanding the modern middle class, Lepenies shows that the pair of melancholy and utopia is useful in discussing the role of the intellectuals. The specific melancholy of intellectuals which derives from the inadequacies of the world they live in and which they are not able to change; and their utopia which derives from the inhibition of action and transference of unsatisfied dreams from this world to a better one. The utopia Lepenies writes about derives from intellectuals' melancholy and, at the same time, is a means to cure them from it. Utopia in Lepenies' account is a product of the representatives of a social class that has lost its public and political significance, or a class that aspires to have such significance knowing that it is (here and now) impossible. Utopia is a shadow of melancholy, its twin. It is born whenever a social activity is blocked and reduced to helpless passivity. When the possibilities of action decrease, reflection grows, but the intellectual-melancholic suffers because he is not able to act - he can only think. "*Weltschmerz, melancholy, and hypochondria resulted from the enforced hypertrophy of the realm of reflection, from imposed loss of an ability to exercise real power, and from the consequent pressure to justify one's situation* (Lepenies, 1992: 61). The intellectual turns away from the world in which he is unable to act, he retreats from society into himself, suffers from his own fate as well as that of the world itself, trying to express this common fate (like Paul Valéry – who tries to changer *ses doulers en oeuvre*) and, finally, suffers for what he is left with – which is merely reflection. *Homo europaeus intellectualis*, as Lepenies named him in his lecture given in Collège de France, is not a social scientist attempting to conquer the world in order to understand and to provide prognoses about it, nor is

he the scientist or the technician. He is the melancholic, the intellectual who is *chroniquement insatisfait*, who thinks and doubts, and finally retreats from this world in search of a better one, experiencing his powerlessness.

What Lepenies shows in his '*Melancholy and Society*' is that utopian thinking derives from the lack of satisfaction with the intellectual's social status quo. This lack of satisfaction does not in any way lead - nor in its intention is supposed to lead - to action. Utopias, as presented by Lepenies, are not revolutionary manifests that show the point of departure (the present miserable state of affairs); the point of arrival (the future radiant and happy society) and the ways supposed to lead from the former to the latter. It is already in the case of the first utopia presented by Robert Burton in '*Anatomy of Melancholy*', that Lepenies expresses the idea in a clear manner: Burton "*designed his utopia of England because as a poor intellectual he could never hope to put his ideas into practice*", and utopians, in general, "*would not think and design in such a way if they were able to act*" (Lepenies 1992b: 146). The intellectual-melancholic-utopian while producing utopia is a therapist (with respect to himself and his class) rather than a revolutionary. Utopia is born out of melancholy and is a means to fight it. It is supposed to cure its producer rather than the world - to cure him from his chronic lack of satisfaction, un-fulfillment of his public and political aspirations, and depravation of dreams of participation in real political power. Utopia does not call for action - "*precisely because it is documented in literature and the arts, utopian thought is a sign of inhibition of action*" (146). Action is impossible, and the intellectual is an unhappy, unfulfilled man of action.

Utopia as a product of the intellectual-melancholic is organized by the notion of order: if in a better world there is no melancholy, then there is also no place in it for boredom: utopia '*divides time to the last dot, since it would appear easiest to create new life in order to preserve utopia. Free time does not exist in utopia, because there are no empty spaces available to be excluded from the plan. Work as well as leisure time is regimented*' (Lepenies 1992b: 91-92). To get rid of melancholy, boredom, ennui, the utopian plan must be all encompassing and order and boredom must be mutually exclusive. But the crucial point is that the

notion of order, plan, and the finite space of possibilities collides with and finally makes impossible the very reflection on it. Utopia of the melancholic-intellectual is born out of reflection about inadequacies of this world but leads to a picture of a better world in which, to quote Lepenies once again, "there is no longer any place for reflection, because everything is 'in order'" (147). When there is no longer any place for reflection, one can speak of paradise (for what might one want to change in an absolutely perfect world?); when there is no longer any place for reflection, though, one can also speak of the hell of totalitarianism (in which any change cannot be even thought of). In utopia, history unexpectedly stops, comes to a standstill and finds its end. Time stops as it is measured by changes. In the new world of utopia - born out of complaints about the inadequacies and imperfections of the present world - nothing else can be changed, or as Lepenies puts it, the space created is "definitive" (148). Utopia has managed to dispel boredom, get rid of melancholy and make hypochondria go - by stopping time and history. While gloom, he argues, carries a 'elitist' claim, it is also a cultural critique which makes a claim for subtlety and turns against itself in a constant dialectic. Notes: *'The elitist claim and the pathos of the special are combined with retrospection and with the dignity that draws its glory from dedication and sacrifice'*. The *'pathos of the special'* is why writers are writers. It is special because the struggle is not rewarded, at least in an artistic sense. The gesture is extravagant and its vulnerability is deep. If writers were sincere and authentic they would have no other selves, and would risk falling into stridency, sentimentality or esotericism. But good writers are always characters-in-progress, a field of selves which can be drawn on for social reflection. This loss of a singular identity and along with it, authorial sincerity, is a gain for others. But the residue for the writer is melancholy. Melancholy finds a space in which to suffer. It is dignified because it cannot be displayed. To enjoy any kind of display as a writer would be to risk the depreciation of one's writing; to lose its force. Baudelaire, for example, would not be Baudelaire if he had the same laurels bestowed upon him as they were bestowed upon Victor Hugo. The black bile, which rages against acceptance, is the result of a wound. A wound, when examined self-reflectively, is self-inflicted; it cannot call for pity or special pleading.

As Edward Said wrote, learned protest only works if the *'exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound... there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity'*¹. A wound is not revenge or a working through. It is not about stoicism or endurance. It is not about the seniority of suffering or the triumphs of fame. As Lepenies says, this wound that is melancholy stands against Enlightenment optimism, forfeiting *'the Enlightenment impulse to improve the world'*. Since this wound can never honor it's suffering, its disposition is inertia. But it has value in generating rebellion and critique by menacing purity, canons, happiness, all of which are forms of forgetting. The wound is the knot in the handkerchief, mindful of the illogic of the outside world. A memorial ligature tied to vision.

Furthermore, Susan Sontag² had noted, in her essay *'Under the Sign of Saturn'* (1978, about Walter Benjamin), illness is the night side of life that we all share at some point in our lives. Melancholy is a part of the human condition and everyday life; everybody feels low sometimes. Accounts of depression describe depression as an experience intertwined with everyday life. Depression in these accounts is not presented as a disease, but as a social and personal problem, a feeling or condition that disables the sufferer and restrains his/her ability to act in his/her ordinary social relations. Wolf Lepenies, in his inventive *'Melancholy and Society'*, argues that social circumstances and historical conditions turn people involuntarily to melancholy when their group has lost its previous significance. In this sense, stories of depression are stories of marginalization: they tell what went wrong in the individual's life and thus they are also powerful descriptions of what an individual's life is supposed or expected to be like. In revealing the night-side of life, these stories also depict the ideal life stories of individuals, the ideal social and personal relationships and positions. By telling what they were deprived of, or what they unwillingly had to endure, the subjects also describe what life should be like: a person should have loving

¹ Edward Said, *'Freud and the Non-European'*, London, Verso, 2003, p. 3.

² Susan Sontag was born in New York City on January 16, 1933, grew up in Tucson, Arizona. She received her B.A. from the College of the University of Chicago and did graduate work in philosophy, literature, and theology at Harvard University and Saint Anne's College, Oxford.

parents who provide a sheltered and happy childhood followed by a balanced adolescence, filled with satisfactory relationships and acceptance, followed by a relatively stress less adulthood without extensive losses or difficulties, a relevant position in society, an equilibrium of work, family and leisure activities, a network of friends, family members and acquaintances to turn to.

At the same time these stories are also descriptions of what is wrong in society from the individual's perspective; what kind of structural and social factors create unbeneficial or unwanted circumstances and environments. Accounts of depression thus reflect not only the psychological conditions that shape an individual's life, but also the cultural, social and structural circumstances that position individuals in a specific society and time. Accounts of depression seek acceptance not as stories of madness, but as stories of suffering. They express the social and individual pressures encountered by today's individuals and convey depression as a legitimate form of suffering. People suffering from depression are depicted as heroes and martyrs, validating and recognizing depression as a normal and natural illness rather than madness.

Cultural history has provided another ad on of the sociological effects and interactions with the subject's conditions: *"Melancholy has always been a catch all phrase as universal as the human condition: widespread, if disparate, in every epoch; an affliction of the young and old that has been virtually incapable of adequate definition; leveling almost everyone at one time or another to apathy, sorrow, dejection, inaction, even utter boredom and uselessness-a pervasive syndrome that continues to be encoded, even in our time, in abstract art forms of music and painting, as well as versified by poets and rationalized by philosophers. The depressive incapable of action is not so distant from the suicide in the melancholic worldview. Indeed, melancholy remains so proximate to the incarnate human tragedy that moralists have never known how to distinguish its borders from their profound tragic vision"*¹, borrowing the

1 G. S. Rousseau (1993). Medical History, 37, pp 342 -344
doi:10.1017/S0025727300058518

words from the study of George Rousseau¹ on the original Lepenies study on *"Melancholy and Society"*. A reason, Shakespeare equipped in King Lear, *'we come into this world crying, as if we already knew what lay in store for us'*. And he continues, *"The natural history of melancholy has been narrated many times, each era, each generation it seems, redefining for itself the essential features of its diverse forms, especially religious, medical, and psychological versions."*

While Lepenies knows the natural history of melancholy, he grasps that its sociology, its relation to specific social milieu has been less well understood. Lepenies grants melancholy's anatomical, physiological, psychological, psychiatric, even geochemical existence, but also believes that each generation shapes its own melancholy, its own versions of pessimism. *"This bending or shaping of the modern human condition is an essential feature of melancholy from which no one entirely escapes, one's own genetic predisposition notwithstanding. The approach does not amount to denial of the anatomical reality or psychiatric essence of melancholy down through the ages"* Rousseau argues. Lepenies' treatment of melancholy is rather more complex than the analyses found in modern medical models because of the way it relates the shapes of melancholy's transformations. *'In the end this is a book about "bourgeois boredom" (a phrase apparently inspired by Saint-Simon) in modern philosophical thought from approximately 1600 to the present, rather than a treatment of its concrete historical manifestations'*. Ends

1 George Sebastian Rousseau (born February 23, 1941) is an American cultural historian. He was educated at Amherst College and Princeton University where he obtained his doctorate. From 1966 to 1968 he was part of the English Faculty at Harvard University, before moving to a professorship at UCLA, and later to the Regius Chair of English at Aberdeen University in Aberdeen, Scotland. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a frequent contributor to newspapers and magazines. Since then he has been attached to the History Faculty at Oxford University in Oxford, England where he is a Co-Director of the Centre for the History of Childhood. Rousseau is a cultural historian who works in the interface of literature and medicine, and emphasizes the relevance of imaginative materials - literature, especially diaries and biography, art and architecture, music - for the public understanding of medicine, past and present. In 2010 - 2012 Rousseau was the presenter of the Wellcome Collection Series in London called Tell It To Your Doctor. In 2007 the University of Bucharest, Romania awarded him an honorary doctorate' *honoris causa*'. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Rousseau

his analysis on the social aspects of the state of melancholy, on the utopian reflection that Lepenies argues. *"The product is systematic speculation about melancholy rather than historical appearances, and it is the labyrinth of theoretical speculation that fascinates Lepenies"*.

Extract from Rousseau's analysis stretches further and creates a whole spectrum of guide lines around writers and thinkers on the subject: *"Nine chapters, arranged thematically rather than chronologically, deal with social order, boredom, behavior, arbitrariness, bindingness, and action, all in relation to melancholy, capped by a concluding chapter on the philosophy of Arnold Gehlen, the post-World War Two theoretical anthropologist who developed a philosophy of "the melancholic climate" based on a speculative anthropology of humankind and a doctrine of social institutions. Lepenies' approach sets up relationships for scrutiny, which compel the inquisitive student of "melancholic science" to ponder how to break new ground on this well-worn subject by looking at social classes. The most original and persuasive material is found in the fourth chapter entitled 'On the origins of bourgeois melancholy', echoing Walter Benjamin in his famous essay on the origins of tragedy and charts the birth of modern ennui along the lines of the social classes, particularly the need of the eighteenth-century bourgeois to escape into imaginary mental spaces. So much has been made of the rich and poor in that century of political crisis and social transformation that it is salubrious to gaze at 'the middle zone' of society. Not even the fecund Robert Burton could have imagined, in 1620, that the growth of modern pessimism would burgeon when the expanding bourgeois felt compelled to retreat (in its newly found leisure time) into interior, Rousseau is permitting reverie of an intensely sentimental and nostalgic type. 'The rise of modern melancholy also brought with it the maturation of suffering and sentimentality, a new form of human sin requiring its own cure and exorcism through action and work'.*

The strength of the sociological approach, as found here, is that it sheds new light on modern philosophy and critical thinking from Heidegger and Freud to Horkheimer and Adorno. It opens up questions and suggests approaches that have bewildered traditional literary and historical criticism. It contextualizes and annotates what groups of persons, arranged in social classes, mean when they profess to be steeped in

lassitude and depression; hence the sociology of modern boredom (post 1500) gathered against the backdrop of an ever-expanding bourgeois mentality. The pillars of the method rest on developing norms and broad categories calibrated to explore the sweeping melancholy of entire social classes rather than to discover what melancholy essentially is; or could be, in any philosophical or heuristic sense. The post-1600 development of melancholy, it seems, is thoroughly bourgeois: bourgeois places and spaces; bourgeois ethics and philosophies; bourgeois texts and counter-texts; bourgeois psychologies and rationales; all culminating in a pervasive modern 'bourgeois boredom' that few of us living on the precipice of the third millennium would deny as palpably credible. The dramatis personae of Lepenies' exercise in contextualization are largely Continental, especially French (Maine de Biran, Saint-Simon, Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry) and German (Kant, Goethe, Hegel, the German romanticists and any number of neo-Kantians). Abundant discussion is found of twentieth-century theories of melancholy in the work of Georges Dumas, Karl Mannheim, Hubert Tellenbach, Theodor Adorno, R. K. Merton, Jürgen Habermas and many others. But Arnold Gehlen's theory that melancholy is constitutive of the human condition and that action, work, dedication to social institutions and systems of leadership keep it at bay—is singled out for its fundamental melancholy within a theory of melancholy generated in an era (ours) that grows increasingly melancholic, if also increasingly bourgeois and appears paradoxical. Throughout this treatment, Lepenies harbors a sense of historical melancholy (1600 to the present) that is assumed rather than derived, one appearing linguistically in these chapters as "Renaissance melancholy, seventeenth-century melancholy, eighteenth-century melancholy, modern melancholy" and so forth. In chapter eight there is discussion of a counter-tradition, or dark underside, of melancholy in which such diverse early modern figures as Ficino, La Rochefoucauld, Sabbatai Zevi, and Natham of Ghaza are shown to have coped with melancholy as part of their 'search for legitimation', but this chapter appears to be the result of an afterthought rather than essential to the argument in any logical or comparative sense. The thinkers Lepenies chooses may be less significant than the points they adumbrate about the 'legitimation of melancholy'. They could have been interchanged

with other thinkers, and readers looking for their favorite authors and examples here may be frustrated, but they probably do well to recognize that Lepenies wants to expand modern melancholy, to enlarge its intellectual spaces rather than close them by definitive prescriptive theories. This is, after all, a social and hypothetical, nota scientific and empirical, study of modern lassitude. Through his research, Lepenies has shown 'how the melancholy of fallen social groups stimulates the Utopian imagination'.

McKeon¹ has argued, *'The sort of status inconsistency endured by the downwardly mobile lesser gentry carries with it the seeds of revolutionary consciousness'*. McKeon writes further, *'the experience of status inconsistency is psychologically and socially subversive... The very fluidity and indeterminacy of social categories is a crucial precondition for revolutionary behavior. Revolution occurs under social conditions of status inconsistency, and revolutionaries are those in whom these conditions have been most completely internalized as a psychological state'* (Origins, 173).

Closing up quote will again emphasize on the dynamic study of Wolf Lepenies, *'Melancholy and Society'*, where he identifies the foundational connections between melancholy and order in attempts to construct human society as *'an intermediate domain between the macrocosmic harmonies of medieval astrology and the microcosmic humoralism of Hippocratic and Galenic medicine. The perfection of society, as much if not more a task or a dream as an accomplished fact, consoles the melancholic writer by affording imaginative compensation for an immedicable condition'*. Thomas More, in the same guidelines, offers a blueprint for political liberty and material equality in his 1516 Utopia, but in conclusion resigns himself to the imperfections of the world and despairs of ever viewing such a society in his native England. Himself a long time sufferer of the black disease, more, in his later days as a defender of the true faith, would repudiate utopian thinking and celebrate sorrow and the necessity of the vale of tears: *'if we get so weary of pain and grief that we perversely attempt to change the world,*

¹ Michael McKeon, *'Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740'*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)

this place of labor and penance, into a joyful haven of rest, if we seek heaven on earth, we cut ourselves off forever from true happiness.' The utopian impulse knows no such resignation to a fallen world, insisting upon institutional reform and social engineering as means of banishing melancholy and perfecting the human condition.

'Bob: It's a sad and beautiful world.
Zach: Yeah, it's a sad and beautiful world, buddy'

Jim Jarmusch, 'Down by Law'

Artists in wonderland. - Paradigm for mimesis?

The Paradox of melancholy in forming revolution

In this chapter the analysis won't consist of a separate and individual insight on artists that dealt with the state of melancholy and their work. History of art has an endless list of artists working with, through or even against their melancholic tendencies. The body of artwork they produced has a profound state of representation of their inner emotions and struggle's with melancholy. Time dissolves in melancholy, giving throughout history of art a numerous amount of representational work that, evoked feelings and emotions based on the primary state of melancholic production. Working either with symbolic representations, or with abstract expressions and forms, the melancholic state had been opposed on artworks, had been reflected upon and through them explicitly and had left a remarkable body of work that can be analyzed in an endless talk.

Rather, this chapter will be devoted to analyze and highlight the points that brought the individual state of melancholy into the collective, reforming the socio political era, as a paradigm that will enforce the ideas explained on the previous chapter. In which ways the shape of experience and identity of the melancholic artist, under a certain political and social regime, had managed to reform terms and conditions. The attempt is made in order to understand in a modern context as of postwar capitalism, the pivotal role of culture and art in particular. *'For a long time, art and commerce have not simply taken place side by side, but have actively set the terms for one another, creating and securing worlds and spaces in turn,* quoting Martha Rosler¹ on her writings *'Culture Class: Art, Creativity and Urbanism'*¹.

¹ Martha Rosler, M.F.A., is an influential video, installation and performance artist. She was born on July 29, 1943 in Brooklyn, New York. Martha Rosler did her BA at Brooklyn College, graduating in 1965. She then obtained her MFA in 1974 from the University of California at San Diego. She has taught at the Städelschule, a contemporary fine arts

In the art world there was a big disappointment as a result of the catastrophe of the World War and the atrocities that occurred, which left a society that had placed science and its progress to the development of the atomic bomb and had ended up being ruled again by the conservative classes. The art was going to be worth enjoyment become consumer value. In response to this position wealthy, many artists are inclined to experiment with forms of expression. One of the great figures of expressionism was Motherwell (1915-1991), who painted one of his most famous works with a long series *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* (1955-1960). The choice of the theme suggests painting a 'subjective' reality (much more indirect than the *Guernica* of Picasso). Great artists appeared at the United States, like Pollock, Franz Kline or De Kooning with an energetic and gestural painting, and Rothko who didn't used figurative painting. By far a controversial figure of the times is Barnett Newman, whose work had influenced major artists in the later years and still does. The painting becomes a meditation on the screen to the viewer. Under the scope of the cold war, the two opposite poles, US and Russia were playing every possible card they had to their profit. Abstract expressionism was used as a weapon of the Cold war against Stalinism and any European form of communism. Cultural projects of the interconnected profits of CIA and MOMA could sell and expose to the rest of the world how under Capitalism life and art could become a promised free world and scope of being. In the era of the cold war and the rise of capitalism, an artistic movement placed strong roots, dating back from the 50-60's.

The material presented in this chapter suggests the following formulation and hypothesis. Melancholic state inevitably leads to a turning inward and to the painful reexamination of the purpose of living

academy in Frankfurt, and at Rutgers University in New Brunswick in New Jersey at Mason Gross School of the Arts. Martha Rosler is also an eminent writer on art and culture and is solicited to lecture both nationally in the US and internationally since at least the mid-1970s. Source: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/martha-rosler/biography/>

¹ Extract from: *e-flux journal* #21 – December 2010, Martha Rosler, 'Culture Class: Art, Creativity and Urbanism'.

and the possibility of dying. Thus, by bringing the artist into direct and lonely confrontation with the ultimate existential question, whether to live or to die, melancholy may have put these artists in touch with the inexplicable mystery that lies at the heart of the 'tragic and timeless' art that the Abstract Expressionists aspired to produce. In rejecting the materialistic values of bourgeois society and indulging in the myth that they could exist entirely outside the dominant culture in bohemian enclaves, avant-garde artists generally refused to recognize or accept their role as producers of a cultural commodity. As a result, especially in the United States, many artists abdicated responsibility both to their own economic interests and to the uses to which their artwork was put after it entered the marketplace.

Modernism brought painting into a new era and that is why mostly painting and artistic brush will put into microscopic examination in this paper. How this painting culture and sculpture, these classic technic used for ages in the art world; have been embraced and given a new outlook for the modern world. How the bourgeoisie society had influenced the doings of modern art and what is left there for the new generation to grasp upon and pass to next level?

When Abstract Expressionists explored the terrain of the canvas and Pollock created something of a disorientation map by putting his unstretched canvases on the floor, few observers and doubtless fewer painters would have acknowledged a relationship between their concerns and real estate, let alone transnational capital flows. Space, as many observers have noted, has displaced time as the operative dimension of advanced, globalizing (and post-industrial?) capitalism. Time itself, under this economic regime, has been differentiated, spatialized, and divided into increasingly smaller units. Even in virtual regimes, space entails visibility in one way or another. The connection between Renaissance perspective and the enclosures of late medieval Europe, together with the new idea of terrain as a real-world space to be negotiated, supplying crossing points for commerce, was only belatedly apparent. Similarly, the rise of photography has been traced to such phenomena as the encoding of earthly space and the enclosing of land in the interest of ground rent. For a long time now, art and commerce

have not simply taken place side by side, but have actively set the terms for one another, creating and securing worlds and spaces in turn.

Regarding the times close to World War I and II and the cold war period, close to the turbulence effects before, meanwhile and after war that lead modernism to an outburst to be the movement as we know it. We will examine what aspects of social input led to this outburst of creativity, the shift on the looks and doings of artist and closely examine the work of art produced under these circumstances.

In an article entitled *'American Painting During the Cold War'* published in May 1973, issue of *Artforum*, Max Kozloff pointed out the similarity between *'American cold war rhetoric'* and the way many Abstract Expressionist artists phrased their existentialist, individualist credos. However, Kozloff failed to examine closely this impact and claimed that it resembled coincidence, gone unnoticed by the rulers and the ruled alike. *'There are conscious and proofed links between the cultural cold war politics and the success of Abstract Expressionism, forged at the time by the most influential figures controlling museum policies and advocating enlightened cold war tactics designed to woo European intellectuals'* as Eva Cockcroft in *'Abstract Expressionism, a weapon of the cold war'*¹ have noted. She continues *'Museums, for their part, enlarged their role to become more than mere repositories of past art, and began to exhibit and collect contemporary art. Particularly in the United States, museums became a dominant force on the art scene. In many ways, American museums came to fulfill the role of official patronage, but without accountability to anyone but themselves. The U.S. museum, unlike its European counterpart, developed primarily as a private institution. Founded and supported by the giants of industry and finance, American museums were set up on the model of their corporate parents. Governed largely by self-perpetuating boards of trustees composed primarily of rich donors. It is these boards of trustees- often the same 'prominent citizens' who control banks and corporations and help shape the formulation of foreign policy, which ultimately determine museum policy, hire and fire directors, and to which the professional*

¹ Eva Cockcroft: *'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War'*, in Francis Francina ed, *'Pollock and after: The critical debate'*, (Harper & Row 1985), online source material

staff is held accountable. Examination of the rising success of Abstract Expressionism in America after World War II, therefore, entails consideration of the role of the leading museum of contemporary art, The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and the ideological needs of its officers during a period of virulent anticommunism and an intensifying "cold war".'

The political relationship between Abstract Expressionism and the cold war can be clearly perceived through the international programs of MOMA. As a tastemaker in the sphere of contemporary American art, the impact of MOMA, a major supporter of the Abstract Expressionist movement, can hardly be overestimated. In this context, the fact that MOMA has always been a Rockefeller dominated institution becomes particularly relevant (other families financing the museum, although to a lesser extent than the Rockefellers, include the Whitneys, Paleys, Blisses, Warburgs, and Lewisohns). MOMA was founded in 1929, mainly through the efforts of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In 1939, Nelson Rockefeller became president of MOMA. Although Nelson vacated the MOMA presidency in 1940 to become President Roosevelt's coordinator of the Office of Interamerican Affairs and later assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, he dominated the museum throughout the 1940s and 1950s, returning to MOMA's presidency in 1946. In the 1960s and 1970s, David Rockefeller and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, assumed the responsibility of the museum for the family. At the same time, almost every secretary of state after the end of World War II, right up to the present, has been an individual trained and groomed by the various foundations and agencies controlled or managed by the Rockefellers. *'The development of American cold war politics was directly shaped by the Rockefellers in particular and by expanding corporations and banks in general. The involvement of The Museum of Modern Art in American foreign policy became unmistakably clear during World War II'*, states Eva Cockcroft and continues: *'The story quoted the Chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees, John Hay Whitney, on how the Museum could serve as a weapon for national defense to 'educate, inspire, and strengthen the hearts and wills of free men in defense of their own freedom'*. In 1967, Whitney's charity trust was exposed as a CIA conduit (New York Times, February 25, 1967). Throughout the early 1940s

MOMA engaged in a number of war-related programs which set the pattern for its later activities as a key institution in the cold war'. For Nelson's Inter-American Affairs Office, mother's museum put together 19 exhibitions of contemporary American painting which were shipped around Latin America, an area in which Nelson Rockefeller had developed his most lucrative investments - e.g., Creole Petroleum, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, and the single most important economic interest in oil-rich Venezuela. Rene d'Harnoncourt, who had proven himself an expert in the organization and installation of art exhibits when he helped American Ambassador Dwight Morrow cultivate the Mexican muralists at the time Mexico's oil nationalism threatened Rockefeller oil interests, was appointed head of the art section of Nelson's Office of Inter-American Affairs in 1943. A year later, he was brought to MOMA as vice-president in charge of foreign activities. In 1949, d'Harnoncourt became MOMA's director. The man who was to direct MOMA's international programs in the 1950s, Porter A. McCray, also worked in the Office of Inter-American Affairs during the war. McCray is a particularly powerful and effective man in the history of cultural imperialism. He was trained as an architect at Yale University and introduced to the Rockefeller orbit through Rockefeller's architect Wallace Harrison. After the war, Nelson Rockefeller brought McCray into MOMA as director of circulating exhibits. From 1946 to 1949, while the Museum was without a director, McCray served as a member of MOMA's coordinating committee. In 1951, McCray took a year's leave of absence from the Museum to work for the exhibitions section of the Marshall Plan in Paris. In 1952, when MOMA's international program was launched with a five-year grant of \$625,000 from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, McCray became its director. He continued in that job, going on to head the program's expanded version, the International Council of MOMA (1956), during some of the most crucial years of the cold war. According to Russell Lynes, in his comprehensive new book *'Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art'*, the purpose of MOMA's international program was overtly political: "to let it be known especially in Europe that America was not the cultural backwater that the Russians during that tense period called 'the cold war' were trying to demonstrate that it was." In the world of art, Abstract

Expressionism constituted the ideal style for these propaganda activities. It was the perfect contrast to *'the regimented, traditional, and narrow nature of socialist realism'*. It was new, fresh and creative.

Artistically avant-garde and original, Abstract Expressionism could show the United States as culturally up-to-date in competition with Paris. This was possible because Pollock, as well as most of the other avant-garde American artists had left behind his earlier interest in political activism. This change was manifested in the organization of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors in 1943; a group that included several of the Abstract Expressionists. Founded in opposition to the politically motivated Artists Congress, the new Federation was led by artists who, in Kozloff's words, were *'interested more in aesthetic values than in political action'*. Nevertheless, these so called *'aesthetic values rather than political action'* from a clear artistic perspective, even if they were used in a propagandist way, which is not here our primal concern, were reflections of social regime and instability. Social balance was in turbulence; the air in the whole world had a strong smell of war. Abstract expressionism as a movement in the current socio political era, had been that vulgar value, the formula that grasped, in an almost absolute way, the conditions of representation of their times.

'The new American painting' exhibition toured eight European countries in 1958-59 and included a comprehensive catalogue by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. In the introduction to the catalogue exemplified the cold war propaganda role of Abstract Expressionist art. *'Indeed one often hears Existentialist echoes in their words, but their 'anxiety' their commitment, their 'dreadful freedom' concern their work primarily. They defiantly reject the conventional values of the society which surrounds them, but they are not politically engages even though their paintings have been praised and condemned as symbolic demonstrations of freedom in a world in which freedom connotes a political attitude'*. By his attitude and the close relationship he had with the Abstract Expressionists artists and his defense of their artworks, he signified the importance to influence intellectuals and artists behind the 'iron curtain'.

During the post-Stalin era in 1956, when the Polish government under Gomulka became more liberal, Tadeusz Kantor, an artist from Cracow, impressed by the work of Pollock and other abstractionists, which he

had seen during an earlier trip to Paris, began to lead the movement away from socialist realism in Poland. Irrespective of the role of this art movement within the internal artistic evolution of Polish art, this kind of development was seen as a triumph. In 1961, Kantor and 14 other nonobjective Polish painters were given an exhibition at MOMA. Examples like this one reflect the success of the political aims of an organization, opening up the world for a new, fresh, untamed art move towards an openness from a space created through the political and social era of the times, but driving the parameters given further than the original shape and form, creating a new promising era away from war and war tactics.

*'Besides my other numerous circles of acquaintances, I have one more
intimate confidant - my melancholy.
In the midst of my joy, in the midst of my work, she waves to me, calls
me to one side, even though physically I stay put.
My melancholy is the most faithful mistress I have known, what wonder,
then, that I love her in return'*

*Søren Kierkegaard*¹

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, Was an existential philosopher; an outsider in the history of philosophy. His peculiar authorship comprises a baffling array of different narrative points of view and disciplinary subject matter, including aesthetic novels, works of psychology and Christian dogmatism, satirical prefaces, philosophical "scraps" and "postscripts," literary reviews, edifying discourses, Christian polemics, and retrospective self-interpretations. His arsenal of rhetoric includes irony, satire, parody, humor, polemic and a dialectical method of "indirect communication" – all designed to deepen the reader's subjective passionate engagement with ultimate existential issues.

Conclusion

The semantics of melancholy in the politics of art

Through out this essay an attempt was made to define and examine closely the state of melancholy as a state that embraces poetics and surreal situations within the spectrum of -what we call- reality. In the last chapter we saw how the avant-garde artists of the abstract expressionism have actually made it possible to reform terms and social conditions. Despite their absolute disregard of any political or even activist action, the story underlines the facts, which relate the melancholic subject with a very specific social milieu. Giving the missing link between the actual story and the theories of Lepenies. Despite the movements' characteristic escapist and utopian attitude, being lead by an existential point of view and the creative outcome being merely reflections upon their individual state, managed to make an outstanding, remarkable impact on the map of political and social era of the cold war times. Making by choice with their creative brushes no political action or statement nevertheless, their creativity coming from an introspective point of departure managed to be employed to reform and work towards a sociological, historical and political status, maybe one of the highpoints in modern history.

From one hand this story compliments the articulations upon the social outcome of the melancholic state as analyzed in a contemporary perspective by Lepenies, who's theories were employed in this paper as the prophetic stigma of the Abstract Expressionism and its usage to pass a message in the Cold War era. And on the other hand, this story shows, how artistic production sourcing from a melancholic, insightful sentiment of existence, dealing with existential and insightful issues, who's creators deprived themselves from any political action, had nonetheless managed to become, not only a genuine force in contemporary art, but also a strong, remarkable force in what is really the politics of art.

The aim of this essay is to underline the importance of the individual sentiment; integrating research upon the philosophical and scientific foundations of melancholy, it's historical mapping and its depictions through the sociological and political scientific study of Lepenies. Focusing on the suggestion of positive conclusion by the example of an art movement used as a weapon against the cold war. An example that has many references and resembles to the post-modernistic crash of values upon the contemporary living. Both to yield attributes to the melancholic artist as an attempt of a rightful documentation and source of information and inspiration and secondly to mark the importance of a creativity as such not only to the personal but also to the collective good that can lead in a practical way to a positive outcome. In the context of an economic crisis of the 21st century, which marks significant consequences on the sociological and cultural life of Europe, this essay attempts to specify the reflective parameters that can give space for a new social horizon and creative break through. Suzan Sontag in combination with the theories of Lepenies, had lead to the positive conclusion of a world being established upon reflections, through reflections and within the spectrum of reflections. In this manner, the imperfection of the world and the utopia of the melancholic soul, in any past or future historical mapping, will always give the space for new developments and expressions of creativity.

Based on this fact combined with the current fragile reality experienced in Europe, this essay attempts to make a reference to the collective positive possibilities the creativity of the melancholic artist can reach, even if the individual aim has a different shift. Life itself has its own natural ways of how, why and where it goes, referring to the reflective unconscious happening. While the melancholic artist pumps material from a very personal and private state, the outcome to the collective is a high value revolutionary act, without even meaning to be one. Taken the paradigm of the cold war, as the closest paradigm of our times of the current socio political whirlpool, this essay attempted to highlight the importance the subjects' state has within the collective, within the worlds' perspective, how it influenced both sides and taken that to account, how now a days living in a post capitalistic era, we can learn and look forward to a new reality. To recognize, explore and base

existence upon a true value system that the prominent artists can give; highlighting the importance of an outburst of creativity that will lead to an outstanding new era of living. May romantic as it seems, there is nothing else, in my opinion, that can once again reform terms and give to existence through the creative process a new, fresh meaning.

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