

The Fragility of Identity in the Age of Manufacture

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Abstract

This essay begins with a discussion of how globalization poses a threat to identity. To support this claim, the second part reflects on the pathologies of the city, as characterized by Paul Ricoeur, with a particular emphasis on memory. Globalization's effects are clearly manifest in the scale of the city, and as such, Ricoeur considers the pathology of the city an expression of global society's pathology. Because for Ricoeur, identity is always narrative identity, and narratives are repositories of memories, the question of identity is also a question of the use and abuse of memory. The third part examines the maintenance of identity, particularly collective identity, in the age of manufacture and considers the place of the more vulnerable nations and their cities in the global age.

Key terms *Ricoeur, memory and forgetting, identity, city, globalization*

The Rise of Technics and Its Challenge to Identity

As late as the 1990s, many of us probably did not anticipate that the world would be more connected in various ways because of technology. One's town was then perceived as larger, and the other side of the world was an elsewhere that was not immediately accessible. Travel took longer, and transportation was more expensive than it is today. Reaching out to another person located on the other side of the globe meant either snail mail or telegram. In the 1960s, prior to the coinage of the term, philosopher Paul Ricoeur already perceived the advent of globalization. Referring to it as "universal world civilization" in his essay "Universal Civilization and National Cultures,"¹ and sometimes as the "mondialization of the world," he characterizes globalization arising from the surge in technics. A development or an invention in one small part of the world is echoed in another city or in another distant location, and because they diffuse quickly, are simultaneously discovered, or are synchronically made in different places, they are beneficial to mankind as a whole.² We are, according to Ricoeur, "the first historical epoch" that "takes a global view of its destiny."³

Modern technics bring about a new way of living that benefits not only the affluent, but even the "masses of humanity,"⁴ including the marginalized, in at least two ways. First, a larger part of humanity can now acquire mass manufactured products that were once considered luxuries. Second, these modern technics give those who

¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," in *History and Truth*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 271.

² *Ibid.*, 273.

³ David Stewart and Joseph Bien, "Editor's Introduction," in Paul Ricoeur, *Political and Social Essays*, col. and ed. David Stewart and Joseph Bien (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1974), 5.

⁴ Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," 275.

are “the other of history” the capacity to tell their repressed stories.⁵ An example of this is the Web 2.0 and 3.0, platforms for interaction and communication, which capacitate communities to narrate for themselves, instead of merely being portrayed by narratives that may be partial to one group or nation.⁶ It is not surprising that the UN declared internet access a human right.⁷ Ricoeur even predicts that because of globalization, there would come a time that a large part of the world population will be literate: “Until these last few decades, only a small fraction of mankind knew how to read.”⁸

Ricoeur sees the rise of globalization as inevitable. The question for him is not whether to accept it or not, but how to adapt to it.⁹ Nonetheless, while he is not pessimistic about the dawn of globalization, Ricoeur shows that it also poses a problem for man, namely, that of “integrat[ing] the universal technical civilization with

⁵ Ibid., 276.

⁶ There should be caution, however, in understanding democracy in Web 2.0 and 3.0, platforms for communication and interaction that include wikis, the blogosphere, and social networking sites. While the forms of narratives that take place in Web 2.0 and 3.0 provide means in what Ricoeur says the 21st-century task to narrate the more ignored parts of history, it should also be taken into account that a number of social networking sites and blogs—that are supposedly promoting democracy—profit through advertising. Christian Fuchs’s work on the political economy of media reveals that some of such platforms sell user data to companies that translate them into profit. When viewed against our initial claim that there is democracy on the web, Fuchs’s work challenges the capacity to tell the other story (either by the other or for the other) because of the accumulating nature of these platforms. While the co-existence of, first, the capacitating nature of web in telling the other story, and second, the accumulating nature of some of these platforms do not cancel one another, it is imperative to examine the latter. This is so that narrating for the other in Web 2.0 and 3.0 does not stand on a foundation that is in itself violent to memory. Elaine Lazaro, “The Ricoeurian Task to Memorize the Other of History vis-à-vis the Spaces of the World Wide Web,” paper presented at Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics, and Asia, Soochow University, Taiwan, May 2014.

⁷ Nicholas Jackson, “United Nations Declares Internet Access a Basic Human Right,” *The Atlantic*, June 3, 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/06/united-nations-declares-internet-access-a-basic-human-right/239911/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Gary Madison, “Paul Ricoeur: Philosopher of Being-Human (Zuoren),” in *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur’s Unstable Equilibrium*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2003).

the cultural personality.”¹⁰ The difficulty arises because while human beings are faced with the primary task of survival, they also need to preserve their identity by sustaining their cultural heritage amidst their changing circumstances.¹¹ The tension between these two exigencies—of embracing the available avenues to progress, and of safeguarding heritage—challenges the meaning of human life itself, which is the most basic of all values.¹² Modern man confronts the pressures of the global and consumption-driven world, which put personal or collective self-understanding or identity into question. The advent of globalization risks the loss of cultural cores to the prevalence of a consumerist culture.¹³

Thus, while globalization, insofar as it also makes “possible the material improvement of all humankind,”¹⁴ makes it possible for the marginalized to advance themselves in the world scene by way of, for example, making education more accessible, it also presents a threat to the great civilizations of the world in maintaining their culture while at the same time embracing scientific and technological advances. David Kaplan says that now is the time to revisit the ties between democracy and globalization¹⁵ since it is true, as Ricoeur points out, that we are now encountering facelessness and neutrality

¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, “The Tasks of the Political Educator,” in *Political and Social Essays*, 291.

¹¹ Ricoeur, “Universal Civilization and National Cultures,” 271.

¹² First dubbed in the French newspaper *Le Monde* in 2005 as the philosopher of all dialogues (cited from the translation of Leovino Ma. Garcia, “Interpreting the Story of My Life: Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of Narrative Identity,” unpublished essay), Ricoeur’s approach to philosophy is by way of translating it to and engaging it in dialogue with other disciplines, such as biblical exegesis, literature, psychology, sociology, law, and even with neuroscience, among others. Despite the abundance of his research interests, one theme that remained all throughout his work is the question of self-understanding or identity. See Domenico Jervolino, “The Depth and Breadth of Paul Ricoeur’s Philosophy,” in *The Library of Living Philosophers Vol. XXII: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago, Illinois: Open Court, 1995), 534.

¹³ Gary Madison, “Ricoeur: Philosopher of Being-Human.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 482.

¹⁵ David Kaplan, *Ricoeur’s Critical Theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 15.

in the public sphere, kinds of dehumanization, and even “barbaric forms of urbanism.”¹⁶

For Kaplan, “while globalization, like the colonialism it replaced, is not directly responsible for regional violence, it is responsible for reshaping, if not determining, the social and economic conditions and opportunities available to people. Therefore, it plays an exceedingly large role in the fate of individuals and groups.”¹⁷ This is evident in the mass production not only of culture, but also of forms of consumption. Kaplan gives the example of farmers who work for produce intended for export and not for the local community. Globalization, particularly global capitalism, considers diversity among cultures and ways of living a peril to its dominance.¹⁸ It is for this reason that it is imperative to examine whether or to what extent democracy now, along with economic progress and freedom, is in fact strengthened or compromised by advances in communication and transport.¹⁹

Furthermore, Ricoeur notes that while the affluent nations may be troubled by this problem in culture, the previously colonized, third world nations suffer it as well and more acutely. They are faced with the double task of reviving the cultural resources lost during the time of colonization and re-inventing their very psychology as a people, and of adapting to the technological world.²⁰ The capacity to maintain oneself and at the same time practice tolerance in encountering other civilizations,²¹ particularly this universal civilization, is not easy. While

¹⁶ Ricoeur, “The Tasks of the Political Educator,” 290.

¹⁷ Kaplan, *Ricoeur's Critical Theory*, 183.

¹⁸ Ibid., 182.

¹⁹ Ibid., 15. Please see note no. 6 as an instance where democracy has to be examined in face of global capitalism.

²⁰ Ricoeur, “Universal Civilization and National Cultures,” 277.

²¹ Ibid.

cultures are not fixed entities and are inherently subject to change, are dynamic and remain themselves precisely because they adapt and change,²² this is not the same for a civilization's "creative nucleus."

This creative nucleus is the "ethical and mythical nucleus" of mankind, which manifests in a group's factual and concrete attitudes, such as those concerning "tradition, change, our behavior toward our fellow-citizens and foreigners, and most especially the use of available tools."²³ It can only be understood through an "authentic deciphering"²⁴ that resembles psychoanalysis, because there is a demand to first plow through the symbols and pictures, "which make up the basic ideals of a nation."²⁵ As such, this ethico-mythical or creative nucleus, while manifest on the level of tools and on the level of institutions, is compared to a dream—in fact, "permanent dreams"²⁶ and "stable images" that are in the nation's subconscious. In *Oneself as Another*,²⁷ Ricoeur explains that the self is both *ipse* and *idem*. First, a self is something that remains the same by changing, but second, a self remains the same by consistently retaining its sameness despite changing. This could shed light upon Ricoeur's warning that globalization can be damaging to this creative nucleus, which is the sameness that allows collective identity to welcome change in the face of various forms of otherness.

This great problem for culture of maintaining "the balance between the acquisition and progress . . . [and] creation and memory"²⁸ can be seen in the city and its pathologies. For Ricoeur,

²² Ibid., 280.

²³ Ibid., 279.

²⁴ Ibid., 280.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

²⁸ Ricoeur, "The Tasks of the Political Educator," 292.

“not only is there pathology of the city, but this pathology is the awesome expression of the pathology of global society.”²⁹ It is in the *scale* of the city and in the features of the city where we can immediately see the effects of globalization upon man as one confronted by the tension between the necessity to live and adapt to the technical world that does not have a past, and, on the other hand, to maintain his culture by way of rescuing it from forgetfulness.³⁰ In localizing and concretizing the problems globalization and modern technology bring to an aggregate of people, the city permits us to examine these problems closely and in a smaller scale.

In the following section, I wish to reflect on the pathologies of the city, but with a particular emphasis on memory. Because personal and collective identities, according to Ricoeur, are always narrative identities, and these narratives constitutive of identities are memories gathered in a plot, the question of identity is consequently also a question of the ethics of memory, which is to say, a question of the use and abuse of memory.

The Pathologies of the City and Problems of Memory

In his essay “Urbanization and Secularization,” that first appeared in 1967, Paul Ricoeur explores the features of the city and their corresponding pathologies. The city is distinguished from ancient cities or other places (a village, the countryside) by four features, namely: (1) the multiplication, abstraction, and elongation of relations and interchanges; (2) accelerated mobility; (3) concentrated organization; and (4) the city’s self-image. In *Memory*,

²⁹ Paul Ricoeur, “Urbanization and Secularization,” in *Political and Social Essays*, 180.

History, Forgetting, Ricoeur says that “it is on the scale of urbanism that we can best catch sight of the work of space in time [since] a city brings together in the same space different ages, offering to our gaze a sedimented history of tastes and cultural forms.”³¹

The multiplication, abstraction, and elongation of relations and interchanges. To understand the city as a mere geographical space is to understand it superficially because it is not only a site where human beings are located or the arrangement of man-made edifices. More than that, the city is an avenue for communication or discourse. The character of the city as essentially congested provides men with more opportunities to interact and connect with one another than, for example, in a village or a town. These surpluses of intersubjective encounters in turn open up to more choices and possibilities for growth, because, flooded with a plethora of signs and symbols that are at the heart of a language, man’s “field of information and field of decision”³² are expanded.

The congestion of the city and the multiplication of possible encounters force one to depersonalize most meetings outside the home, which is a good thing because it preserves the possibility of genuine personal, intimate encounters in the sense of I and thou. In these depersonalized, neutral encounters, the other person is a *socius* that “becomes tolerable only insofar as a large number of relations remain fragmentary.”³³ After all, one cannot really force to encounter every person in the public sphere in the mode of the neighbor.³⁴ Apart from the fact that it would be exhausting and

³¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 150–51.

³² Ricoeur, “Urbanization and Secularization,” 177.

³³ *Ibid.*, 177–78.

³⁴ Ricoeur says that there is no sociology of the neighbor. Instead, to be neighbor means one makes oneself a neighbor to the other. The contemporary world is said to lack this mode of the neighbor since the other is for most of the times encountered in a dehumanized way, that is

false, it is also, on the other hand, from these anonymous and neutral exchanges where rare encounters of love and friendship sometimes spontaneously arise.³⁵

However, the positive aspects of the city as a site for increased and elaborate communication are attended by a corresponding pathology due to the excessive amounts of stimulation and information caused by the increase of relations. Ricoeur characterizes this event aptly as a “swelling.”³⁶ This inflammation not only consists in the literal congestion of human beings in confined locations—such as a crowded lobby or an apartment—but also extends to psychological bloating, so to speak. Since man is emplaced in a congested space, he is forced to absorb highly stimulating interactions and environments—an experience that is overwhelming. This phenomenon results in a kind of numbness, which leads us back to the reason why most of the time, he can only encounter individuals in a neutral manner, and very rarely as a neighbor, especially in the public sphere. It appears that the only way for man to confront this swelling due to the excess of information is to become anonymous.³⁷

On the positive side, the city, because its dwellers come from differing histories and traditions, brings together a “sedimented history of tastes and cultural forms.”³⁸ In other words, the character of a city as congested enriches its people by way of bringing together different memories and preserved histories. In a way, the city as a fact of communication is informative because, intersubjectively

merely as a *socius*. Paul Ricoeur, “The *Socius* and the Neighbor,” in *History and Truth*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 98–109.

³⁵ Ibid., 107.

³⁶ Ricoeur, “Urbanization and Secularization,” 181.

³⁷ Ibid., 181.

³⁸ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 151.

speaking, it is fertile ground for acculturation and for forming relations. However, because dwellers are forced to maintain their anonymity in the public sphere, most encounters happen in the name of utility. The other person encountered is not seen as someone who has a history, but is only seen as a *socius*, that is, as a social function. Encountering the other as a *socius* is not inherently wrong, but then again, because it is necessary to remain neutral in the public sphere, this anonymous mode of encounter might cancel the surprise of a genuine, neighborly encounter.

Furthermore, Ricoeur recognizes that because this sedimentation is always coupled by innovation, there is a danger that these various histories of tastes and cultural forms may be lost through innovation, especially if change is made in the name of consumerist culture. The loss of sedimented histories through innovation, especially due to the threat of the prevalence of consumerist culture, induces a kind of memory loss. Bell and de-Shalit's description of the "Davos Man,"³⁹ a man who considers himself a "citizen of the world," is symptomatic of memory loss as he does away with national allegiances, rendering him incapable of relating and returning to a historical root. This forgetting is followed by a life lived for the sake of utility, wherein the future is not seen as something linked to a collective memory, but is only imagined in the name of utility and function, accumulation and exchange of goods.

Accelerated mobility. An offshoot of the first characteristic of the city, Ricoeur also describes the city as "an environment of internal migration"⁴⁰ due to accelerated mobility. It is because of this acceleration that there is now a division between the public and the

³⁹ Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit, *The Spirit of the Cities: Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), xi.

⁴⁰ Ricoeur, "Urbanization and Secularization," 178.

private sphere. In the countryside, for example, farmers who own the lands they till usually work with their family, relatives, or neighbors. In this case, distance is relative because although a city worker and a farmer may spend the same amount of travel time from house to work, the farmer perhaps sees the field as an extension of his home. In contrast to this, for most city-dwellers, the place of home and the place of work are widely separated. Such a geographical distance also results to emotional and psychological distance, wherein the work is approached with neutrality, and wherein the home is a place where one can finally retire from the everydayness of public life. Mobility, thus also forces man to be more flexible, that is, to be able to adapt to differing situations, the wide range of circumstances, the variety of individuals encountered. Accelerated mobility heightens the variations of encounters, and thus forces individuals to show a neutral façade. The indifference with which they approach the public sphere preserves the intimacy of their personal relations. In addition, the city-dweller has to be more flexible in his interactions, which, however “oscillates between aggressiveness and indifference.”⁴¹

Ricoeur notes, however, that mobility affects the underprivileged and the privileged differently. Migrants who are forced to leave one place after another may attest to this suffering of a new kind of nomadism. On the other hand, the well-off can use the capacity to travel to enrich themselves culturally.⁴²

The problem of memory that accelerated mobility has to confront is the fact that this internal migration within a city particularly forces the underprivileged to be uprooted in the literal

⁴¹ Ibid., 178.

⁴² Ibid., 179; Ricoeur, “Universal Civilization and National Cultures,” 279.

and figurative sense. Their displacement from their home turns them into nomads carrying a past that cannot find a place in their present homelessness because of the relationship between place, body, and memory. In one essay, Edward Casey, who is often cited by Ricoeur when he refers to places, explored “a carnal hermeneutics of body and place”⁴³ in reference to the constriction a body experiences in solitary confinement. He there argued that the body of a prisoner and the cell wall cannot have a cordial relationship. According to Casey, “change the place and there will be a corresponding change in the body in that place.”⁴⁴ For Clingerman, “the hermeneutical structure of place is intimately tied to the meaning of self.”⁴⁵ I surmise that the person confined in isolation and the city nomad both experience a kind of displacement that renders them both alienated in their emplacements. Although the city nomad is not confined within four walls of a cell, displacement can be experienced as immobility due to the absence of a clearly defined social function, which is also referred to as a “place” in the society.

In Hong Kong, “many families hire FDHs [Filipina Domestic Helpers], and every Sunday many roads in HK’s central business district are closed to provide spaces for them to gather.”⁴⁶ This nomadism is a manifestation that these bodies lack permanent places where they can identify themselves as belonging. Prior to working in Hong Kong, their identities were linked to the memories

⁴³ Edward Casey, “Skin Deep: Bodies Edging into Place,” in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 159–72.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁵ Forrest Clingerman, “Memory, Imagination, and the Hermeneutics of Place,” in *Interpreting Nature: The Emerging Field of Environmental Hermeneutics*, ed. Forrest Clingerman, Brian Treanor, Martin Drenthen, and David Utsler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 252.

⁴⁶ Galvin Chia, “Focussing the familiar? Locating the Foreign Domestic Worker in Postcolonial Hong Kong Discourse,” *Cross-sections* 8 (2012): 9.

that took place in places where they felt at home. (It is no accident, said Ricoeur that we talk of memory as something that took *place* because we always recall a memory in reference to a specific location.⁴⁷) Their bodies are commodities exported to another place, performing jobs invisible outside HK homes—which is all the more troubling given the fact that they are also invisible, that is to say, physically absent, in their own country. For Xiaojiang Yu, the Sunday gatherings by Filipinos, which result in several closed streets in Hong Kong, are not only driven by external forces but also by Filipino values or customs that encourage them to meet.⁴⁸ Perhaps, the proximity of a displaced body with another familiar but also displaced body allows one to overcome the sense of alienation in a foreign land, and at least for a time, to feel at home. By gathering together, reminiscing and talking, and thus creating new memories not necessarily rooted in the Philippines, the temporary spaces in which displaced domestic workers congregate become permanent markers of their identity, ultimately creating the imaginary of the FDHs in Hong Kong. This is an example of how accelerated mobility may impact the marginalized by disjoining the body from personal and collective memory places that are markers of identity. But it also shows how it is possible to emplace oneself amidst displacement.

Apart from the capacity to travel from one place to another because of mobility, the city also manifests this mobility in a certainly similar way in reference to places. If places are seen as mementos, as reminders, as a mark so that we can be reminded to

⁴⁷ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 41.

⁴⁸ Xiaojiang Yu, "Influence of Intrinsic Culture: Use of Public Space by Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong," *Journal for Cultural Research* 13.2 (2009): 97.

reminisce about past events and experiences that are shared, then the city as a place can induce short-term memory for its inhabitants, because of its character of frequently changing its façade, suddenly erecting buildings, revising, and redesigning the streets, and the shopping malls. For instance, shops in malls take the place of another and just as easily are replaced by others, leaving no trace of having been there. In a way, it is very easy to forget in the city because something will take the place of what previously was there. The acceleration of mobility that characterizes the city even in its physical aspect or design reflects consumerism. An attitude characteristic of consumerism is that it always seeks variation and novelty.

In fact, the seemingly progressive changes done in the city's physical aspect is a symptom of memory loss because the city seems to see the future as merely maintaining utility. It appears that other forms of imagining the place, which do not conform to the dominion of global capitalism, are marginalized. This is because these other forms of seeing the place anew, of imagining it as something else, and of imagining inhabiting on it differently, is of course based on the memory of places and the memory of its inhabitants. Memory is important because just like imagination,⁴⁹ it opens the possibility of imagining or visualizing a place's future that is other than the vision of it of the technical society. It is also important to understand the tension between the conservationist and developmental perspectives in interpreting a place.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Writer Ursula Le Guin echoes Ricoeur's idea of the transformative capacity of narrative. She said that while we "live in capitalism," it is not really impossible to escape such world. Authors have the capacity to inspire their readers to assist them in imagining "alternatives to how we live." Cited by Araz Hachadourian, "Ursula K. Le Guin Calls on Fantasy and Sci Fi Writers to Envision Alternatives to Capitalism," *Yes! Magazine*, June 4, 2015, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/ursula-k-le-guin-calls-on-sci-fi-and-fantasy-writers-to-envision-alternatives-to-capitalism>.

⁵⁰ Clingerman, "Memory, Imagination, and the Hermeneutics of Place," 245–63.

Concentrated organization. The city is not just concentrated geographically. Because bodies are physically proximate, one of the city's features is concentrated organization. Here, Ricoeur also notes the transition of farming communities into urban dwellers, who find themselves with other people in a small space with a concentrated number of bodies. Because of this, man suffers from complex over-organization and, as Marcuse puts it, from “fragmentation of the personality.”⁵¹

It is because of this complex over-organization that Ricoeur calls the metropolis a technopolis—administration or organization is executed in a way that subjects the city dwellers “in the modern method of organizing work.” Even the way a city works resembles modern technology. The distribution of goods, the “bureaucratic management of industry,” and the management of banks are concentrated in the city. The system of the city therefore regulates man entirely, especially because the distribution of goods, industry management, and banking system influence institutions like education and the legal system.⁵² It is easy to see why modern man's life is both complex and dispersed, being immersed in a city that Ricoeur calls both over-organized and under-administered.

Problems of memory and forgetting arise from the fact that in a city, one falls into such and such social role under a governing administration since the city is “the logistical apparatus of social roles.”⁵³ Which stories, events, or images are remembered or forgotten, preserved or neglected are determined by the organization of social life in accordance with the culture of consumerism—a kind

⁵¹ Ricoeur, “Urbanization and Secularization,” 181.

⁵² Ibid., 179.

⁵³ Ibid.

of culture indebted to no past—which threatens to reduce the meaning of human life to one lived only for the sake of utility. Moreover, over-organization also threatens the perceived social recognition of ways of living that may deviate from the complex arrangement of city living or of consumer culture.

Self-image. Lastly, the city has its self-image. This refers to “the collective picture men hold of their city.”⁵⁴ It is also the hallmark of humanity, since it attests to the human energy materialized into a collective project. However, this energy “insofar as it is dominated by technology, risks losing itself in an empty futurism, in a useless Prometheism through loss of memory.”⁵⁵ Thus, unlike the ancient cities that have recognizable faces, modern cities may no longer be recognizable and may look like any other city in the world because of amnesia. Heritage sites are necessary for a city’s self-image, for the psychology of the city’s inhabitants, and for its future. However, it is also important to maintain self-image by reinventing it and by adapting to the ever-changing world.

Bell and de-Shalit explore, in their book *The Spirit of the Cities*,⁵⁶ why the identities of the cities matter in the contemporary, globalized world. Exploring the spirit, which they called *ethos* of select cities, they used a method that resembled Walter Benjamin’s flaneur or strolling and storytelling in putting such spirit into words.

⁵⁴ Ricoeur, “Urbanization and Secularization,” 179.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 181–82.

⁵⁶ According to Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit, Beijing even conducted a study to determine the spirit of its city. This spirit influence how they treat cultural heritage and how they plan for Beijing. Moreover, for Bell and de-Shalit “cities can combine the openness of the global with the sense of community grounded in particularity”—a claim that echoes Ricoeur’s argument that it is important, for the sake of identity, to maintain the creative nucleus of a culture. One way of cultivating this *ethos* of a city is through its architecture. They talk about how buildings and urban planning in general give faces to a place, as for instance how Jerusalem’s structures give the aura of the divine, whereas totalitarian states tend to intimidate its people using the scale of the walls they erect. Bell and de-Shalit, *The Spirit of the Cities*, xiv, xix, 2.

Similar to the distinctness of the cities of Ancient Athens and Sparta, what Bell and de-Shalit produce is a work that opens discussions about cities with strong identities, cities that uphold values and a sense of rootedness, though not necessarily to an inherited past. Cities with identities, they argued, fight against the uniformity brought about by globalization.⁵⁷

Remembering and Creating in the Age of Production

In the first part of this essay, we saw how Ricoeur views globalization as something that is positive and beneficial to man, because it makes available to a larger number of people things that were once only for the well-off. But globalization also threatens identity because of the uniformity of the consumer culture that it promotes. The challenge then is to maintain the sameness of the self, while at the same time adapting to the ever-changing technological world. The examination of the city and its four features, which echoes the pathology of the technological world, vis-à-vis the problems of memory, exposes the concrete effects of globalization and consumer culture upon the fragility of identity. In this final section, I wish to reflect on remembering and creating in the age of production.

The ahistorical domination of consumerism marginalizes, pushes the little stories carried by city dwellers into the background. This is not at all different from what Ricoeur calls the history of the conquerors and the victors from which his duty to tell for the other sprang.⁵⁸ Perhaps, this is one reason why it is possible to be displaced while emplaced (even as one finds one's place) in the city.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁸ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 89.

The city, shaped and conditioned by the global society, embodies a place that is constantly shedding its past.⁵⁹ For Ricoeur, it is important to keep memories because only by remembering collectively or by having cultural memory can one maintain one's heritage and attain a sense of identity.⁶⁰ Being stripped of the past, of communal markers of culture and tradition—visible receptacles of collective memory—a human being may experience feelings of homelessness in the city. What is more, because a city is a technopolis, even what remains of cultural markers are in danger of turning into spectacles for consumption by, for example, tourists who are hungry to know a place.

In affirming memory as essential to the formation of identity, Ricoeur does not fall into the trap of romanticism. He distinguishes memory from a nostalgic return to the past. Ricoeur argues that identity remains the same precisely insofar as it changes.⁶¹ As Madison puts it, memory is non-monolithic and is porous.⁶² The forgetting instigated by the global technological and consumerist culture calls for the making and keeping of memories in acts of creation, the task of which consists in maintaining the individual, cultural personality of a society by coupling its values, images, and symbols with the technological world that tends to strip communities of their shared past.

The act of witnessing and preserving collective memories through artistic production is a task of reinterpretation or translation, specifically a kind of translation that preserves the heritage of a culture or nation amidst the technical global society.

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, "The Tasks of the Political Educator," 292.

⁶⁰ Ricoeur, "What does Humanism Mean?," in *Political and Social Essays*, 69.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶² Madison, "Ricoeur: Philosopher of Being-Human."

Thus, while the materials from the past may be difficult to preserve, the intangible heritage must still persist. Moreover, since there is acceptance of the inevitability of a world globalized, new creation—and not just preservation of heritage sites—that does not merely mirror the uniformity or sameness of consumerism may resist the loss of humanism in the age of manufacture. In relation to this, Bell and de-Shalit noted that architecture, for one, could serve as a marker of a city, exemplifying contemporary buildings that altered the façades of several cities, or that gave faceless ones faces.⁶³

I would like to end these reflections with the question of the possibility of formulating an ethic of creating, specifically, an ethic of building or erecting structures or shaping a city with respect to the demands of memory. Drawing from the second part of this paper, we can say that interpreting buildings or places reveals that the city's temporal character of not being attached to a past is a problem that demands confrontation.

What is further revealed by these reflections on the city and memory is that a concern for both an ethics of memory and an ethics of building that includes destruction and reconstruction does not only imply preserving heritage and monuments to retain one's cultural core. It is important to critique structures as well for the sake of oneself and of the other, especially when sites represent oppressive memories enclosed in oppressive narratives. Walls are sometimes erected to keep informal settlers out of sight and railways may become borders walling one place from another. Neighborhoods in five cities in Texas, for example, remain racially segregated, and this segregation is made by infrastructure such as

⁶³ Bell and de-Shalit, *The Spirit of the Cities*, 3.

highways and railroads.⁶⁴ Some public spaces are solely seen as a sphere for haggling goods. The absence, too, of safe and beautiful places in Manila gives rise to the success of the shopping malls where people opt to spend their idle time.⁶⁵

To maintain a self-image, a city needs to preserve heritage sites for a depth of memory, so that we can remember the world in a way other than as a symbol of mere consumption. But a city also has to build new structures in reference to an ethics of memory, which implies care for the possible abuses to which such constructions may give rise. In 2014, for example, city towers in construction in Istanbul were asked to be put down because they blocked the view of a heritage site, namely the Hagia Sophia.⁶⁶ In other cases, some memory places are being relocated to preserve them, though this approach to preservation lifts memorial sites out of their context, displacing them as a place.

The call for an ethics of construction, destruction, and reconstruction in view of a care of memory is premised on the idea that a city as a place is more than a mere backdrop for human beings who are speaking and acting, narrating and recounting agents. Built spaces are means for the emplotment of memories: by being inhabited, the meaning of the place is shaped by stories, but the very location, structure, façade, technology, materials of a building are features that can configure and reconfigure a self and a world. Thus, we come to understand that a Ricoeurian approach to memory and

⁶⁴ John Harden, "Maps Show Visible Racial Divides in Major Texas Cities," *Houston Chronicle*, July 24, 2015, <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/article/Highways-interstates-reinforce-divides-in-Texas-6399606.php>.

⁶⁵ Jorge Mojarro, "The 'Reprivate' of the Philippines or Why Metro Manila Continues to Deteriorate," *Interaksyon*, November 24, 2014, <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/99809/the-reprivate-of-the-philippines--or-why-metro-manila-continues-to-deteriorate>.

⁶⁶ Oliver Wainwright, "Istanbul's 'Illegal' Towers to Be Demolished After Landmark Court Ruling," *The Guardian*, August 21, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/aug/21/istanbul-illegal-towers-to-be-demolished-after-landmark-court-ruling>

the city is not only about the preservation of structures, but it is also about the creative refiguration of the cityscape. This creative refiguration maintains identity both by remembering and preserving, and at the same time by re-inventing prefigured structures and adapting these to the changing world through a creative configuration.⁶⁷ It is only by resisting the uniformity of the age of manufacture through such creative efforts that we can imagine a world different from the present order of things.⁶⁸

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⁶⁷ I here, of course, echo Ricoeur's threefold mimesis of a prefigured world, configured world, and a refigured world. See Paul Ricoeur, "Time and Narrative: Threefold Mimesis," in *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁶⁸ Forrest Clingerman says, "A depth of memory challenges and complicates the consumerist, throw-away culture by calling us to remember other forms of living in place, as well as seeking an imaginative response of living otherwise." Clingerman, "Memory, Imagination, and the Hermeneutics of Place," 263.

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