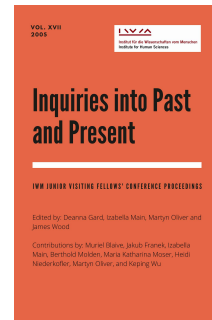


Introduction

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The essays gathered here, though disparate in topic and methodology, present a surprisingly unified theme. During our stay at the IWM during the first half of 2004, the Institute occupied itself with questions about the European Union, particularly in terms of the EU's relationship to the world and the EU's own complex internal identity politics. The Junior Fellows' Conference in June, 2004, brought together a diverse array of individual talents and interests, many of which were not, at the outset, explicitly concerned with the nature of the EU. However, the work produced at the conference concerned two aspects of human experience that lay at the center of the body politic: memory and action. In their own ways, each essay collected here asks what it means to remember who we were but also what we want to be, both as individuals and as society on the whole. The numerous ways in which these questions are asked and answered illustrates the complex processes of public memory, action, and identity formation.

Muriel Blaive begins by noting how the failure to archive or achieve a collective memory is often due to institutionalized resistance; this resistance, however, can also indicate collective culpability and resistance is thus a type of communal action. Blaive claims that because personal opportunism contributed to Czech citizens' empowerment of the communist party, there exists no mechanism or public will for addressing the past transgressions of communism in the republic. She asks, "Must a person acquit oneself of or settle his accounts with the past to be able to liberate himself from it? An adequate and systematic policy of dealing with the past would definitely and positively assist with such an endeavor." The question remains, do the citizens of the Czech Republic believe it necessary to do so? The implicit denial of the past thus suggests large-scale complicity, a condition that has implications not only for political historians, but also for the future of Czech civil society. The extent to which we are willing to reflect upon our past might foreshadow the ways in which we form and critique the present.

Jakub Franek's essay, "Political Conditions of Philosophy According to Arendt," rewards multiple readings. By carefully exploring the relationship between thinking and acting in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, Franek considers the implications of a world in which the ability to think is impaired by a shrinking public realm and the

problem of political freedom. He writes, “Drawing mostly from *The Human Condition*, this paper argues that thought and action or philosophy and politics are, according to Arendt, closely interconnected and even interdependent.” What are the conditions for acting, or politics, and what are the conditions for thinking, or philosophy? The answer, according to Arendt, is a free public realm, a space in which the political can interact with the philosophical. Despite this abstraction, however, neither Franek nor Arendt means to suggest a theoretical space: acting and thinking are real endeavors and are always threatened by tyranny. Franek notes that the injustice of slavery and subjection of women in ancient Greece, the “deprivation of the reality of one’s own existence,” has become the lot for nearly all members of contemporary society. Arendt argues that Karl Marx accurately describes the causes of this condition, but rejects his reductive solutions, agitating instead for a less material, more active and philosophical response. The question then becomes, who is given the gift of real existence? This is an intensely important question and speaks, when we allow our imaginations to act, to a whole range of social, or public realm, concerns in our contemporary world—as real existence is further and further eroded, the desire for such a life becomes frenzied. In this state of chaos, it becomes more and more difficult to discern the actual real. “Arendt returns to thinking in the last paragraph of the work, where she states that ‘[t]hought is still possible, and no doubt actual, whenever men live under the conditions of political freedom. Unfortunately, and contrary to what is currently assumed about the proverbial ivory-tower independence of thinkers, no other capacity is so vulnerable, and it is in fact easier to act under conditions of tyranny than to think.’” Because this is so, it is imperative that we engage in political action, even if this act cannot be fully informed by freedom of thought. That is, we must act blindly to preserve a free public realm so that thinking/philosophy can flourish. Franek leaves us with the question as to how thinking can influence action, a question all the more pressing given his analysis of the dangers of diminishing freedom.

The third essay, **Izabella Main**’s “Memory and History in the Cityscapes in Poland: the Search for Meaning,” considers the physical landscape of memory in the monuments of Poland. In large part, she is “concerned with the issue of how the making and remaking of the symbolic spaces might reflect problems in thinking about the past.” Through a thorough examination of monuments in three Polish cities, Main questions the ways in which society makes and remakes physical manifestations of its own self-identity. Her essay extensively illustrates the transitory nature of those objects that are built with the intention of immutability. Faced with these changes, the very idea of monument building is seen in a new, somewhat wistful, light. The public realm, which monuments are intended to create and demarcate, is continually reappraised by the prevailing political machinery. The extent to which certain structures or names are retained has less to do with systematic philosophical principles than it does political trends and circumstances. In this regard, monuments become less an expression of inherent identity than an indicator of the continuing process of self-definition.

Berthold Molden examines the means, process, and implications of a society attempting to define itself in his study of Guatemala’s struggle to emerge from its debilitating civil war. Specifically, he explores the ways different segments of the Guatemalan population choose to remember the thirty-six year so-called Internal Armed

Conflict that took the lives of over 200,000 people. One elite segment of Guatemalan's, in Molden's analysis, advocated a "remembrance" of the past but at the cost minimizing its brutality. Ex-military members tend to depict Guatemala as a pawn in the US-USSR cold war, thus denying any personal responsibility. Another group, the indigenous Guatemalan's most severely afflicted by the violence, hope to construct a war narrative that will enable them to reassert themselves in Guatemala's national history. The historian Antoinette Barkan points out how the convergence of seemingly incompatible versions of the same course of events "leads to a reconfiguration of both sides. While the perpetrators hope to purge their own history of guilt and legitimize their current position, the victims hope to benefit from a new recognition of their suffering and to enjoy certain material gains." However, Molden recognizes that by diminishing the question of moral right or wrong—a process organically underway in Guatemala via a political process that effectively democratizes the population—a new picture of the conflict emerges, and it is more accurate than previous versions. The question remains whether or not the re-negotiation of the victims' historical and political role will be equally successful. Molden's essay can fruitfully be read in conjunction with essays concerning European political memory by shedding light on the dynamic process of institutionalizing memory that has occurred in other post-war countries.

Maria Katharina Moser's essay, "Representations of Suffering: Confronting Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and Rituals of Self-Flagellation and Crucifixion in the Philippines," seems to radically depart from the historical, sociological, and philosophical work presented thus far. However, by bringing together film-criticism and her theological fieldwork in the Philippines, Moser offers a challenge to how we understand religious identity. Her essay tries "to show that Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is problematic – and ultimately bad theology – because it separates Christ's suffering from human suffering in history. In contrast, rituals of self-flagellation and crucifixion embedded in the reading of the *pasyon* [Filipino Passion narratives] as they are practiced by rural poor communities in the Philippines contain a representation of Christ's suffering which is situated in a concrete historical and political context. I have tried to read those practises as ritualistic expressions of being a crucified people and therefore as marking Christ's presence in history. Furthermore, I have tried to read those practices as a way of acquiring power based on the world-view of animistic traditions and folk Catholicism." In the end, this essay illustrates how disenfranchised communities, a group in which Mr. Gibson might theologically place himself, use creative means to give witness, and thus power, to their experiences. These forms of active memory are important examples social definition.

Heidi Niederkofler explores a parallel theme in terms of linguistic intentionality and the struggle to define 'women's movement' throughout Austrian history. She writes, "When one perceives history as a process of re-constructing the past from a position in present time, it becomes a constant re-formulation and re-definition of what has happened. In following this rather constructivist approach, the writing of a women's movement's history is affected, among other things, by the actual notion of women's movements. In this regard, there is a strong connection between the historiography of women's movements and the movements themselves. Consequently, writing women's

movement's history is an intervention in an ongoing process of defining the past of the movement itself. Furthermore, this also means that in re-constructing the past I am heavily involved in constructing and defining the present, in the task of making sense of it." This attention to the often unnoticed power of academic abstraction wisely raises a word of caution. In the process of "doing" history, sociology, etc., the writer gives meaning to a topic or subject in a way not inherent to itself.

The penultimate essay in this volume broadly sketches the history of the impact of Islam on European society and culture. The essay hopes to bring into question the ways in which societies and cultures define themselves, arguing that the representation of "otherness" is often an unacknowledged attempt at self-definition. Furthermore, the extent to which Islam has played a long and varied role in European affairs should give pause: in this new age of violence and conflict, we would do well to remember that the boundaries we create are neither impermeable nor static and that "religion" as a category functions poorly as a political device. While apparently convenient, terms such as "European" or "Muslim" often obscure more than they reveal, leading to potentially dangerous misunderstanding.

Our final essay, **Keping Wu's** "Performing Charisma: Construction of Religious Experience In Catholic Charismatic Ritual of Prayer and Worship," brings us to the United States, but in a way both strange and uniquely American. A preeminent example of "outsiderness", Wu's experiences with charismatic Catholics explodes usual conceptions of religiosity and institutionalization. Following the work of Max Weber, her research sheds light on the relationship between personal charisma and its tendentious relationship to organized religious structures. That charismatic Christianity is growing rapidly—Catholic and Protestant, in the Northern and Southern hemispheres— indicates a certain frustration with predominant religious structures. The reaction to perceived institutional indifference or ineffectiveness in religious situations often mirrors similar political reactions.

Combined, these essays cover a wide spectrum of approaches to the process of social definition. Just as thinking and acting are intermingled, so too are politics and memory. That we each were provided the resources to pursue our various concerns in our own manner, we thank everyone at the IWM for their remarkable support.

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