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The contingency of cultures, cultures of contingency: Cultural Theory with a philosophical attitude

The main argument of this text is that culture is contingent and it is the condition of one's own making. This notion of contingency is central to the project of Cultural Studies (WINTER 2001). It also includes the articulation of hegemonic forces and the search for the place of emancipation, when culture is not determined in economic or political terms, but it is open to the process of becoming, rather than being. The challenge provided by the work of Stuart Hall is the challenge to the economic determinism of Marxism, which reduced every cultural attempt to materialist conditions (HALL 1996: 25). Opposing this binary thinking and oriented towards the philosophy of difference, Cultural Studies scholars argue for the indeterminate nature of culture. Culture is either pre-determined or over-determined and because of this, it is open to influences and contingencies (HALL 1996: 262). It is already evident in the term, culture as one of the difficult terms to define, and „it is partly because of its intricate historical development [(...)] and mainly because now [it happens] to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought"(WILLIAMS 1983: 87). This difficulty is also the condition of the articulation of cultural memory. Culture derives from the powerful mechanism of memory, which plays a significant role in the formation of subjects through both remembering and forgetting. While articulating the missing dimension of history or, the other, Cultural Studies have brought to prominence marginalized subjects, such as race, sexuality, and migrations, themselves already a challenge to the dominant politics of historical formations. These subjects are symbolically central and socially marginal and in their movement towards freedom the hegemonic idea is persistent. The cultural memory which never remembered these subjects or ignored them is now after the convincing work of Stuart Hall can be read as an open book, a new history that is awaiting it's time to be re-written. Inspire by these dark times of cultural theory this open book doesn't come to its closure but on the contrary, persists as a signifier of the possibilities to come. It needs to be said that there are many ideas, which emerged by developments of the discourse in cultural theory. These ideas are only the beginning of the shift toward emancipation, the trajectory of

which is disturbed by the return of conservatism'. Nevertheless, this return of conservatism doesn't abandon the project of freedom since the turbulence of memory is articulated in the present. Drawing on these considerations with certain pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will', I would like to point to the potential of the resisting aspect of the cultural memory via cultural theory.

1.1.1 Cultural Memory as Philosophy's big project

Developed in the 1950s and appropriated from the context of the philosophy of its time, partly from Sartre, partly from Gramsci via Althusser and, of course, from Marx, the question of emancipation is at the very heart of Cultural Studies is associated with the work of Stuart Hall. It also links the project to its previous formations, such as Matthew Arnold's work and 1930's Leavisite project. However, with the involvement of Stuart Hall, the question expands its scopes on the international level for the first time by including the study of the non-Western cultures in the first place, the resistance emerged in youth subcultures in the second, and the entanglement with the Continental philosophy, usually ignored in England, in the third (HALL 1997). This is one of the most important sources of understanding not only culture but also the problematic notion of the culture industry. The latter is, of course, associated with the Frankfurt School, especially with the work of Adorno, which sees in any document of mass culture barbarism only. Cultural Studies have brought the notion of strategic involvement with the industry as a possibility of emancipation, where every aspect of culture becomes ideological. This totally enclosed space of culture to be involved within, rather than outside provided the possibility for the critique. Instead of simply rejecting the culture industry Cultural Studies is making an attempt strategically to be involved in the industry. It is in order to position oneself focused on the capacity of people „to be able to say anything at all". Because „people's identities are tied up with their intellectual positioning"(HALL1996: 401). This difficult task defined British Cultural Studies as a different subject from the „Kulturindustrie Kritik" of the Frankfurt school. These two sources of the culture, the Frankfurt School critical theory and British Cultural Studies helped to define "culture as such " and „culture as industry" as well as their complex amalgamation. In Adorno's critical theory and Stuart Hall's cultural studies culture is understood as a process in the case of the first as a „negative dialectics “and in the case of the second as a practice of the signification "through the complex notions of hegemony and articulation. Stuart Hall has shown that culture cannot be reduced to the industry only, because marginalized subjects are not included in this industry (ADORNO 1975: 12ff.). Politics of inclusion and exclusion

therefore is the question of culture, rather than a complete rejection of culture as a negotiator of the dominant ideology. As it happened „popular culture became the dominant form of global culture" (HALL 1996: 469). In order to engage in understanding culture globally and the „mark of difference inside forms of popular culture-which are by definition contradictory and which therefore appear as impure, threatened by incorporation or exclusion" (ibid.: 469). Today the study of popular culture is not necessarily about emancipation, but in the context of Hall's study, it is still very influential because it points to the deepening contradictions which are visible today. This contradicting nature of culture is also the condition of over-determination and chance and choice of subjects to articulate their own conditions of making. The possibility of strategic articulation in the situation of the technological turn, which follows the cultural turn by, incorporating‘ culture, the technological-cultural turn, takes its emergence from the early critique of both terms: the industry and the popular. This critique played an undeniably important role in the transformation of culture is evident in Stuart Hall's example of the dialogue between the group of reggae musicians and the producer (HALL 1996: 143). In response to the producer's demand to include the tom-tom‘ in their music, reggae musicians answered by saying: Don't tell us about tom-toms in the forest. We want to use the new means of articulation and production to make new music, with a new message'. For them, using contemporary technology was important for making new music and speaking in a new language, but not exhibiting, exoticism, which included the use of the new technology as a resistance against the racist identifying of everything Caribbean as an exotic. Starting from the encoding/decoding model to his critique of ideology as a „return of the repressed " Stuart Hall's work is this understanding of the role of techniques in the articulation of the cultural subject (HALL 2009: 172ff.). Both Adorno and Stuart Hall envisaged the dangers of the rising cultural populism which could lead to „a language with no speakers" (HALL 1996: 145). This is, unfortunately, the situation we are in; the age of the proliferation of means, technologies, gadgets, and easily accessible social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube which makes the entire world look like a global society of commentaries, there is no language to identify the problem. Is any new theory possible to become an answer to the spectacular society of commentary? The latest stage of Cultural studies itself consists of attractive media case studies, which exclude the philosophical reading of the culture as a contradictory mechanism contaminated with the technology from its beginning. I argue that if culture is understood as a contradiction and over-determination, this understanding opens the way to cultural reproductions in the irreducibility of cultural memory, which is disseminated elsewhere.

1.1.2 Cultural Memory: contradiction and over-determination as a Condition of Contingencies

The notion of, 'contradiction' may seem an obsolete term to critics of Hegel and a problematic term for readers of Althusser, because of its fuzziness. I propose to take on this notion again in the situation of the post-truth and the hegemony of conservatism. I argue that the ambiguity of the term is providing contingencies, which may allow the discovery of further possibilities for further theories. In its ambiguity and fuzziness, the term does a lot of work starting from the fact that we may be in the post-truth age', without ever being lived in the age, which could be called the age of truth before and if the truth' itself a contradictory term, what kind of mechanism can help to find the way out of the crisis? Stuart Hall described articulation and hegemony as a conjecture, a contingent source of culture that is never determined; it is either, *pre'* or, *over'* determined. The current conjecture is the conjecture of contradictions becoming intertwined, the „left“ with the right, the „right“ with the „wrong“ and this makes contradictions more complex. In Bernard Stiegler's words „We are disoriented" and this disorientation itself is signaling another perspective (STIEGLER 2009). In this world of disorientation, where ubiquitous computing and data economy seems to pave the way to hyper-industrialization of the world, Stiegler is like Adorno highly critical of this industry, yet his work is also pharmacological, where technological culture itself is seen as a poison and the remedy. In this way, he is much closer to Stuart Hall, although Stiegler's theory is, organological', whereas Hall's theory is, articulation(al)'. In this articulation (al) organizing, for Stuart Hall, it is the engagement with the theory as, going on theorizing is a lifelong, signifying practice' (HALL 1996: 150). For Stiegler, in his turn, the inseparability of theory from practice, and techniques from thoughts is the very basis of the notion of the work'. These mentioned inseparable entities are irreversibly separated and this has provided a malaise that opens up not only catastrophic tendencies but also remedies, for example, the necessity of a new model of thought. Stiegler is also involved in the critical reading of the project on the „culture industry". His powerful theory of „technics preceding thought“, locates the human subject in a very new way as not having any essence. His argument is partly developed from Simondon's theory of „technogenesis“, which problematizes a technical object, which is not the result of the form (*morphe*) being stamped upon matter (*hylé*) by a pre-existing efficient cause. It is about a transduction' of a diverse set of elements coming into a singular new relation that precedes any individual human act of making (SIMONDON 2016). This theory is also combined with Andre Leroy-Gourhan's

paleontological theory of the human subject as a product of techniques (LEROI-GOURHAN 2018). Any form of trans-individuation takes place as a conjugation of the technical object with the cultural subject. It is the central role played by technical objects in physic and collective individuation in the digital age. His reading of the subject is different from many of his contemporaries, which is usually reduced to the notion of, belonging'. For Stiegler the human is a fiction, which has emerged as a result of the conjugation with the techniques. In his work any trans-individuation takes place at the conjecture of the „human in default" and the process of cultural transformation is incomplete. This incompleteness itself is the condition of becoming and overcoming of technics central to his project of the „negantropocene" (negative Anthropocene) (STIEGLER 2018). The protean nature of the human opens the way for two forms of trans-individuation. It may also provide the possibility for adaptation, but adaptation may also be taking place by adopting. The first is a poison and the second is a remedy. Adopting here means increasing one's own intellectual and artistic potential, in order to be able to seize control over oneself before becoming controlled by the dominant politics. Here the notion of the 'image' is crucial, because of the technological-cultural turn that has widely become possible by the proliferation of visual means. I would also like to stress the importance of understanding the notion of the 'image' as the contingent container of contradictions. The necessity of understanding images emerged from the contradictory effect produced by them, namely, the pharmacological effect which is providing both the impossibility of overcoming the crisis and the possibility at this point of impossibility. The contradiction here is images are the product of technology and are not simply understood as phenomenological subjects but as techniques constituting humans. Images are techniques as soon as they record memory. Images as recorded memory are temporal objects and all temporality is constituted technologically. Another contradiction is here that the human is fiction rather than substance and the fictional nature of humans is provided by technologized images. The critique of the culture industry then is about the use of images by imitations, rather than studying them from the position of subjectivity. Technological retentions make prominent the facticity of imitations overcoming the real' as a result any work is pure imitation. Stiegler (2011) argues that in historical materialism „technics finally continues to be thought of as a means of production, to the extent where the metaphysical understanding of time, which is not questioned, still dominates that philosophy of technics' (135f.). Stiegler critically addresses Marx's hope that under industrialization the machine is restored to its place as the instrument of man's production of himself and his world as a means of production, rather than dominating force and means to ends. The

question is addressing technics as it is never determinate; technics consists of fuzzy objects and contingencies.

1.1.3 Degrees of memory: Fuzzy aggregates, contingency, and the fuzzy ontology

Ubiquitous computing and data economy provides further „proletarianization" of „available brain time“ (STIEGLER 2010: 11ff.). At the same time, the formation of subjects is taking place as the triad of, information-deformation-reformation, which demands a new model of thought. I call this new model of thought a fuzzy ontology, which is based on an understanding of the new mimesis, what I call translating imitations or trans-imitation. Based partly on my understanding of Stuart Hall's notion of the „encoding/decoding" model and Stiegler's philosophy of organology I see this model as critical and clinical at the same time. Is it possible to think of direct access to the world, as speculative philosophers argue? Isn't the world of thought itself contaminated? In this contamination, people imitate techniques and techniques are becoming a model of imitation. This contamination accelerates forgetting and makes the question of remembering an important issue. The notion that people elsewhere listening to podcasts or music in their headphones may not even remotely be aware of the notion of imitation, but they wear a mimetic machine plugged into their heads, headphones which link every interior element to externalized memory. The re-production as the imitation translating the missing subject, resided in the memory of the past and in the anticipation of the future. This is why technologies will never determine the human or the inhuman, but the relationship which is produced by the use of technologies, which is in itself a very fuzzy relation. As the AI scientist Lutfi-A Zadeh's „fuzzy logic" demonstrates, this is in itself a very fuzzy relation since working with technologies produces fuzzy aggregates, available for translations. I adopted the term fuzzy aggregates from Zadeh's theory of „fuzzy logic" in order to formulate the potentialities of culture after its critique. Zadeh's theory has been developed in the early 1960s as the research on machine translation and the precision made during the translation which is performed by Artificial Intelligence. What kind of thought is possible when there is no, true' object of thought? The truth is manifested in the order of words. Zadeh's „computing with words" for object-oriented technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence provides the possibility for the discovery of degrees of truth. Since there is no ultimate truth, it is the degree of the truth which ontologically positions any activity as an ongoing process of invention, otherwise known as „fuzzy logic". I insist that Zadeh's fuzzy logic is thus a challenge to the traditional binary logic which constantly attempts to construct perfection. Yet, there is no perfection, and

decisions are made depending on the situation. Besides, decisions are made not according to the notion of perfection but to the state of imperfection. Fuzzy logic and set of ideas connected to it: like fuzzy sets, fuzzy systems, and fuzzy aggregates are elaborations of the imperfection. His work is also a pioneering study, which demonstrates that the traditional binary logic is not the only logic, especially when it comes to highly sophisticated forms of programming and Artificial Intelligence. Instead of the binary logic, there is a fuzzy logic as fuzzy and uncertain as the human. That is why the logic of „computing with words" is more suitable to the understanding according to degrees of truth rather than the ultimate truth. Very often words are not so much the power to speak as it is the power to understand speech. The research on languages of machines demonstrated that machines imitate natural languages, rather than logical operations and more specifically the Artificial Intelligence technology that provided a whole new concept of fuzziness. This interaction of machines translating the natural language to the language of technology is now reversed. Now it is the mutual act, which urges us to rethink the cultural theory of articulation (al) organology. This urgency emerges from the situation when the information theory, algorithms, and data industry is not an option any longer and instead, it is part and parcel of our everyday lives. Why do these aggregates appear to us in this and not another way and why is access to them possible in this and not another way? I argue that it is because any aggregate has the quality of the quasi-object and therefore in a state of fuzziness. These aggregates can be temporarily defined by the temporal effects of the meaning in one context, however, in another context this meaning will also change and shift into another temporal location. It is because aggregates are in a constant state of alterity and therefore the world inhabited by them is the world of otherness. Instead of being simply determined and fixed, they proliferate. Search engines like Google, for example, are ideal tools to maintain the connection between different times instead of cutting- off with the past. Search engines are challenging the hierarchy and they provide a model for equality similar to Jacques Ranciere's notion of „a part of those who are not part of"(RANCIERE 2006). Although there is a space of equality, direct access to this space is dependent on the choice made by the juxtaposition of objects. Searching implies a new way of composing, which is neither perspective nor perspective; it is the juxtaposition of objects on the line. The search engine is neither linear nor non-linear, it is on the line, which defies any hierarchy and provides the possibility to find a balance in order for them to function in cultural terms. In fact, with the emergence of new technologies the functioning of the cultures translated into the digital by making lists consisting of keywords guiding the search leading to new discoveries. The crucial question of meaning is decided within the space provided by

fuzzy aggregates. These aggregates are meaning-free: meaning depends on the context and it can be given and it may be not given in the same manner. In order to challenge the strict attitude towards this in the paradigm of, identity thinking and escape from meaning by the paradigm of, absolutist thinking it should be said: there is no meaning outside of one's head and the one' is an object among other objects. The meaning is outside of these aggregates it is external and these aggregates are temporal objects in their relation to the external meaning which in its turn resided in the recorded memory. Since fuzzy aggregates are meaning-free this provides rediscovery of the meaning in changing contexts, which is not a fixed and determined meaning but a zone, where meaning can be given as included or excluded. This is therefore the question of culture, the dynamics of which is defined by the exclusion' or by the inclusion'. I understand culture as a continuous and temporal exchange of fuzzy aggregates. These aggregates are not precise. Culture in this way is non-essential and always undermines the essence. One of the views of materialism is that material objects are physical objects and while immaterial objects are not, although after physically coming into existence they may also become physical. This is also why I prefer the notion of aggregates rather than objects, objects, and aggregates they are assemblages of different contradictory objects. In this way, the notion of fuzziness undermines this deterministic view while arguing that the character of Dostoevsky's novel or the location, which is intentionally built for the film by Lars von Trier in order to create fiction, is equally materialistic in the same way as trees or grass. In both ways, their full realization becomes possible with the meaning discovered. While attaining a full meaning (for the time being) aggregates remain open to influences to come. Depending on the technicalities of cultural subjects these influences are accepted differently. As mentioned above and according to Stiegler the human is the invention of technics. By appropriating techniques that turned the human into cultural beings, techniques in their turn have, replaced' the human. Artificial Intelligence is possible because human intelligence is already and always artificial, since memory, the source of this intelligence is artificial. Technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, may in fact replace the human, but they will not replace the contingent thinking subject. Together with techniques, thought plays an important role in the constitution of subjects. The proliferation of techniques provides multiplicity-oriented objectivity. These techniques are manifested in humans depending on memory and culture has become merely an application amongst other applications. In this situation, culture may be understood as the assemblage of fuzzy aggregates with the meaning of an exteriorized image of thought. Differently from the problem of, representation' as well as, solipsism', meaning can be said that it is an exterior image of thought that is formed and

transformed by difference and repetition and constantly challenges the fixity. Once externalised it becomes a matter of culture and enters the zone of meaning. This entrance is accompanied by imitation. Derived from the Latin *imitari* which means image making, imitation is a condition of one's own making. I am interested in the mimesis as the imitation which leads to translations of what is imitated. In other words, it is not only the question of blind imitation, but also the question of the awareness of what is imitated and further developed by translating imitations. Derrida's reading of Joyce is an example of „transimitation“(DERRIDA 1991: 573). In these writings, philosopher Derrida by revealing the hidden ' philosophy in the work of Joyce opens up a perspective. This perspective is the double becoming' by revealing the hidden ' philosophy in the work of Joyce while revealing the philosopher hidden in the literature. An artist (read: Joyce) revealed in the philosophical work or in the „mimodrama" of Derrida. This mimodrama consists of Derrida's, imitating' of the thought of Joyce, which elaborates philosophy in the work of literature. The question here is not whether all involved with making images are thinkers or not, such as artists for example, but the question of different degrees of imitation. The image is both revealing and concealing of the truth. Imitation is a method to bring a missing object into clearer light and into full consciousness by appropriating the experience of the other in order to succeed or to surpass the adopted by imitating. Images become something more than simply objects to be looked at; they express Levi-Strauss' sentiments and become something good to think with'. Seen through this lens, both translation and imitation are forms of resistance that make it possible to conjugate thinking and making, sensibility, and intelligibility. Another aspect of trans-imitation is the distinction it makes in degrees of memory. Degrees of memory play the role of understanding firstly the fuzziness of the event and secondly the translating of imitations at the very point of the impossibility of translation. With the translation, from the appropriation of other cultures to the plastic surgeries and gene editing and cyber physics of algorithms, the network and human interactions, we are, in Merleau-Ponty's words „condemned to meaning", which in its turn makes possible not only representation but the unrepresentability of events, including non-representational imitation as a matter of the human condition (MERLEAU-PONTY 2013). This condition understood through the translation paradigm helps me to investigate further the formation, information, and re-formation of the subject which leads to trans-individuation, which takes place not only in relation to language and meaning but technical objects themselves understood through the process of imitation central to the translation. Language, meaning, and symbolic exchange are all subordinated to the mimetic faculty and its translatability sets limits and transgressions. With the increasing

knowledge of technology and by the adoption of technologies for technics, techne as art may be a new industrial model and a new mode of thought. As a result, imitations provide the role of translating rough images or confusions of the new industrial model into a clearer picture; because these models themselves are temporal objects until the new ones come into existence. Mimesis in this sense is an access to the exterior, „the bridge to the world“ as Adorno stated (ADORNO 1995: 314). Images of the exterior are places of hypomnemata or a „great outdoors“ (MEILLASSOUX 2008). As mentioned above, memory (anamnesis) is „contaminated with its first substitute: hypomnesis“ (DERRIDA 1991: 112). Hypomnesis, is the making-technical of memory; the hypomnemata include all kinds of memory substitutes and externalizations such as writing, photography, machines, etc. This is an antonym to anamnesis and together they are playing the role in memory's double act: remembrance and oblivion. This contamination intermittently demonstrates itself in living memory. „What we call living memory is always already in the process of exteriorizing itself out by non-living technical supplements“ (STIEGLER 2011: 134). Memory, in this sense, is the cultural memory, because once externalized it becomes the subject of further classifications and recordings in cultural artifacts. The confusion provided by these classifications demands a further understanding of differences crucial to understanding degrees of memory which is helpful to distinguish between different forms of technological retention. It is necessary because imitation is the human condition (GEBAUER/WULF 1995). It is also the condition of humans as a technique. It is obvious today those technologies imitate human memory and what is drawn gathered together by thought. In turn, the more we use technologies, the more we imitate them. In this mutual „mimodrama“, the technology is also the imitation of knowledge of the real' provided by the contingent thinking subject. At the same time, it also provides confusion, for example, if Plato's writing imitates speech, I would say that after the writing imitates the speech, the speech itself becomes a confused imitation of writing. And if mimesis as the imitation is the human condition then this condition is also a confused condition. This fuzziness of the confused condition opens up the chance for translating and acting 'as if' and it is also the condition of one's own making at the point of being confused. Knowledge is infinite and the phenomenon doesn't have a strict definition of aggregates. This opens up a contradictory space and in this contradictory space of negotiation, the alterity takes place, where the situation is articulated according to the current. It is also the point of naming or giving the name and understanding of aggregates as, fuzzy' objects, which is explained by the fact that our perception of any object provides associations through words coming to our mind. Words are always fuzzy, because they are not defined as one thing, but

understood in the plural meanings provided by them. Although they are meaning-free at the inception, giving the name to the object makes an object interesting for us as a meaningful one. It is because the confrontation with the object becomes presentable with the language of the recorded memory, but language is formed or developed in time and the endurance of the naming is the trajectory of thought. Because of this objects are always temporal and fuzzy. Assembling the objects as aggregates give meaning to objects which exist independently of our mind, as assemblages they become meaningful through the encounter with the thought. This encounter is the beginning of the 'study' of the object. Further, the degree of complexity stipulates the dynamics of thinking. The degree of indeterminacy is the main idea of „fuzzy logic“. This logic is not being defined because of the fuzziness of the essential qualities and finding its termination or temporary definition as a function only. Because objects are positioned in the space of emergence, access to them is created independently of their being complex or simple. To speak of the „fuzzy object“ means that an object is in a situation of being grasped and any object is grasped in time; the complex ones take longer time and simpler objects take shorter time to be grasped. Zadeh has shown that depending on the degree of complexity the object provides more fuzziness, „...precise statements lose meaning and meaningful statements lose precision“(ZADEH 1994). While finding a solution, decision-making itself is a fuzzy activity so the fuzziness should become the decision, and Zadeh's invention waste unprecedented "computing with words". The space of the language and meaning open in any operation rather than relying on calculative reason and instead of answering Yes or No, there is a fuzzy state of the double negation based on Yes and Yes. The „fuzzy logic“, demonstrated that there is no one truth but degrees of truth which creates temporal objects. I would also say that humans are one of these temporal objects who compute words. Computing with words means that objects of computation are words, perceptions, and propositions drawn from a natural language. It is a necessary tool when the available information is perception-based or not precise enough to use numbers. Zadeh calls this kind of acting „as if“ as a „granulation“, lumping things together. „If you want to park a car and somebody said, you had to do it within $\pm 1/10$ of an inch of some particular point, you'd be in trouble. The reason why people can do things like park a car is that they don't have to be very specific to succeed“ (ZADEH1994: 46f.). One uses granulation, which means lumping contradictory things together without excluding and in this way the missing dimension of time becomes present. Once realizing that while listening to the podcast or music by direct participation in the mimetic technology, which is the headphone, this awareness opens a new space for understanding that one doesn't simply and exclusively

consume what is available in any shop, but detached to places of memory disseminated elsewhere and brought to one's head and ears while connecting the listener to the „great outdoors “in order to include a memory of the absent present. But it is the beginning of the work further, polishing the work will depend on how to manage not to exclude anything but to remain comprehensible while realizing that any subject today is the conjugation of the “montage-consciousness“. It is the question of today's cultural theory and it is the theory's philosophical attitude. „The long revolution“ of elaborating the missing dimension of time in order to include what is excluded is the never-ending cultural revolution, which is central to any form of culture the main goal of which is human freedom (WILLIAMS 2011). The renewal of cultural theory and Cultural studies as a part of it needs to retain the philosophical understanding of this necessity, which is the fact of the contingency of freedom.

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