A note on the contingent necessity of a Morphogenic Society and human flourishing

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Abstract: The Centre for Social Ontology working group project has been exploring the concept of a Morphogenic Society since 2013 (see Morgan, 2016b). The project is now drawing to a close. One of the arising issues from the project has been whether such a society can be and is liable to be one of human flourishing. In this short paper I explore one possible aspect of the concept of a Morphogenic Society.[1] A Morphogenic Society *may* involve issues of "contingent necessity". Contingent necessity may provide one way to think about human flourishing, and this in turn may highlight the potential significance of the concept of a Morphogenic Society as a resource in positional argument for human flourishing.

The significance of the necessity that 'need not be'

I'm going to start with what may appear initially to be pointless ruminative word play. There is an underlying purpose, so bear with me.

Contingent necessity or the idea of a necessity that 'need not be' seems formally nonsensical. However, within human systems the formally nonsensical need not be nonsense, because context can provide a semantic spur in the form of an imperative. One can work to realise a potential, where context, sufficiently understood and explicated, creates the grounds for an imperative: 'we can' becomes 'we should' becomes 'we must'. This by no means implies simple reduction to a There is No Alternative (TINA) position, since TINA is a rhetorical move to prevent understanding and close down reasoned argument. Contingent necessity refers to ways to explore arguments.[2] TINA is ideological positioning, and is purposively restrictive, as exclusionary, in a pre-emptive way. Contingent necessity is intended to be posed differently to this.

A necessity that 'need not be' seems silly in the abstract, but it is a possibility precisely because of the characteristics of social reality. Humans are reflexive persons with agency. They are able to construct the social world, subject to material and cumulative structural and cultural conditions. Construction is also contestation. Often, to realise a potential we first *realise* that the potential needs to be realised. Realisation (to bring into being) may not be inexorable or ineluctable, yet it can be powerfully preferable and perhaps, in some circumstances, *required* for the most basic of purposes, including in some circumstances survival. Something can be 'necessary' 'because of' and 'based on'. So, I am not referring here to the standard critical realist conceptualisation of

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[1] To emphasise: the following is not intended to be fully representative of all possible interpretations, aspects and arguments regarding a Morphogenic Society. For that one should refer to the published volumes.

[2] The grounds to construct the exclusion are also philosophically explicable as a Tina compromise, see Bhaskar, 1993, 116-119

internal necessary relations (student-teacher), nor to J. L. Mackie's INUS causal complex, but rather issues of futures (though these may then have internal necessary relations and INUS conditionality).[3] In terms of futures, contingent necessity arises because of the characteristics of the human - we are deliberative creatures. Characteristics involve needs and capabilities and these are profound issues in terms of human flourishing, since what it is to flourish flows from what kind of being has the potential to flourish (see Assiter and Noonan, 2007; Martins, 2007). However, it is with the role of deliberation or reflexivity that I am principally concerned here, and as I will set out later, this too is constitutive of flourishing (and so a human capability and need). The social world is not just passively received. We do not simply recognize the various components of *how* we have lived, but rather deliberate about how we *should* live (based partly on responding to the consequences of how we have lived). This tempers temporality. Contingent necessity may flow from judgement. It applies to a position that is reasoned out as a response to the consequences of (whilst being made simultaneously possible by) an historical, in process, open social reality. Contingent necessity may seem initially odd, if not oxymoronic, but it is not thereby inconsistent as a statement in terms of the conditional aboutness of social reality.

Social reality can be referred to at various levels of generality. By common recognition many now live within Modernity (though clearly this is differentiated, disputed and involves also pre-modern practices in some places). Contemporary modernity is sometimes referred to as 'Late'. The implication is that it is in its later stages and so in transition to something else. For some, it is already significantly different. Modernity is 'liquid' or other related terms, each intended to imply characteristics of flux, fluidity, non-fixivity, transcending of limits or constraint (for example, Bauman, 2000). For a realist, such language is problematic. It places an overwhelming emphasis on the absence of conditions. As such, it conflates two different things: first, the observation that the social world is variable and changing, and in some ways, under some descriptions, it may be more varied and changing more quickly; second, the inference that more variation and intensified change implies an absence of conditions and determinate (though not deterministic) processes: as though social reality, the social form, was no longer formed (and was instead defined as the social form that is implicitly formless - appearing in time rather than being produced through time).

The Centre for Social Ontology working group, convened by Margaret Archer, has been exploring this conflation through a series of annual seminars,

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[3] For a clear statement of internal relations as necessary see Sayer, 1992, 89-92. Note Sayer also refers to contingency and necessity (neither of which implies regularity) in terms of an emergent form from the combination of two prior contingent relations (he is concerned here with 'partial naturalism' and notes 'contingent necessity' is a 'confusing' term) in Sayer 2000, 16-18. INUS refers to: an Insufficient but Necessary part of a condition which is itself Unnecessary but Sufficient. For example, a short circuit may be pivotal to an electrical house fire. See Mackie, 1965. Mackie ties INUS to causation, and in this domain it invites criticisms because necessary conditions need not be causal in the active sense (though can be in the Aristotelian 4 causes typology). If I ask how was x murdered, and x was stabbed, then it is reasonable to state he was killed using a knife - but it would not be semantically appropriate to state the knife was the cause of his murder (rather than the means of his death). The condition is also conditional.

reproduced in an five volume edited collection (again, see Morgan, 2016b).[4] The intent has been to develop a more coherent realist approach to the potential for a new social form. The project takes seriously the observation of variation and change (without reducing the concepts of what is varied and what has changed to what is observed only). The potential social form is referred to as a Morphogenic Society. The choice of phrasing follows from the terminology of morphogenesis within Archer's morphogenetic/static (M/M) approach to a social ontology of agents, structure and culture (see Archer, 1995). Morphogenesis refers to processes of elaboration, rather than stricter reproduction or morphostasis, of some distinguishable component of society: aspects of agency, structures and cultures. The concept of a Morphogenic Society follows tentatively from Archer's prior work on reflexivity, which identified various forms of reflexivity increasingly operative in Modernity (see, Archer, 2012). The point of departure for *ontological speculation* regarding the Morphogenic Society within the project is the issue of whether and in what sense reflexivity is rooted in an increasingly heterogeneous social reality. For example, whether agency is *required* to be *more* reflexive across a wider range of activity. If this is so, it may be indicative of incipient transformative effects on social reality, and hence the social form. A social form that is not simply disorder, that is, one that still makes sense in terms of explicable processes of determination, but which is more heterogeneous, may be one where morphogenesis comes to dominate (for conceptual clarification see, for example, Archer, 2013: pp. 12, 14 and 18). Reflexivity is elaborative (though there is more to elaboration and its context than agency within M/M). If elaboration becomes increasingly significant then in a non-vicious circularity argument it may be indicative of a self-reinforcing tendency: the social form becomes one where elaboration is increasingly called upon to manage the consequences of elaboration. As such, in so far as the social reality is ordered (which must be established rather than assumed) its forms of stabilization would be, by internal construction, non-stationary.

In the abstract this way of thinking about social reality can seem little different than approaches conceived in terms of metaphors of 'liquid' or flows and such. However, social reality, in its parts and wholes need not be considered as simply dissolving into formlessness. A reality of continually shifting difference and differentiation can still be recognizably relational and interactive. The idea of order as leading to meta-stability (a process that is identifiably reproducing) is not antithetical to a dominance of elaboration. The family, for example, in Late Modernity is increasingly differentiated, both in legal and normative ways (for issues see Archer, 2012 and Donati & Archer, 2015). Yet there is still law, norms and a concept of the family. There may be disintegrations, if one explores the nature of the social processes at work, but there are also recognizable pathways of mutually referenced change. If one expands this dynamic then the concept of a Morphogenic Society is not conceptually incoherent. Nor, given the many areas of modern life one could choose to focus on as locations where morphogenesis seems to be creating self-reinforcing tendencies, is the concept of a Morphogenic Society rendered empirically unlikely (in the sense that there is no observed

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[4] Note, there is also a series of reviews of the early volumes from the realist political economist Jonathan Joseph (2014; 2016). Amongst other things, Joseph highlights the need to identify a generative mechanism for a Morphogenic Society.

morphogenesis that is cumulatively occurring in various ways - these in many respects are what theorists of Late Modernity (liquid etc) are seeking to grasp).

However, a social order of stabilization without stasis where morphogenesis dominates still begs a variety of questions. A new social form is a transformation from a prior form. This creates issues regarding what constitutes sufficient difference to be a *new* social form. Since a Morphogenic Society is one dominated by morphogenesis then one can reasonably question what threshold of morphogenesis is required for social reality to be characterised as a Morphogenic Society. Widespread elaboration from elaboration is a matter ripe for dispute. One might contest the evidence based on use of evidence regarding framing issues: the construction of significant timeframes, geographical extent, whether a bounded whole involves *elaborative* elaboration -- calling forth more elaboration to deal with the consequence of what is elaborated -- and so forth. One might dispute the nature of change, and whether change is change to stay the same and more akin to morphostatic reproduction rather than transformation through elaboration.

The scope for dispute, however, is not a weakness of the concept of a Morphogenic Society *per se*, it is a problem of the complexity of the world that we then seek to conceptualise and categorise, and it is a problem of identifying breaks and transformations (perhaps emergence, diachronically expressed) in what is otherwise a matter of historical processes that we are seeking to grasp from within. Dispute does not prevent subsequent agreement or recognition regarding transformations that have occurred or are occurring. It is worth bearing in mind that few social forms are heralded rather than retrospectively recognized - though some thinkers may be earlier articulators of the new than others (e.g. Smith or Marx on aspects of capitalism). Furthermore, the term morphogenesis is deliberately non-specific. It has meaning but is sufficiently flexible to apply to any number of constructs. In what sense a social form such as a Morphogenic Society is formed is, therefore, also disputable. It is here that I want to consider *one* aspect of the concept of a Morphogenic Society based on the idea of contingent necessity.

The quality of a Morphogenic Society

Morphogenesis in the abstract tells one little about the principles that drive, shape or motivate elaboration (what is ingrained in structures, culture, institutions etc). As such, it tells one little about how morphogenesis is situated either in particularities of some aspect of a social form or more broadly in terms of system-wide integrations. This is an additional issue, and in terms of the Morphogenic Society project has led to discussion regarding what qualities actually constitute a Morphognic Society over and above the dominance of morphogenesis.5 The *nature* of a Morphogenic Society is to some degree qualitatively open. That this can be so can be illustrated based on what is already around us, if one considers areas of morphogenesis.

Financialisation has cumulatively resulted in powerful corporate actors (for example, Morgan 2009). Financialisation has resulted in transformed practices of finance, and also in increasing influence and reach of financialised

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5 Notably in volume five, see Archer, 2017

relations within other aspects of life, such as work, government, and the family. The consequences of this have in many ways required elaborative responses. For example, management of budgets within the family in Austerity Britain has become increasingly creative based on new constraints, and this feeds into forms of elaboration within and beyond the family. A 2013 UK Office of National Statistics report on social exclusion and poverty found that 36.6% of the population were unable to meet sudden unexpected expenses. As Rowntree and the Bank of England have also noted, large swathes of the UK population are trapped in debt vulnerability situations. They are experiencing changed circumstances to which they must respond creatively and yet without significant power to alter the circumstances they find themselves in. The context is elaborative in many ways, including the existence of more and different varieties of family. The underlying aspects of finance systems are shifting (legislative, practical etc). The interactions with households are also different than prior to the financial crisis, as is the context of employment. There are identifiable elements of morphogenesis occurring. However, if one considers the particularities of how elaborations are being shaped they do not involve profound transformations in the power and influence of some key corporate actors (for the limits of current reform of finance see Morgan and Sheehan, 2015).

If we generalise from this example, one can then make the point that situations that are more elaborative need not, simply by being elaborative, be positive for all or even the majority concerned. To be clear, no claim is made by Archer or others within the project that the concept of morphogenesis and that of the Morphogenic Society are intrinsically beneficial to given parties, quite the reverse. Morphogenesis as a concept is primarily descriptive-as-explanatory-conducive of social activity and its consequences. It allows methodological insight into processes, subject to a social ontology. A Morphogenic Society is in the first instance one that follows from the balance of social activity so described. Thereafter, the qualities of such a society remain a matter of inquiry and dispute. In the spirit of critical inquiry participants in the project have consistently considered the various ways in which relations of Modernity may be extended (as elaborated), and whether particular qualities of what may be new may be detrimental to parties (see Archer, 2013, 2014). Participants are in general committed to generalised human flourishing, so a potentially oppressive kind of Morphogenic Society is clearly not one that participants want to argue for. But the point bears emphasising. A Morphogenic Society *could be* one that carries with it the oppressive and divisive qualities of the society from which the social form is a transition. A Morphogenic Society *could* be a transformation in some ways but not in others. Moreover, if one considers the consequences of the historical processes with which we are now living, this is not some minor concern or unlikely possibility. So, contingent necessity is an issue.

Consider the current situation of climate change. Relatively few are aware that major state and international organizations, as well as corporations and high net worth individuals, are already planning securitised responses to climate change. To non-academics or those who do not read the Guardian or listen to Radio 4 or other country's public access media, it can readily seem like a lunatic fringe claim. However, since the early 2000s, the CIA, the EU, and many others have commissioned reports on the possible security implications of climate

change. Climate change is situated as a 'threat multiplier' (see Buxton and Hayes, 2016). This is important because influential voices have begun to position responses based on worse case scenarios of more frequent erratic weather events, food and water resource conflicts, mass migration, and other issues. Some of this is scaremongering to create a climate of fear conducive to particular interests. However, it is not thereby irrelevant. The underlying logic is one where parties are not committing to preventing the causes (climate change), but positioning how to manage the consequences. So, climate change, rather than a problem to be solved based on social redesign to ensure the flourishing of all (a focus on universal genuine security of the person) becomes a matter of militarised security (for recent policy on climate change see Morgan 2016a; Spash, 2016). A logic of conflict, exclusions and oppressions is set in motion. If this seems cabalistic consider how democratic spaces are already beginning to be closed down. This was a process begun by the amorphous War on Terror. It has extended to the gradually erosion or withdrawal of rights through forms of legislation whose legitimacy is based on exceptional circumstances directed at exceptionalised persons, but which can actually be applied to almost anyone. The populations of the wealthy world are already cumulatively experiencing a discursive shift. Migration has already created a powerful sense of a divided world, austerity has already seen the imposition of finance-as-technical solutions to problems. One need only consider the problems of Greece, the rise of populism, Brexit and the election of Trump (see Sandbeck and Schneider, 2014; Bruff, 2014; Morgan, 2017; Fullbrook and Morgan 2017). It is not an unthinkable step from where we are now to acquiescence to increasingly authoritarian solutions and divisive approaches to the problems of the world. These may emerge to some degree from Taylor's (1992) soft authoritarianism of democratic neglect, but also from the continued failure of democratic pushback and social movements (contingent though this is, see conclusion).[6]

Clearly, a climate change affected future is one likely to call forth increasing need for elaborative responses. It may well, therefore, make more likely the possibility that the many kinds of morphogenesis one might observe in the social world become in turn a Morphogenic Society. However, the quality of that Morphogenic Society could readily be one that is dystopic rather than utopic. At the same time a Morphogenic Society, as various participants to the Centre for Social Ontology project have argued, need not be dystopic. If one considers morphogenesis in terms of possible associated characteristics then it has the potential to be conducive to human flourishing. Not only that, one can reasonably make the case that a survivable, meta-stable Morphogenic Society *ought* and perhaps *must* be one that pursues collective human flourishing. General human flourishing becomes a contingent necessity for and within a Morphogenic Society. The climate change example in particular can illustrate this point. In order to clearly establish what I mean by this I first set out some important aspects of the concept of eudemonia as human flourishing based on Aristotle's work. There are, of course, many other sources one might use to consider human flourishing.

Eudemonia and the Morphogenic Society

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[6] The point applies to many aspects of modern life, see Morgan, 2016c

Eudemonia is typically translated as 'human flourishing'. For Aristotle, such flourishing was the primary interest at which all other activity is directed. He was not concerned with outlining the specifics of a good society or with exploring or providing solutions to concrete moral dilemmas. For example, in situation x do y based on procedure z -- consequential, deontological etc. Aristotle's specific concern was to consider the nature of virtue. That is, the various qualities attributed to emotion and action expressible in right conduct. Some of Aristotle's concerns can seem anachronistic in terms of the context of qualities he discussed. For example, courage, honour, piety etc as these were meaningful to a Hellene of his time, though this does not mean they have no resonance today in different contexts. Moreover, some of his statements when taken in isolation can seem circular or vacuous. This is in so far as a great deal of the discussion of virtue takes it as given that, upon reflection, we know what is appropriate-as-virtuous conduct, and this is the same for others. So, an appropriate community is one that recognizes and practices goods. This can result in a reductive sense of: *the good person is good, the good society is the good society*. Concomitantly, Aristotle's virtuous person can seem to be vulnerable to critique in two ways. First, his concept fails to take due consideration of socialisation, and so is under-socialised as theory of the virtuous person whose concept and practice of virtue is affected by socialisation. There is a failure to recognize the harms done by the 'virtuous' in the name of virtue.[7] Second, and by contrast, Aristotle's virtuous person is ultimately conformist by reference group, and so detrimentally over-socialised in terms of actual practice and hence conduct qua virtue as ethics.[8] Though there is some credence in the critiques they can also miss the point that Aristotle's work is an expression of potential. A person is a work in progress, including through phronesis and Aristotle seems aware of the potential problems of his position.[9]

At the beginning of the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle explicitly recognizes that his focus can appear truistic and in a sense circular (Aristotle, 1996, 12). As he also notes, the plausibility of any deliberation regarding virtue resides not only in a combination of the elaboration of the parts of the case made, but also in the actual practice of what is expressed in the general case. This cannot simply be proved or demonstrated in philosophy on the page. It can only be recognized through its realisation. So, any circularity along the lines of *the good is good* is non-vicious. Aristotle's point of departure is that the human has needs and dispositions that can be expressed or repressed, and capacities or further potentials that can be identified, inscribed and cultivated. For Aristotle, the human is incomplete in relation to realisable goods. As such, Aristotle's

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[7] Harms related to gender, race, slavery etc. 'Be virtuous' is an invocation to a quality of activity rather than to a given activity (the benevolent slave owner)

[8] For example, selective quotation can easily produce this impression: "the good man wishes for what is truly wished for... the good man judges everything correctly; what things truly are... what chiefly distinguishes the good man is that he sees the truth in each kind, being himself as it were, the standard and measure of the noble and pleasant." Aristotle, 1996, 61. Blackledge & Knight eds (2008), includes essays that explore Aristotle via MacIntyre -- specifically the problem of developing a revolutionary or transformative core of ethics from Aristotle in the context of the determinations of capitalism.

[9] That is, 'practical wisdom' -- the cumulative experience accumulated through life on the basis of particularities.

context for the development of argument is more suggestive of a commitment to or optimism in regard of the improvability of the human condition, rather than mere naivety in regard of the way that condition is *conditioned*. Aristotle's virtue ethics are not antithetical to also considering the nature of given context, rules and such, in so far as these are relevant to given situations for reasoned practical engagement. So, virtue ethics need not be considered hermetically sealed from matters relevant to deontology and so forth. Moreover, cultivation is precisely a matter of willed or reflexive socialisation and this is necessarily relational since the reference group is a community capable of the same processes and activity.10 In a modern context it can seem odd that Aristotle identifies reason(ing) as both a need and the highest good, rather than say care, community or active participation in the polis, but he does not neglect these.11 Rather they flow from or are situated to reason in Aristotle's own work, but also in later developments from his work (see for example, Smith, 2015; Sayer, 2011). Moreover, though his doctrine of the mean, where conduct following reasoning on the nature of an issue rejects extremes, may be interpreted reductively as conformist, it might more appropriately be interpreted as centred rather than centrist. The point is to avoid extremes, in the sense of emotive qualities of reasoned conduct (acting in rage etc), rather than to *a priori* accept or reject principles of or substance of that conduct. One can still reject majority action or common contexts as incorrect, inappropriate, unjust etc through the reasoning process.

In any case, Aristotle's virtue ethics are directed at a recognized situation of social malleability, where the world is uncertain and where action is voluntary and involves choice.12 It is through *deliberation and learning* that virtue is cultivated and human flourishing or eudemonia realised. For the individual, this is a matter of a lifetime. For society, it is a never-ending process, since there is, though Aristotle does not spend any significant time oriented upon this, a formal contradiction or tension in eudemonia. Specifically, if the person is realised through reasoning and subsequent practices, and so is engaged in completion (she flourishes and hence can be referred to as operatively experiencing eudemonia) *through* reflexive activity, within and in regard of a community, then

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10 Cultivation creates numerous theoretical and practical problems, since one cannot guarantee that socialisation and development are not pathological, and one must then address the problem of whether in actuality one is capable of recognizing the pathology. This, however, is a subset of the case regarding the possibility of judgemental rationality - usually pursued in terms of needs, dispositions, feelings etc - i.e. the claim that it is human characteristics, which make such cultivation *possible*. It is manifestly the case one can barbarise the human and create societies in which people do not flourish or in terms of which flourishing is in some sense harmed - but the very possibility of recognition creates the basis of the case that the alternatives are at least grounds that can be subject to judgement. Aristotle's work is rooted in the claim that there is a duty to 'prefer the truth' (1996: 8); and based on the commitment to the possibility of truth, and in the context of ethics, that the truth of what is good is something that is translated into activity and then judged in terms of activity (for a real embodied human who is able to suffer and flourish).

11 Aristotle's work on ethics is developed in several essays collected in Volume 2 of Barnes' edition of his complete works (1984), notably *Nichomachean Ethics*; *Magna Moralia*, *Eudemian Ethics*, *On Virtues and Vices*, and *Politics*. Aristotle is, of course, also well known for the claim that humans are political animals.

12 Aristotle distinguishes between disposition and volition but the nuance of the argument is not significant here for the general point that there are dispositions and capacities that are realisable and that the context is ultimately uncertainty and choice, see 1996, Bk 3.

that context and community must necessarily be perpetually incomplete for the individual to be able to engage in the activity which realises a key aspect of the self that is eudemonistic; hence a eudemonistic society must also be simultaneously non-complete *as* a eudemonistic society in order to be a eudemonistic society for the particular persons within, engaged, and constructing that society. This incompleteness must also extend to the person. Note, the contradiction or tension only arises if one insists on considering the problem as formal logic and treats terms as symbols rather than as conditional and shifting concepts with real referents.13 Much of the potential problem dissolves if one accepts that being is always becoming, that any particular state is also a process, and that eudemonia is practical, where one should not conflate the agreed constituents of the society over which deliberation continues to occur with the capacity to deliberate as a eudemonistic trait, which must continue to be enacted for the person *to be* flourishing.14 The apparent contradiction does not mean any society is as good (or bad) as any other, simply because we are always deliberating and seemingly need to do so. Rather the reverse is the case, it is a fully realised participatory (democratic) society that would seem to be central to eudemonia. This returns us briefly to a point signposted earlier. Deliberation, reflexivity, reason etc. are not just means to seek flourishing, they are constitutive aspects of flourishing. They are also powers or capacities of the human expressible as needs and capabilities, and so subsets of the general itemisation of needs and capabilities (though arguably they are subsets that exceed the set). One can find them in the work of Sen or Nussbaum. One can also align them as basic to Donati and Archer's relational goods (2015, 199). That is, goods of 'sociability' that are continually achieved in a relation and that are not reducible to the instrumentality of the relation or goal. Such relation goals are typically community-rooted and pro-social.

Moving on, though much of the potential problem of a contradiction dissolves when appropriately considered, the actual potential of eudemonia with reference to the Morphogenic Society does not. A Morphogenic Society is defined by its variegation and as a society of process and elaboration. It is one that concomitantly calls forth greater requirements for quotidian reflexivity merely to proceed. However, 'calling forth' does not guarantee that reflexivity has given qualities or actual consequences that are eudemonistic -- as, say, neoliberalism indicates. As such, there are phases to consider. Activity may be eudemonic-conducive and, thereafter, a Morphogenic Society *may* be one that is eudemonic-fit. For this to be so it must be reflexively constructed *to be* fit. There must be contestation of ways we should live. This raises issues that can be made sense of via contingent necessity. 'We can' becomes 'we should' becomes 'we must'. This is an active process of reasoned conduct subject to some problem field and involving cultivation via virtue ethics that are themselves an aspect of flourishing.

As regards the Morphogenic Society, for variation and heterogeneity to be other than disintegrating and destabilising, then, particular characteristics of a

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13 Note: Aristotle is also widely recognized, along with Plato, as the source of the principles of logic that give rise to some of the problems here - including the excluded middle (see the *Metaphysics*, Bk iv in Barnes, 1984).

14 All of which lead to dialectical theorisation of the grounds of being and freedom. See Bhaskar, 1993

social form would seem to be required based on the particular powers of the human: a society of variation and heterogeneity is potentially one of opportunity, greater choice, limited conformity to oppressive convention or simple reproduction of oppressive technocratic spheres; but this is only so in so far as stabilisation can occur without stasis. This seems to call forth qualitative aspects of the particular powers of the human. That is, reflexivity and reason rooted in a participatory medium i.e. precisely the grounds (if not the guarantee) of flourishing. When stated in the abstract and when the term eudemonia is used this can seem utopian wishful thinking at odds with the real world. But it is no more than the claim that the human condition is improvable, progress is possible, and for it to be so we are required to take responsibility for our actions individually and collectively. It starts with a step, it starts with a conversation, it starts with a policy or practice. There is nothing unrealistic or unrealisable about that.15

The point I want to emphasise here is that the possibility of a eudemonic Morphogenic Society is dependent on practical forms of the characteristics which are themselves aspects of human flourishing - deliberative participation. In social theory one can place this point in a series of distinctions and inferences:

1. Change and morphogenesis are not necessarily the same
2. Morphogenesis is not necessarily eudemonic-conducive morphogenesis
3. Morphogenesis can be eudemonic-conducive
4. A Morphogenic society can be eudemonic-fit

Here we return to the climate change issue by way of conclusion.

Conclusion: human flourishing and contingent necessity

In a prior section I noted that various tendencies in Late Modernity seemed to involve forms of elaboration that did not necessarily involve significant change

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15 If an inter-human closed system could exist we would likely feel compelled to break it, which is a reasonable indication that such a system is impossible (or semantically incoherent as a statement for reference). No system is perfect not even a eudemonic system. Rather it seems in order to be eudemonic it would require to be imperfect (perfectly imperfect in order to be eudemonic, perhaps). Humans are problem solving, societies are open and so also throw up problems or opportunities to create problems (as challenges, new constructs etc). The real question is what kind for problems are desirable; problems, moreover, may simply be a different way of thinking about variety - problems are not necessarily problematic in the negative connotation of the term - but rather desirable, and even if adverse may still be something we long for - this is not irrational, or infantile or a sign we have not evolved as societies or a species. One should also note that there is a reciprocal relation between emotional well-being and practical outward oriented social existence. A society of individuals encouraged to increasingly focus in on themselves can create a distorted form of self-cultivation, which becomes about the superficialities of how one is projected to others; this in turn can result in perpetual anxiety since the grounds for self-concern can be continual self-criticism based on the failure to achieve an exteriorised ideal of the self. However, if one's sense of self flows from an outward oriented project of what one does for others (rather than how one projects an acceptable perfected self) then the terms of emotional well-being are quite different and the implications for society are also fundamentally different.

to power relations. I also noted that, developing from this, there was some possibility that responses to climate change might result in forms of oppressive elaboration and perhaps also a form of authoritarian Morphogenic Society. However, several further points can be made here by way of conclusion.

An authoritarian form of Morphogenic Society is not inconceivable but it is also likely unsustainable. It seems to run counter to the capacities of the human (hence the surprising fragility of apparently powerful authoritarian regimes in history). Moreover, the underlying logic of planning for a divisive future is intrinsically built on limiting transformation in the underlying causes of climate change now. That is, the political economy built on carbons, consumption based growth models, and the spread of industrialisation through globalisation. Such an authoritarian Morphogenic Society would be one that reproduced and exacerbated the material-economic problems that called forth the authoritarian responses of that society. This can have a variety of consequences. First, the authoritarian response may fail precisely because it perpetuated underlying practices of a political economy. This occurs in many ways, including through the way knowledge is constructed and reproduced (see Lawson, 2015, Morgan 2015a, Morgan 2015b). If authoritarian Morphogenic Societies are focused around responding to climate change, but not to transforming the causes of climate change, then they run the risk of continuing to overburden the planet. It is basic to ecological economics, politics and science that one cannot negotiate with the planet. One either does what is necessary to preserve and reproduce its capacities to preserve and reproduce ourselves, or one does not. Ecological limits do not respond to persuasion and have no way to value failed good intentions. Technology may help solve problems but technological determinism is itself a problem in a market system, which undermines our felt need to act with caution. Second, over time, the powerful may well comprehend that divisive authoritarian responses will be self-defeating and so may themselves become agents of transformation. This is in so far as they can break out of any lock-in into those positions. Third, it is conceivable, though unpalatable, that authoritarian responses may be functional. In the longer term the social form may itself be transformed, if authoritarian responses maintain civilisation in some places for a sufficient period to allow technological changes to address the problems of the political economy that the social form resisted directly addressing (short of an extinction event). Fourth, and most importantly, increasing recognition of the possibility of an authoritarian Morphogenic Society can itself constitute a resource for social movement responses, which recognize the extreme risk to the majority that the perpetuation of current power relations represent. That is, practical engagement as human flourishing *for* human flourishing is recognized as a contingent necessity.16

Note, highlighting contingent necessity in the context above is not simply naïve -- in so far as it places the emphasis on transformative human action for human flourishing. The recognition does not require one to ignore the structural power of capital, the nature of power and interests. It does require one to ignore counsels of despair, and so perhaps be wilfully naïve and so knowingly naïve (to add another semantically awkward combination). Moreover, this is quite

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16 For the general plausibility of the ways of thinking about the future set out in this paragraph see Patomäki, 2008 and 2010

different as an orientation to the future than Rawls' veil of ignorance. Rawls' invites the reader to put aside any knowledge of one's position within a society and then consider what kind of social mechanisms one would want to observe.17 Rawl's argument is that if I can be anyone then I will argue for a society that benefits everyone: justice is grounded in merit, and reductions in inter-generational privilege. However, Rawls assumes an 'anyone' position becomes an 'everyone' imperative. This is suggestive but incomplete because we may accept different levels of risk and so different types of social solution to the possibility of inequity and harm. More fundamentally, it puts aside for the purposes of philosophy that we are all someone and remain so always. It may be useful to create an ideal situation of persons that could not exist to make a point. But one can make the point more powerfully based on the *reality* of persons as common and the *reality* of consequences from the activity of those persons within systems (the collective interests of 'we' does not require us to be anonymised and effectively erased).

Morphogenesis is the potential for things to be otherwise in two ways. It is the grounds by which change is occurring *and* it is the grounds that can be reflexively worked upon to shape what could arise. The two are in many respects overlapping if one accepts that reflexivity is increasingly inscribed in modern life. Of course, a further distinction must still be maintained. The capacity for reflexivity may be basic to the human, but the degree and quality of reflexivity may be a product of a social form. There is a difference. To emphasise the latter can be to emphasise pessimistically (oppressive socialisation in pathological systems creates adverse reflexivity). Here, one needs to consider the difference that difference makes. One overly socialises the human as a subject if one denies the capacity for real agency of the human by reducing the person to the socialised subject, whose reflexivity has been constructed to, and can only result in, the reproduction of the social form.

One may be required to exercise greater reflexivity within the contemporary world (Modernity, neoliberalism, capitalism etc), but equally that reflexivity can be the grounds by which that world is altered. As such, though the emergence of a new social form may not require a question framework that asks: what is desirable in that new social form, it does not preclude it and seems to create an obligation to pursue that question.18 This is not least because of the consequences of the disintegrations of the modern world. If one fails to pursue the question, then one is not contributing to the construction and contestation of norms as ways we should live. One becomes merely a passive amanuensis of the times, rather than an active agent within time in terms of the times. In this sense, the Morphogenic Society project may be more than research. It may be a resource. In terms of an issue like climate change, it may serve as a point of departure, such that 'we can' becomes 'we should' becomes 'we must'.

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17 The same issues arise though in different ways, in terms of Habermas's early use of Ideal Speech situations and then subsequent theory of communicative action (1986), in which he differentiates the conditions of reaching understanding (communicative activity).
18 It is a curious feature of modern social science that it seemed actually necessary to make this argument, as though a normative focus on the good were a special case requiring special pleading, rather than is simply *the case* or intrinsic to social science, for further argument see Porpora, 2015

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