CITIZENS OF THE COSMOS?

How the limitations of Kwame Appiah and the Marvel Cinematic Universe contribute to a reimagining of partial cosmopolitanism

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology

in the University of Canterbury

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2016

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Acknowledgments

I would like to first thank my supervisors, Ruth McManus and Mike Grimshaw. Your support, both technical and otherwise, has been incredible; your advice and enthusiasm has been greatly appreciated.

Also, huge thanks Alice, Alicia, Cushla, and Morgan, for putting up with my ranting and raving; you are some of the smartest people I know.

As always, I need to thank my parents. You might not always understand what is going on, but you are always on my side; there are never enough words to explain how much that matters.

Oma – you saw me start this but did not get the chance to see me finish;
thank you for everything.

Abstract

This thesis explores the competing models of partial cosmopolitanism suggested by Kwame Appiah and the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This exploration is undertaken as a response to a larger concern with the place of difference within a shared humanity. To do this, this thesis examines first the history and the influences of the models of cosmopolitanism that Appiah and the Marvel Cinematic Universe suggest; it then completes a thematic analysis of these models, before comparing and contrasting the two models in a dialectical approach. The models are also located within a broader theoretical context, with a consideration of Marxist / neo-Marxist and popular cultural theory providing background and grounding for this thesis.

This thesis argues that the models of partial cosmopolitanism that Appiah and the Marvel Cinematic Universe suggest are, individually, insufficient answers to the question of difference. They suffer from similar limitations, such as an inability to be considered as anything other than theoretical and an inaccessibility to anyone without significant levels of actionable agency. This thesis instead argues that a synthesis of these two models is required. A third model of partial cosmopolitanism is outlined; this model of situational cosmopolitanism combines aspects of Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism and the Marvel Cinematic Universe's reactive cosmopolitanism, and extends this synthesis through the use of Joseph Fletcher's situation ethics.

Situational cosmopolitanism suggests a cosmopolitanism that is context dependent; it also requires the participation of not just those with high levels of actionable agency but those with lower levels as well. It is underpinned by notions of partiality and driven by the desire to lay the foundations for a future that is better – more equal, fair, and just – than today. It is an ongoing aspiration, understanding that there is no cosmopolitan state to be reached, just an ethos to be fostered and encouraged.

Introduction

How as humans we can best live together is a question consistently proposed throughout human history. It is a question that can be found in our text books, newspapers, and in our myths and stories; a question that has fuelled violence and a question that has called for peace. Any answers that have arisen are constantly being challenged and reviewed, with ideas changing and evolving over time.

Cosmopolitanism is one particular answer to this question. In this thesis, it is defined as a form of politics based on the belief that all human beings belong to a shared community based on a shared moral code, regardless of where they are from in the world and the particulars of any culture, ethnicity, and religion. It sits as an alternative to the two opposing poles of globalised universalism and multiculturalism. These poles suggest subsuming differences and retreating into cultural silos respectively. This thesis argues that neither is an appropriate, nor a realistic, answer; rather, as an alternative that favours neither side, partial cosmopolitanism is a more convincing answer. To construct this argument, this thesis investigates the high culture model of partial cosmopolitanism presented by Kwame Appiah and the popular culture model of partial cosmopolitanism that is suggested by the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Kwame Appiah theorises a model of cosmopolitanism which focuses on the universal individual. This thesis argues that Appiah's model can be labelled an ethical cosmopolitanism; it considers how an individual should live their life in accordance with other people and social structures. It is a partial cosmopolitanism, in that Appiah believes that humans live better on a smaller scale and cannot be expected to care about strangers in the exact same way that they care about those closest to them. Alternatively, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) suggests a different model of cosmopolitanism that can be labelled reactive. This model focuses on a collective of individuals engaging in cosmopolitan responses to (physical) threats, disengaging from this cosmopolitan collective once the threat has passed. It too is a partial cosmopolitanism, careful not to demand that moral obligations are put above ethical obligations and vice versa.

However, I believe that these two models are insufficient answers in and of themselves to the question of how we can best live together. In this thesis, presented as an extended

discursive essay so as to facilitate flow and discussion, I take a dialectical approach to develop an alternative model of partial cosmopolitanism that exists as a synthesis and an elaboration of Appiah's and the MCU's models. After locating this thesis within a broader theoretical framework, I examine the history, influences, and models of cosmopolitanism of both Appiah and of the MCU. This will be followed by an argument as to why these two models are insufficient. I will then present an alternative model of cosmopolitanism, arguing that a model of situational cosmopolitanism can be used to reimagine a cosmopolitan approach to the question of how we can best live together with our varied, and at times incompatible, differences as a part of a broader theoretical context of modern and post-modern tensions.

The discussion now moves to the first section of the thesis, which will undertake a Marxist / neo-Marxist approach to this thesis' primary concern with how it is that we can best live together given all our varied and at times incompatible differences. It argues for the inclusion of the consideration of popular culture *alongside* a consideration of theoretical works as an approach to this concern.

A Common Existence

The concern with how it is that we can best live together is not new. This thesis is informed by the tradition of Marxism that traces back to Karl Marx in the 19th century, and follows (Western) neo-Marxist thinkers who have emphasised the importance of understanding culture in the pursuit of social equality. The emphasis on culture is important for this thesis because, as Antonio Gramsci (2000) suggested, through aspects of culture such as literature and film, a gradual and lasting social change towards a more fair society can occur.

 In the spirit of theorising how to create a better society – that is, a fair, just, and equal society – Karl Marx (2002), along with Friedrich Engels, emphasised the importance of the proletariat, the importance of those who were not part of the dominant social class in Western society. The proletariat, Marx argued, should be able to rise up and set off a revolution, fuelled by industrialisation and the urbanisation that was occurring as a result of this industrialisation. This revolution would result in a shift to socialist relations that would change how people interact with one another. Wealth would be redistributed. Resources would be shared equally amongst everyone. The world, in the spirit of progress, would change. This emphasis on the role of the non-dominant social class in social change is included in the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for.

Marx's idea for a better future had a strong focus on the economic factors that underlay society; it was by progressing through different economic epochs that communism would ultimately be realised. This focus on the strength and power of an economic-based class system meant that not only did the dominant economic class control the means of material production, but also the "means of mental production," indicating that "the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant [social class]" (Marx, 1975, p. 59).

Whilst this idea of the means of mental production struck a chord with thinkers around the world, Western thinkers in particular turned to it after Marxism failed to revolutionise the West after the First World War, the revolution transforming Tsarist Russia into the Soviet Union did not find its way into and take hold of industrialised Europe. There was a growing realisation by leftist thinkers that economic division was not going to be enough to overthrow the rule of the dominant social class. Lacking the same levels of industrialisation, it had been the peasants in Russia that had revolted – led, of course, by a Leninist vanguard

and armed forces. In areas of higher industrialisation, where a middle class had had the opportunity to develop, revolutionary attitudes were less likely to come to anything tangible. Revolution in these areas was a middle class dream, a dream that the working class did not share. For the working class, it was too big of a risk to take; they had more to lose if the revolution was to fail than did the rural peasants of Tsarist Russia. Revolutionary thinkers began to see the need to overhaul Marx's theories and to re-evaluate the situation.

In Italy, Antonio Gramsci, involved with the Italian Communist Party, began to formulate a strategy in the 1920s and 1930s that extended Marx's thinking "for socialist movements in non-revolutionary environments and situations" (Hobsbawm, 1999, p. 11). In his famous *Prison Writings 1929-1935*, Gramsci (2000) articulated a belief that it was important that economics were not the sole focus and driver of communist thought. What was needed was "a satisfactory analysis of *how* [the dominant] class itself holds power" (Ransome, 1992, p. 135 emphasis added); an analysis that would go beyond economics and examine the political and (importantly for this thesis) cultural aspects of a given society as well. Gramsci, cited in Forgacs (2000, p. 429) understood that Marxism was more than a set of philosophical ideas; it was "the absolute bringing down to earth and worldliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history". In a post-1917 world, the consideration of society as a *whole* was seen as being of particular importance.

In his strategy for fostering communist attitudes in non-revolutionary environments, Gramsci drew upon the connected ideas of hegemony and ideology. Hegemony is a concept understood by Gramsci as the power to determine the "ideological terrain" and "conception of the world" (2000, p. 192). When applied as a political strategy, hegemony was understood as "the need to amalgamate at a political level all sections and aspirations of the working class into a greater whole with a single unified aim, which … transcends the inherent divisiveness of economistic trade-union consciousness" (Ransome, 1992, p. 133).

An ideology is understood in this thesis as a set of beliefs. Gramsci noted how ideologies were denatured under the totalitarian Fascist regime that controlled Italy from 1922 to 1943. He explained how these ideologies were separated from structures, and that the idea developed "that it is not ideology that changes the structures but vice versa" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 199). This led to the belief that anything that was ideological could not change the structure so it was therefore pointless; this in turn "passes to the assertion that every

ideology is 'pure' appearance, useless, stupid, etc." (Gramsci, 2000, p. 199). Challenging this thinking, Gramsci argued that ideologies are not necessarily a bad thing, nor necessarily useless; people had just been convinced to think that they are. Ideologies instead serve a purpose in a society; they are "historically necessary [as] they have a validity which is 'psychological'; they 'organize' human masses, they form the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc." (Gramsci, 2000, p. 199).

Gramsci took these base ideas and worked to expand them. He encouraged a "much greater emphasis on the synthesis of … concerns which go beyond immediate and practical economic problems," and a "more explicit indication of the need to develop productive communication with, and assimilation of, other social groups which are, in the first instance at least, and in a predominately economic sense, friendly towards the proletarian class" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 134). He also "applies his analysis to *all forms* of class association and homogenisation *including* that of the dominant social group" (Ransome, 1992, p. 134). Gramsci encouraged the coming together of various non-dominant groups within a society, forming an alternative ideology that could displace the dominant ruling social class, and instituting a different hegemonic order in its place.

To bring about this social change, Gramsci (2000) considered the notions of *coercion* and *consent* to be crucial. Coercion, which he associated with physical force, can only be a part of controlling a society. Consent takes on a concession role, where the dominant ruling group must concede certain things to the group(s) that it rules over, indicating a belief in the idea of positive social control. Those being ruled need to consent to the dominant class; they need to *allow* them to continue to rule. Subtle manipulation and persuasion can be used to get non-dominant groups to voluntarily assimilate to the dominant ideology, as exampled by the idea of a welfare state[1]. Gramsci's core argument was that wealth and political power alone are not enough to ensure the position of the dominant class. By giving concessions to the non-dominant groups, the dominant group is providing them with a reason to consent, to allow the system to continue without challenge. This idea of consent and the power that it subsequently provides the non-dominant class is picked up in the

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[1] Karl Marx (1997) criticised the notion of a welfare state for this reason; he believed that by the provision of higher wages, improved working conditions, and social insurance – examples of concessions – there would be a weakened revolutionary consciousness. He believed that by providing these concessions, the public would be placated and consent to the dominant rule.

model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for, as there is an emphasis on a gradual rather than a sudden change to more equal society.

The idea of a dominant culture, Marx's means of mental production, is used to give legitimacy to the ruling class, used to control and preserve the power of those already in charge. However, by taking some of that control away from the hands of the dominant social class through the notion of concessions and consent, Gramsci was emphasising the power and ability of the non-dominant classes. He was suggesting "a much more fluid, contingent, agent-centered and culturalist view of social life than was to be found in classical Marxism" (Seidman, 2008, p. 280). A balance is required between coercion and consent; both the dominant and non-dominant groups in society need to contribute, a central idea in the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for.

Gramsci wrote from a different social situation than other communist thinkers of the time, which contributed to his particular ideas around the place and power of mass culture. In Italy, there were high rates of illiteracy, placing illustrated magazines, comics, and film in a central position for Italian cultural consumption (Forgacs, 2000). The illiteracy of the masses also contributed to the class divide in the country, with little to bring the ruling class and the general population together. This divide was also fuelled by the tensions between the industrialised north and the rural, poor south, and between the Catholic Church and the communist party. Gramsci (2000) himself located this divide in a long-standing Italian caste tradition between the Italian intellectuals and the nation. It is this caste divide that he sought to reconcile in his thinking; the synthesis of the upper and lower classes that would result in a new socialist hegemony. Socialism, in this instance, becomes a model of living together in harmony. Where Marx focused on the economic structure of society, Gramsci turned to culture as an answer as to why revolution failed to materialise and how the dominant class continued to remain dominant. He believed that the culture of the masses were of utmost importance. Mass culture was how the dominant class retained their control, through the notion of consent and concession, but it also provided a potential location to gradually change the prevailing ruling class. The importance of the comic book and the film is reflected in this thesis through the use of the MCU and the understanding that this franchise has an ability to be more than just a source of entertainment.

Gramsci treated folklore and popular culture in much the same way that he treated ideologies; both have a purpose. "Folklore must not be considered an eccentricity, an oddity or a picturesque element, but as something which is very serious and is to be taken seriously," Gramsci wrote whilst imprisoned (1926-1934) by Italy's fascist state on account of his position as a communist[2]. As he observed: "Only in this way will the teaching of folklore be more efficient and really bring about the birth of a new culture among the broad popular masses, so that the separation between modern culture and popular culture of folklore will disappear" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 362). Gramsci argued that examining folklore and popular culture was important for the bridging of the gap between Italian intellectuals and the masses; for they were "something deeply felt and experienced" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 373). Examining this culture would also enable people to see how dominated classes can become hegemonic themselves, particularly by looking at how "popular culture forms [can be] raised into the dominant artistic literature" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 364).

However even amongst popular culture, Gramsci indicated that there are both dominant and non-dominant forms. Not all novels or films are regarded as equally popular; "From this predominance one can identify a change in fundamental tastes, just as from the simultaneous success of the various types one can prove that there exist among the people various cultural levels, different 'masses of feeling' prevalent in one or the other level, various popular 'hero-models'" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 370). Some types reflect a conservative and reactionary view, others a creative and progressive view, often showing a morality that is "in contradiction to or simply different from the morality of the governing strata" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 361). The MCU currently is an example of a dominant form of popular culture, on account of its dominance and tenacity at the global box office. This dominance of the MCU, and superheroes in general, has occurred as a response to social events such as 9/11, reflecting Western society's desire for a narrative of Good triumphing over Evil (DiPaolo, 2011).

Gramsci's positioning of folklore and popular culture in opposition to the governing strata suggests that they create a "conception of the world and life" that objects "to 'official' conceptions of the world" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 360). They act as a religion, a morality of the people, one that determines a "set of principles for practical conduct and of customs that

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[2] Gramsci would be moved from prison in 1934 to a hospital, where he would die in 1937 (Forgacs, 2000).

derive from them or have produced them" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 361). By positioning popular culture as taking on the role more commonly associated with religion, Gramsci was asserting a disenchantment with the Church as a traditional host of religion. This can be understood as being a result of the way, in his native Italy in particular, the Church had opposed communism and often chosen to support fascism as a consequence. Whilst popular culture does not necessarily supplant pre-existing religion or morality entirely, it nevertheless not only becomes a place for people to find the moral guidance that was traditionally considered to be the responsibility of the Church, but also as a site for mass resistance to fascism. By paralleling religion and popular culture, Gramsci suggests that consumers of popular culture can find moral guidance from the ideas that they are exposed to in popular film and literature, dismissing the idea that popular culture is just mindless entertainment.

By associating the influence of religion with popular culture, Gramsci thus also implicated popular culture in the project of nation building, something that he saw as important for crafting a new hegemony. Italy did not have a common culture – as mentioned above, the high illiteracy rates divided the society – which Gramsci emphasised by contrasting the popularity of Italian literature with that of other European literature. He wrote that what other literature has and what Italian literature lacks, is that "in the overall production of each country there is an implicit nationalism, not rhetorically expressed, but skilfully insinuated into the story" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 371). It is also a consistent nationalism; Gramsci (2000) explained that whether it is a naval novel of Jules Verne or a geographical adventure, the French are consistently positioning themselves in opposition to the English, a historic rivalry going back generations. Italian literature, on the other hand, was

> incapable of satisfying the intellectual needs of all the people precisely because they have failed to represent a lay culture, because they have not known how to elaborate a modern 'humanism' able to reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes, as was necessary from the national point of view, and because they have been tied to an antiquated world, narrow, abstract, too individualistic, or caste-like (Gramsci, 2000, p. 369).

The nationalism of the MCU, a primarily American franchise – the heroes largely operate and live in America – is an interesting deviation from this idea: it is able to "reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 369), yet even the character

of Captain America does not necessarily engage in an implicit nationalism. When asked what the character represents for Americans, Chris Evans, the actor portraying Captain America, has said in an interview that

> His name is Captain America and he wears the red, white and blue, but I think you can find a guy like Steve anywhere. It's just about doing the right thing and being a good person and putting yourself last, and I don't think that's necessarily relatable for only Americans, or solely an American quality. You can find that anywhere (McCabe, 2014, p. 49).

Captain America is, in many ways, Simon Keller's (2013, p. 253) worldly citizen; he views his "own local places and communities as special and important, but as placed in a much larger world". In this way, the MCU asserts itself as having an ethos that extends beyond national borders, engaging audiences as an idea of globalism rather than nationalism.

With his observations, Gramsci was attempting to articulate a practical solution towards the breach between the Italian upper and lower classes, with the intention that a hegemony would be created to supplant the fascist regime that was in place throughout his later life. Folklore and popular culture – particularly film and images – became a site of potential common culture, where literature had been incapable of breaching the social divide; folklore and popular culture acts as both a reflection of society and a place of gradual change, rather than the sudden nature of revolution. This idea, of the revolutionary potential of popular culture, implicates the MCU in a contemporary cosmopolitan conceptualisation of Gramsci's work; the globalised viewership of the multiple films too becomes a site of common (global) culture, both reflecting society and encouraging a gradual change in social attitudes.

The study of popular culture is consistently revisited in times of national unease. Gramsci was attempting to reconcile a long-term rift in Italian society, questioning what Italy should hope to look like in the years to come. In Britain, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was established in 1964, "in part related to the decline of the British Empire" (Seidman, 2008, p. 274). Across the globe, British colonies were pushing for independence, bringing to the fore questions about a national identity. The presence of Marxist thought in Britain was not inappropriate; Marx had spent much of his life in London,

including his final years, and the Centre followed Gramsci in a Marxist tradition of thought, although they too turned to the popular culture of the masses for answers. The Centre was interested in researching mass culture, disagreeing with the way that the subject was often "looked down on by academics, many of whom thought that their focus should solely be on "high" culture, what was regarded as the "best that has been thought and said"" (Hall, 2014, p. 1). The Centre promoted a particularly neo-Marxist attitude, believing in the potential of the non-dominant classes in society by examining their particular culture. This thesis follows a 'Birmingham School' attitude by choosing to look at the popular culture behemoth of the MCU, and extending this attitude by contrasting the MCU with the theoretical work of Kwame Appiah.

Where earlier neo-Marxists like Gramsci were grappling with a society turning to modernity, the Birmingham Centre was witnessing a turn away from the grand ideas that characterised modernity. World War II saw soldiers bring American culture to the United Kingdom on an unprecedented scale, and as many of the British Empire's colonies began to revolt against colonial rule, "questions about national identity, social values, and cultural imperialism took on a new urgency" (Seidman, 2008, p. 274). There was a notable shift from the modernist questions of *who* we can be in the future to the more post-modernist questions of *what* we are at the present. The Birmingham Centre's establishment was therefore tightly linked to the social identity movements associated with post-modernity, and with addressing the multitude of identity questions that had arisen in the decades since Gramsci. The tensions between the grand narratives of modernity and the social identity movements of post-modernity is an important balance that is argued for in the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for.

Stuart Hall had a central role in founding the Birmingham Centre, and continued to examine popular culture throughout his career. The same year that the Birmingham Centre was established (1964), he released a book, *The Popular Arts*, co-authored with Paddy Whannel. Resonating with Gramsci's belief in the power of visual mediums, the pair discussed the way that film has a history of reflecting popular tastes and attitudes, acting as a space where popular art can merge with mass culture (Hall & Whannel, 1964). Film, the authors asserted, has the benefit of being an accessible medium for audiences, and "can often by-pass some of the social and cultural barriers that cut off audiences from material in the more

traditional arts" (Hall & Whannel, 1964, p. 78). Popular culture was reasserted as something that can be shared across society, something that does not need to be stratified, and film is particularly important to this idea.

Another of the Birmingham Centre's founders, Raymond Williams, also contributed to the Marxist tradition of thought practiced at the Centre. Williams had been involved with the Communist Party of Great Britain whilst he attended university, and had retained socialist ideas throughout his life (Williams, 1979). Writing on film in 1971, Williams discusses the way that films can be used to provide "a vision of an underlying structure" in a modern urban landscape that has a lack of "social identity, … habitual belonging and relatedness" (Williams, 2013, p. 24). He understood the potential of film to combat the alienation that comes with modernity's move away from small communities to large, anonymous, mobile cities, suggesting that people can be brought together by film. As Gramsci and Hall and Whannel had suggested, Williams also saw the possibility of film and popular culture to cross class boundaries and create common culture. This thesis uses the ideas of the MCU to this end, as it is a film franchise that is created with the intention to appeal to the broadest possible audience, and thus consumer base, both across the globe and across class boundaries.

Whilst the Birmingham Centre's founders were writing on the brink of post-modernity, Dick Hebdige (1988) wrote about the importance of popular culture at a time when post-modernity's emphasis on plurality and identity was coming to a head. This emphasis on plurality and identity is important to this thesis, as one of the key aspects of the model of cosmopolitanism argued for is the balance between individual identity and universal commonality. Hebdige considered closely the rise of American popular culture – of which the Hollywood blockbuster films of the MCU still are, despite their global audience – and the effect that it would have in Britain. In contrast to George Orwell's (1939) modernity-based critique of American popular culture – a violent spectacle that sits in opposition to the more passive, conservative British works – Hebdige acknowledged the importance of a distinctly American popular culture in British cultural consumption, suggesting that a resurgence of negative critiques surrounding popular culture was the result of the British Empire's fear of America's growing presence in the world after World War II. Critics claimed that British high culture was being degraded by the influx of American popular culture, and Hebdige

suggested that these critics were perhaps too concerned with accusing "Americanisation" of the crime of "eradication of social and cultural differences" (Hebdige, 1988, p. 73). He chose instead to emphasise the potential of American popular culture, claiming that it "offers a rich iconography, a set of symbols, objects and artefacts which can be assembled and re-assembled by different groups in a literally limitless number of combinations" by taking individual subjects "out of their original historical and cultural contexts and [juxtaposing them] against other signs from other sources" (Hebdige, 1988, p. 74). American popular culture was becoming global popular culture, and its assimilation into other national popular cultures reflected changing global environments; Marx and Gramsci had been concerned with how we can create a better society, and the virality of American popular culture was a reminder that it was becoming increasingly important to consider a society that did not end at national borders. As this thesis is being written from New Zealand, it too is implicated in this idea of a broader society.

The shift from the concerns of modernity with grand narratives to post-modern concerns with social identity movements is a central point of interest for the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for. A balance needs to be struck between the grand narratives and the social identity movements, so as to ensure that the individual is neither lost within or held hostage to the universal and vice versa. This thesis argues that American popular culture, by becoming global popular culture, is an example of how to find this balance; if it does produce a variety of symbols and icons that can be combined to produce unlimited varieties of cultural scripts as Hebdige suggests, American popular culture can attend to both the idea of the universal whilst also making allowances for social differences. A new, global, empire is created, with regional differences occurring within a wider infrastructure and hegemony. The MCU, as global popular culture, moves past the notion of a strictly American empire; this thesis argues that a popular culture empire can thus be reimagined as a model of cosmopolitanism.

The next section examines the tensions between modernity and post-modernity more closely. It highlights the influence of (American) popular culture and the potential of the ideas that are contained therein to contribute to a cosmopolitan ethos that encourages the pursuit of equality, speaking to this thesis' concerns with how to best live together with our

various differences. It argues that an approach that addresses both grand narratives and social identity movements is required for a robust conception of partial cosmopolitanism.

The Place of American Popular Culture

The influence of American popular culture was growing increasingly widely spread across the globe post-World War II. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, American culture itself began to succumb to an identity crisis. Following the end of the Cold War, how were was America to define itself without the Soviet Union sitting across the seas as an opposing 'Other' (Gitlin, 1995)? What did it mean to be a nation? These questions brought about what has been termed the 'Culture Wars,' defined by James Hunter (1991) as opposing Orthodox and Progressive groups battling over the idea of moral authority and the right to determine the future trajectory of the country. Hunter suggests that the Orthodox camp believed in a transcendent moral authority, positioned against the Progressive camp which followed a "tendency to resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life" (Hunter, 1991, p. 44), where moral authority was determined by the individual. Hunter's Orthodox group follow a belief in a larger, grand narrative, and his Progressive group chose to instead champion individual identity groups.

The Culture Wars then become more than just a struggle over moral authority. They become a tension between between a modernist narrative of progression and a post-modernist deep suspicion of *any* overarching narrative. Concerned with how America was to best define itself, the Culture Wars engaged in an examination of society; this included a continuation of decades worth of debate around the place of American popular culture, both abroad and at home, entrenching these debates within broader modernity / post-modernity tensions.

Edward Shils had cautioned against using popular culture to create identity. Three decades before the culture wars, Shils published an article concerning mass culture; the influence of literary critics such as George Orwell is evident in Shils' attitude that the "persistence of traditional and orally transmitted culture [renders] fruitless the effort to diagnose the dispositions and outlook of a people by analysing what is presented to them through films, television and wireless broadcasts, the press, etc." (Shils, 1960, p. 298). Shils was arguing that popular culture alone was not enough to displace the importance of religion and regional and class culture, whilst also claiming that most popular culture was "brutal," lacking symbolic meaning and subtlety, with "a general grossness of sensitivity and perception [as] a common feature" (Shils, 1960, p. 292). Believing that popular culture is

inherently tied into economics, Shils argued that to keep production costs down, "it has been necessary to make the content of what is transmitted … as heterogeneous as the audience sought" (Shils, 1960, p. 296). He was suggesting that any impact popular culture may have is inherently diluted. He was also implicating popular culture in the emerging post-modern emphasis on identity and identity groups, by providing audiences with cultural scripts that are largely identical and thus limiting choice. Shils himself preferred the ideas of modernity and progress; he believed that the emergent post-modern focus on a fractured identity was impeding the country's ability to move forward into a more just, fair, and unified society. Whilst this thesis disagrees that popular culture lacks symbolic meaning, it does agree that it is not enough in and of itself for an understanding of society; hence the contrast of the MCU alongside Appiah's more theoretical work for a more convincing theorisation of cosmopolitanism.

Shils' dismissal of the usefulness of popular culture was not without opposition, even within those who shared his preference for the grand narratives of modernity. Born in Germany, Herbert Gans moved to America as a child in 1940 as a refugee from Nazism. His refugee status has had an evident impact on his thinking; the influence of having lived under Hitler's rule suggests a reason as to why he is not so much interested in the post-modern focus on identity groups, but instead in how the masses can push back against those in power. Unlike Shils, he is not as wary of conceding too much influence to popular culture; he claimed that "several studies have shown that people choose media content to fit individual and group requirements, rather than adapting their life to what the media prescribe or glorify" (Gans, 1974, p. 32). Gans saw popular culture as more than just a consequence of economic decisions, emphasising the power of the individual to challenge ideas presented in popular culture, which in turn indicates that mass media reflects society and sits within and reinforces, rather than strictly creates, a value system. This idea echoes Gramsci's notion of consent, with the dominant class needing to make concessions so as to continue their dominance. Gans suggests that, by reflecting society, individuals are actually exposed to a wide variety of cultural scripts, "describing, both through fact and fiction, the different life-styles, aspirations, and attitudes currently co-existing in the society" (Gans, 1974, p. 42); this provides a range of identity choices for an individual to take up and that, because of the control that individuals can have over their media, there is a revolutionary power in popular

culture. It becomes a space for the masses to push back against those in power, to shape their society on their own terms. The audience have an active hand in creating and shaping a mass consumerist identity, with consumption then being linked to identity capitalism through the impact of consumer choices on the economic decisions of producers. Popular culture blurs the boundary between grand narratives and social identity movements – it can be both revolutionary and focus on identity – which is a key aim of the model of cosmopolitanism argued for by this thesis.

Gans' position as an immigrant is important, as the immigrant is an essential aspect of the identity of American popular culture; as the amalgamation of a whole range of different ideas from different places, American popular culture is capable of intermingling with the cultural identities of other places – as Dick Hebidge (1988) pointed out – and challenges Shil's dismissal of popular culture as being too heterogeneous. The way American popular culture combines all these different ideas is important to the question of an American national identity and the consideration of a national mythology; this in turn is important in the consideration of Appiah's *partial* cosmopolitanism, where loyalty to the local and national is as important as loyalty to the global. American popular culture also has a broader reach; by becoming globalised as the MCU has done, it also becomes important to the question of a global identity and a global mythology as well.

The importance of American popular culture on a national identity is explored by Christopher Hitchens. Writing on America as a British-born American, Hitchens (1996) explores how popular fiction can be used to create and reinforce the national myths that build up and embody the popular idea of America. He discusses how the American myth is constructed in opposition to an Other, and how the American myth typically situates itself as better than this Other, who is often portrayed as a caricature and in a typically racist manner. In a modernist conception of progression, Hitchens suggests in a later book that the whole is stronger than the sum of its parts; "The point is a simple one," Hitchens wrote, "'America' is larger as an idea and as a geography than the fifty states of the Union" (2002, p. 103). In much the same way that Gramsci suggested that it would take a collection of non-dominant social classes to come together to form a new hegemony and overcome the dominant ruling class, Hitchens supported the idea of America as a collective, as opposed to a fragmented set of separate identities. As a globalised mythology, the MCU suggests that

Hitchens' emphasis on the collective rather than the fragmented can be applied to a much larger scale than the United States.

The importance of the collective is also emphasised by Robert Hughes, an Australian who, after living in the UK, died whilst residing in America. A believer in the ideas of modernity, for Hughes the post-modern emphasis given to individual identity groups actually threatens the idea of a collective identity, and he claims that what has resulted is a 'culture of complaint' (Hughes, 1993). Rather than Hitchens belief that identity groups can help inform the collective, Hughes has a less positive view of these groups. This culture of complaint prizes the idea of victim status, with different identity groups crying out for special treatment, refusing to negotiate over even small things (Hughes, 1993). It is not just the minority identity groups claiming the status of victim, Hughes suggests, but because "only the victim shall be the hero, the white American male starts bawling for victim status too" (Hughes, 1993, p. 7). The "cultural and educational needs of groups" are overriding "the need of any individual" (Hughes, 1993, p. 197), a situation that is in direct opposition to what he believes it means to be an American. The underlying claim in Hughes' work is that a collective national identity cannot be found in post-modernity. A collective hegemony cannot be created by groups that refuse to cooperate, and with everyone in a society asserting victimhood, Gramsci's integral leadership role (Ransome, 1992) appears impossible to fill. No one can move forward, Hughes suggests, unless everyone does. These are important points for this thesis because the heroes of the MCU are frequently victims before they are heroes: Tony Stark creates the Iron Man armour because he is first taken hostage by terrorists and Natasha Romanoff gains her skills from the mysterious Red Room, a soviet initiative to make assassins of young girls, for example. These heroes emphasise Hughes' argument that group victim status can result in social stagnation, as they are required to move past their traumas before they can save the day.

Continuing in the vein of examining how theorists have articulated a tension between postmodernity and a collective national identity, Todd Gitlin also finds post-modernity incapable of fostering the collective identity that is needed to create a national identity. He discussed how American popular culture is often made up of a diverse range of ideas from a diverse range of countries, writing that "in a world of ubiquitous images, of easy mobility and casual tourism, you get to feel not only local or national but global" (2001, p. 180). In its

attempts to appeal to the broadest range of identity groups, American popular culture takes away a national identity and replaces it with a global identity. Whilst Shils suggested that popular culture provides too few cultural scripts, Gitlin suggested that it provides too many. Popular culture, in Gitlin's view, is not helping answer the questions that arose with the end of the Cold War. He suggested that an American identity is getting lost within a global identity; if every individual is situated as an Other, then a collective identity becomes harder to find.

In his earlier work, Gitlin took an even stronger position against post-modern identity politics. In the early years of the Culture Wars, he accused identity politics of being a central cause of the tensions of the Culture Wars; he claimed that post-modern notions of pluralism are claiming "attention and resources, and often enough [succeed] by mobilizing small, visible, passionate groups against the very idea that commonality might be as important as, even more important than, difference" (Gitlin, 1995, p. 34). What is implicit in this idea, that the Culture Wars are being perpetuated by identity pluralism, is that if difference could be considered second to commonality, then the Culture Wars could be brought to an end. Like Hughes, Gitlin does not see a national identity forming in post-modernity. He wants something that is better for everyone, not just for separate identity groups. He goes so far as to claim (1995) that identity pluralism is actually inhibiting any sort of cosmopolitan vision, that people would rather fit themselves comfortably into an identity group than attempt to bring those identity groups together with a common cause. He is mourning the progressive nature of modernity, the desire for large scale social change that could be found in the works of thinkers such as Marx and Gramsci. What Gitlin is ultimately decrying is the notion of the individual who would retreat into multiculturalism out of convenience; this emphasises a limitation of Appiah's model of cosmopolitanism, for as I will later discuss, Appiah provides little incentive for individuals to do anything other than what is, for them, convenient.

The Culture Wars exemplifies some of the tensions that exist between modern and post-modern approaches to how we can best live together. They struggle with the questions that modernity tried to answer and the questions that post-modernity turned away from. How does a nation define itself? How do we create a society which is just and fair? A society that does not seek to put one identity group above another, but also does not reject the identity

group all together? Tied into the debates on these questions is the place of American popular culture, which is seen as a reflection of popular views, and is frequently informed by the spirit of the immigrant. Ideas of modernity and post-modernity are often in a position of tension within these debates, as they are largely seen as incompatible and incapacitating to one other. It is acknowledged that this is a particularly Western conception of ideas, and that this thesis sits within these Western modernity / post-modernity tensions. However the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis ultimately argues for is a blurring of these theoretical boundaries, balancing modernity's progressive narratives and post-modernity's social identity movements within a wider western cultural and national expression.

The next section of this thesis discusses why global universalism and multiculturalism are unconvincing approaches as to how we can best live together with our various differences. It then introduces the role that the models of cosmopolitanism of Appiah and the MCU play in the consideration of how it is that we can best live together. It also situates both Appiah and the MCU in relation to the neo-Marxist and modernity / post-modernity debates outlined in the previous sections.

The Cosmopolitan Project

Partial cosmopolitanism is understood in this thesis as a model of cosmopolitanism which seeks to consider the place of a localised individual within a global context. Partial cosmopolitanism exists as an alternative to two opposing poles of a globalised universalism and multiculturalism as solutions to the question of how best can we live together. This thesis argues that these two positions are unconvincing and unrealistic answers as to how we can best live together with our various differences. A brief argument as to why is set out below.

The globally universalising intent of what Appiah (2006) terms 'toxic cosmopolitanism' – a version of cosmopolitanism that involves a group "attempting to impose their own purportedly superior ways, often by the sword" (Appiah, 2005, p. 221) on the entire world – is unconvincing; it is difference that keeps life interesting, that offers new opportunities and ideas. I believe that it is unrealistic to demand that people give up the entirety of multiple generations' worth of tradition to fit what would be a predominately Western model of a universal, a model that arises from a combination of classical-era cosmopolitanism, Christianity, and the Enlightenment. A global universal is also impossible to attain; there will always be dissenters, for example, and those that do indeed wish to leave behind their traditions are not always capable of doing so, as those same traditions often deny their own abolishment through the use of violence and abusive powers. Even if it was possible to create a global universal, it is not necessarily desirable as significant aspects of variety would be lost, which could in turn lead to a negative impact on diverse, creative, and adaptive solutions to problems. It should be noted, however, that not all aspects of variety and tradition are conducive to a better society and instead contribute to this same negative impact; whilst a global universal is undesirable, so too is holding onto and valorising each and every tradition that currently exists.

To expect the world to adhere to any given universal way of living – such as to follow the exact same traditions and speak the exact same language – would be monotonous and oppressive. It would also lack an ability to adapt, to change, and to evolve. If it were achievable, a state of global universality would still not guarantee a peaceful way of living. Without extremely strict enforcement – which can still incite rioting and revolution, and ultimately is a *repression* rather than an *elimination* of difference – or interfering on a

biological or neurological level, there is no way of eradicating difference. To create a universal where everyone agrees on the rules of engagement, where everyone values the same things, speaks the same language, follows the same moral code, everyone would have to be stripped of any agency they may have. The result would be an oppressive totalitarian global system, where fear and violence impose a way of existence that is the ideal of the few rather than the many. The ambitions of the Nazis that led to World War II are, for example, an attempt at a universal that was only an imposed universal; the collective response that it incited showed that it was hardly a global ideal. As we will see in the discussion of the MCU, to ensure the illusion of total and complete agreement, especially on a global scale, would require serious supervillain levels of power and ethical conduct.

If the ideal of a global universal is ultimately unachievable, so too is retreating into an enforced and patrolled collective difference; a multiculturalism where group identities reign supreme. Whilst multiculturalism is relatively straightforward to legislate for (individuals opting into strategic essentialism is a significant way that any legislature decisions are made possible (Spivak, 1988)) it also pushes people into distinct and restrictive social and cultural categories. There is reluctance in multiculturalism to share ideas, to give up secrets, to be open to new ways of doing things (Salter, 2006). Multiculturalism inhibits cross-cultural innovations, with too much energy expended on protecting the traditions and interests of our particular culture. There is also little consideration of the internal intricacies of a cultural identity either; there is rarely one way to construct, perform, or take on any given identity and an outward unified identity can create friction between groups and between individuals within a group (Green, 1995; Waldron, 1992). There will be internal competing power dynamics, differing goals, or ideals; oppression can occur as frequently within identity groups as it does between them. Where global universalism suggests unrealistic compromises in agency, multiculturalism suggests that our agency is irrefutably tied to, and controlled by, our particular culture – by the dominant individuals in our particular culture, who are more likely to have a representative voice in conversations with the nation-state that shape any legislature.

As with a global universal, I likewise find multiculturalism an unappealing resolution to the question of how we can best live together; for multiculturalism also imposes conformity onto individuals, as it encourages an unchanging social environment that lacks an ability to

sufficiently adapt to new issues that may arise. As both a global universal and a recession into differences are unable to provide an adequate response to the question of how we can best live together with our differences, I turn again to cosmopolitanism. In particular, I turn to the *partial* cosmopolitan models presented by Kwame Appiah and the MCU.

The concern with how we can best live together is apparent in Appiah's idea of a partial cosmopolitanism. Writing in an American, post-Cold War setting, Appiah, like Gitlin and Hughes, is wary of identity politics and of putting the identity group before the collective. It is not always all about the collective, however. Appiah comes to America with an immigrant identity akin to that of Hitchens and Hughes. Raised with a dual British and Ghanaian identity, he looks upon America with a distinct awareness of the fractured state of the country. His work on cosmopolitanism is an attempt at a dialectic synthesis of post-modernity's claim of identity and modernity's push for a better society. He suggests various ways to mitigate the tension between the issues of modernity and post-modernity identity, including, for example, a reconsideration of what is classified as a human right: countries should not be expected to conform, and punished if they do not, to requirements that they have no hope of meeting (2005). It is a sentiment that echoes Gramsci's claim that "no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 200).

Gramsci himself was wary of the dangers of cosmopolitanism (Gramsci, 2000), however his idea of cosmopolitanism was that of the universal without nations, a "pseudo-internationalist" notion (Forgacs, 2000, p. 392). Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism, with its attention given first to universality but attention also given to locality, difference, and the responsibilities of the nation-state, would perhaps have appealed to Gramsci. Gramsci's belief that in a non-revolutionary environment, a society cannot breakdown or "be replaced until it has developed all the forms of life which are implicit in its internal relations" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 200) is also considered by Appiah. Appiah believes that the necessary conditions for his partial cosmopolitanism already exist; partial cosmopolitanism in this sense is not an end game, but a continuous, evolving journey.

Appiah also engages with the tension between modern and post-modern thought, a tension which is symbolic of the Culture Wars. Where Hughes sees the "fundamental temper of

America" as being able to have "equal rights to variety, to construct your life as you see fit, [and] to choose your travelling companions" (1993, p. 12), suggesting that identity groups take away some of the freedom that should be afforded to the individual, Appiah would probably agree; individuals need to be able to decide for themselves which parts of their identities should be considered important and which parts should be considered hindrances (Appiah, 2005). Appiah does not seek to deny these identities, however, but to integrate them into the collective. It does not need to be one or the other, he suggests; there is the possibility that it can be both.

This thesis asks what Appiah offers to these debates. How can his partial cosmopolitanism, influenced by his own cosmopolitan identity and taken from a tradition of liberal thought going all the way back to the Cynics, cross the divide that sits at the heart of American, and to an extent Western, culture?

While Gitlin (1995) claims that identity politics are inhibiting a cosmopolitan vision, Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism agrees that the universal is important, but that difference cannot be neglected. Society cannot be expected to exist within a framework that focuses solely on the commonality, enforcing a dominant discourse with no room for individual expression. Appiah wants to negotiate a suitable place for difference in the discussion. Identity groups can make it easier for a national government to cater to the needs of its people; it is near impossible to cater to each person as an individual, and Appiah shows that he understands this (2000). Identity groups pushed for the change of law that allowed him to marry his husband in New York, after all. They are not without their benefits. But they cannot be the end of the conversation. Appiah seeks a way to bring the fractured identity groups together, to treat people as individuals first; to create a universal where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What he seeks to do is to open up the conversation, to move past the arguments of the Culture Wars, and move forward together. His partial cosmopolitanism is thus an *ethical* model of partial cosmopolitanism.

Is Appiah's model of partial cosmopolitanism capable of beginning this conversation however? Does it have any relevance in contemporary society? Or is it just another idea, floated around by another academic, which will ultimately be little more than a book on a shelf? To test this, to test the strength and relevance of Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism, I propose a turn to popular culture. If, as Gramsci and many others have suggest, popular

culture is a reflection of society, a reflection of mass ideas and thoughts, then it should be capable of providing a critique of Appiah's ideas. Applying partial cosmopolitanism to popular culture has the potential to highlight any problems that there may be with a practical application of the idea and to consider how it currently sits within the contemporary social environment.

With a society so entrenched in the Culture Wars, this thesis looks at an aspect of popular culture that is just as much a part of those tensions. The Marvel Cinematic Universe is currently the world's highest grossing film franchise. Twelve films have been released so far, with Marvel Studios announcing future films planned until at least until 2028, with an average of at least two a year. A return to modernity, where science is the true way forward, does not seem to be enough for contemporary audiences, and the popularity of the superheroes of the MCU are testament to that. They are the quasi-gods of contemporary society; more than man but still just as flawed. To engage with the popularity of these quasi-gods, perhaps we are to remember that, in response to the rise of a society he labelled Technicity and the resultant uprootedness of late modern humanity, Heidegger claimed that "only a god can save us" (2010, p. 57). What, then, does it mean for these superheroes to take the place of gods? What can they tell us about ourselves? The characters of the MCU, whilst god-like in their abilities, are also just as guilty of Hughes' accusation of victimhood as the post-modern society he aims those accusations at. In the MCU, a hero is not made until a character is at their most vulnerable. They cannot be a hero unless they are first a victim.

By creating these characters, the MCU speaks to an audience that grew up during the Culture Wars. The characters are both victim and hero, struggling with the question of what it means to be. The struggle that Hunter positions at the heart of the Culture Wars can also be seen in the films. Hunter sees the Culture Wars as "ultimately a struggle over national identity - *over the meaning of America*, who we have been in the past, who we are now, and perhaps most important, who we, as a nation, will aspire to become in the new millennium" (1991, p. 50). It is through this struggle that the MCU situates itself as the latest expression of the Culture Wars. Captain America, for example, is the literal man-out-of-time, struggling to reconcile living during the Depression and World War II with living in contemporary, post-9/11 America; he is trying to reconcile the values of the "greatest generation," with the

values of the "Miley Cyrus generation" (Joe Russo, quoted in McCabe, 2014, p. 48). Iron Man questions the place of America on the world stage and the consequences of military capitalism. Thor, Black Widow, Hawkeye, and the Hulk are all wrestling with what it means to be a hero and who deserves to have that title. Hunter claims that because America "was never rooted in a millennia of tradition," it compensated by constructing "great myths about its origins and even loftier versions of its calling in the future" (Hunter, 1991, p. 61). The MCU is a continuation, an elaboration, of those myths. They too enter the debate about what it means to be.

Central to this thesis is the question of how do we move forward, entrenched in the Culture Wars and arguments against post-modernity's identity politics? How do we resituate the grand ideas and progressive aims of modernity in an environment that favours identity politics? Can we do either of those things? The MCU is currently one of the most popular reflections of Western society, and Appiah's theories are rooted in centuries of liberal thinking. By using the MCU to contrast and expand upon Appiah's notion of an ethical partial cosmopolitanism, this thesis looks to explore high and low brow models of partial cosmopolitanism to consider how we can best live together with our various differences.

As the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for is in part a reconceptualization of the model presented by Appiah, the next section will present a brief biography of Appiah so as to understand his unique position in society. It will then examine Appiah's theoretical influences, tracing his intellectual heritage back to the Cynics of Ancient Greece and following it through a liberal tradition of thought that includes thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and John Rawls, so as to gain a better understanding of where his particular ideas on cosmopolitanism have emerged from. This will then be followed by a thematic and a contextual analysis of Appiah's model of ethical cosmopolitanism.

Kwame Anthony Appiah

Personal Background

Kwame Anthony Appiah is himself a cosmopolitan project. Born in London in May 1954 to Enid Margaret Appiah (née Cripps) and Joseph Emmanuel Appiah, he is the eldest child and only son of both British and Ghanaian elite. His mother was the daughter of a prominent British Labour politician and through his father, Appiah is related to the royal Ashanti line; their marriage made news headlines around the world due to both the social status of their families and the marriage's interracial nature.

Appiah's parents are important figures in their own rights. Enid Appiah was the daughter of Sir Stafford Cripps and Dame Isobel Cripps; Stafford Cripps was a lawyer and a prominent politician both as the leader of the Labour party and as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the United Kingdom (November 1947 – October 1950). Enid Cripps involved herself in international aid work after having travelled widely in her youth with her father, serving as his secretary in Moscow during World War II. She worked for the British Army in Iran before moving back to London to study art history (Anon, 2006). During her time studying in London, Enid Cripps met Joseph Appiah at a meeting of the West African Students Union, and the pair married in 1953. An event of public interest, the marriage was, according to a friend of Joseph Appiah, a "marriage of equals at the highest levels of their societies" as "she was to the manor born and he was an aristocrat related to the King of the Ashanti" (Brozan, 2006, p. 1). After moving to Kumasi in 1954 with her young family, Enid Appiah involved herself in the community, writing books to help children learn to read. Upon Joseph Appiah's death in 1990, she had no intention of leaving the country; she had purchased the burial plot next to her husband's when he died. She then had the plot covered with concrete to ensure that no one else would be buried there first, and she voiced her dissatisfaction with any attempts by government officials to deport her in the interim; Appiah's husband has commented that "she said the airport was a long way away and she would kick and scream every inch of the way. Fearful of the publicity that would engender, they backed down" (Brozan, 2006, p. 1). Enid Appiah refused to let anyone else determine where she would live or determine how she would be defined, which is something that Appiah has prized in his work. The individual is central, Appiah insists; they

should be provided with the ability to choose which parts of their identity define them, and they should also have the ability to set aside that which they choose not to be defined by.

Appiah's father also influenced many of his ideas on cosmopolitanism; Joseph Appiah had left Appiah and his three sisters a handwritten, unfinished note when he died, urging them to remember that they "are citizens of the world," and that they should try to leave the world "better than [they] found it" (Appiah, 2005, p. 213). Joseph Appiah, born in Kumasi in 1918 to members of Ashanti imperial aristocracy, was related to the royal Ashanti line (Williams, 2007, p. xxxiii). He studied Law at West Temple in London, where he joined the West African Students Union, a student group of which he went on to be appointed president. The group had a strong focus on self-governance and liberation for British colonies in Africa, and it was here that Joseph Appiah met and befriended the future Ghanaian President, Kwame Nkrumah. Whilst reading for the Bar, Joseph Appiah was appointed as Nkrumah's representative in London whilst Nkrumah pushed for the liberation of Ghana from British governance. It was not until Nkrumah began to push for a centralisation of power in West Africa in 1955 that Joseph Appiah began to distance himself from his friend. Groups opposing Ghana's post-colonial government claimed that a centralisation of power was dictatorial; they believed that the tribal leaders that Nkrumah had been gradually removing from power should be reinstated as key officials, as they were more capable of being aware of and attending to problems on a local level (Berry, 1994). Joseph Appiah sided with this opposition and was ultimately imprisoned for opposing Nkrumah's Prevention of Terrorism Act (Anon, 2006). When Nkrumah was eventually ousted in a military coup in 1966, Joseph Appiah remained in politics, serving as Ghana's representative in the United Nation and as a government minister until he retired in 1978 (Pace, 1990). Appiah picks up on his father's aversion to a centralised government, rejecting the notion of a global government and following the argument that local needs are best addressed through local governance. From his father's experiences, Appiah also takes care to emphasise the responsibility of the government to protect its citizens and their autonomy, supporting the idea of a democratic government that is attentive to its people.

It was amidst this post-colonial upheaval that Appiah received his early education before returning to England to study at Clare College, Cambridge University, gaining both a B.A. and a Ph.D. in philosophy. He has since taught at many prominent American universities, such as

Yale, Cornell, Harvard, and Princeton, and is currently employed as a Professor of Philosophy and Law at New York University. He has also received many honorary degrees throughout his career, including honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from both Harvard University and the University of Edinburgh in 2012 and 2013 respectively, indicating the international level of respect for Appiah's work in his chosen fields. Appiah travels widely to present lectures in his fields, which include multiculturalism, global citizenship, identity, and cosmopolitanism, so as to encourage the global dispersion of knowledge, whilst residing primarily in the United States with his husband, editorial director of the New Yorker magazine, Henry Finder (Appiah, 2015).

Appiah's identity as both an English-African and as a gay man have impacted his work. He discusses American culture as an outsider and, by virtue of his link to royalty through his family lineage, Appiah's position as an English-African living in America is situated differently from that of a Black American. His ties are to elite culture in both Ghana and England rather than to slavery, and whilst the racism he may encounter may not be explicitly different from that which a Black American may encounter, the reception will be different. It is a different experience, a different way of being. Appiah's sexuality, whilst acceptance for diverse sexualities is growing, is also something that will have positioned him as an outsider throughout his life – after all, the American Psychiatric Association did not declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder until 1973, when Appiah was only nineteen. Appiah has lived a life of difference, and his work explores how to understand the possibilities and limitations of those differences.

Appiah's Theoretical Background

This section examines the theoretical influences on Appiah's model of cosmopolitanism. Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism is an ethical cosmopolitanism. It celebrates "universality plus difference" (Appiah, 2008a, p. 92), but does so on an individual level, not so much concerned with a universal human *race* as it is with a universal human *being*. Appiah is himself concerned with how an individual can lead a successful life, how they can be helped to live that life autonomously, and what that individual can do to give other people those same opportunities. He focuses on the worth of the individual as a human as opposed to an

individual living within a distinct identity group; underneath the various identities that we take up, Appiah suggests we are all the same. We are all, at the most basic level, human and we should all be treated as such.

It is in this idea that the impact of Appiah's position as an English-African living in America and a gay man becomes apparent. Appiah seeks to push past the idea of determining a person's worth based on the particulars of their identity, and to determine it based on their humanity. By the content of their character, so to speak. The universal human needs to come first, Appiah urges, and individual differences need to be secondary. His cosmopolitanism seeks to transcend difference, to centralise the universal human, and to champion the individual. He turns back to the grand progressive narratives of modernity and believes that the best way forward, for humanity, is together.

On account of being a model of cosmopolitanism that emphasises the importance of universal individuals – as opposed to a collective of individual identities – Appiah's cosmopolitanism reveals a liberal attitude in the same tradition as that of prominent thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, and Immanuel Kant, tracing as far back as the Cynics and the Stoics of Ancient Greece and Rome. Appiah refers to these thinkers throughout his work, and their influence on his thinking is evident.

For instance, the letter left for Appiah and his sisters by their father reminds them to think of themselves as "citizens of the world" (Appiah, 2005, p. 213). Joseph Appiah in this instance quotes the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope, who is famous for having replied, when asked where he came from, that he was a "citizen of the world" (Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 6.2.63). Diogenes rejected the notion of the *polis*, the notion of the city state that was central to the Ancient Greek (male) identity, both denying it his allegiance whilst also denying himself any of the help that a *polis* is expected to provide for its citizens. He was challenging the exclusivity of *polis* membership, offering instead the alternative option of belonging to a much larger, more encompassing *polis*. The Cynic's world citizens were not to be held to the conventions of traditional social membership; instead they were free to live according to nature, suggesting that "human affiliation ought to be to humanity rather than a single state" (Piering, 2015, p. 1). Diogenes argued that because humans are rational creatures, there was no need for them to be ruled by law or convention, that "nature offers the clearest indication of how to live the good life" (Piering, 2015, p. 1). Diogenes himself

was committed to his ideas; he was known to have rejected social conventions and instead chosen to live in a pithos – a large jar – and to have eaten and masturbated in the marketplace without shame. Through his rejection of *polis* affiliation and standard social conventions, Diogenes was embodying the Cynic ideas of "the unconditional supremacy of the moral will, in the determination of life" and "the independence and responsibility of *the individual* as the unit of morality" (Rendall, 1898, p. xxxvi). The emphasis was on the rational individual, a key figure in Appiah's cosmopolitanism.

Appiah creates a further connection to Ancient thinkers when he mentions that his father would keep both the Bible and Cicero beside his bed (Appiah, 2006). Cicero has been linked to the broader philosophical ideas put forward by the Stoics of Ancient Rome, and Murray Rothbard (2006, p.22) has claimed that Cicero was "the great transmitter of Stoic ideas from Greece to Rome." The Stoics evolved out of Cynic thought, particularly after the ideas had been brought to Rome. A key difference between the two schools of thought is found in their interpretations of the idea to live life in agreement with nature. Where the Cynics took the idea quite literally, with Diogenes in his pithos, the Stoics chose to reject the implied "reversion to animalism, and the reduction of man's needs to the level of the beasts" (Rendall, 1898, p. xlvi). They again put forward the notion of a rational individual, and believed that to live in agreement with nature was to live rationally; human beings are naturally rational the Stoics proposed, and one could live in agreement with that nature and live rationally, or they could not and therefore they would live irrationally. To live rationally, in agreement with nature, would raise people out of isolation and promote "conscious brotherhood" (Rendall, 1898, p. xlvi). Cicero explored this further, stating that each person has two personae: one is a personal persona, distinguishing each individual, and the other is a universal persona, indicating that every person is a human being and has that factor in common (Holowchak, 2008). Cicero was distinguishing between an individual identity and a universal human identity, which Appiah – and subsequently this thesis – also pushes as integral to thinking about how people interact with one another.

The Stoics pursued the idea of a common humanity further with the notion of each individual having membership to two separate commonwealths. The first is the local commonwealth, the *polis*, and the other is the commonwealth that encompasses both gods and men. The Stoics did not reject the idea of local loyalty in the way that Cynics like

Diogenes did. They instead situated those local loyalties alongside an allegiance to the global; the Roman Emperor and noted Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, for example, believed that "his 'city', insofar as he is the particular person he is, is Rome, but, insofar as he is a human being, is the world. Being a part of two cities, his good is what is good in both cities" (Holowchak, 2008, p. 74). Appiah too follows this line of thinking, recognising the importance of the local, which is emphasised by his father's experiences as well. Belonging to a global does not have to mean a rejection of the local; the Stoics suggest that the two can co-exist.

The Stoics continue to show the endurance of their ideas when the ideas of Stoic philosopher and Roman statesman Seneca the Younger are considered. "It is required of a person that he should benefit other humans," Seneca suggested, "many, if he is able; if not many, a few; if not a few, those nearest; if not those nearest, himself" (Holowchak, 2008, p. 186). Appiah reiterates this idea centuries later when he writes that "whatever my basic obligations are to the poor far away, they cannot be enough, I believe, to trump my concerns for my family, my friends, my country; nor can an argument that every life matters require me to be indifferent to the fact that one of those lives is mine" (2006, p. 165). It draws on the concept of dual commonwealths discussed above, where local loyalties are not strictly rejected in favour of universal loyalties. There is an implied obligation for an individual to do what they can to better the world, and even if an individual is unable to do this on a global scale that does not necessarily mean that it cannot be done nor should not be attempted. Do what you can, the Stoics and Appiah both suggest. "If we revere the whole", the Stoics believe, "the parts are sacred" (Holowchak, 2008, p. 96).

Appiah is also largely influenced by Enlightenment thinkers. His work on cosmopolitanism is concerned with questions of modernity and he draws on the work of thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, who has also considered the ideas of the Cynics and the Stoics. Kant's work is humanist at its core, questioning "above all things else, human nature and the human condition" (Ferrone, 2015, p. 96). He has appropriated the moral core of Stoic ideas to this end, ideas such as "a kingdom of free rational beings, equal in humanity, each of them to be treated as an end no matter where in the world he or she dwells" and "that we have a duty to promote the happiness of others, and […] this entails constructive engagement with political life" (Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 33, 35). Appiah also engages with these ideas, believing

in the idea of a rational human being and the importance of politics to ensuring the protection of the individual. Like Kant, Appiah (2006) too believes in the ongoing development of humanity, that throughout history humans have been becoming increasingly more morally mature and that this will one day lead to a more enlightened world. Both see human life as an ongoing trajectory, with each generation building on the work of the ones that had come before, to move towards a "universal *cosmopolitan existence*" (Kant, 2010, p. 24). Kant does urge his readers to consider that the idea of an *achievable* utopia is perhaps unwise however; a world without discord is one that cannot achieve anything further, cannot grow, and will become stagnant and meaningless, which resonates in Appiah's work. Appiah (2006) does disagree with Kant's positive suggestion that the cost of war will eventually become too much and too apparent for nations to accept, and that this will lead to other nation-states being "forced by their own insecurity to offer themselves as arbiters […] so that they indirectly prepare the way for a great political body of the future, without precedent in the past" (Kant, 2010, p. 24). Appiah is on the other hand quick to caution against the notion of a global government.

Where both Appiah and Kant reject the notion of a transcendent moral authority and position the government as responsible for protecting the freedom of its citizens, Kant reminds his readers that it is not always an easy thing to guarantee. "While man may try as he will," Kant writes, "it is hard to see how he can obtain for public justice a supreme authority which would itself be just, whether he seeks this authority in a single person or in a group of many persons selected for this purpose. For each one of them will always misuse his freedom if he does not have anyone above him to apply force to him as the laws should require it. Yet the highest authority has to be just *in itself* and yet also a *man*. This is therefore the most difficult of all tasks, and a perfect solution is impossible" (Kant, 2010, p. 21). Appiah (2006) answers this problem with the notion of democracy; the responsibility of monitoring and ensuring the justness of a government is given to the rational masses. The government answers to the people and the people can remove it if they need to.

Both Kant and Appiah place a lot of faith in the idea of rationality and the figure of the rational human individual; they agree that the obligation to uphold heritage traditions rests on the individual, for example, and that the individual should be given the opportunity to approach those traditions how they see fit. Kant believes (2013, p. 7) that future

generations should have the opportunity to dismiss past practices "as unauthorized and criminal" if they feel it is appropriate. Appiah follows this line of thinking; as we should ideally have the ability to dismiss the practices of the people who came before us, we should not expect that our practices be upheld without question, that "the decision of whether to uphold 'tradition' is for them to make, not us" (2005, p. 150).

However, whilst much of Appiah's thought is in line with Kant's, he does not follow Kant's notions of cosmopolitanism completely. Kant focuses on a moral cosmopolitanism where attention is given to notions of allegiance to a grand universal and the consideration of the part that individuals are required to play in the continuous project of making the world a better place. Appiah diverts from this path, instead championing a more ethical style of cosmopolitanism; the individual is central and the focus is on how the individual can live the best life, not only in terms of helping others, but also in a large part for themselves. Appiah's (2005) focus on the worth of the individual and the recognition of the individual as an end in and of itself, as opposed to the means to some form of global project, draws attention to the influence that thinkers that are concerned with notions of liberty have had on his own thoughts.

Mill was influenced by Benjamin Constant, a theorist who understood liberty as "the triumph of individuality – as much over the authority that would govern through despotism as over the masses who claim the right to enslave the minority under the majority" (quoted in Young, 2002, p. 34). This autonomous individual is a central figure in the work of both Mill and Rawls, and also for Appiah. Rawls uses this individual to explain what he considers to be the three key elements of liberty: "the agents who are free, the restrictions or limitations which they are free from, and what it is that they are free to do or not to do" (Rawls, 1971, p. 202). Rawls prizes autonomy, believing that when a person's actions are "chosen by him as the most adequate possible expression of his nature as a free and equal rational being" (Rawls, 1971, p. 252), that person is engaging in the project of creating a good life. It is in his adoption of this idea that Appiah moves away from Kant, who focuses on the idea of creating a better global world, to a more liberal interpretation, where there is a focus on creating a better life for the individual.

Appiah follows the tradition of liberal thinkers through history to Mill, whose work Shaun Young (2002) suggests marks a turning point between classical and modern liberalism. This

turn shifted the emphasis from individual *self-preservation* to individual *self-fulfilment*; no longer was the government expected to limit themselves to the protection of the liberty of its citizens, but it was also expected to provide an environment within with those citizens could flourish. Tied into this idea are notions of pluralism and tolerance, both of which Appiah stresses in his work through ideas on identity creation and diversity. Mill's ideas of pluralism and tolerance suggest that, because there are multiple definitions of what makes a life good, no one person – or state – should be able to decide what is good for another (Young, 2002); Mill does, however, follow Kant in the belief that an individual's freedom should only be protected insofar as it does not impact on the freedom of another individual. "Acts, of whatever kind, which, without justifiable cause, do harm to others," Mill suggests, "may be, and in more important cases absolutely require to be, controlled by the unfavourable sentiments, and, when needful, by the active interference of mankind" (quoted in Young, 2002, p. 34). Appiah (2006) agrees, believing that individuals should be allowed to make their own autonomous choices, as long as those choices do not negatively impact the choices of other autonomous individual; your freedom ends where the next person's freedom begins.

A liberal influence also shows through in Appiah's work with the emphasis on the responsibilities of government which informs his particular model of cosmopolitanism. He does not retain the Cynic idea of a world without local allegiance, nor does he want to pursue Kant's notion of a global governing body. He instead chooses an approach more in line with the liberalist tradition, following the ideas of thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, and John Locke, in that they considered it unacceptable for a government to do more than protect the "individuals' lives, liberty and property" (Young, 2002, p. 31); if the government failed to fulfil its responsibilities to its citizens, then those citizens should be capable of replacing that government, by whatever means are necessary. The idea of replacing the government is implicit in Appiah's work; he endorses the idea of citizens encouraging their governments to help other people, but he does not explicitly suggest what to do if a government chooses not to listen. The political liberal tradition that Appiah follows provides the answer for him. If the government does not listen, then they should be replaced, whatever it takes. This is the basis of the United States' second amendment, the

right to bear arms, which further links Appiah's work with the US, where he writes much of his work. When Young states that

> the goal of liberalism has not been to secure a homogeneity of cultural, or religious, or moral beliefs, but rather to develop a governance framework than can achieve and preserve a socio-political order within which conflict between competing beliefs is minimized and tempered, and the inevitable plurality of views is allowed to co-exist, if not flourish (Young, 2002, p. 43),

Appiah is likely to agree.

Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism, therefore, is a cosmopolitanism influenced by thousands of years of thought. From the Cynics, he has taken the idea of the rational individual, an idea that has been elaborated on in the work of Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant. From the Stoics, he has borrowed the notion that humans can exist in two worlds – the local and the global – and that allegiance to one does not have to diminish allegiance to the other. He takes from Kant an emphasis on the ongoing nature of the project that is humanity. From liberal thinkers such as Rawls and Mill, the importance of the rational and autonomous individual, and the responsibilities of government and its accountability to its citizens. Appiah takes all of these ideas and weaves them throughout his ethical model of partial cosmopolitanism. The autonomous individual is the central figure, and Appiah seeks to explore how a wide variety of individuals can come together in the ongoing pursuit of a shared humanity.

An Ethical Model of Cosmopolitanism

In this section, an examination of Appiah's ethical model of partial cosmopolitanism will be undertaken using first a thematic analysis, followed by locating this particular model in its social context. The themes that appear in Appiah's work on cosmopolitanism are: universality, diversity, obligations, autonomy, and narratives.

Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism is a model that treats cosmopolitanism as an ideal state for society to reach. He focuses primarily on the autonomous universal individual, and how that universal individual can live the best possible ethical life for themselves. The individual

is assumed to belong to a universal collective, and that the best ethical life for the individual includes a rational desire for what is best for that collective. It should be noted, however, that whilst Appiah's idealised individual is capable of rationality, he does not assume that we *are* rational all of the time, suggesting instead that we should continuously be doing our best to be so.

Themes

Universality - Diversity

Appiah describes the heart of his ethical model of partial cosmopolitanism as being the idea of "universality plus difference" (2008a, p. 92). He puts more weight on the importance of universality; he sees every individual as having something in common, an even ground that can be called upon to give people something with which to start a conversation. Appiah essentialises this commonality, suggesting that it is based in biology; every individual shares a "universal human biology" (Appiah, 2005, p. 252), and it is through this shared biology that we can begin to consider notions of things such as fundamental human rights (Appiah, 2005). Through the globalisation of the world, with trade and expansive networks of information being shared, we now have the "knowledge about the lives of other citizens … and the power to affect them" (Appiah, 2008a, p. 87), making global similarities easier to recognise. It is these similarities, these things that everyone has in common despite all our various differences, that is key to beginning Appiah's cosmopolitan conversation. What Appiah does not emphasise, however, is that globalisation has also made our *differences* easier to recognise; at times, the unavoidable realisation of these differences is stronger than the contrasting similarities, and this thesis argues that it is careless to think that the similarities will always trump the differences.

To explore his idea of a human universal, Appiah turns to art. He discusses the way that art does not have to be in its place of origin to be understood or admired, believing that people anywhere can look at great works of art and think "these things were made by creatures like me, through the exercise of skill and imagination. I do not have those skills, and my imagination spins different dreams. Nevertheless, that potential is also in me" (2006, p. 135). He emphasises the idea of art being a human universal when he considers the art work

of ancient cultures. This artwork, he believes, should be shared around the world, not just confined to the country wherein it was found. He suggests that Ancient Malian art is simply art that was "made on territory that's now part of Mali" (Appiah, 2006, p. 124); it is *not* the artwork of Mali, because Mali as it is now did not exist when the artworks were made. The same can be said of Nok artefacts, Appiah continues, in that Nigeria was not a country when they were created, so they should not be considered as Nigerian artefacts. The Elgin marbles are also included in his explanation; they should belong to Athens, if they are to belong to anyone. They were created when Athens was a city-state, before Greece as we currently understand it came into being. If they are going to be returned home, then they should be returned to Athens. However, Appiah argues that there is little reason why they cannot be displayed elsewhere; they were created by a people long since dead, why should the people who inhabit the land where they are found inherit them? Appiah suggests that they should instead be inherited by humankind.

Appiah's discussion does not significantly consider art that was created by artists of a pre-modern culture that still exists. In a New Zealand context for example, any newly discovered Māori taonga tuturu[3] is considered to be the property of the Crown, which is then compelled by law to find an appropriate owner for the object. They do this in conjunction with the Māori Land Court, and potential owners are required to submit a claim to the object which cannot solely rest on the "virtue of ownership or occupation of the land from which the taonga tuturu was found or recovered" (New Zealand Government 1975, s. 11, ss. 2). In line with what Appiah suggests, simply inhabiting the land where the objects are found is not enough. The taonga tuturu can be held by authorised public (New Zealand) museums who, acting as the object's guardians, are tasked with consulting with local (or regional) Māori to determine the appropriate display and care of the object. This can include establishing a link with the whānau (family) that the object links to, and establishing how the object came to be in the museum's possession (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2001). Under the Protected Objects Act 1975, ownership of historic Māori artefacts is determined with consideration of the direct descendants of the original creator;

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[3] "An object that (a) relates to Māori culture, history, or society; and (b) was, or appears to have been (i) manufactured or modified in New Zealand by Māori; or (ii) brought into New Zealand by Māori; or (iii) used by Māori; and (c) is more than 50 years old" (New Zealand Government 1975, s. 2, ss. 1).

tight export restrictions[4] mean that, on the one hand, the object may belong to the nation – or humankind – and on the other, they very much belong to families and individuals.

Whilst there are organisations, such as UNESCO, pushing for the return of ancient Malian art to contemporary Mali, Appiah believes that the people of Mali would actually benefit more if some of the art was shared around the world. Selling certain pieces could finance the care and the maintenance of the remaining pieces, allowing for better preservation, and would also open up the opportunity to receive artwork from other places in return. They would be able to experience the skill and imagination of elsewhere, and the skill and imagination of the ancient Malian art would be able to be experienced by people all over the world. For Appiah himself, the idea of art being displayed outside of its supposed country of origin takes on another dimension; artworks and artefacts had been stolen from his hometown of Kumasi long before his birth, during the process of British colonisation, and some of it has recently been returned (Appiah, 2006). He does not think that all of the artworks should be returned:

> I actually want museums in Europe to be able to show the riches of the
> society they plundered in the years when my grandfather was a young man.
> I'd rather that we negotiated as restitution not just the major objects of
> significance for our history, things that make the best sense in the palace
> museum at Manhyia, but a decent collection of art from around the world.
> Because perhaps the greatest of many ironies of the sacking of Kumasi in 1874
> is that it deprived my hometown of a collection that was, in fact, splendidly
> cosmopolitan. … Many of the treasures in the Aban were no doubt war booty
> as well (Appiah, 2006, p. 133).

This idea, however, lacks a consideration of the totemic value of an object. The restrictions set out in the New Zealand Protected Objects Act 1975 compensate for this; where Appiah suggests that some cultural artworks be displayed internationally, this thesis argues that it is perhaps in these restrictions that a balance can be found. The art can be displayed

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[4] The Protected Objects Act 1975 places tight restrictions on the export of taonga tuturu, including that an object may not be permanently exported, or exported for a period longer than six months, from New Zealand.

elsewhere, but still very much belongs to the people and culture that it is intrinsically linked to.

Art, Appiah argues, is more than just an issue of cultural patrimony, though he is assuming that the peoples of any given culture will take up the rational argument that sharing their art will allow for more cosmopolitan collections around the world; that the totemic value of an object can be weighed against this rational argument is perhaps easier said than done. However, Appiah follows that if the peoples who created the art, and provided the context for its creation, no longer exist, then the artworks arguably become the property of everyone. The government of the place where the artwork is found has a particular duty towards the preservation of the art, but they should be doing so for everyone. Appiah uses the example of the Nok artefacts once more, suggesting that "whilst the government of Nigeria reasonably exercises trusteeship, the Nok sculptures belong in the deepest sense to all of us" (Appiah, 2006, p. 120). He points out that this idea is expressed in the preamble of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict from 1954, providing a quote from the preamble: "Being convinced that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world…" (Appiah, 2006, p. 121). Appiah expresses a belief in a world cultural heritage, a cultural heritage that is common to everyone, everywhere. His cosmopolitanism does not just have a moral commonality, but a cultural one as well.

He does address one of the issues that arise from that preamble; it suggests that a cultural contribution is made by a people, rather than a person. This suggestion becomes an issue when considering the idea of private ownership. If someone buys a piece of art created by an artist who goes on to be considered one of the nation's great artists, does that art then belong to the nation, under the idea of cultural patrimony, or does it still belong to the person who paid the artist for it? Appiah suggests that the best way to approach this question is not in the national perspective, but in the cosmopolitan perspective. We should instead be asking "what system of international rules about objects of this sort will respect the many legitimate human interests at stake" (Appiah, 2006, p. 127). There are multiple parties who have a stake in this question: the nation, who wishes to preserve its culture for future generations; the individual, who, having legally acquired the artwork, has a claim to

be allowed to enjoy living with it; and the global, who wish to look at the skill and imagination and be awed by the human potential it suggests. Appiah is suggesting that we think about more than cultural patrimony and private ownership; we need to start to also consider how decisions around art – ownership, exportation, repatriation – affect our global cultural heritage.

Appiah's discussion of art indicates his belief in what he calls a universal humanity. There is something in all of us that is the same, regardless of where we come from. It is this similarity that he suggests is central for beginning a conversation with someone who is vastly different from ourselves. "I am human," Appiah writes, quoting ancient Roman playwright Publius Terentius Afer, "nothing human is alien to me" (Appiah, 2006, p. 111). If you share nothing else with someone, you will always share the fact that you are both human. It is this idea that Appiah suggests as being a good starting point to begin conversations as the centre of his solution to how we can best live together. The recognition and respect of a universal humanity, both in oneself and in others, is vital. "If my humanity matters," Appiah believes, "so does yours; if yours doesn't, neither does mine. We stand or fall together" (2008b, p. 203). Violence against you is violence against me. With this as a caveat, we can sit down and talk. Of course, Appiah is again assuming that we will make the rational decision that being human is *enough*; that the people we are talking with are willing to agree that our biological commonalities hold the same value, and that those commonalities are worth putting above our differences.

Appiah is not interested in a cosmopolitanism that solely focuses on the universal, however. He has no desire to form a global government, or to discard all local loyalties. If "moral universalism can carry a uniformitarian agenda" (Appiah, 2005, p. 220), then Appiah is right to caution against what he terms "toxic cosmopolitanism" (Appiah, 2005, p. 221). He ties this toxic cosmopolitanism to radical social movements, saying that whilst these movements may have a utopian agenda, it is frequently aggressive, ruthless, and can be considered malignant. "They would never go to war *for* a country," Appiah (2006, p. 137) writes, "but they enlist in a campaign *against* any nation that gets in the way of universal justice." National loyalty is discarded in favour of a universal, enlightened culture; however, anything other than their particular universal will not be tolerated. It is this lack of tolerance, this inability to accept other ways of living, which becomes dangerous: "Universalism without

toleration, it's clear, easily turns to murder" (Appiah, 2006, p. 140). Radical fundamentalists, regardless of their creed – Appiah (2006) uses the example of the Muslim (neo) fundamentalists of Al Qaeda – create a model of cosmopolitanism that is problematic, where difference has no place.

He also cautions against liberal cosmopolitanism, critical of its "rigorous abjuration of partiality, the discarding of all local loyalties" (Appiah, 2005, p. 221). Whilst liberal cosmopolitanism may agree that difference between people is important, it is still stringent on the notion that everyone matters equally. The idea of complete impartiality is a logical conclusion to come to if one believes that we are, at a biological level, the same; if we are all worth as much as one another, then "what could justify favouring members of your particular groups of others?" (Appiah, 2005, p. 221). A logical conclusion is not capable of dismissing the reality, however. Appiah presents, and rejects, the situation described by 18th century philosopher William Godwin:

> Godwin gave us the locus classicus of this posture in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, where he wrote, "What magic is there in the pronoun 'my,' that should justify us in overturning the decisions of impartial truth?" and contemplated, with equanimity, the prospect of rescuing the venerable Archbishop Fenelon from a fire and leaving his valet (insofar as his life was less valuable) to burn. "Suppose the valet had been my brother, my father or my benefactor," he continued. "This would not alter the truth of the proposition." A few people seem to find heroism in the moral austerity, and the *bodenlosig* rhetoric, that accompanies such barrel-proof cosmopolitanism; but most of us find the smell of burning friends and relations distinctly off-putting (Appiah, 2005, p. 221).

It is perfectly acceptable to privilege those closest to you, Appiah claims. To try and discard all local loyalties is impractical.

Local loyalties allow a space for diversity, which Appiah positions as a vital component of his partial cosmopolitanism. It is perhaps not as important as the recognition of a universal humanity; it is "universality *plus* difference" (Appiah, 2008a, pp. 92, emphasis added), after all. Difference is included in the discussion, nonetheless. Difference, Appiah believes, is

inescapable and an important part of healthy discussion that is the lynchpin of being able to live together despite our differences.

The difference that Appiah supports is a difference that is focused on the liberal idea of the autonomous individual. It is "a matter not so much of cultures as of identities" (2005, p. 117), he says, pointing to the various identity groups that are implicated in post-modernity's identity politics. He positions these identities, often associated with cultures, as identities that are malleable, able to be taken up and put aside as the individual chooses. He places this ability to choose at the centre of American culture; "For so many who have loved America, in part, exactly because it has enabled them to choose who they are and to decide, too, how central America is in their chosen identity" (1997, p. 633). He does not claim that there is a common culture that *centres* Americans, but he does believe that there is still a common culture. It does not drive everything that they do, and not everyone relates to it in the same way or with the same intensity, but it is there nonetheless. It is the freedom to be involved with a variety of common cultures. What Appiah is suggesting is a cosmopolitanism that recognises the diversity that exists within the universal.

The notion of a shared humanity is put forward as a reason to respect diversity; someone may be different from you, but there is still something about you that is the same. Because of that commonality, difference can be tolerated. "As long as these differences meet certain ethical constraints," Appiah suggests, "we are happy to let them be" (Appiah, 1997, p. 621). If difference is unavoidable – and to try to push difference away for the sake of the universal is unwise and totalitarian, as was shown with the idea of a toxic cosmopolitanism – then the idea of a commonality can be drawn on to give people a reason to sit down and begin a cosmopolitan conversation. Appiah suggests that it can be something as simple as a conversation between two individuals (2006). In the face of all their differences, perhaps they both like to fish. They can sit down and talk about fishing and can use that common ground to begin building a relationship. They may find they have more in common than they first thought.

Coming together is the first step; Appiah draws on Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis to explain that "contact between individuals of different groups makes hostility and prejudice less likely if it occurs … on terms of equality" (Appiah, 2008a, p. 91). If we come together in commonality, we can begin to work together, despite our differences. It is the working

together that becomes difficult. Appiah believes that we do not always need to agree as to why something has to be done, just as long as we agree that it must be done (2005); we do not need to agree as to why the child needs to be pulled out of the lake, what is important is that we both agree that the child needs to be pulled out.

Appiah does not suggest what we do if we *do not* agree that the child needs to be pulled out. He assumes that the safety of the child is paramount, but does so from a particular cultural standpoint; an Asian man in 1996 allegedly prevented lifeguards in Dubai from rescuing his drowning daughter because he believed that "if these men touched his daughter, then this would dishonour her" (AFP, 2015, p. 1). This man would not agree with Appiah that the child needs saving, though it is important to note that others might, given that the man was subsequently arrested for hindering the lifeguards and allowing his daughter to die. However, this case does recognise that coming to the agreement that a child needs to be saved will not always guarantee that the child *will* be saved; a tradition of honour and purity would have needed to be overcome, in the name of a universal human value, to save this particular girl's life. Appiah stays with the assumption that we want to save the child and suggests that "what's morally appropriate for me to do from my point of view is different from what's morally appropriate for you to do from your point of view" (2006, p. 11); we are not questioning whether or not that child needs to be pulled out of the lake, we are questioning *how* to pull the child out of the lake. Thus it is important, Appiah presses, that we do our best to remember that "when we disagree, it won't always be because one of us just doesn't understand the value of what's at stake" (Appiah, 2006, p. 59). We can agree that the child needs to be saved, but we are not always going to agree on how, and that is not because one of us values the child less, Appiah suggests.

The Dubai situation suggests that one of us may indeed value the child less, however. It also brings the notion of upholding and enacting tradition down to an individual level; many onlookers disagreed with the father's actions, and he was subsequently taken to court for letting his daughter drown, showing that there is a variety of ways for individuals to understand and interpret the common traditions of a culture. What we have in common can get us into a conversation, but that commonality will not always overshadow what makes us different.

Important to Appiah's cosmopolitanism is the notion that difference plays a part in an ethical existence. We cannot realistically expect people to reject the potential for diversity for some utopian goal. However, whilst diversity can open up multiple identities for an individual to choose from – allowing for a variety of identity scripts that can be taken up and put aside as desired – there is no need to value diversity for diversity's sake. Appiah takes this idea to its logical extreme; "we don't need to treat genocide or human rights abuses as just another part of the quaint diversity of the species, a local taste that some totalitarians just happen to have" (2008a, p. 88). Whilst Appiah's cosmopolitan accepts that there are always going to be people who hold views and opinions and beliefs that are different from their own, allowances do not have to be made for people who would wish to limit the freedom – the liberty – of others. "Cosmopolitanism values human variety for what it makes possible for free individuals," Appiah believes, narrowing in on the liberal, autonomous individual once more, "and some kinds of cultural variety constrain more than they enable. In other words, the cosmopolitan's high appraisal of variety flows from the human choices it enables, but variety is not something we value no matter what" (1997, p. 635). Difference *can* be set aside for the universal, he insists, and it should be when the freedom of the individual is at stake. The girl in Dubai should have been saved, and it was an appropriate response to punish the father.

Given that diversity cannot therefore be the ultimate attainment for Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism, he makes space for the idea of homogeneity. The liberal and autonomous individual should be free to choose uniformity over diversity; if a group of individuals choose to shape their life around a single, identical set of values, then they should not be denied that decision. Appiah suggests that the concern over homogeneity is because of the way it has in the past been enforced; "Freely chosen homogeneity, then, raises no problems for me: in the end, I would say good luck to them. But what British Tories and Hindu chauvinists and Maoist party bosses want is not a society that chooses to be uniform, but the imposition of uniformity" (Appiah, 1997, p. 635). Homogeneity does not have to be a bad thing, it does not have to detract from diversity, but it must be chosen freely. As with diversity, the freedom of others must be considered, and if an existence of uniformity impacts that freedom negatively, then steps should be taken to dismantle it.

Appiah has described his cosmopolitanism as "universality plus difference" (2008a, p. 92). It is not a totalitarian concept of cosmopolitanism; there is no desire to form a global government or to push an aggressive utopia onto people. It is not an entirely liberal concept of cosmopolitanism either; it shares the idea of diversity, but does not believe that that diversity can, or should, be considered impartially. It is a partial cosmopolitanism, believing in a universal humanity and the idea that difference is important, and that partiality is a realistic feature of human life. The partial cosmopolitan's allegiance is first to the universal, but they will not deny their allegiance to the local, to their family and their friends. Appiah's cosmopolitanism claims that humans lead better lives when they live on a smaller scale, and that "we should defend not just the state but the county, the town, the street, the business, the craft, the profession, the family *as* communities, as circles among the many circles narrower than the human horizon that are appropriate spheres of moral concern" (1997, p. 624). It is not a question between the universal and the local, between homogeneity and diversity. It is a hybrid, a synthesis. We should not just consider one or the other.

Obligations - Autonomy

Central to Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism is the idealised rational, autonomous individual. It is thus an ethical cosmopolitanism, concerned with what individuals can do to make their own life better. If the individual is trying to live a better life, then it follows that they are subsequently making life better for others. If we do not want, in our identity, to be a murderer, then we will not murder (Appiah, 2005). Our motivations and intentions then become where we find our values; Appiah explains that morality is not situation dependent – things such as genocide are bad, regardless of the situation – but ethics are the opposite in that they rely heavily on motivation, particularly in how those motivations tie in to the kind of person that an individual wishes to be (Appiah, 2005). It is something else that we all share; we all are engaged in the ethical project of shaping good lives for ourselves.

In his cosmopolitanism, Appiah suggests that moral questions can, and perhaps should, be approached from an ethical standpoint. He turns to the notion of charity, and what it is that we are obliged to do for one another, to discuss this idea. You could, hypothetically, give all of your money to charities that support starving children in a third world country, Appiah supposes. It would leave you with nothing, however. You would be in a worse position to engage in the ethical project of constructing your own life. Appiah believes, then, that it is

unwise to put yourself in a bad situation just to momentarily remedy someone else's. There is a balance that must be found, between what is morally praiseworthy and ethically obligatory. The cosmopolitan does not have to be impartial; "Whatever my basic obligations are to the poor far away, they cannot be enough, I believe, to trump my concerns for my family, my friends, my country; nor can an argument that every life matters require me to be indifferent to the fact that one of those lives is *mine*" (Appiah, 2006, pp. 165, emphasis added). What is needed is a mixed theory of value, one where local loyalties are reconciled with global obligations.

Engaging with life ethically does not mean that moral obligations are automatically negated, however it is not the case that "the obligations of universal morality must *always* get priority to ethical obligations" (Appiah, 2005, p. 233). Partial cosmopolitanism distinguishes itself from so-called toxic or liberal cosmopolitanism in this way, as the global is not always deemed the most important, and local allegiances are not rejected. Distance becomes an important part of the discussion, but finding the balance between local and global obligations is not easy.

Appiah (2006) presents the idea of being able to kill an old mandarin in China from far away to exemplify the challenge that distance poses. The mandarin is old, dying, and you will never meet them. If you killed the mandarin, the philosophical puzzle promises you will be made extremely wealthy. With just a thought, you could be rich. The mandarin would also be dead. Appiah then introduces another philosophical puzzle, once again questioning the limits of the moral imagination. He quotes philosopher Adam Smith, taking the idea of killing strangers for personal profit to its logical extreme:

> If he was to lose his little finger to-morrow, he would not sleep to-night; but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren. … To prevent, therefore, this paltry misfortune to himself, would a man of humanity be willing to sacrifice the lives of a hundred millions of his brethren, provided he had never seen them? Human nature startles with horror at the thought, and the world, in its greatest depravity and corruption, never produced such a villain as could be capable of entertaining it. But what makes this difference? (Appiah, 2005, p. 156).

If local obligations are always the most important, then the mandarin will die. Hundreds of millions of strangers will die.

It still stands that we cannot be realistically expected to care about each one of those strangers in the same way that we care about those close to us, however. The insistence in moral cosmopolitanism that we should care about each and every person on the planet in the same way has received criticism. Appiah cites Robert Sibley, who suggests that it is a nice idea, but not possible; it "strains to extend our concrete realities to include some distant and generalized 'others' who, we are told, are our global neighbours. […] The idea might give you the warm-and-fuzzies, but it's nothing for which you'd be willing to go to war" (Appiah, 2006, p. 157). However, whilst we cannot be expected to care about everyone to the same extent, it does not negate the fact that we still have moral obligations to strangers. It is simply important, Appiah insists, that we recognise that those obligations will be different from the ones we have to those closest to us.

What, then, are our moral obligations? Philosophers such as Peter Singer and Peter Unger suggest that we must do for others whatever we can. It is not just about a passive attitude – not killing someone – but an active approach. Appiah discusses the way that Singer presents the problem mentioned above of saving a drowning child; if you see the child drowning, then you should wade in and save the child out, even if you damage your clothing in the process, Singer suggests. Unger takes the idea to its extreme, suggesting that you should be giving away as much as you can to children in need. "You'd have to liquidate your assets and empty your coffers until you could be sure that your losing a hundred dollars was worse than thirty kids' dying," Appiah (Appiah, 2006, p. 159) writes, following Unger's ideas. Appiah identifies a simple principle for considering such situations, based on Singer's and Unger's logic: "If you can prevent something bad from happening at the cost of something less bad, you ought to do it" (Appiah, 2006, p. 160). It is an uneasy conclusion, Appiah suggests, as how would you be able to judge what was less bad? Should you leave the child to drown in the pond, if it means you are able to save two other children? Should those two children die to save thirty others? Moral obligations are not about doing *whatever* you can, Appiah decides. We should be wary of giving *everything* away to save thirty kids from dying, wary of being "willing to accept for ourselves, our families and friends, lives that are barely worth living" (Appiah, 2006, p. 165).

Knowing that we must not hugely disadvantage ourselves does not provide any further clarification of what our moral obligations are, however, nor does it clarify how we can ensure that those obligations are met. It is in this that Appiah turns towards government. Already having established that he is not interested in a global government, Appiah suggests that governments of nation-states are in the best position to ensure that obligations – and entitlements – are met. It is something that would not work with a global government; a global government would be ill-equipped to deal with local, regional needs, and faces the potential of amassing *too* much power, which could in turn be uncontrollable and unwieldy (Appiah, 2006). Ideally, the nation-state government would instead "balance external rights and internal constraints" (Appiah, 2005, p. 78), allowing it to protect both the people it governs and the world in general. The government of the nation-state should be capable, Appiah believes, of attending to both local and global obligations. By rejecting a global government and accepting a nation-state government, we are "accepting that we have a special responsibility for the life and justice of our own; but we still have to play our part in ensuring that all states respect the rights and meet the needs of their citizens" (Appiah, 2006, p. 163).

The rejection of a global government also allows for multiple political arrangements and experiments. As each nation-state government will have different resources, and need to meet different needs, Appiah suggests a reconsideration of the notion of human rights. Whilst he believes that there are human rights that each and every person on the planet is entitled to, he sees the "glory term" (2005, p. 261) – human rights – to be over-used. If every person is entitled to basic human rights, then they should be things that governments are capable of providing. They should be considered "constraints or conditions on the achievement of social goods, rather than those goods in themselves" (Appiah, 2005, p. 261); it is often easier for a government to prohibit something than it is to provide something, and by emphasising negative rights, there is less confusion that just because a government *ought* to provide something that it actually can. "That is why negative rights to do something," Appiah claims, "where other people have the obligation not to hinder me if I choose to do it – are so prominent in the basic human rights instruments: abstaining from action if almost always possible" (Appiah, 2005, p. 262). It is important to note that Appiah does not deny the importance of things such as education and social services, and that

people should have access to these things. He is simply suggesting that the language of human rights obscures what is realistically possible for some governments to provide; "not every good needs to be explained in the language of human rights, a language that makes most sense if it is kept within bounds" (Appiah, 2005, p. 263).

The basic obligation not to hinder an individual in something that they are pursuing emphasises another key component of Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism. In line with the idea of an ethical cosmopolitanism wherein the individual should not only consider their friends and family but themselves as well, Appiah puts great importance on the autonomy of the individual. Laws should be created under the consideration of what "would be good for individuals" (Appiah, 2001, p. 112). As long as the (rational) individual does not infringe on the autonomy of another, then they should be largely left to make their own choices, though Appiah neglects to mention at what age an individual should be recognised as a rational and autonomous individual capable of making those choices, nor does he provide any guidance in regards to those whose health keeps them from being able to make those choices for themselves. What results is the idea of an *ideal* autonomous individual as being of paramount importance. It is a figure that gets placed above the collective throughout Appiah's works.

The most important facet of the rational individual is that they have the power of choice. The individual, in Appiah's framework, is able to choose their own identity, choose how they are defined. Tied to this is the notion that the individual is allowed to choose what does *not* define them. Even a culture that is on the brink of extinction should not be saved if the individuals of that culture do not freely choose to save it (Appiah, 2005). Culture, in this way, becomes a creation not an imposition, something that is able to be set aside if one should choose.

The power of choice of the individual is emphasised further by Appiah when he puts forward the commonly held so-called Golden Rule of global ethics: "What you wish done to yourself, do to others" (Appiah, 2006, p. 60). He goes on to suggest that it is a fundamentally flawed principle; it infringes on the autonomy of others. Consider Jehovah's Witnesses. They believe that receiving blood leads to damnation. The Golden Rule would disregard this; you may think that having a blood transfusion is not an issue, and if you were in an accident, would have no problem receiving one if it would save your life. If you wish it

done to you, then, logically, you would have no problem doing it to the Jehovah's Witness. If the situation was reversed, and it was up to the Witness, then you would not get the blood transfusion. They would not want one, so they will not give you one. They want to save your soul; you want to save their life. Either way, one of you loses. The Golden Rule is thus intrinsically flawed. It cannot respect the autonomy of an individual, because it fails to recognise that everyone has different values and beliefs, or, at the very least, fails to clarify whose values with which you are supposed to make the decision.

The idea of choice belonging to the autonomous individual however offers possible answers to some of the more controversial topics that the law of a nation-state – as opposed to an individual – is expected to regulate, such as euthanasia and abortion. If the individual is entitled to autonomy and free choice, then it should be up to the individual to make a decision regarding their health care. It is not a moral decision in this instance; it is an ethical one. Appiah draws on Ronald Dworkin's endorsement constraint to explain that "you cannot make someone better off by forcing her to do something she does not herself endorse as valuable" (Appiah, 2005, p. 150). As with the Jehovah's Witness above, you cannot expect the Witness to thank you for giving them a blood transfusion; that is not their idea of better off. Appiah reasons that, as long as what a person is doing does not affect anyone else negatively or impact their own expression of autonomy, they should be allowed to continue with what they are doing. The individual – who is assumed to be of an appropriate age and to have the capacity to engage in autonomous rational thought, as Appiah provides no mention of the individual being otherwise – has an entitlement to choice, and so "the right way to express my concern for her is not to force her to do the right thing, but to try to persuade her she is mistaken" (Appiah, 2008a, p. 93). Appiah draws once again on the idea of conversation; he is encouraging a dialogue, where both sides get to explain their values and, ideally, come to an agreement on the best way to move forward. What is important to remember is that perhaps it is not *she* that is mistaken.

Beginning the conversation is a good start. It encourages people who have little in common to start to get used to one another, to find things that they may not realise they have in common. However, central to the idea of autonomy, and implied in Appiah's work, is that you do not have to begin that conversation if you do not want to. Even if you do start it, you are still entitled to walk away from it. Appiah follows the idea that a rational individual will

want the conversation, will not reject an opportunity for betterment. If the conversation is more than just a conversation between two individuals, a conversation between nation-states for example, then those nation-state governments have an obligation to continue the conversation, to protect the autonomy of their citizens.

Appiah makes clear that one of the issues that arise when considering moral and ethical obligations is the obligations of the individual and the obligations of the nation-state government. They are not the same, he suggests. Where the government needs to ensure fair and equal treatment for all its citizens, those citizens cannot be expected to be held to those same standards (Appiah, 2005). Where the individual can walk away from the conversation, the government cannot. The government should protect the autonomy of its citizens, and those citizens should be allowed to construct their lives however they see fit – as long as they do not infringe upon another citizen's ability to enact autonomy, however. It ties back into the idea of accepting that individuals are rarely impartial, that they often care more about those closest to them than strangers. Individuals cannot be expected to care about each person equally; on the other hand, the government can and should meet that expectation. They should not discriminate amongst their citizens, and ensure that equal employment and space in the public sphere are available to all (Appiah, 2000).

Appiah positions a democratic system as the ideal form of nation-state government. Whilst the idea of a global government is rejected by Appiah because, among other things, it does not allow for a "variety of institutional experimentation from which all of us can learn" (Appiah, 2006, p. 163), Appiah suggests that democracy is rational and capable of infringing upon a citizen's autonomy to protect them or others if necessary (Appiah, 2005). Cosmopolitans should do what they can to "defend the right of others to live in democratic states, with rich possibilities of association within and across their borders" (Appiah, 1997, p. 624), widening the range of available identity scripts which they can use to encourage diversity amongst their own nation-state. The change in language he suggests for talking about human rights is tied into this idea; for Appiah, human rights are "embodied in legal arrangements within and between states rather than … somehow [existing] as antecedents or are grounded in human nature or divine ordinance" (Appiah, 1997, p. 620). The protection of human rights is an international issue, with citizens of democratic nation-states encouraged to pressure their governments into protecting those rights not only for

them, but for others as well. The advantage of a democratic system is that, if the government refuses to listen to its citizens, they should be able to remove that government from power. It is not a monarchy; they can be voted out. Appiah acknowledges that this is not always easy or straightforward, quoting American statesman and political theorist James Madison "in framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself" (Appiah, 2005, p. 165).

Appiah recognises a tension in his partial cosmopolitanism between moral and ethical obligations. What results is a cosmopolitanism that is more concentrated on the ethical obligations of the individual, where the individual should not be considered impartial and should be allowed the autonomy to construct the life that they choose for themselves. The moral obligations of the individual are unclear; Appiah suggests that individuals can fulfil these obligations by urging nation-state governments to do more for the protection of the basic human rights of others. To this end, Appiah also suggests a reconsideration of the language we use for human rights; Appiah believes that "once we conceive of human rights as constraints of the pursuit of social ends, we should not include among them demands that states cannot meet" (Appiah, 2005, p. 262). By adjusting our conceptions to fit this idea, we can make the basic idea of human rights more palatable to all nations and cultures (Appiah, 2005). Appiah positions democratic nation-state governments as the ideal system to ensure the protection of these human rights; he also insists we remember that government obligations and individual obligations are not identical, in neither the ethical nor the moral sphere.

Narratives

Throughout his work, Appiah remains confident of the importance of narratives in the ethical project of creating our lives. He suggests that we use narratives to structure and make sense of our own lives, and also to communicate those lives to one another. Narratives become important in how we understand people that are different from ourselves; they can help us create a collective "thick" language, where we have common understandings of values and are able to establish a common "moral vocabulary" (Appiah, 2008b, p. 156). Appiah also implicates narratives in the project of creating an identity – both of the individual and of the collective – as they provide a variety of identity scripts that

individuals can attempt to either emulate or reject as they see fit. These identity scripts encourage diversity within the universal; they allow for the autonomous individual to freely choose diversity or, alternatively, homogeneity.

In his discussion of narratives and identity scripts, Appiah once again emphasises the importance of the autonomous individual. The collective is tasked with providing the individual a variety of identity scripts with which they can begin to construct their sense of self; this is frequently tied into ideas of collective contestation, as it is often in the debate about which discourses should determine the identity of a collective that the variety of identity scripts available *within* that collective are actually exposed (Appiah, 2005). There is not one way to be gay or straight, or male or female, Appiah stresses. Contestations within collective identities are able to provide different scripts for individuals to draw from.

Identity scripts are also to be found in other areas of social life, beyond that of the collective identity group. Appiah (1994, p.20) claims that his "identity is crucially constituted through concepts (and practices) made available to [him] by religion, society, school and state, and mediated to varying degrees by the family." Education becomes a key point of transmission for these concepts; Appiah argues that the nation-state is obligated to provide examples of different concepts and practices in schools, so as to expose children to other ways of thinking and structuring their lives. Education should leave you "not only knowing and loving what is good in the traditions of your sub-culture but also understanding and appreciating the traditions of others" (Appiah, 1994, p. 16); exposure to other ways of thinking and other traditions will not necessarily mean we will be inclined to agree with them, but "it will help us get used to one another" (Appiah, 2006, p. 78). Children should be exposed to cultural traditions other than those that are generally considered to be their own; Appiah proposes that there are parts of the history of individual social groups that arguably also belong to the history of humankind – or, at least, to the citizens of the United States – such as the Underground Railroad and Ellis Island, or the Chinese Exclusion Act (Appiah, 1994). The migrant nature of the United States is implicated in this idea; the social history of one identity collective will have an impact on the social history of the others. In a New Zealand context, the government sanctioned Dawn Raids, occurring from 1974 to 1979, is an equivalent example; these raids on Pacific Islanders who had overstayed their visas were a result of the nation's wider social and economic tensions (Anae, 2012), and were

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consequential in the creation of the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act of 1982 (Spoonley, 2012) – which stopped Western Samoans from being counted as natural New Zealand citizens due to their position as British subjects – which is still currently active.

Appiah does not only focus on the *lived* narratives of individuals or of collective identities. He also believes that *fictional* narratives are of central importance; they too can provide diverse identity scripts and can be useful tools in discussions of difference. "Evaluating stories together is one of the central ways we language-users coordinate our responses to the world" (Appiah, 2008b, p. 158); fictional narratives can provide a middle ground, a place for conversation to start.

Appiah suggests that fictional narratives are of more use than traditional philosophical thought experiments when considering how people respond to complex problems. Thought experiments have very strict parameters, and Appiah uses the trolley experiment to exemplify this: this experiment asks the individual to consider a situation where there is a trolley speeding down a track towards five people, and there is another track where there is only one person, and then determine whether or not they should switch the trolley to the second track. The thought experiment is too narrow, Appiah argues, whereas a film or novel displaying the same problem would allow for a much more nuanced take on the situation. "In the real world," Appiah writes, "situations are not bundled together with options. In the real world, the act of framing – the act of describing a situation, and thus determining that there's a decision to be made – is itself a moral task" (Appiah, 2008b, p. 196). The thought experiments provide the individual with a range of options to choose from; the narrative makes an important distinction in that it first encourages the individual to decide what those options actually are.

Whilst they can provide a representation of responses to complex problems, fictional narratives can also take on an etiological function. They "provide models for telling our lives" (Appiah, 2005, p. 22); frameworks that can be drawn upon to structure and make sense of our life stories, much in the same way that collective identities can. Fictional narratives, however, can introduce an individual to frameworks that exist outside of their own collective identity groups. They can be an easy way to expose people to other ways of being – other traditions and other values – in a relatively safe space; people can retreat into

the knowledge that it is fictional, into a belief that it cannot affect them, or into an argument that it is unrealistic.

The idea that an individual can reject the message of the fictional narrative is in line with Appiah's rejection of the claim that there is an implicit cultural imperialism in film. He quotes Herbert Schiller, one of the critics making this claim: "[it is] the imagery and cultural perspectives of the ruling sector in the center that shape and structure consciousness throughout the system at large" (Appiah, 2006, p. 108). Appiah then goes on to refute this claim, laying out an assortment of research that has been undertaken by various researchers looking at how global audiences respond to American television dramas. He writes that these researchers have found a number of interesting results: "The first is that, if there is a local product […] many people prefer it, especially when it comes to television. […] The second observation that the research supports is that how people respond to these American products depends on their existing cultural context. When the media scholar Larry Strelitz spoke to those students from KwaZulu-Natal, he found that they were anything but passive vessels" (Appiah, 2006, pp. 109-110). Whilst Appiah does not make the direct connection, the idea is much the same as that of Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding theory (Hall, 1980): an individual can reject the intended and encoded message of a fictional narrative, and can decode the narrative in ways that are oppositional to what may have been expected. The individual retains agency and is able to critically evaluate the identity scripts that the narrative provides. Appiah uses examples from one of Strelitz's participants to demonstrate this:

> What's more, after watching the show, Sipho "realized that I should be allowed to speak to my father. He should be my friend rather than just my father.…" One doubts that that was the intended message of multinational capitalism's ruling sector.
>
> But Sipho's response also confirmed what has been discovered over and over again. Cultural consumers are not dupes. They can resist. So he also said, "In terms of our culture, a girl is expected to enter into relationships when she is about 20. In the Western culture, the girl can be exposed to a relationship as early as 15 or 16. That one we shouldn't adopt in our culture." (Appiah, 2006, p. 110)

The individual is able to both accept and reject the identity scripts that the fictional narratives provide. The claim of cultural imperialism through American television and film is, by Appiah, therefore dismissed. Appiah does not however, in this instance, mention the gendered response that is shown in this example: Sipho responds that the Western cultural tradition of entering relationships five years earlier than his own should not be adopted, whereas a female may hold the opposite view, and the desire by some to maintain tradition and by others to maintain autonomy would then sit at odds with one another.

In his discussion of cultural imperialism, Appiah does make a brief comment on the position of the Hollywood blockbuster. He claims that, in many countries, the film industry requires subsidies from the government, and that in France in particular people prefer to watch American films (Appiah, 2006). He rejects the claim that this is an instance of cultural imperialism – "No army, no threat of sanction, no political saber rattling, imposes Hollywood on the French" (Appiah, 2006, p. 107) – and instead suggests that it is more likely the reverse:

> The Hollywood blockbuster has a special status around the world; but here, as American movie critics regularly complain, the nature of the product – heavy on the action sequences, light on clever badinage – is partly determined by what works in Bangkok and Berlin. From the point of view of the cultural-imperialism theorists, this is a case in which the empire has struck back (Appiah, 2006, p. 109).

Hollywood blockbusters are global creations, shaped by international markets as well as local tastes. Given that research has shown that people prefer locally produced content, for the blockbuster to appeal to the widest possible audience, and thus to make the highest economic return possible, it becomes necessary that it takes on a cosmopolitan attitude. The content is made to elevate, rather than reduce, and in this way the blockbuster becomes a global myth. Globalisation and cosmopolitanism converge, representative of global capitalism and consumption. Shaped by global tastes and trends, the blockbuster is perhaps film at its *most* cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism, then, is centrally linked to capitalism; as with Joseph Schumpeter's "gale of creative destruction" (1994, p. 84), we consume cosmopolitan films and in turn, those films remake us.

The suggestion that Hollywood blockbusters are influenced by a global audience, not just by an American audience, is important for Appiah's discussion of the importance of fictional narratives as providers of identity scripts. To appeal to a global audience – which is necessary if a blockbuster is to be financially successful – a film needs to show a diverse range of identity scripts. People need to have something relevant to *them*, something that they can enjoy. By showing this range of scripts, audience members are exposed to ideas and values that are not necessarily aligned with their own; as with the case of teaching various social histories in schools, the exposure to difference can help people "get used to one another" (Appiah, 2006, p. 78). Appiah touches on the idea that, due to its global nature, the blockbuster can reveal to us "values we had not previously recognized or [undermine] our commitment to values we had settled with" (Appiah, 2008b, p. 158); we can begin to work towards establishing what Appiah terms a shared "moral vocabulary" (Appiah, 2008b, p. 156).

The next section will place these themes and the ideas that they contain in the social context that they emerge from. It then addresses the implications of this particular model of cosmopolitanism, and begins to introduce the limitations of Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism.

Context

The question that underpins Appiah's work on cosmopolitanism is straightforward; however it is one that does not have a straightforward answer. From a philosophical and ethical level, he is concerned with not only how we can best live together as humans, but also with how we can do this whilst acknowledging and maintaining some level of our diversity as individuals. Difference, he asserts, is important for us to live lives that are satisfying on an individual level and to enable growth and progress on a universal level. He views difference as a positive thing, something to generally be celebrated rather than denied, however he does believe that our differences must come second to the idea of a universal humanity; what we share, given to us by our human biology, is stronger than that which we do not. Inspired by Enlightenment notions of the rational individual, Appiah is concerned with what we as individuals are ethically and morally obligated to do for one another, and with what position the nation-state should play in the pursuit of a better world for everyone.

Appiah, in his cosmopolitanism, is rightly responding to the threat of the current social hegemony. This threat is an internal one, which deals with social structures and institutions both created by and continuously creating an environment that in his critique is inhibiting our ability to construct our individual ethical lives alongside one another. He sees the (white) patriarchal power structure of society, particularly Western society, as detrimental to the wider population; he would have it so that each individual would be seen *first* as a human, and *then* as a chosen identity. This would allow individuals to define their own identities, picking and choosing what they would like the world to see them as. However, his belief that the structures and institutions maintained by hegemonic social forces can be so easily transcended belies the fact that the people this hegemony most disadvantages are denied the resources necessary to challenge it. Therefore, there is an internal contradiction in what Appiah theorises.

Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism comes from a position that has a high level of cultural capital attached, afforded to Appiah both by his position as an educated academic working within some of the world's highest regarded tertiary institutions and by his ancestry, with both sides of his family having accumulated high social capital through both blood and position. What Appiah's work achieves in theoretical depth is, as a consequence, inhibited by an inability to experience the limitations that those without such privileges are restricted by. His idea that differences can be set aside for the sake of the universal – implicit in his argument that our commonalities are enough to get us to sit at the same table – is not a possibility for many people; it requires social and economic capital that most people simply do not have access to and there is no realistic strategy in Appiah's solution that would enable those without such capital to gain it (and so logically be able to set aside social minority attributes).

As to how to realise Appiah's cosmopolitanism, the notion of education plays an important role. As a body of work that exists within the academy, it is in an essential position to be able to educate those who *do* have the necessary social and economic capital on the benefits of a cosmopolitan existence; this suggests that it is those people who have the most responsibility to work towards a cosmopolitan society. As such, Appiah's cosmopolitanism becomes a top-down approach, with the people who are already in power being educated with the intention of creating a better existence for those who do not have

the same advantages. In short, this is cosmopolitanism for governments, diplomats, policy makers, and global elites.

This better existence is focused on the universal individual; how can the individual live the best life. Appiah explicitly suggests a partial – or 'rooted' – model of cosmopolitanism, wherein the focus is more on the universal individual at a local level as opposed to a global level. He treats cosmopolitanism as a state of individuals who do their own thing, as something that 'you' and 'I' can do rather than what 'we' can do. He is concerned with how the individual can respond to a threat and what that individual is obligated to do for the universal collective. The nation-state government also plays an essential role in Appiah's cosmopolitanism; it is the essential provider and protector of public space within which the individual can perform a cosmopolitan identity. Appiah seeks to establish a state and an existence within which the cosmopolitan attitude has a constant presence.

It is this universal individual that holds Appiah's focus. He stresses the importance of the universal, insisting that it is the universal that all individuals share regardless of their cultural differences. It is not so much a universal collective as it is a universal type; a universal identity that exists under the umbrella term of 'human,' that is available to each of us that is not reliant on the decision of any other individual of whether or not to take it up. Appiah is careful to also assert the importance of difference – we are not, nor should not be, all the exact same – however he does position this difference as secondary to the universal. The universal that we all share as individuals, Appiah believes, is more important than our differences. If necessary, we can set these differences aside for the sake of the universal.

The issue with Appiah's work here is that we cannot, or perhaps more importantly do not, realistically set these differences aside whenever we want to. Nor are we purely individuals; never acting as totally and primarily rational autonomous individuals in and of ourselves, we instead decide and act as a member of a group, whether that is a family group, a cultural group, a religious group, or another form of social collective. The ideas and opinions of others impact our choices and often our dedication to the collective trumps our dedication to the universal. As such, Appiah's top-down cosmopolitanism becomes unrealistic; he provides little incentive beyond an appeal to rationality that would convince the powerful cohort to relinquish any significant measure of their control.

These issues are reflected in the effects Appiah's cosmopolitanism has on agency. Appiah's work follows an essentialist conception of agency, wherein every individual automatically possess agency on the virtue of being biologically human. It is not the case that some individuals have agency and others have none, it is that some individuals have more limits on how they can apply their agency than others. Appiah's ethical cosmopolitanism suggests that the individual must willingly limit their own agency in the pursuit of a new and improved ideal in return for the provision of public space in which to enact a cosmopolitan identity as granted by the nation-state. It is a reductive model of agency, where those with the most privilege must sacrifice the most for the 'greater good'. As he is largely speaking to academics and policy makers/legislators in his work, the notion of a reductive model of agency sits well with his top-down cosmopolitanism; it is his audience that, through education on a cosmopolitan existence, have agency that can endure restrictions for the benefit of others.

By suggesting this reductive model, Appiah suggests that the individual needs to consider their own differences – their individuality, their faith, and their cultural traditions – as something that is worth less than a shared universal, an idea that neglects the strength of difference and the influence it has on, and the power it has over, the individual. The rational individual, which Appiah believes we should be trying to be, would perceive this reduction in their agency as a necessary and amicable sacrifice, equalising agency between individuals by reducing the agency of those who currently hold the most. As we cannot be rational individuals all of the time – Romantic notions of emotionality hold just as much sway over our actions – those who refuse to limit their own agency stand in a position to hold even more control as those around them willingly acquiesce to the rational sacrifice. Further inequality and totalitarian situations are a logical realistic extension and are unintended consequences of this idea and thus Appiah's model of ethical cosmopolitanism.

As the model of cosmopolitanism that this thesis argues for is also a reconceptualization of the model presented by the MCU, the next section will present a brief history of superheroes and Marvel Comics so as to understand the influence that social context has on the popularity of the medium. It will then briefly introduce the MCU to show why this particular franchise was chosen for this thesis and to re-emphasise the importance that social context has on the ongoing success of these films. This will then be followed by a

thematic and a contextual analysis of the MCU's model of cosmopolitanism, as it sits in relation and contrast to Appiah's model of cosmopolitanism.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe

A brief history of superheroes and the rise of Marvel Comics

In 1938, Superman was introduced to the world. He was a type of character not previously seen in comic books; god-like in his abilities and dressed in blue with a red cape and a giant 'S' stuck to his chest, Superman swooped in to save the day. Readers of comic books had seen funny characters, had seen adventure and mystery stories, but Superman was their first glimpse of a *super*hero. He was featured on the cover of the first issue of *Action Comics*, a new book that the owners of Detective Comics, Inc., Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz, had released alongside their already successful title, *Detective Comics*. The character was so popular that within a year, Superman had received his own self-titled book; it was "the first book title devoted to a single character" (Wright, 2003, p. 9), and it sold in record numbers.

Even though World War II would not begin until 1939, a year after Superman's debut, tensions in Europe were coming to a head when the first *Action Comics* hit the newsstands. Beginning two years before Superman's debut, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) had emphasised the tensions between communism and fascism; most countries officially remained neutral during this war, though many were unofficially involved (Alpert, 1993), and the extent of the war added to the "growing instability that developed across Europe across the 1930s" (Little, 2011, p. 184). Whilst Superman was established in this first appearance as an alien, he did not fight other aliens, instead defending humans from other humans as a "champion of the oppressed" (Seigel & Shuster, 1938, p. 1). What Superman represented was the triumph of Good over Evil. He was a hero that was superior to both man and environment. In the face of the crisis rising in Europe, Superman was an opposing force, a saviour. If we do indeed look for a deliverer in times of crisis, as Roger Rollin (1970) suggests, then Superman was that deliverer. Whilst war brought uncertainty, superhero comics came with a sense of security for readers; the hero would always win, Good would always triumph over Evil.

In response to the new craze that Detective Comics, Inc. had started with Superman and his growing cohort, other publishers began to release superhero comics. One of the most notable of these publishers was Martin Goodman, a pulp magazine publisher. Goodman purchased two characters, the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner, and when the anthology

book they were published in started selling better than most other superheroes on the market, Goodman went looking for more. He chanced upon Joe Simon and Jack Kirby who, like Superman's creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, were both sons of Jewish immigrants. The pair made a conscious decision to bring the "working-class values of the urban Jewish immigrant" (DiPaolo, 2011, p. 21) to their work, and in 1940, Goodman published what was to become Simon and Kirby's seminal creation: *Captain America*.

The war in Europe was raging, but the United States was keeping out of it. Captain America was a conscious political response to this; whilst the country held back, a soldier bearing its name and wearing its colours was punching Adolf Hitler squarely in the face. Simon and Kirby were using the Captain "to wage a metaphorical war against Nazi oppression, anticipating the real American war that they believed was inevitable" (Wright, 2003, p. 36); the sheer number of issues that would sell throughout the war emphasised the importance of social relevance in comics. Even though, by 1941, most of the other superheroes across various publishers had followed the Captain into the fighting (Genter, 2007), Captain America continues to remain the "definitive comic book entry into the culture of World War II" (Wright, 2003, p. 30). Superheroes were a contemporary salvation myth; when America's response to the war was not enough, Captain America rushed onto the battlefield, shield first.

Simon and Kirby would eventually leave Goodman's Timely Comics[5] over payment disputes. Goodman needed a new in-house editor and writer (Jones, 2004) and, given that most of the work was contracted out, he turned to the only person left in the office. The 17-year-old Stanley Lieber was the cousin of Goodman's wife – nepotism was alive and well – and had, until that point, been an errand boy for Simon and Kirby. One of those errands was the task of writing a story to accompany two panels of illustration for *Captain America*. In his attempt to distance himself from the world of superheroes and comic books, he had signed the story as 'Stan Lee'; he had had great intentions of being a published novelist, and comic books at the time were looked down upon in much the same way that pulp magazines had been. The name 'Stan Lee' would stick with Lieber for the rest of his life.

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[5] Goodman's publishing company went by many different names throughout the years, allegedly to manipulate tax laws. During this initial foray into superheroes, it is best known as Timely Comics, and would become Marvel Comics in the early 1960s (Howe, 2012; Jones, 2004).

Whilst the company grew under Lee's direction, superheroes became less profitable after the war. There was a lack of Axis power enemies to pit them against and the dedicated readership that had been guaranteed with large numbers of active U.S. servicemen had dried up (Howe, 2012). The entire superhero industry saw a massive downturn, and a lot of the smaller publishers went under. Soon all that was left of the industry was Lee, still working for Goodman, and Detective Comics, Inc., who were miraculously still publishing Superman and Batman titles. It had proven too difficult to pull the heroes out of the war, and audiences had lost interest in witnessing a fight that had already been won.

Detective Comics, Inc. scrapped through the post-war years with only their biggest heroes. Those heroes were then, in 1960, put together to create the 'Justice League,' a revamp of the company's earlier 'Justice Society.' For the first time in years, interest in superheroes began to rise. Stand-alone heroes were not enough to sell comic books, but a team of heroes was. The ensemble cast was a draw card for readers, with a range of heroes bringing a range of identity scripts to the books. Still interested in jumping on the biggest payday, Goodman instructed Lee to create a superhero team for his company. In response, Lee then did something with superheroes that had rarely been done before: he made them human. The focus of the new book was "not only upon the wondrous abilities of its characters, but also upon the lived reality of the superheroes themselves, that is, upon the ways in which the mundane problems of human existence interfered with their crimefighting abilities" (Genter, 2007, p. 954).

Not only was the new team relatable because of the emphasis on their lived reality, *The Fantastic Four* books were also instilled with Cold War themes. The team's origin story spoke to a generation of readers witnessing the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union; the pressure to be first into space was the reason the four titular characters took an unprepared rocket into space, which ultimately exposed them to the cosmic radiation necessary for them to develop their superpowers.

The Cold War themes would continue throughout the string of superhero titles that followed. *The Hulk* came next, with a communist spy starting the military test that would expose Dr Banner to gamma radiation, leaving the doctor to be forever plagued by a Jekyll/Hyde condition. *Iron Man* was the alter ego of a "military industrial complex billionaire protagonist" (DiPaolo, 2011, p. 27) who created a suit of armour after he was

taken hostage by communists due to his position as a weapons manufacturer. These new heroes, under Goodman's publishing company which would from then on be known as Marvel Comics, spoke "to the anxieties of a culture in an atomic age" (Genter, 2007, p. 954). They had moved past World War II and into the Cold War.

Marvel Comics continued to utilise the lived reality aspect of superheroes and did what they could to keep the stories they were telling socially relevant. *The X-Men* titled was released in 1963, and it merged Cold War themes with Civil Rights themes. The superhero team featured in this title were the result of atomic radiation, characters born with varying mutations struggling to find equal ground with non-mutants. The two lead characters, engaging notions of identity politics, echoed the philosophical stances of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcom X, and were surrounded by a new cast of characters for audiences to relate to. Central to the ongoing popularity of the X-Men is the team's ability to be at the "forefront of the many teams that suffer from intra-group conflicts" creating a situation wherein "X-Men comics interleave fantastical action with soap operatics" (Newman, 2000, p. 1), drama that cannot be resolved quickly within a stand-alone issue. Audiences were required to commit to multiple issues to complete the story. "What we have here is not the anomaly of a single masked or caped man hovering over humankind," Kim Newman (2000, p. 1) writes about the X-men specifically, but applicable to the new superheroes of Marvel Comics more generally as well, "but a thorny crowd of extranormals who have sprung from our midst and never left behind the problems that made them human before they were superhuman."

This new batch of superheroes was arriving during a time of larger societal ontological change. As with what would eventually be the Culture Wars, the return of Captain America in 1964 began to deal with broader questions of what it meant to be an American. Marvel Comics interestingly chose to bring the Captain back from his apparent death, rather than choosing to just re-boot the character and start him over from scratch. This created a tension between the values he had been given at his conception, values from the 1930s and 1940s, and the values of the world that he was waking up into. The world had changed. There were no longer any Axis armies for him to fight and a large part of his character was devoted to his man-out-of-time status, struggling to negotiate and reconcile two distinct periods in time. The Captain kept his political underpinnings and revolutionary nature,

questioning what it meant to be wrapped in the American flag, and by the 1980s, he had set the uniform aside after becoming too disillusioned with the government he was answering to – which none too coincidentally coincided with the Watergate scandal (DuBose, 2007). His new identity, that of the superhero Nomad, kicked off an industry-wide trend to question the "political underpinnings [of] superhero actions" (DuBose, 2007, p. 933), and he began to emphasise notions of moral relativity, recognising opinions *as opinions*. The Captain had moved away from the flag-waving patriot that he was at times perceived as, and "even explicitly anti-American villains [were] not berated by Captain America for their *ideals* but for their *execution* of those ideals" (DuBose, 2007, p. 929 emphasis added). As society changed, so did the superheroes.

Whilst superheroes may have made their debut with Detective Comics, Inc., at the close of the twentieth century it was Marvel Comics that maintained the primary position as a publisher of superhero comic books. Fluctuations of sales figures within the industry have implicated the importance of social relevance for the continued interest in superheroes, and Marvel Comics had carved out a space for themselves in the industry though their focus on not just the *super* aspect of their characters, but also of the *human* aspect as well. By negotiating historical ontological transitions, the company has found success through its "historical progressiveness" (Howe, 2012, p. 352), and the writers and artists creating the stories, at least, seem to understand this. The evolving nature of the superhero comic book and the way in which it reflects social climates and events are key contributors to the reactive model of partial cosmopolitanism that the MCU presents, a model that contributes to the synthesised model that this thesis argues for.

The next section examines the transition of the Marvel superhero from comic book to the silver screen. It considers the part that the social climate played in the success of Marvel Studios, and the way that the films have had to evolve and adapt to society's changing concerns.

Marvel Studios

Despite the progressiveness of Marvel Comics overall, comic book storylines are not *always* explicitly created to address social questions that exist within a society. There are instances

when titles are created for the singular purpose of selling merchandise (Howe, 2012). The *Secret Wars* storyline from the mid-1980s, for example, was one such storyline. As many characters as possible were packed into the twelve large cross-universe issues, and the toys that were able to be manufactured and sold as a result laid the groundwork for a larger operation: selling film production rights to various studios.

Whilst different studios would acquire the film rights to different characters over the years, none of these films would make it past early production stages. During the late 1980s interest in superheroes was once again waning – rising cover prices and oversaturation were part of the reason – and most film studios were unwilling to take such a financial risk. In an attempt to make their offers more attractive to production studios, Marvel changed their tactics away from simply selling off character rights. The older film section of the company was rebranded as Marvel Studios and they began to offer package deals: a script, director, and actors would be supplied for bigger studios to complete any film they might purchase the rights to (Howe, 2012). The new structure proved effective, and *Blade* was successfully released by New Line Cinema in 1998, followed by *X-Men* in 2000, and *Spider-Man* in 2002, released by Fox and Sony respectively. Interestingly, two of these films are heavily implicit with post-modernity's social identity movements: *Blade* featured an African American lead and *X-Men* was underpinned by gay rights sentiments.

These films brought new readers to the comic books, which created a new issue for Marvel Comics to contend with. New readers were struggling to break into storylines that had decades worth of backstory. As an answer to this growing problem, the *Ultimates* line of comics was released; fifty years' worth of character history would be set aside and the characters would be approached anew. Each character would be revamped, with their origin story revisited (Howe, 2012). Readers would not have to trace half a century worth of story arcs to understand the characters that they were seeing on the silver screen; in this way, Marvel Comics was conceding long-standing traditions for the sake of an expanding readership and, as a result, larger profits. This move also shifted the comics into a space of universality, with the works existing in and of themselves and no longer necessarily requiring the reader to have knowledge of the lore and traditions that the characters were originally involved in.

The newly reimagined characters made a definitive transition, with grittier origins and motivations taking over the optimism that had defined many of the characters in their previous incarnations. The new *Ultimates* comics would serve another purpose as well. They became the storyboards for new films, films that Marvel Studios would release themselves, having seen the profits rolling in from films produced elsewhere (Howe, 2012). Superhero films had finally proven popular, and it was time for Marvel Studios to cash in.

In much the same way that comic books have to remain socially relevant to ensure any chance at success, superhero films too are tied to their social context. The director of *Iron Man* – Marvel Studios first successful release using the *Ultimates* structure – has "speculated that 9/11 set the stage for the current superhero craze. He observed that, in the years immediately following the 9/11 attacks, American audiences craved escapism, and movie storylines that featured easily identifiable heroes and villains […] He indicated that, as deceptively simple and provocative as those films were in their iconography, they still featured tortured heroes wrestling with issues of power and responsibility that helped audiences work out their own feelings about the current state of the world without speaking directly to those fears" (DiPaolo, 2011, pp. 18-19). This idea goes back to Roger Rollin's (1970) belief that superheroes in popular culture serve a purpose, that people turn to superheroes because they crave a sense of security and wish to see Good triumph over Evil. "In times of crisis we look for a deliverer" (Rollin, 1970, p. 89): in these films, the superheroes are our deliverers. In the face of Heidegger's (2010) technicity and uprootedness, we turn to new myths – created and expressed both through technicity and capitalism – for a sense of security, for a hero that is more than human to save us.

The reimagining of character origins that begun in the *Ultimates* comic line has been important for keeping the Marvel Studios films relevant. No longer is Iron Man facing down a communist threat; he instead confronts terrorists from the Middle East. The Hulk is not created with the help of a communist spy; a neo-liberal attitude sees Bruce Banner with now only himself to blame, with military officials who had a hand in the accident denying any responsibility. Given that Marvel Studios plans many more years of film releases, they need to ensure that they stay relevant to remain successful. It has been over a decade since the 9/11 attacks. As when the comics had to change from the clear notions of Good and Evil they portrayed during World War II to the more ontological-based questioning of the 1970s

and 1980s, the films that Marvel Studios are releasing have also been undergoing a metaphysical shift.

Phase One of the MCU began with *Iron Man* in 2008, before following various characters on solo adventures, before culminating with the team film, *The Avengers*, in 2012. In this Phase, the heroes knew who the villains were; the films were working with the dualist concepts of Good and Evil that had been laid out in the successful superhero films that had been released since the 9/11 attacks. As mentioned above, Iron Man is created out of a hostage situation in the Middle East. The primary antagonist in *The Incredible Hulk* (2008) is a Russian, working for the United States military. Thor faces down his brother, Loki, unwilling to kill him but understanding the importance of stopping him in *Thor* (2011). Captain America is pitted against the Red Skull and his Hydra agents in the WWII-era film *Captain America: the First Avenger* (2011). In *The Avengers* (2012), Loki is once again pulling the strings, with a larger alien threat at his disposal. The villains are obvious. The heroes know where to focus their energy. There is a Good, and there is an Evil.

Phase Two shakes things up. Beginning with *Iron Man 3* in 2013 and ending with *Ant-Man* in 2015, this Phase plays with the notion that the Bad Guy is not always so easy to spot. The villain becomes the central plot twist; the hero chases after one villain only to realise that the real threat is closer to home. The Middle Eastern terrorist Iron Man tracks down in his third feature turns out to be the film's central twist: the ominous threat is nothing more than a British actor, hired as a diversion by a colleague that Stark had humiliated years earlier. In *Thor: the Dark World* (2013), Loki sacrifices himself as Thor's ally, only to be revealed to the audience as alive and well, sitting on the Asgardian throne, suggesting that he has killed their father. Captain America puts a dent in the MCU when he uncovers that Hydra, the organisation that he died to defeat at the end of his first film, has secretly infiltrated the covert defence agency SHIELD at the highest levels. *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) introduces a range of new characters to the MCU and, as such, uses the same pattern of obvious villains as in Phase One films, as does *Ant-Man* (2015). However, it is in *The Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) that the pattern shifts again. The villain is not the obvious (foreign) threat of Phase One. It is not the plot twist of Phase Two. *Age of Ultron* chooses to move the villain even closer to home: the threat is this time directly created by the heroes themselves.

The MCU currently stands as the highest grossing film franchise of all time, having grossed over $3.5 billion (US) over its twelve films[6]. The studio has films assigned release dates through to 2019, with further films being planned up until 2028 at least, at roughly three films a year. By the end of this decade, there will have been another fourteen Marvel Studios films released. As of the close of Phase Two, the MCU has moved through various paradigm shifts, reflecting a changing audience. Using both clear cut villains and hidden villains to drive the action, the films have ultimately ended up questioning the role of the superhero itself. Are superheroes humanity's biggest threat, *Age of Ultron* asks, or is it humans themselves? Ultron was, after all, created by Stark and Banner so that they can retire from the hero business. The films have moved away from the dualistic separation of them vs us, and are now beginning to question just what it is that does, if indeed anything actually does, separate them and us. This idea of a perhaps false dichotomy becomes central to the MCU's reactive model of partial cosmopolitanism.

A Reactive Model of Cosmopolitanism

In this section, an examination of the MCU's reactive model of partial cosmopolitanism will be undertaken in relation and contrast to Appiah's ethical model of partial cosmopolitanism. This will be done first with a thematic analysis, followed by locating this particular model into its social context. To facilitate the comparison and a contrast to Appiah's ethical model of cosmopolitanism, the themes that will be looked at are: universality, diversity, obligations, autonomy, and narratives. To support this discussion, plot descriptions of the films of the MCU can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

The reactive model of partial cosmopolitanism of the MCU is a model that treats cosmopolitanism as an act, as a response to a wrong. Individuals come together to form a collective – often to protect a universal – and once they have overcome the (physical) threat, they go their separate ways once more. It is only in the coming together that cosmopolitanism is realised; the individuals retreat into their differences, having little to do with one another in their day to day lives.

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[6] As of the close of 2015. *Deadpool*, released in early 2016, does not constitute part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe as the film rights to the character are currently owned by 20th Century Fox, rather than Marvel Studios.

Universality – Diversity

In regards to universality and diversity, the MCU largely agrees with Appiah: there is something that we all share, something worth protecting and fighting for. Yet we are all different. We bring to the conversation a wide variety of different experiences. We are not always going to agree.

The structure of the MCU lends itself well to articulating Appiah's idea of "universality plus difference" (2008a, p. 92). Each phase begins with individual character films, culminating in a team film. For example, Phase One consists of *Iron Man* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Thor* (2011), *Captain America: the First Avenger* (2011), and culminates in *The Avengers* (2012). Individual characters are established first; we are shown how they come to be considered 'super' through origin tales that provide both motivations and aspirations. We see their triumphs alongside their flaws and their faults. Then they are thrown together in *The Avengers* (2012), whereupon different personalities are expected to put aside a whole lifetime's worth of differences to overcome a common threat.

This is best articulated in *The Avengers* (2012) through Tony Stark and Steve Rogers; Rogers knew Stark's deceased father better than he ever did. "That's the guy my dad never shut up about?" Stark remarks when Rogers is out of earshot, "I'm surprised they didn't just keep him in ice." The two characters immediately conflict with one another: Stark is an ex-weapons manufacturer, trying to make the world a better place through sustainable energy sources; Rogers was a soldier in World War II, frozen in time and awoken to a world that holds a whole new set of ideals and fears. Their differences are highlighted throughout the film – "We are not soldiers," Stark snaps at Rogers – and it is those ingrained differences that the narrative expects them to overcome.

Where Appiah would have them set aside these differences to find their commonalities, Stark and Rogers instead work with their differences. They do not *overcome* their differences; instead they go into the final battle of the film with their differences intact. Rogers is ever the wartime Captain, issuing orders and leading from the front. Stark is the reckless rogue, going off on his own to deal with the primary antagonist. What is crucial for

the narrative is that this strategy works. They do not have to ignore their differences to save the day. It is the differences that actually make them stronger.

What ultimately makes the Avengers a capable team is that each one of them is different. They work as team because they do not come together *despite* their differences, but *because* of them. It is not just the difference between the individual members, however; what brings them together is that they are also different from everyone else. The six Avengers share something that others do not have. They have a commonality – a universality – between them that comes from their position as superheroes. That commonality suggests something that Appiah does not. Appiah writes about difference as being a discussion about individuals, rather than about cultures (2005). He also suggests that we think on a local level, of the "circles among the many circles narrower than the human horizon" (Appiah, 1997, p. 624). The MCU takes those thoughts a step further. The Avengers team suggests, as does Appiah, that smaller communities exist within larger ones, but it also suggests that cultures, not just individuals, can work towards the benefit of the universal. The Avengers are Appiah's universality plus difference, just on a smaller scale. The Avengers slot in amongst other groups, other *cultures*, and create a larger and stronger whole, albeit one that exists to complete a particular project or task, coming together as events necessitate rather than as a permanent state. The rational individual, *The Avengers* suggests, is not enough. The film suggests that we look at cultures as well.

To emphasise the idea of the Avengers being part of a larger whole, another team of superheroes exists within the MCU. *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) does not have the individual character films lead up that *The Avengers* (2012) has, but it does continue the theme of a group of people coming together for the benefit of the whole. Set this time in space, rather than on Earth, the so-called Guardians begin the movie as adversaries; they ultimately team up to escape prison and to collect the bounty from an orb they had been fighting over. Though once they realise the scale of destruction the orb could cause, their motivation shifts from individual monetary interest to keeping the orb out of the hands of the film's primary antagonist. It is only by coming together that they can overcome the threat.

The Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy exist within the same universe. They are both examples of smaller scale versions of Appiah's universality plus difference. Both exemplify

the idea that differences are important, but it is that which is shared that brings them together. What they show is that groups – groups whose members share things that others do not have – are just as important as individuals are when it comes to creating and protecting a better world. They also show that perhaps the universal humanity that Appiah discusses is not strictly tied to biology. Where Appiah finds a universal *human* biology, Thor from the Avengers and all but one of the Guardians of the Galaxy are not human. Yet they still share something in common with their teammates. Humanity loses its tie to (biological) humans in the MCU, and becomes something more than a biological universal; it becomes "a common cultural basis on which particular (kinds of) identities can be constructed" (Lechner, 1984, p. 80).

Yet this does not mean that the individual is not ignored in the MCU, however strong the collective may prove to be. It is the combination of individuals that create the collective. Where the first phase of the MCU is set up to create the Avengers team, the second is to show the audience that the characters are not locked into that team. They come together, and then they go their separate ways. When it is necessary, they come together again. What results is an expression of partial cosmopolitanism that is task-orientated. They are able to focus on their commonality when they need to, but they are still able to retain their individuality and can move back and forth between the two states. They come together when a situation arises that they cannot handle alone. This is not even necessarily a global extinction event; *Thor: the Dark World* (2013) threatened to destroy the Earth, and *Captain America: the Winter Soldier* (2014) targeted the lives of each one of the Avengers, and both of those films remained individual character films. Partial cosmopolitanism becomes, then, an act that individuals undertake, rather than a state of being.

Appiah's notion of the partiality of the individual is also important in the MCU, particularly for Steve Rogers. In *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), a super-serum-powered Rogers does not get to singlehandedly wage war against the Nazi forces in World War II. He is instead initially relegated to selling war bonds, performing across the country, and eventually heads to Europe to promote morale amongst serving American soldiers. He is performing his routine for a base just outside of Germany when he hears that his audience is "what is left of the 107th," the unit that his best friend had been assigned to. Rogers ignores his orders to stay put; he takes off into enemy territory and, despite the fact that it was his

first time in battle, he makes it into the Nazi base and successfully tracks down his missing friend. Along the way, he manages to rescue dozens of other POWs but, as Appiah would suggest, it is his *motivations* that are important. He does not risk everything to save strangers; he does it for his friend. There is nothing impartial in his decision. Rogers is the partial cosmopolitan, unwilling to set aside his allegiance to those closest to him.

Rogers represents more than just the partiality of the partial cosmopolitan. His story arc is also a question about a universal. After being discovered frozen in the arctic, he tries to reconcile WWII era values with the 21st Century world he wakes up into; if everyone *he* loves is dead, then why should he care about someone trying to kill thousands of people? Yet he does. There is something universal that travels across time, something that motivates him to help others regardless of the situation he finds himself in. When Appiah discusses American culture, and rejects the idea that there is a common culture that *centres* all Americans, he suggests that "what [Americans] desire centrally, what shapes their lives, is what the American freedoms make possible" (1997, p. 628). Rogers fights for that freedom; "This isn't freedom; it's fear," he says to Nick Fury in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014), pointing to the three flying warships Fury is authorising in the name of global security and protection. For Rogers, there are things that transcend time, things that everyone shares and that, for that reason, should be protected. What his actions and motivations suggest is that the universal that we share is an idea. Where Thor suggests that humanity is not strictly tied to human biology, Steve Rogers extends the idea, suggesting that it can also be an intangible idea, a motivating force.

In regards to establishing and acknowledging this commonality, what is important to Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism is the idea of conversation. He suggests that the conversation can begin between two individuals; it does not necessarily need to be a big discussion about morals and truths. In *Captain America: the Winter Soldier* (2014), there is one such conversation. The film opens with Rogers, still a fish out of water and finding his feet in a new world, having a conversation with ex-pararescue officer, Sam Wilson. The conversation is at first light and easy. Then, "Must have freaked you out, coming home after the whole defrosting thing," Wilson says. Rogers shuts the conversation down. He has had this discussion before. He is about to walk away when Wilson says "It's your bed, right?" It catches Rogers off guard and he turns. "Your bed, it's too soft. When I was over there, I slept

on the ground and used rocks for pillows, like a caveman. Now I'm home, lying in my bed and it's like…" "Lying on a marshmallow," Rogers finishes for Wilson. The conversation picks back up. They have found common ground. It is a common ground that ultimately lands Wilson a spot in the Avengers team. Whilst a bed may not be quite the intense conversation starter of fishing that Appiah provides, it is a start. In the MCU, a conversation between two individuals as an expression of partial cosmopolitanism makes sense. Where the MCU extends Appiah's idea, however, is that Rogers and Wilson explicitly find common ground *because* of their differences; they are part of an exclusive club of returned servicemen, finding commonality in what separates them from the general population.

Appiah also suggests that conversations do not always have to lead to agreement; Tony Stark and Steve Rogers articulate this idea in *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015). Whilst Stark believes that creating a sentient artificial intelligence is an obvious next step in global protection, Rogers disagrees. The two get into an argument. They almost come to physical blows. Conversation, it seems, does not fix everything; in fact, a conversation that escalates to disagreement can be that which causes the expression of differences and conflict. It is not even as though one of them is irrational; both provide reasoned arguments for their positions, both agree on the underlying moral idea of protection, so Appiah's idea of disregarding the irrational party does not hold. It is more than just a conversation that is a disagreement – it becomes a fight. Appiah does not suggest what to do if the conversation turns sour and common ground cannot be found; whilst Appiah uses an example of the two fisherman using a shared interest to find common ground, it remains an idealistic example, neglecting to mention that even the simple act of fishing can create arguments and disagreements, regarding sites, tackle, and methods. Stark and Rogers' ethical positions are simply incompatible. What ultimately ends the argument is a third party; Thor pushes the two aside and decides on a course of action. Whilst how he came to his decision is perhaps dubious – he receives magic visions induced by a telepathic villain – his actions suggest an answer to how to deal with conversations that become arguments. The introduction of a third party, whether as mediator or to take charge, has the potential to provide a way forward, past a stalemate.

The MCU also raises the point that even conversations that lead to agreement are not always a good thing. In *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), General Thaddeus Ross and Royal

Marines Commando Emil Blonsky find agreement on both a moral and ethical level. Both agree that the Hulk is dangerous and needs to be stopped to protect the lives and property of civilians. Both agree that aggressive force is a suitable way to accomplish this. Ross suggests and Blonsky agrees to take a variant of the serum that turned Bruce Banner into the Hulk in the first place. The two agree on everything, and can provide rational reasons for what they intend to do. The issue is that they are the film's antagonists. That their conversation leads to agreement is not necessarily a positive thing; it ultimately ends badly for the pair of them.

Ross and Blonsky are also an example of something else the MCU suggests repeatedly throughout the different films: there is still a bad guy. The films all have at least one antagonist, though often multiple. As Appiah suggests, there are opinions and attitudes that are *wrong*. Diversity for diversity's sake is not appropriate. Variety is supposed to enable choice, not constrain it; "toleration requires a concept of the *in*tolerable" (Appiah, 2006, p. 144), after all. In *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), the primary antagonist intends to commit genocide; that, the film declares, is intolerable. The antagonist is allowed his opinion, up until he infringes negatively upon the lives of others. The MCU and Appiah are on the same page: "we don't need to treat genocide or human rights abuses as just another part of the quaint diversity of the species" (Appiah, 2008a, p. 88).

Obligations – Autonomy

The MCU recognises many of the tensions that Appiah considers in his work around moral and ethical obligations and notions of autonomy. The films question the obligations of those who have more power than others do, asking whether, if you have the means to do something, are you obligated to put others above yourself. They too hold government and ruling authorities to high standards, and consider how much interference these authorities are allowed to have in an individual's life. The autonomy of the individual and freedom to do as they please comes into question in the MCU as well; they consider the understanding of who should be considered irrational, and how they should be dealt with.

A question that arises again and again throughout the MCU is about obligations. With great power comes great responsibility, after all. Are the superheroes of the MCU obligated to help people, to save lives, purely because they have the power to do so? Similar to Appiah's

questioning of the ethical obligations of those in power, do the moral obligations of the superhero trump their individual ethical obligations?

Tony Stark would say no. In *Iron Man 2* (2010), Stark comes under governmental pressure to hand over the Iron Man technology that he has created. He faces two arguments as to why: on the one hand, it is an unknown and wild threat to the citizens of the United States of America; on the other, the government want to utilise the technology for the military, to be used in international conflicts. Stark does not care. He has enough economic, and social, capital to tell the panel that he is not even remotely interested in handing over one of his suits. The government could use the technology to end wars and save lives. However Stark sees the risk as being too great; he has no interest in letting the government have that level of power. He has seen first-hand what effect providing the military with high tech weapons can have: the Iron Man technology was developed because those high tech weapons had fallen into the hands of terrorists. Stark invokes his entitlement to autonomy, to the ownership of his personal possessions and intellectual property. He keeps the Iron Man armour for himself, though of course he only has this option because of his pre-established access to significant actionable agency.

Steve Rogers, on the other hand, has a harder time balancing moral and ethical obligations. He loses everything to save the world; after being defrosted, Rogers joins up with the (secret) international defence agency SHIELD in an attempt to find a purpose for himself. Over the course of events in *Captain America: the Winter Soldier* (2014), Rogers' childhood best friend, James Barnes, reappears. Barnes, presumed dead when he fell off a train in *Captain America: the First Avenger* (2011), initially comes into *The Winter Soldier* as an antagonist; having lost his memories and having been brainwashed by Nazi-affiliated agency HYDRA, Barnes had been turned into a living weapon used primarily for political assassinations. His primary mission in the film is to kill Steve Rogers. Understandably, this causes Rogers a fair amount of distress; he blames himself for Barnes' apparent death and to have the hollow shell of his best friend trying to kill him is jarring. It would be hard to fault him for choosing partiality, to put trying to save his best friend above trying to save the world. Yet he does not. Rogers stays on task, systematically bringing down the flying warships – helicarriers – that threaten the lives of millions of people worldwide. He physically goes through Barnes to do so, after trying to talk it out does not work. It is only

once he has ensured that the final helicarrier will be destroyed, that Rogers takes off his mask. He stands aboard the doomed warship, facing his amnesiac best friend, and gives up; he allows Barnes to attack him, getting beaten bloody without fighting back. The Captain and his best friend go down with that ship, crashing into the Potomac River. Whilst he ultimately survives – Barnes is slowly regaining his memories and pulls Rogers, unconscious, from the river – Rogers, even in such a situation, chose to put his moral obligations above his ethical obligations. What is important in this idea to this thesis in particular is that Rogers *chose* to make that decision for himself.

As previously discussed, Appiah (2006) uses the story of a drowning child to question the obligations of the individual to save that child. If you have the power to save the child, should you, even if it would ruin your suit? Are you *obligated* to? The MCU uses examples that have arguably higher stakes; more lives at risk, more sacrifice required. The general premise remains the same however. There is no easy answer, the MCU agrees. It instead suggests the answer is situation-dependent. Whilst Tony Stark may not willingly give his technology over to the government, he is not beyond sacrificing something for the greater good. At the end of *The Avengers* (2012), Stark chooses to make the sacrifice play. He grabs a hold of a missile the government had launched at New York City – to destroy an invading alien army – and forces it into the sky, up into the wormhole that had been opened over the city to allow the invasion to occur. He recognises that there is a distinct possibility that he will not make it back to Earth; the missile may explode, or the wormhole might close, trapping him inside. "I've seen the footage," Steve Rogers says to Stark earlier in the film. "The only thing you really fight for is yourself. You're not the guy to make the sacrifice play, to lay down on a wire and let the other guy crawl over you." Stark proves him wrong; he knows the consequences, and yet he still flies into space. His moral obligations in this instance were stronger than his ethical obligations. Whilst Stark survives, falling unconscious back through the wormhole and slowed in his descent by his teammate, the Hulk, what is important is that he was allowed to make that choice, that he had the freedom to decide which set of obligations to prioritise in different situations. Stark's actions suggest that we should carefully consider the potential outcomes, both positive and negative, of a situation before being forced to make that decision. We are not obligated to always put the moral above the ethical, nor are we expected to always put the ethical above the moral.

In addition to this, the MCU suggests that the ability to prioritise either ethical or moral obligations should not be impacted by governments or ruling authorities. *Ant-Man* (2015) begins with a scene set a few decades before the events of the film take place. In this scene, Hank Pym stands before three high-ranking SHIELD officials – including two of its founders – and angrily tells them that he will not hand over the his research, or the resulting Pym Particle. The Pym Particle is the key to the Ant-Man technology; a particle that is used to create the Ant-Man suit which enables its wearer to shrink to the size of an ant, complete with all of an ant's strength. SHIELD wants to weaponize the particle. In an echo of Tony Stark's refusal to give the military his Iron Man armour, Pym verbally acknowledges the danger that his research poses and is adamant that it will never be used. Whilst one of the SHIELD officials becomes aggressive, threatening to take the research regardless of Pym's fears, another steps in and assures everyone that they will not take from Pym that which is not freely given. SHIELD is not the government, but it is a ruling authority. It could take the research by force if it wanted to. Nonetheless, Pym's autonomy is respected. He is given the space to make a decision as to what he is obligated to do – or not do.

SHIELD does not always show such respect for the individual, however. In *Captain America: the Winter Soldier* (2014), SHIELD puts three helicarriers into the sky, each one set to target and kill millions of people worldwide. These people are a threat, SHIELD argues. Some of them will *become* a threat in the future. The helicarriers are about protecting the security and freedom of the world. As mentioned above, Steve Rogers disagrees. He sets out to destroy the helicarriers before they can be launched; in turn, SHIELD sends out its best agents to bring him back and put him in a cell. With some help, Rogers gets into the communications room of the helicarrier base and gets his hands on the announcement system:

Attention all SHIELD agents, this is Steve Rogers. You've heard a lot about me over the last few days. Some of you were even ordered to hunt me down. But I think it's time to tell the truth. SHIELD is not what we thought it was. It's been taken over by HYDRA. Alexander Pierce is their leader. The STRIKE and Insight crew are HYDRA as well. I don't know how many more, but I know they're in the building. They could be standing right next to you. They almost have what they want. Absolute control. They shot Nick Fury. And it won't end there. If you

launch those helicarriers today, HYDRA will be able to kill anyone that stands in their way. Unless we stop them. I know I'm asking a lot. But the price of freedom is high. It always has been. And it's a price I'm willing to pay. And if I'm the only one, then so be it. But I'm willing to bet I'm not.

Rogers issues a call to arms. The ruling authority has over stepped its bounds. As Appiah's liberal tradition would suggest, Rogers intends to remove them from power by any means necessary. The film – and the United States' second amendment – supports him in this, with many of the other SHIELD agents coming to his aid. The citizens have spoken. The corrupt government had to go.

The ruling authority is answerable to the autonomous individual in the MCU; Appiah's work agrees with this prioritisation of the autonomy of the rational individual. However, what if the individual is not rational? Appiah's work implies that we either are, or should try our best to be, rational; *Iron Man 2* (2010) indicates that we are not rational all the time, that we make bad decisions. Should the government step in if this is the case? Is it obligated to, for our own protection? In the film, Tony Stark hosts his own birthday party; he gets drunk and ends up in a fight with his best friend, the pair of them in different versions of the Iron Man armour. Stark's living room is destroyed and his guests are left fearing for their lives. Stark's best friend, James Rhodes, is a military officer. His superiors had requested that he bring them one of the Iron Man suits; if Stark would not hand one over to them, then they would take one from him. Rhodes, as a proxy for the ruling authority, takes Stark down – *he* is not drunk – and takes off in the suit. He gives it to his superiors the next day. On the surface, it seems like a justifiable case of the ruling authority intervening in the life of a citizen for his own protection, and for the protection of those around him. However, the film criticises Rhodes for his actions. He is ultimately proven to be in the wrong, when the military uses the technology to create a corps of suits controlled by the film's antagonist. The film shows a distrust of the ruling authority – both in this instance and in the instance mentioned earlier wherein Stark refused to hand over his technology – and the actions of the citizen are justified. The MCU suggests that the ruling authority has no excuse for interfering in the autonomous lives of its citizens, regardless of whether they are deemed to be rational or otherwise. Appiah's notion of an ideal democratic system is rejected, seen as unrealistic and unobtainable. The MCU does agree with Appiah in his quote from James

Madison, however. They agree that "you must first enable a government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself" (Appiah, 2005, p. 165).

In the example mentioned above, Rhodes judges Stark as irrational and so incapable of correctly exercising his entitlement to autonomy. Appiah suggests that this is not unwarranted; that "if we are coercing people who are unreasonable, we have no obligation to provide justifications that satisfy them. We must merely offer reasons that they would accept if they were reasonable" (Appiah, 2005, p. 93). This raises the question, then, of who gets to decide whether or not someone is unreasonable. Does that decision fall to Rhodes? In his position as a proxy of the ruling authority? In his position as Stark's best friend? The film suggests that it does not matter that, in that moment, at that party, that Stark was unreasonable. What the film suggests is that Rhodes should have followed the decisions that Stark made when he *was* reasonable. What is considered reasonable falls to the individual who the decision affects.

What if both parties are reasonable, and neither are under the influence of alcohol, as Stark was? In *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), both Stark and Steve Rogers are of sound mind. They both are capable of providing rational arguments as to why the sentient artificial intelligence Ultron should – or should not – be created. Whose argument gets priority? It is a higher stakes version of Appiah's Jehovah's Witness situation. Is the Jehovah's Witness irrational, for believing that a blood transfusion leads to damnation? What makes someone qualified to decide that? From their perspective, it is a rational belief. The same can be said for Stark and Rogers.

It is not as simple as Appiah may suggest, where the individual should be allowed to make whichever decision they choose to so long as it does not impact on the autonomy of another individual (Appiah, 2008a). The tension between Stark and Rogers highlights the fact that there are very few, if any, decisions that affect only one person. Stark sees Ultron as protection for the world; Rogers sees Ultron as a threat to the world. It is not just an argument that affects the two of them, or even just the Avengers team. It is a decision with global consequences.

The MCU brings that dilemma down to a more personal level as well. The end of *Captain America: the First Avenger* (2011), set in World War II, puts Steve Rogers in the cockpit of a

plane that is carrying a bomb. He is over arctic waters when he makes the decision to put the plane in the water, long before it has a chance to crash into a populated city. Over the radio, he is talking to the love of his life; she tries to convince him to wait, to give them a chance to find him a safe landing site. "There's not enough time," Rogers replies, "This thing's moving too fast and it's heading for New York. I gotta put her in the water." One could argue that Rogers is not, in that moment, reasonable. His best and oldest friend had died a few days earlier; he is grieving. Yet the decision remains with him. The film respects his autonomy. He is not the only one who is affected by the decision, however. There are people who care about him, who will be devastated at his loss. They are, in fact, devastated at losing him; as far as everyone is aware, he died when the plane crashed in the arctic. It is not until the film's final scene, set in the present day and played after the credits, that the audience discovers that he survived the crash, frozen in ice for seventy years. If it is, as Appiah suggests, the cosmopolitan's obligation to step in because "the wrong someone is doing harms others" (2005, p. 93), then someone should have stopped Rogers. Appiah suggests that if an individual chooses to do a wrong that only affects them, then they should be free to do so. Is it possible to do a wrong that only affects one person, the MCU asks in return. Even if it is not a global threat, there are still people who will be affected by the decisions of any given individual. Appiah's cosmopolitan should be stepping in more often than they do not. Rogers' situation suggests that even if this is the case, even if he should be stopped, he is also entitled to reject any intervention. He may know that his decision will negatively affect others, but it is his prerogative to make that decision.

If there *are* actions that an individual can undertake that *only* affects them, then Appiah suggests that "the right way to express my concern for [them] is not to force [them] to do the right thing, but to try to persuade [them they] are mistaken" (2008a, p. 93). The MCU proposes that the idea of persuasion can also be useful when the decision affects other as well. In *Captain America: the Winter Soldier* (2014), Steve Rogers and Nick Fury get into an argument when Fury reveals SHIELD's plan to launch the three helicarriers. Fury is a firm believer that using the helicarriers is a necessary course of action; "These new long range precision guns can eliminate a thousand hostiles a minute. The satellites can read a terrorist's DNA before he steps outside his spider hole. We're gonna neutralize a lot of threats before they even happen," Fury advocates. Rogers is taken aback. "I thought the

punishment usually came after the crime," he says, and Fury brushes him off. Both of them are working towards the same goal; they both want to protect people. "When we disagree, it won't always be because one of us just doesn't understand the value that's at stake," Appiah (2006, p. 59) writes. The film takes Rogers' side in this argument; he is ultimately able to persuade Fury that he is wrong. The film rejects the contemporary attitude towards fear and risk – the film has echoes of whistle blowing and extensive public surveillance, and it brings to mind public figures such as Edward Snowden, for example – and promotes the classical liberal values that Rogers represents. Both Fury and Rogers find themselves obligated to protect people, and the film suggests an appropriate way for them to do this.

Narratives

The notion that collective identities are a central provider of frameworks with which to construct an individual identity is reflected in the MCU through the Avengers team. The Avengers come together because of what they share; a common goal and a way to achieve that goal that others do not have. That shared identity encourages different ways of being. The team's collective strength comes from their individual differences; they all bring something unique to the table. As Appiah (2005) indicates with the constructions of race and gender – that there is not just one way to be black or white, male or female – there is not just one way to be an Avenger. The collective identity gives way to individual interpretations of that identity. In an instance of strategic essentialism, the collective identity can then be drawn on when necessary; the differences can in turn make that collective identity stronger, with each individual bringing with them different strengths that can be utilised in the project of the collective.

The collective identity can also cause issues, as the MCU demonstrates in *Thor* (2011). Thor's brother Loki discovers that he is, essentially, a stolen child early in the films; he is unable to put aside his assumptions of what it means to be from Jötunheim, despite having been raised in Asgard. He instinctively makes judgements on the values and traditions of the Jötunn's, and finds it difficult to separate his own identity from that collective identity. Even though he has grown up with an Asgardian identity, he begins to be seen – both by others and by himself – with traits he associates with Jötunheim. He is not allowed the autonomy to choose which identity scripts he takes up; they are instead forced onto him. This is at

odds with Appiah's suggestion that individuals are able to choose which identity scripts define them. There are some aspects of our identities that are not so easily set aside.

This idea is shown over and over throughout the MCU. In *Captain America: the First Avenger* (2011), the idea that identity scripts can be imposed upon a person without their input is highlighted in a number of different ways. Steve Rogers begins the film as a sickly young man, rejected time and again from war enlistment booths despite his determination. His rejection is not unfounded; it would indeed be unwise to send someone with such a list of ailments to fight on the front lines. Rogers is however offered a position in a research project and whilst he is not the best soldier in the project, he is ultimately the one chosen to go through the procedure to receive the super-soldier serum. Throughout the selection process, few people are convinced of Rogers' eligibility as a candidate. As with Loki, Rogers is not given the autonomy to choose an identity script for himself; he cannot prevent others from inflicting a particular way of being onto him.

Whilst Appiah insists that there is not just one way to be male or female, *Iron Man 2* (2010) and *The Avengers* (2012) suggest that that is not something that is often explicitly realised when interacting with other people. Natasha Romanoff uses popular assumptions of what it means to be female to her advantage in both these films; she emphasises her femininity, often taking on the damsel in distress role to distract her opponents and causing them to underestimate her abilities. Whilst Romanoff is an example of Appiah's belief that there is not just one way to be female, showing a multiplicity of identity options throughout the films, the responses she receives from others suggests that varied identity scripts within a collective identity are often ignored or overlooked. The individual's autonomy to decide which identity scripts they will use to shape their life is disregarded in favour of the collective identity; whilst the individual may endeavour to construct their identity in a certain way, outside factors will influence and at times impede decisions that the individual makes. Concepts and practices may be made available to the individual to choose from (Appiah, 1994), but that does not guarantee that those choices will be recognised.

Appiah moves his discussion away from collective identities as providers of identity scripts to the place of fictional narratives as providers of identity scripts. The MCU itself is an example of a set of fictional narratives wherein varied identity scripts can be discovered. Both *The Avengers* (2012) and *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) rely on the combination of a

range of identities to fulfil the requirements of their plots. Whilst the individual character films endeavour to provide a diverse range of characters, it is these team films that use that diversity to drive the plot forward. Importantly, it is the team films – *The Avengers* (2012) and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) in particular – that drew the biggest crowds to theatres (Mojo, 2015b); the diverse range of characters and the identity scripts that they bring with them are part of what makes these particular films so successful.

This idea of diverse options also ties into the emphasis Appiah places upon fictional narratives rather than on more traditional philosophical thought experiments. Tony Stark provides perhaps the best articulation of this idea. In *The Avengers* (2012), Steve Rogers accuses Stark of not being the "guy to make the sacrifice play, to lay down on a wire and let the other guy crawl over you." Rogers implies that there are only two options: to lay down on the wire, or to not. He is working with the same strict parameters as the thought experiments. Stark pushes past those parameters; "I think I would just cut the wire," he replies. Rogers presents the thought experiment; Stark rejects it and suggests that reality is not quite so simple. The fictional narrative remains open to other options.

The Avengers (2012) celebrates diversity of options at the film's close, as well. The film shows a news story which covered the destruction of New York City that the Avengers had, in part, caused; it provides various responses, varied scripts, from the city's citizens. Some of the citizens are outraged; these so-called superheroes had just destroyed a large part of their city, their homes and livelihoods. Others are grateful for their new heroes. The film presents varied responses to the event. The MCU as a whole, however, suggests that whilst people as individuals can react however they like, the Avengers will always reconvene in the face of a threat. They will always engage in the cosmopolitan response when they need to, regardless of what people think of them; an example of Appiah's idealised elite individuals who feel a sense of duty to act in a cosmopolitan fashion for the common good. When Natasha Romanoff sits in front of a national security committee at the end of *Captain America: the Winter Soldier* (2014), the committee questions why she should not be arrested for her part in the destruction of the three helicarriers.

> "You're not gonna put me in a prison," she replies. "You're not gonna put any of us in a prison. You know why?"

"Do enlighten us."

"Because you need us. Yes, the world is a vulnerable place, and yes, we helped make it that way. But we're also the ones best qualified to defend it. So if you want to arrest me, arrest me. You'll know where to find me."

The Avengers are not always on active duty; they spend most of their time apart. Romanoff makes clear that, despite what everyone else may think of them, they will be there – together – when they are needed.

That notion of coming together in the face of a crisis sits at the heart of both *The Avengers* (2012) and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015). These films take the characters from the individual films and suggests that it is the diversity of those characters that make them stronger when they come together. The internal diversity of the films also allows for wider audience appeal; Appiah suggests that the Hollywood blockbuster is, by necessity, a cosmopolitan film because it is influenced by global tastes and trends and, as such, has a global appeal. The MCU demonstrates this; *The Avengers* (2012) and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) have been more successful at the box office than any of the individual character films, both within the United States and globally (Mojo, 2015b). The team films offer a wider range of identity scripts than the character films and, as such, reach a wider audience. There is a stronger response to this internal diversity; to the team that comes together in the face of a crisis, to the narrative that allows for varied ways of being.

It is important to remember, however, that not every country saw the same cut of some of the films. This is not necessarily a negative thing; as is encouraged with a partial cosmopolitanism, local tastes were at times put above global tastes. *Iron Man 3* (2013) embraced the idea of locally-focused content, with the Chinese release of the film showing an extra four minutes of footage that was not seen in any other release. The extra footage featured extra characters with prominent Chinese actors, including Fan Bingbing and Wan Xueqi, tasked with undertaking life-saving surgery on Tony Stark. Along with changing the primary antagonist from the Chinese stereotype that is found in the comic book source material that was in every release of the film, providing the extra footage meant that the film saw more than $121 (US) million at the Chinese box office. To put this number in context, South Korea had the next highest box office taking (outside the USA) at $64 million,

just over half the Chinese gross takings, and the United Kingdom after that with just over $57 million (Mojo, 2015a). The idea of locally-focused content thus becomes important for international releases, and suggests that audiences have a stronger response when there is something in a fictional narrative that they can relate to on a personal, rather than just a universal, level.

Captain America: the Winter Soldier (2014) took this idea and applied it on a broader scale. At the beginning of the film, Steve Rogers is shown with a list of things to look into; important historical moments, objects, and movements that he will have missed while he was frozen in the arctic. Different countries saw different lists. The film was tailored to where it was being shown. The United States release showed things such as "Steve Jobs" and "Berlin Wall (Up and Down)". In Russia, the list had "Yuri Gagarin" and "Moscow doesn't believe in tears". The United Kingdom release had "The Beatles" and "World Cup Final (1966)". The Australian list suggests Rogers looks into "Steve Irwin" and "Tim Tams". Mexico saw "Chilean Miners" and "Octavio Paz (Nobel Winner)". South Korea, Italy, France, Spain, and Brazil all have other variations. The list features subtle changes, but is intended to reflect what each audience believes is important and significant to their country's social history. Even though the lead character is called Captain *America*, the film shows an understanding of the global nature of the Hollywood blockbuster, and actively demonstrates the notion of putting the local before the universal. This is an example of glocalization; creating a connection at a local level so as to encourage the consumption of global ideas. Treating people equally, the film – and the MCU – suggests, does not always necessarily mean treating them the same.

The next section will place these themes and the ideas that they contain in the social context that they emerge from. It then addresses the implications of this particular model of cosmopolitanism, and begins to introduce the limitations of the MCU's reactive cosmopolitanism.

Context

The MCU implicitly deals with the concern with difference from a different angle than Appiah: the perspective and position of pop-culture. It does this with a focus on emotionally

driven characters and narratives, which resonates with the counter-Enlightenment ideas of Romanticism. Faced with threats from World War II era Nazi Germany to alien invasions to artificial intelligence, the MCU questions how we can best organise our lives together so as to peacefully co-inhabit this planet. The MCU narratives do not want to subsume diversity; they often explicitly indicate that difference is an unavoidable facet of human existence and of existence more generally, and that at times difference can seem insurmountable. The MCU narratives are concerned with how we can compensate for this difference in a broader social environment.

It is in response to an external threat that the MCU asks these questions. The resulting cosmopolitanism of the MCU is reactionary, something that can only exist as a response. It becomes an act as opposed to a continuous state of existence; within the narratives of the MCU the cosmopolitan act is undertaken as a reaction to imminent external physical threats. There is little consideration of how to respond to internal threats and oppressive social structures; notions of hegemony are all but ignored in the narratives – the narratives do not question, for example, that the apparent brightest scientists are all white and typically men – which positions the cosmopolitanism of the MCU as an unrealistic and underdeveloped model. The cosmopolitanism offered by the MCU would be a stronger model if it were able to relate its participatory model to internal threats as well as external threats, addressing the issues of everyday differences, internal inequity, and discriminatory social institutions.

The MCU does have the benefit of a wide and varied audience. It is highly accessible, with millions of people having watched the various theatrical instalments into the series. Through simple and easy to understand ideas and thematic tropes, the films are able to disseminate a model of cosmopolitanism to a broad audience. This simplification of ideas, however, has the disadvantage of being at times *too* basic, *too* under-theorised. The films of the MCU suffer theoretically from the perception of their position as fantasy, as escapist narratives that have little impact on reality. They are created as entertainment, rather than as a philosophical consideration of how we can live alongside one another, thus it can be considered that the implicit model of cosmopolitanism within the films is unrecognisable on an explicit level to most viewers. While many viewers may understand the basic concepts

that are being portrayed, there is no guarantee that they would or could piece them together as an understanding of the larger concept of cosmopolitanism.

The larger concept of cosmopolitanism that the MCU suggests is a reactive cosmopolitanism that is undertaken by a group, by a collective, as opposed to one that is undertaken by an individual. The individual, reacting in the face of an external threat, joins forces with other individuals; this is done not by setting aside any differences that may exist, but by working *through* those differences to create a stronger whole. It is a collective of individuals, as opposed to Appiah's individuals of the universal. For the MCU, differences are not able to be taken off, nor should we want them to be; it is our differences that make us stronger and we are at our best when we bring our differences with us to the table rather than leaving them at the door. This perspective is reminiscent of Anderson's (2004) 'cosmopolitan canopy' in his discussion of Philadelphia's Reading Terminal Market, where it is through our differences that we can both make up for one another's shortcomings and find ways to complement each other. Cosmopolitanism, for the MCU, is a collective response, and we should not and do not need to ignore our differences to form that collective.

The collective cosmopolitanism of the MCU is driven by the civilian (civil society, the 'third estate') rather than by the nation-state. It is the civilian that creates the spaces to cultivate and ensure that there is space for a cosmopolitan attitude to flourish; the nation-state is often kept at arm's length in the films, treated as a repressive and constrictive force to be sceptical of. For the MCU, a cosmopolitan state is not necessarily the goal, instead favouring the notion of cosmopolitan acts, of a society wherein cosmopolitan responses to events are possible. As such, it is easy to assume that the MCU takes a grass roots approach to agency; however this is not the case. As with Appiah, there is an assumption of an inherent agency within each individual; it is the extent to which that agency can be actioned that is where the inequality lies. The majority of civilians within the films are unwitting bystanders, waiting for a collection of costumed superheroes to save them. It is the superheroes and espionage experts – the elite, and those who are made so – that are capable of effectively expressing and utilising their agency.

For these heroes and experts, the participation in cosmopolitan acts is an expression of an agency that is already there. Where Appiah suggests giving up agency in a reductive approach, the MCU declares that we elevate our agency as an active, rather than passive,

collective response. It is not presumed that a significant level of actionable agency is a normal state of existence, and we need to be proactive in expressing it. It is, however, not a bottom up approach. The characters with any significant actionable agency are guaranteed this agency regardless of whether they are saving the world; Tony Stark inherited his father's multibillion dollar company and Thor is the crown prince of Asgard. It is those who already possess significant actionable agency that are able to grant the possibility of agency to others, to the civilians that need saving; even Steve Rogers has his ability to utilise his agency granted to him by top tier scientists. The MCU suggests that we all have agency, however we need someone else to give us the space to express it; if it is given, then the MCU suggests that it is done so as a response to a threat – Captain America was created to fight off armies in World War II, for instance. It is only those in power that have the ability to elevate those without power, done so through collective cosmopolitan responsive acts. In this focus on the cosmopolitan collective, the MCU also misses the importance of the cosmopolitan individual; it neglects a consideration of how the individual is best to construct an ethical life without the external threat required to bring together the collective.

The next section of this thesis will closely examine the limitations of the models of cosmopolitanism put forward by Appiah and the MCU. It will argue as to why they are insufficient models in and of themselves, indicating that a reimaging is required to approach the question of how it is that we can best live together with our various differences.

Insufficient Models of Cosmopolitanism

Having considered the competing models of partial cosmopolitanism presented by Appiah and the MCU, I believe that whilst they both offer sound components, they are both overall insufficient approaches as to how we can best live together whilst maintaining some level of our various, and at times incompatible, differences. Appiah's ethical model and the MCU's reactive model are different in many ways, however they suffer from similar flaws. This section will argue first that they are both largely theoretical models and as such are difficult to realise, and second, that they both have the potential to be adversely manipulated, as they rely heavily on the commitment and intentions of those who have high social and/or economic capital and high levels of actionable agency.

Both models are limited in their capacity to be engaged with as anything other than theoretical models. Appiah's model may be engaged with, as an academic text, by policy and law makers, and the MCU's model may be recognised by its broad audience, though neither is capable of bringing into being the cosmopolitan state or reaction that they are arguing for. There are two reasons for this: firstly, that the models of cosmopolitanism that both present are largely inaccessible to the average person, and secondly, that their audiences either cannot, or simply will not, make best use of the material that they are presented with.

These models of cosmopolitanism are largely inaccessible to the average person because they are, at their centre, top-down elitist models. Appiah's ethical model relies heavily on the nation-state government; it is the essential provider and protector of space within which the individual can perform a cosmopolitan identity. He argues that a global government cannot hope to respond to localised needs efficiently, placing much more emphasis on the integral role of the nation-state in the pursuit of a cosmopolitan state. His model is also one that requires individuals to have high levels of actionable agency to participate. Appiah's work follows an essentialist conception of agency, wherein every individual automatically possess agency on the virtue of being biologically human; it is not the case that some individuals have agency and others have none, it is that some individuals have more limits on how they can apply their agency than others. Appiah argues that it is those who have more freedom with their agency that need to consider how they can best utilise that agency

for the benefit of others, thus making the cosmopolitan act the act of only those who can realistically operate and limit their own agency.

The reactive model presented by the MCU also suffers from being a top-down model. Whilst Appiah suggests that individual agency needs to be limited for the 'greater good,' the MCU suggests a cosmopolitan act is an expression of individual agency, which is facilitated by high levels of capital. The Avengers team, who engage in the cosmopolitan reactive acts, is made up of individuals with high levels of capital; Tony Stark, for instance, has inherited his father's multibillion dollar company, and Thor is the crown prince of Asgard. The team members who have not been born into their positions have instead had their agency and social capital elevated by those with significant levels of their own; the sickly Steve Rogers becomes the strong Captain America on the whim of an eminent World War II scientist, for example, and it is only through this elevation that he is able to engage in cosmopolitan acts. A further instance of the reactive cosmopolitanism of the MCU being inaccessible to the average person is that any engagement with cosmopolitan acts requires there first to be a physical threat. The collective that comes together does so as a *reaction* to a threat, and without that threat, there is no incentive to participate in the cosmopolitan collective that the MCU's model expounds.

The second reason that the models of cosmopolitanism that Appiah and the MCU suggest remain theoretical is the limitations that emerge out of their audiences. Appiah's audience, whether intended or otherwise, largely consists of other academics; they are often working within universities, though his work may branch to those in policy and law making. There is a certain level of contradiction in Appiah's application to public policy; he focuses on the universal individual, and how the individual can live a suitable ethical life, as opposed to a collective of individuals, which policy and law is constructed to best consider. Appiah, both in the academy and with those involved in policy, finds an audience that consists of people who already have access to the high levels of actionable agency that his model of cosmopolitanism requires. His audience has agency that they can realistically limit for the benefit of others without assured extensive detrimental effect to themselves. That Appiah's model of cosmopolitanism finds an audience for those who are in the best position to participate in his ethical cosmopolitanism is beneficial, however Appiah's work provides little incentive for as to *why* that audience would want to participate. He appeals to the

notion of rationality and the idea of progress, though a call to do what is considered rational is, alone, an insufficient argument or incentive. Consider that the medical community can classify those who, whilst alive, would wish to donate an organ to a stranger as 'pathological' (Henderson et al., 2003): they do not get something from the deal, therefore they have no rational reason to put their own life at risk. The same argument could be constructed for Appiah's model of cosmopolitanism; if this particular model of cosmopolitanism requires the reduction of agency to function, the lack of incentive beyond the 'greater good' is inadequate.

Conversely, the audience for the MCU's reactive model of cosmopolitanism is broad. The films appeal to a wide range of social groups, with millions of viewers worldwide. Through simple and easy to understand ideas and thematic tropes, the films are able to disseminate a model of cosmopolitanism to their audience. This simplification of ideas, however, has the disadvantage of being at times *too* basic and *too* under-theorised. The films of the MCU suffer theoretically from the perception of their position as fantasy, as escapist narratives that have little impact on reality. They are created for a broad global audience as entertainment, rather than as a philosophical consideration of how we can live alongside one another; it can thus be considered that the implicit model of cosmopolitanism within the films is unrecognisable to viewers. While many viewers may understand the basic concepts that are being portrayed, there is no guarantee that they would or could piece them together as an understanding of the larger concept of cosmopolitanism. The audience of the MCU are also, by and large, not the individuals who have the capital and actionable agency necessary to participate in the cosmopolitan reactive act. They are not the superheroes but the unwitting bystanders, those waiting for someone to save them. In the narratives of the MCU, there are few spaces wherein the average person can be more than just a victim running from the threat; the audience is shown the spirit of cosmopolitanism, yet are not provided with a way of acting on it.

The second limitation of these two models of cosmopolitanism is that, beyond being difficult to realise and thus remaining largely theoretical, Appiah's ethical model and the MCU's reactive model also suffer from a *potential* to be oppressive. These models are not necessarily going to be oppressive – it is often the people who execute the idea, not the idea itself, which is the largest problem – however they are structured in a way that could

be adversely manipulated against notions of social justice and equity. The particular aspects of these structures that could be problematic are their rigid set of ideologies for existence, and the position of both models as implicating cosmopolitanism as the act of people with significant levels of power.

Appiah's model rests on the premise of "universality *plus* difference" (Appiah, 2008a, p. 92, emphasis added). This places universality before difference: commonalities are more important than differences and should always be put first even, it is implied, if that it is at the expense of difference. The suggestion underlying this idea is that we can downplay our differences, that we can actually make them less important than our similarities. An argument can also be made – as it is by the reactive cosmopolitanism of the MCU – that solutions to problems are better found *through* differences, rather than *in spite* of them. By reducing difference to a strictly secondary position, the argument for a universal that downplays cultural and social diversity can potentially be made stronger. The universality of Appiah's model is also reliant on a common moral code; it suggests that everyone shares a moral position and shares opinions on what is considered Right and Wrong. The belief in a strict common moral code, which prizes universality, can neglect and reject important cultural and social differences, though it can also work to discard those differences that actively work against the greater good.

The MCU's model of cosmopolitanism also suffers from a strict set of ideologies, though one cause for this is the inherent framework of a Hollywood action blockbuster, and another that popular culture is often just a reflection of popular contemporary social attitudes. The narratives of the MCU have a clear notion of what is morally right and what is morally wrong; there is always a hero and a villain, and the audience has a clear understanding of which is which. Even when it is unclear who is the villain, audiences are always sure of who is the hero, and always sure of who they are supposed to be cheering for. It is the hero characters who set the moral tone of the films, and thus the moral tone that propels the reactive cosmopolitan acts. Once the morality of the films is displayed, then the heroes of the MCU – the characters who are the ones capable of participating in the cosmopolitan acts – enforce this morality through the use of violence. As superhero comic books had relied on providing a reality where Good triumphs over Evil during World War II, the films also fit the same pattern; the hero is guaranteed to win the fight. Again, largely a by-product

of the medium, the use of violence legitimates one particular set of ideologies and the model of cosmopolitanism that the MCU puts forward is thus not only one that relies on a physical threat to exist, but one that also relies on physical violence as a response as well.

Whilst both models of cosmopolitanism have strict sets of ideologies, they also both suggest that it is the people who have significant levels of power that are able to engage with a cosmopolitan position. Appiah's model, as indicated above, relies heavily on nation-state governments. It is these governments who are tasked with providing and protecting spaces wherein a cosmopolitan identity can be engaged with. There is an understanding in Appiah's model that the nation-state government will be democratic, and be an ideal democratic government that is not corrupt nor disproportionately favours any particular faction of society; the democratic government would service its citizens first whilst still accommodating the global, and given the shared moral code, would be able to function appropriately. The issue here is that it is an *ideal* democratic government system where, even assuming that a democratic system is truly the best option, the reality is not always going to meet the same standards. Human error is going to play a part. Beyond the notion of the nation-state government, Appiah's model also implicates its audience – academics and policy makers – as the ones with the power to make changes towards a more cosmopolitan environment. As a reduction in one's own agency is a necessary requirement of this model, it can be argued that those in power would be more likely to participate if they got something in return for this reduction; this can lead to adverse manipulation of this model, increasing inequality as opposed to reducing it.

The model of cosmopolitanism suggested by the MCU has a particularly visible example of adverse manipulation by those who are in the best position to create a cosmopolitan environment. The films – *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) in particular – show that the superheroes themselves can be irresponsible with their substantial power; they are often the *cause* of the problems that plague the general population, whether that be directly or indirectly. As the reactive model that the MCU suggests is only really accessible to those individuals with existing actionable agency and capital, it becomes problematic when those individuals are consistently creating and solving problems that they themselves are the cause of. Beyond this, the Avengers team itself – the ones who directly engage in the reactive cosmopolitan acts in the films – is a team that is created by those with extremely

high levels of capital and actionable agency; the secretive defence agency SHIELD brings them together, initially encouraged by the World Security Council. Even with all the power that each of the team members has individually, they do not come together of their own accord. The MCU suggests that even superheroes can be pushed and manipulated into playing along with an alternative agenda.

The competing models presented by Appiah and the MCU share similar flaws. On account of their inaccessibility to the average person and the lack of incentive for those who can participate to participate, the models both remain theoretical, difficult to bring into reality. Their strict set of ideologies and their reliance on, and restriction to, those with significant levels of power also suggest a structure that has the potential to be oppressive, with neither model suggesting a way to hold those in power accountable. As such, I believe that the ethical model of Appiah and the reactive model of the MCU are both insufficient approaches as to how it is that we can best live together with our various, and at times incompatible, differences. Instead, I argue that a reimagining is needed; an alternative model of cosmopolitanism that synthesises and builds upon the sound components of these two models. This alternative model will be presented in the next section.

A Model of Situational Cosmopolitanism

The model of cosmopolitanism that I propose, as an alternative to Appiah's ethical model and the MCU's reactive model, is a model of situational cosmopolitanism. This model draws concepts from Appiah's model and the MCU's model, reimagining and relocating them within an expanded framework. This expanded framework does not just combine these two models, instead it extends and reconceptualises their notions of partial cosmopolitanism.

Situational cosmopolitanism is a model that, guided by a principle of freedom, emphasises social context; it is not just important what we do. How, why, and where we do it are important as well. Also emphasised in this model is the importance of difference within a universal collective; alternatively put, the importance of social identity movements to grand narratives. Situational cosmopolitanism endeavours to be accessible to a broad spectrum of society, to both those with high levels of actionable agency and those with lower levels. It believes that culture is crucial, particularly popular culture, and that along with nation-state governments, it has a distinctive part to play in the pursuit of fairness and equality.

Whilst Appiah's ethical model seeks to create a cosmopolitan state, and the MCU's reactive model exists to respond to (physical) threats, this model of situational cosmopolitanism is intended as an ethos, an attitude. It is not a strict set of ideas or actions, emphasising the importance of context dependent decision making. Situational cosmopolitanism is underpinned by specific formulations of freedoms and decision-making, incorporating notions of Joseph Fletcher's (1966) situation ethics and Gerald MacCallum's (1967) triadic freedom.

The idea of a partial cosmopolitanism, wherein allegiance is not automatically given to the global and the local is often prioritised, is an important idea in developing a robust model of cosmopolitanism. As Appiah and the MCU both suggest, humans live better on a smaller scale, and also cannot realistically be expected to care about strangers with the same passion that they care about friends and family. It is this notion of partiality that underpins and guides my model of situational cosmopolitanism; what is an appropriate cosmopolitan attitude in one locality is not necessarily going to be the same for another. The situation that decisions are made in are important and thus this model of situational cosmopolitanism is required to be continuously reflexive and aware of this fact.

Informing this model is a reimagined conception of Fletcher's (1966) notion of situation ethics. Situation ethics helps deal with the challenge of defining the terms of decision-making. Like Fletcher, I believe that the context of an act is important to determining an appropriate response because each situation requires unique consideration, rather than a reliance on an absolute moral standard. Blanket decisions that do not take into consideration the nuances of any given situation have the potential to become totalitarian and constrictive. As such, this model needs to remain flexible and reflexive, as opposed to fixed.

Fletcher suggests that 'agape', or 'love', is the only indisputable principle to be followed and he uses this principle to guide decisions. While he takes his notion of love from Christianity, I suggest a secularised version of this principle, one that speaks to a shared humanity as opposed to any one religion. To this end, I believe that a guiding principle of freedom, rather than love, is better suited to a model of situational cosmopolitanism.

Situational cosmopolitanism is also underpinned by a particular conceptualisation of freedom. The concept of freedom that I put forward here is a triadic understanding of freedom, as explained by Gerald MacCallum (1967). This interpretation of freedom synthesises the models of freedom put forward by Appiah and the MCU. Appiah's model of cosmopolitanism suggests a protective freedom in line with his reductive approach to agency; this suggests that the freedom of individuals needs protecting by the nation-state so that they are able to construct suitable ethical lives for themselves without any negative social stigma. The MCU's model of cosmopolitanism suggests a different kind of freedom: the freedom to act. This freedom for the MCU is taken up by the civilian rather than being provided by the nation-state; it is often enacted *despite* and *in spite* of the actions of the nation-state. Isaiah Berlin (1969) defines these freedoms as expressions of negative liberty and positive liberty respectively, and MacCallum's conception of triadic freedom combines these, suggesting that they impact one another and are not mutually exclusive. We need to consider freedom as multifaceted: "freedom is thus always *of* something (an agent or agents), *from* something, *to* do, not do, become, or not become something" (MacCallum, 1967, p. 314).

It is the notion of triadic freedom and the implicit part that freedom plays in an emergent actionable agency that has incited my reimagining of the guiding principle of situation ethics

as 'freedom' rather than Fletcher's 'love'. As with actionable agency, this triadic freedom is a freedom that we both need to grant to others and to take for ourselves. Through the work of Appiah and the MCU, we can further explore how we can pursue this freedom. They suggest that the nation-state and those with high levels of actionable agency need to be involved to ensure that everyone has access to the resources necessary for this to happen, such as access to healthcare and education as well as to protection from external threats. How much intervention is permissible from the nation-state is largely up for debate by both the nation-state and the citizens that the nation-state is accountable to, requiring case by case, situational driven deliberation. The obligations of those not directly associated with the nation-state is harder to determine; it relies on the individual agreeing to and abiding by an implicit social moral contract. This echoes Durkheim's theorising on the sociology of morality, where he asserts that morality comes into being only when an individual belongs to a collective social group (1973). Durkheim's ideas on social morality and collective consciousness are particularly relevant when the collective cosmopolitanism of the MCU is considered.

When those with high levels of actionable agency work to restrict and limit the agency and freedom of others, a decision is necessary: whether to respond, or to retreat into nihilism. A response undertaken using the guiding principle of triadic freedom, and considering the distinct aspects of that situation is a task of collective intelligence requiring diverse participation. Individuals and groups – regardless of class or professional standing – are able to contribute information that can be combined with the information of others to create a comprehensive depiction of the situation and inform any response that is undertaken.

It is through this collective intelligence that the importance of difference to the pursuit of a shared goal is realised. Appiah argues that universality should come before difference, and the MCU suggests that difference is more important than universality. In this model of situational cosmopolitanism, neither universality nor difference is automatically championed. Instead, a synthetisation of the two occurs. The stance that the MCU's model takes, wherein collective strength is found through – not despite – difference, is important; the weaknesses of one individual can be balanced out by the strengths of another, and vice versa, and without difference, the combination of available strengths and weaknesses can be lacking. Equally important is Appiah's emphasis on universality; it is the universal that can

be used to justify the collective, to legitimate a reason as to why those different individuals would want to come together in a collective. A combination of the two approaches is required, with an understanding that living together occurs both through differences and commonalities.

A robust conceptualisation of agency is also required to theoretically combine universality and difference. The approaches that Appiah and the MCU take to agency are, however, limited. Whilst there is an inherent agency, a self-determination, that each of us has as a result of our (human) existence, and also that we all differ in our ability to action that agency, the top-down approach that Appiah and the MCU both take is insufficient. A broader approach to agency is necessary for a more comprehensive model of cosmopolitanism.

Therefore a conceptualisation of agency as both top-down *and* bottom-up is needed. It needs to encompass actionable agency as something that emerges from our actions, rather than as the reduction of the actionable agency of the powerful, or the granting of actionable agency from the powerful to the powerless. The emergence of agency should not be solely at the discretion of the powerful. In the name of social justice and equity, there needs to be both opportunities provided for actionable agency to develop in those who have less, and encouragement for those individuals to take up those opportunities for themselves. Appiah writes for those with significant levels of actionable agency, suggesting that they restrict that agency for the good of those who have less. The MCU speaks to those with less actionable agency, showing them that those with more should be acting to help them. Both approaches are important, however a third avenue is also needed, where those with less actionable agency are encouraged, and have the freedom, to engage in cosmopolitan acts that will develop their agency against acts that desire to limit them.

Legislation is thus required to ensure that those with less actionable agency are able to engage in acts that help their agency flourish. In this model of situational cosmopolitanism, this centres on the idea of education. This is because, as Appiah suggests, education is integral to fostering a cosmopolitan attitude; by exposing people to diverse ideas, to diverse ways of existing, a familiarity can be cultivated, making the apparent Other less strange and more understandable. Education in global citizenship can be used to encourage tolerance and an understanding of the importance of both the universal and of difference.

Legislating for education in this model of situational cosmopolitanism is underpinned by a two stage approach. First, a top-down approach is required, where those who already possess high levels of power – of actionable agency and capital – are tasked with creating an educative environment that fosters a cosmopolitan ethos. This is done through education policies; these policies would need to be reflexive and context specific, and possess the ability to be flexible and malleable. The second stage is the taking up of the cosmopolitan ethos, encouraging people to engage in and work towards a more equitable approach to education. It is a cyclic process; bottom-up pressure is required to create top-down policies for a cosmopolitan education, an education that in turn encourages a bottom-up cosmopolitan ethos, which once more cycles back to encourage bottom-up pressure on top-down policies. The pressure on top-down policies works within Gramsci's notion of consent, where concessions are required to be made by the ruling class so as to provide a reason for the wider population to consent to their rule.

There is a distinct focus on the education of children in this model of situational cosmopolitanism. To encourage participation, the focus is on fostering a cosmopolitan ethos for future generations to build upon. It does not require individuals to relinquish or limit their own agency, as Appiah's model does, thus negating that particular barrier to participation; it instead works on the somewhat utopian ideal of creating a better future for those who will come next. As in Appiah's (2010) discussion of changing honour codes, it is a process of working towards that better future, not necessarily that there is an ultimate end goal that can ever be reached. It is a continuous cycle of changing attitudes, of social pressures encouraging broader uptake – as with the turn away from foot binding in China – in a snowballing effect of continuously adapting moral codes. The idea of a continuous cycle, tied in with the emphasis on situation dependent responses, helps to mitigate the unavoidable fact that not everyone will want to participate or encourage a cosmopolitan ethos.

That this model of situational cosmopolitanism is a synthesis of Appiah's theoretical work and the popular culture of the MCU, attention is drawn to the idea that it is not only through traditional channels that people are educated. As Gramsci and others have suggested, mass and popular culture also play an important part in the way a society constructs and understands itself. Thus it is also important to consider how popular culture

can be utilised to foster the cosmopolitan ethos. As policy is constructed to inform the education system, situational cosmopolitanism suggests that those who are in a position of producing the cultural content that is mass consumed also consider their social contract. Again, as with Gramsci's notion of consent, the mass culture that is produced is influenced by its consumers; the task of the nation-state government is to provide a space wherein those consumers can (safely) exercise that influence. Additionally, an economic incentive or something similar may be provided by governments to encourage producers of mass-consumed content to replicate the cosmopolitan ethos that is provided through traditional education channels. Unlike the Motion Picture Production Code, which penalised producers for breaching a strict moral code (Lewis, 2000), policy, around tax breaks for example, can be created to reward producers for incorporating a reflexive cosmopolitan attitude in their content. By utilising the sphere of entertainment, situational cosmopolitanism breaches the home / school divide. Entertainment becomes edutainment; normalising the cosmopolitan ethos across multiple areas of life, including the divide between high and low brow education, encourages individuals to not just leave that attitude in the classroom.

Situational cosmopolitanism is thus a model that synthesises and extends upon the models of cosmopolitanism put forward by Appiah and the MCU. It is underpinned by notions of partiality and driven by the desire to lay the foundations for a future that is better – more equal, fair, and just – than today. It is an ongoing aspiration, understanding that there is no cosmopolitan state to be reached, just an ethos to be fostered and encouraged.

Conclusion

The concern with how it is that we can best live together, with our various and at times incompatible differences, is not new. Two polemic approaches that address this concern – global universalism and multiculturalism – are not convincing, because they lack an ability to respond to the nuances of lived reality. Cosmopolitanism has possibilities that encompass and extend the dominant positions of global universalism and multiculturalism.

The partial cosmopolitanism models that are suggested by Appiah and the MCU, theoretically, better address this concern with co-existence. Each has its own positive components, particularly an appreciation for the partiality that is a reality of human existence. They both, however, lack an ability to be anything more than theoretical, and suffer from the potential to be adversely manipulated against a goal of social justice and equity. Thus they can be considered insufficient models of cosmopolitanism.

As an alternative, this thesis argues for a model of partial cosmopolitanism that synthesises components of Appiah's ethical model and the MCU's reactive model, and expands on these ideas. The result is a model of situational cosmopolitanism that encourages the education of future generations to foster a cosmopolitan ethos. It is understood that this model is situated in a primarily Western / American context; this is due to its location within a discipline of cultural studies that is influenced by thinkers such as Gramsci and the founders of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. However, there are indications that there is potential to widen the reach of this particular model of cosmopolitanism: the societal snowball effect, such as the one which Appiah argues brought an end to foot binding practices in China; the model's reflexive nature; and the broad reach of the Hollywood Blockbuster given that entertainment is implicated in the educating process are three such examples.

After locating this thesis within a broader theoretical framework, the discussion has examined the history, influences, and models of cosmopolitanism of both Appiah and of the MCU. This has been followed by an argument as to why these two models are insufficient. Finally, an alternative model of cosmopolitanism was presented, arguing that a model of situational cosmopolitanism can be used to reimagine a cosmopolitan approach to the

question of how it is that we can best live together, with our differences, in an environment of modernity / post-modernity tensions.

In the end, for all their theoretical similarities and differences, what Appiah and the MCU ultimately have in common is an intense optimism. They both believe that the world can be a better place if we make the effort; it is an optimism and a hope that is infectious. It is why, I believe, that they work together. This combination of philosophy and superheroes, of high and low brow culture both proposes and demonstrates that two opposing ideas can come together to create something better. It is the idea of dialectic that sits at the heart of situational cosmopolitanism. Working with our strengths, bringing our differences to balance out one another's weaknesses; this thesis is itself an example of the model of cosmopolitanism that it argues for. It invites further synthesis, a further blurring of boundaries, to encourage reflexive and evolving ideas. Situational cosmopolitanism suggests that nothing needs to be stagnant; we can always hope and strive for something better.

Appendix

Plot descriptions of the films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe

These plot descriptions are presented here to provide sufficient background and detail to support the thesis discussion. Further information on each of the films of the MCU can be found at http://marvel.com/movies/all [accessed 13/02/2016].

Phase One

Iron Man, May 2008

Director: Jon Favreau

Primary Cast: Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark / Iron Man; Gwyneth Paltrow as Virginia "Pepper" Potts; Terrence Howard as Lieutenant Colonel James "Rhodey" Rhodes; Jeff Bridges as Obadiah Stane.

The first feature of the MCU, *Iron Man* begins with billionaire weapons manufacturer Tony Stark showcasing his company's latest missile in a Middle Eastern desert. After a dramatic display, Stark is taken hostage; he wakes up in a cave and discovers that his kidnappers want him to make them weapons of their own. With help from a fellow captured scientist, Stark designs and constructs a crude prototype of what will become the Iron Man suit. This suit, enabled with weapons and powered by an 'arc reactor' of Stark's design, allows Stark to escape. Upon his return to the United States, Stark is treated as a returning hero; his mentor and quasi-father figure Obadiah Stane is ultimately exposed as having orchestrated the kidnapping to ensure that, in the event of Stark's death, the ownership of Stark's company would fall to him. Whilst Stark redesigns and updates the Iron Man suit, Stane does the same from the (wrecked) prototype. Stark and Stane go toe to toe in the film's climactic battle sequence and, with the help of Potts and Rhodes, Stark walks away victorious. Stane falls into the large arc reactor that Stark had begun to construct (in his attempt to move his company away from weapons manufacturing to sustainable energy), and it explodes.

In a final scene, SHIELD (Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement, and Logistics Division) director Nick Fury approaches Stark to discuss what he calls the "Avengers Initiative".

Director: Louis Leterrier

Primary Cast: Edward Norton as Dr Bruce Banner; Lou Ferrigno as the voice of the Hulk; Liv Tyler as Betty Ross; Tim Roth as Emil Blonsky; William Hurt as Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross.

Bruce Banner has already been infected with the gamma radiation that causes him to transform into the Hulk before this film starts. He is hidden abroad, working in a soda bottling plant. When some of his blood accidently makes its way into one of the bottles, Banner is tracked down by the American military, led by Ross and Blonsky. Banner goes on the run, returning to the United States after an anonymous scientist suggests that the solution to his Jekyll / Hyde condition lies in the files on Banner's gamma radiation accident. The files are on kept on a university campus; Banner is confronted on the campus by Blonsky and turns into the Hulk. Whilst Banner goes on the run again, Blonsky barely survives the fight; he undergoes radiation treatment with the intention of becoming a force capable of defeating the Hulk. A final battle between Banner and Blonsky, both in monstrous forms, destroys Harlem. Blonsky begins to lose his grip on reality due to his treatment, and Banner spares his life; Banner runs once more, leaving Betty Ross behind to pick up the pieces.

In a final scene, Tony Stark approaches Banner at a bar in British Columbia, informing him that a superhero team is being formed and inviting him to take part.

Iron Man 2, April 2010

Director: Jon Favreau

Primary cast: Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark / Iron Man; Gwyneth Paltrow as Virginia "Pepper" Potts; Don Cheadle as Lieutenant Colonel James "Rhodey" Rhodes; Mickey Rourke as Ivan Vanko; Sam Rockwell as Justin Hammer.

This film sees Tony Stark dealing with the consequences of revealing his identity at the end of *Iron Man*. He faces governmental pressure to hand over the Iron Man armour; the media circus that surrounds the situation encourages Vanko to create an arc reactor of his own, and eventually at the request of Hammer, create a small army of Iron Man-inspired armoured drones. Stark also spends the film dealing with the palladium poisoning that

comes as a result of living with an arc reactor in his chest, which is keeping shrapnel from reaching his heart. Believing he is near death, Stark takes to life with reckless abandon, causing Rhodes to take one of the Iron Man suits to the American military after a drunken brawl between the pair; this brawl also prompts Stark to promote Potts to Stark Industries CEO to ensure the survival of his family's company. After Vanko hijacks the drones he had created for Hammer, Stark and Rhodes join forces once again to take them down, ultimately leading to the death of Vanko. By the film's conclusion, Stark has discovered a new element, left encoded in an old diorama by his father, which enables him to switch out the palladium in his personal arc reactor, thereby saving his own life by removing the poison.

In a final scene, Stark is informed by director Nick Fury of SHIELD that he is unsuitable for the 'Avengers Initiative', but they would like to retain him as a consultant.

Thor, April 2011

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Primary Cast: Chris Hemsworth as Thor; Tom Hiddleston as Loki; Natalie Portman as Jane Foster; Anthony Hopkins as Odin.

This film has a more fantastical feel than the previous three films. After a battle with the frost giants of Jötunheim destroys the fragile truce between Jötunheim and Asgard, Thor is banished from his home of Asgard by his father Odin; he is stranded on Earth with none of his powers and no way to get home. Whilst Thor resigns himself to his new life on Earth, his brother, Loki, discovers that he is actually the son of the king of the frost giants, not the son of Odin, and brother of Thor, that he had been led to believe. He takes advantage of Odin's retreat into a comatose-esque state and Thor's banishment to plot to take the throne of Asgard for himself. He sends a large battle automaton to Earth to kill Thor; Thor defeats the threat once proving that he is worthy of wielding the magic hammer Mjolnir through self-sacrifice, and he quickly returns to Asgard to confront his brother. He discovers that Loki had lured the frost giant king to Asgard to kill Odin; Loki had planned to kill his birth father and then to destroy Jötunheim using the Bifrost (a cosmic bridge that connects the different realms) in the hope of proving himself worthy to Odin. To stop any further damage, Thor destroys the Bifrost himself, and Loki chooses to fall into the abyss that takes its place. Thor rejects his claim on the throne of Asgard for the time being, and even though the realms are

disconnected and he cannot return to Earth, he is content to watch his new friends from a distance.

Agent Coulson of SHIELD is a constant presence in the film; he confiscates Foster's scientific instruments and findings once SHIELD discovers her association to Thor, and SHIELD create a perimeter around the hammer Mjolnir when it is stuck in the desert in New Mexico to study it. When Thor, enraged, goes to retrieve his hammer, SHIELD agent Clint Barton trains an arrow on him, awaiting orders to put him down; he ultimately refrains from doing so, allowing Thor to escape.

Captain America: The First Avenger, July 2011

Director: Joe Johnston

Primary cast: Chris Evans as Steve Rogers / Captain America; Hayley Atwell as Margaret "Peggy" Carter; Sebastian Stan as James "Bucky" Barnes; Dominic Cooper as Howard Stark; Hugo Weaving as Johann Schmidt / the Red Skull.

Set during World War II, this film is an origin story that takes Steve Rogers from being a skinny, constantly ill, young man to being a war captain in the peak of health. After multiple rejections from the enlistment booth, Rogers is eventually accepted into a special programme designed by scientists to create a super-soldier capable of easing the cost of the American war effort. When the scientist heading the project is killed by a Hydra agent – a secret science division of the Nazi army – Rogers is put in a costume and paraded across the United States to sell war bonds; he is eventually sent to Europe to encourage troop morale. Upon hearing that Barnes, his best friend, is one of many soldiers being held behind enemy lines, Rogers takes off against his orders; with the help of Carter and Stark, he successfully navigates the rescue of all the prisoners. Realising that he is of more use on the battlefield than on a stage, Rogers gains permission to form his own elite team with the intention of taking down the Hydra threat. In the process of capturing Hydra's lead scientist, Barnes is killed and his death hits Rogers hard. The climax of the film sees Rogers' facing down the Red Skull; the pair eventually end up on a bomber plane headed for New York City. After defeating the Red Skull, Rogers realises he has no option but to crash the plane whilst still over the ocean to avoid any major causalities. The film closes with a scene of Stark on a boat, searching the arctic for the crashed plane and the hero that it entombed.

In a short scene played after the credits, Rogers wakes up in a hospital room that he quickly deduces is a replica; when he is confronted by SHIELD director Nick Fury in a New York City street, Rogers is told that he is now in the twenty first century.

The Avengers, April 2012

Director: Joss Whedon

Primary Cast: Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark / Iron Man; Chris Evans as Steve Rogers / Captain America; Chris Hemsworth as Thor; Jeremy Renner as Clint Barton / Hawkeye; Scarlett Johansson as Natasha Romanoff / Black Widow; Mark Ruffalo as Bruce Banner / the Hulk; Tom Hiddleston as Loki; Samuel L. Jackson as Director Nick Fury.

Having been promised an army with which he can subjugate Earth, Loki – having survived his fall into the abyss in *Thor* – returns to Earth to retrieve the Tesseract; the Tesseract is a cosmic cube which had enabled scientists to create the super soldier serum given to Rogers in *Captain America: the First Avenger*. SHIELD is studying the cube when a wormhole opens; Loki steps through and uses an alien sceptre to brainwash a handful of scientists and agent Barton before taking them and the cube. As a response, Nick Fury activates the Avenger's Initiative: Romanoff goes off to a remote part of the world to retrieve Banner, who they hope will be able to track the cube; Agent Coulson visits Stark, asking him to look over the scientist's research; Fury himself approaches Rogers, asking him to pick up his shield and go out to retrieve the cube.

The group trace the cube to Germany, where, after a short confrontation, they take Loki – sans cube – into custody. On the way back to their holding facility, they are waylaid by Thor, who has come to retrieve his brother and the cube to return both to Asgard. After a short battle between Thor, Stark, and Rogers, Thor agrees to work with SHIELD until the cube can be located. The team members begin to clash once they return to the SHIELD helicarrier; Loki uses this to his advantage when his possessed agents, including agent Barton, storm the helicarrier. Banner transforms into the Hulk and goes on a rampage; the ships engines are stopped. The team quickly discover that they have to work together to fix both the engines and Banner, and to save the brainwashed SHIELD agents.

In the chaos, Loki escapes and kills agent Coulson on his way out. Fury uses Coulson's death to motivate the team into working together, though it does continue to create conflict

between them, particularly between Stark and Rogers. They quickly determine that Loki intends to use Stark Tower in New York City as the place to use the cube to open another wormhole, this time to bring through his promised army. By the time they arrive, they are confronted with said army, aliens known as Chitauri. In the film's climactic battle, they have learnt to work together to contain and control this new threat. Romanoff discovers that Loki's sceptre can be used to close the wormhole; before they get the chance, government officials launch a missile at Manhattan, as they are not convinced that Fury's Avengers can defeat the advancing army. Stark realises that the only way to stop the missile from destroying the city is to fly it through the wormhole; his suit loses power whilst he is still through the hole, leaving him falling through the depths of space with no power. He barely makes it back through the wormhole before Romanoff has no choice but to close it.

The film ends with Loki in chains and the cube in a protective box, both being taken back to Asgard by Thor. The other Avengers all choose to go off in their own directions; Fury indicates that if they are needed again, he will make sure they return.

Phase Two

Iron Man 3, May 2013

Director: Shane Black

Primary cast: Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark / Iron Man; Gwyneth Paltrow as Virginia "Pepper" Potts; Don Cheadle as Lieutenant Colonel James "Rhodey" Rhodes; Ty Simpkins as Harley Keener; Rebecca Hall as Maya Hansen; Ben Kingsley as the Mandarin; Guy Pearce as Aldrich Killian.

Central to the film is Stark working through his experiences from *The Avengers*. He suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; he is unable to sleep and creates endless versions of the Iron Man armour, many of which can pilot themselves. When his friend becomes a victim in a string of terrorist attacks, Stark publically announces a threat to the Mandarin, a shadowy figure who has taken responsibility for the attacks. The Mandarin responds by destroying Stark's house; he narrowly escapes in an experimental Iron Man suit that flies him across the country on autopilot before losing power, leaving him stranded and near death. He befriends Keener and with the boy's help he discovers that the Mandarin attacks

were explosions caused by the Extremis virus. Stark tracks the Mandarin to Miami – not the Middle East, where Rhodes and the American military had been searching for him – only to discover that the man who had claimed public responsibility for the attacks was nothing more than an actor. The actor was a cover for Killian, who reveals himself to Stark as the real Mandarin. Killian exposes Potts to the Extremis virus to torture Stark, before escaping to capture the President of the United States. He planned to kill the President on live television and to manipulate the vice president, but he is stopped by Stark in the Iron Man armour. In the final battle, Killian makes Stark choose between Potts and the President; Stark goes for Potts whilst Rhodes goes for the President, however the oil tanker that they are on crumbles, and Potts falls from sight. Stark confronts Killian and attempts to trap him in one of the Iron Man armours set to self-destruct, but fails. Potts reappears and kills Killian herself. The battle over, Stark chooses to destroy all the Iron Man suits that he had made in a symbolic gesture for Potts; he then undergoes surgery to remove the shrapnel that had been embedded near his heart in *Iron Man*, removing the necessity for his personal arc reactor.

In a post-credits scene, Dr Banner is seen failing to stay awake while Stark narrates the preceding story to him.

Thor: The Dark World, November 2013

Director: Alan Taylor

Primary cast: Chris Hemsworth as Thor; Natalie Portman as Jane Foster; Tom Hiddleston as Loki; Anthony Hopkins as Odin; Christopher Eccleston as Malekith.

Following the events of *The Avengers*, this film sees Loki imprisoned on Asgard for his crimes. The Bifrost has been rebuilt, and peace has once again been achieved across the realms. On Earth, Foster follows a rumour to a warehouse where a truck is suspended in mid-air, and goes through a portal and arrives in another world. There, she touches a large cube and becomes infected with a substance known to the Asgardians as the Aether. When she returns to Earth, Thor is waiting for her, and after the Aether insider her lashes out at a local policeman, he transports her to Asgard for testing. Odin, upon recognizing the Aether, wants it – and Foster – removed. There is no time, however, as the remainder of the Dark Elves descend upon Asgard, freeing prisoners and killing Thor's mother Frigga. The Dark

Elves want the Aether, believing it will allow them to destroy the realms. Thor uses Loki to get Foster and himself out of Asgard; he thinks that they will be able to trick Malekith into saving Foster. The plan fails and Loki is killed in the ensuing battle. Thor and Foster end up back on Earth. Malekith intended to use the Convergence – an alignment of portals to the various realms – to carry out his plan. The film's climactic battle happens through the portals and is ultimately ended with the use of scientific instruments. With the realms safe, Thor returns to Asgard to inform Odin about Loki's sacrifice, and to turn down the offer of the Asgardian throne once again. As Thor leaves the throne hall, it is revealed that it is Loki, using illusions to make himself look like Odin, sitting on the throne.

Captain America: The Winter Soldier, March 2014

Director: Anthony Russo and Joe Russo

Primary cast: Chris Evans as Steve Rogers / Captain America; Sebastian Stan as James "Bucky" Barnes / the Winter Soldier; Scarlett Johansson as Natasha Romanoff / Black Widow; Anthony Mackie as Sam Wilson / Falcon; Robert Redford as Alexander Pierce; Samuel L. Jackson as Director Nick Fury.

This film deals with Rogers' man-out-of-time experience. He meets Wilson in the film's first scene and the two form a brief friendship, able to relate to one another as war veterans. Rogers is soon picked up by Romanoff and whisked off to a save a SHIELD ship that is being overrun by pirates in the middle of the ocean. He secures the hostages, takes out the pirates, and discovers that Romanoff is copying SHIELD secrets off the ship's computer servers. Furious, Rogers confronts Fury upon their return, who admits to him that SHIELD is taking the idea of national and global security very seriously; Fury shows Rogers three large helicarriers (flying warships) that will be able to maintain continuous flight and surveillance once they are finished. After being told that the objective of the helicarriers is to deal with a threat before it even becomes a threat, Rogers makes it his personal mission to destroy them before they become operational. Helped along by Romanoff and Wilson, Rogers is on the run from SHIELD and being hunted by some of their best operatives. A skirmish on a motorway reveals that one of the operatives is Barnes, Rogers (presumed) dead friend from WWII. Barnes has no recollection of Rogers and is shown to be regularly brainwashed by SHIELD, which has also been revealed to be infiltrated by the remnants of Hydra. Rogers sticks to his mission, but a confrontation on the final helicarrier sees Rogers throw down his

shield and remove his mask; he is willing to let Barnes beat him as he tries to get his friend to remember who he is. The helicarrier goes down into the Potomac River, taking Rogers and Barnes with it. Barnes is conscious enough to drag Rogers from the water, leaving him on the bank. As the film comes to its conclusion, SHIELD is exposed to the world. Romanoff goes off on her own, with the world fully aware of her past as a soviet agent; Fury is presumed dead, apparently killed earlier in the film by the Winter Soldier. Rogers is unwilling to give up on his friend, and Wilson signs up to help him track Barnes down.

Guardians of the Galaxy, August 2014

Director: James Gunn

Primary cast: Chris Pratt as Peter Quill; Zoe Saldana as Gamora; Dave Bautista as Drax the Destroyer; Bradley Cooper as the voice of Rocket the Raccoon; Vin Diesel as the voice of Groot; Lee Pace as Ronan the Accuser; Karen Gillan as Nebula.

This film is a space opera, with only a brief scene on Earth showing the death of Quill's mother and his subsequent removal from the planet. Quill begins as a treasure hunter, trying to sell off his recently acquired bounty before being attacked by Gamora, who is after the sphere he is trying to sell. Rocket and Groot quickly join the fray, realising that Quill has a bounty on his head and wishing to secure it for themselves. The four end up in a prison for their public display, where they meet Drax, who wants nothing more than to take off Gamora's head; she was associated with Ronan, who had killed his family, and he viewed her death as a justifiable act of revenge. After Gamora admits to Quill and Rocket that she has a buyer for the sphere, Quill convinces Drax that she can also provide him with an opportunity to take revenge on Ronan himself, and the five proceed to break out of the prison. From there, they fly to Knowhere, an alien world, to meet with Gamora's contact. The contact opens the sphere, revealing an Infinity Stone (of which the Cosmic Cube that was central to Captain America's creation and the plot of *The Avengers*, and also the Aether from *Thor: The Dark World* are both) that can destroy worlds. After a fight with Ronan and Nebula, the five find themselves on the ship that Quill had spent his childhood, convincing the smugglers that own it to help them recover the sphere that they had since lost to Ronan. A large space battle ensues, with the smuggling ships teaming up with galactic law enforcement group Nova Corps to break through Ronan's ship's defences, enabling Quill and his new friends to board it. They manage to send the ship crashing to the closest planet,

Xander (which Ronan seeks to destroy out of a culture conflict between the Kree and the Xandarians), and Groot sacrifices himself to save the others. Ronan emerges from the wreckage alive, and prepares to use the Infinity Stone to destroy the planet. Quill briefly distracts him, which gives him the opportunity to take the Stone. With help, Quill is able to use the Stone to defeat Ronan. In the aftermath of the battle, the smugglers take off with what they think is the real stone, ready to sell it to the highest bidder, whilst Quill hands the real stone over to the Nova Corps. The criminal records of Quill, Gamora, Drax, and Rocket, now known as the Guardians of the Galaxy, are expunged, and they head off into space, a small cutting from Groot in a pot clutched in Rocket's paws.

At present, this film is disconnected from the MCU as a whole, not situated in the main timeline as of yet. The film also deviates from the treatment that was given to the Avengers, in that its characters do not get a lead up of solo films before the team film.

Avengers: Age of Ultron, April 2015

Director: Joss Whedon

Primary cast: Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark / Iron Man; Chris Evans as Steve Rogers / Captain America; Chris Hemsworth as Thor; Jeremy Renner as Clint Barton / Hawkeye; Scarlett Johansson as Natasha Romanoff / Black Widow; Mark Ruffalo as Bruce Banner / the Hulk; James Spade as the voice of Ultron; Aaron Taylor-Johnson as Pietro Maximoff; Elizabeth Olsen as Wanda Maximoff.

The film opens with the Avengers team storming a fortress in Eastern Europe, hunting down the sceptre from *The Avengers*; they find it has been used to experiment on humans, two of which are the Pietro and Wanda Maximoff, who develop super speed and telekinesis respectively. The Avengers are able to recover the sceptre, though the twins escape.

After a victory party, Stark and Banner discuss the possibility of using the sceptre to create a new artificial intelligence that can be used for Stark's proposed Ultron programme: a sentient global defence system that would ultimately render the Avengers obsolete. Despite Banner's misgivings, Stark sets up his computer to work with the sceptre and Ultron is created. Stark's lab is destroyed as Ultron decides that Earth's biggest threat is humanity itself; it uses an Iron Man suit as a body, and takes off intending to build itself a new purpose-built body.

The Avengers eventually track Ultron to an African shipyard and the base of an arms dealer. Ultron is after Wakandan vibranium (a substance not unlike the metal used to create Rogers' unbreakable shield) to create yet another body. The Avengers prove incapable of stopping him, with many of them given hallucinations by Wanda Maximoff. These hallucinations cause Banner to turn into the Hulk and go on a rampage, leading to a worldwide backlash against the destruction that the Avengers have once again caused.

The Avengers retreat to a safe house revealed to be Barton's farmhouse home. Whilst Ultron blackmails scientists in Seoul to create a body for him out of the vibranium he had acquired, the Avengers begin to drift apart. They are brought back together by the return of Nick Fury and his insistence that they formulate a plan to stop Ultron. Rogers, Romanoff, and Barton fly to Seoul and retrieve the body, however Ultron escapes, taking Romanoff hostage in the process. The twins, having realised Ultron's ultimate goal, turn on him and choose to side with the Avengers.

Back at Avengers Tower, Stark decides to put his AI JARVIS into the empty body that had been recovered. Rogers takes issue with this; they get into a heated argument over whether or not it is a good idea to create *another* sentient AI, especially after the first attempt went so badly. Thor arrives back at the Tower – having gone off to receive guidance after the hallucination that Wanda Maximoff had given him – and explains that the stone on the body's face is an Infinity Stone (like the Cosmic Cube, the Aether, and the stone in *Guardians of the Galaxy*). He uses it to transform the AI into a sentient android known as the Vision, and the Vision and twins accompany the Avengers back to the fortress from the beginning of the film; at this fortress, Ultron has decided to raise a nearby city and crash it back into the Earth, causing global devastation.

The ensuing battle with Ultron leaves Pietro Maximoff dead, and Ultron is able to activate his machine to drop the city. Thor and Stark manage to explode the city before it reaches the ground, though the effect of the shattered pieces of land crashing to the Earth is never explored. Instead, the Avengers once more go their separate ways: Banner leaves, citing the danger he poses to everyone; Thor goes home to learn more about the vision that he had had; Stark and Barton both choose to set aside the responsibilities of being an Avenger. Rogers and Romanoff are last seen at a new Avenger's base – the Tower being largely destroyed – and they welcome in a new line up to the team: Wanda Maximoff, the Vision,

James Rhodes (of the *Iron Man* films), and Sam Wilson (of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*).

Director: Peyton Reed

Primary cast: Paul Rudd as Scott Lang / Ant-Man; Evangeline Lilly as Hope van Dyne; Corey Stoll as Darren Cross / Yellowjacket; Michael Douglas as Hank Pym / the original Ant-Man.

This film introduces the new character Ant-Man to the MCU. It opens with Scott Lang as he leaves prison; he moves in with a former cellmate and is unable to hold down a job, leading to him taking what is meant to be a quick burglary job to make ends meet. The house he and his team break into belongs to Hank Pym, creator of the Pym Particle (which enables objects to shrink); when Lang cannot find anything recognisably valuable within the house's safe, he takes the suit that Pym designed to control the Pym Particle. When Lang realises what it is that he has taken, he goes back to the house to return it, only to be drawn into the conflict that exists between Pym, his daughter Hope, and the current CEO of Pym's old company, Darren Cross. Cross seeks the Pym Particle, so as to sell it to the highest bidder, and designs his own version of the suit that he dubs the 'yellowjacket'. After extensive training, Lang tries and fails to steal the yellowjacket suit; Cross then sells it to a Hydra official, leading to a confrontation wherein Lang, using Pym's ant-man suit, forces Cross to don the yellowjacket suit and chase him across the city. Cross ends up holding Lang's young daughter Cassie hostage; in a last ditch effort, Lang shrinks down to subatomic size to penetrate the yellowjacket suit, sabotaging it so it too would shrink and kill Cross in the process. Whilst shrinking so small caused Lang to enter the quantum realm – where Pym's wife had gone missing – he eventually makes it back to regular size and his family.

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