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LIVING IN BETWEEN: AN “IN-BETWEEN” ONTOLOGY BETWEEN METAXY, LIMINALITY, AND LIQUID MODERNITY

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to philosophically and theoretically reconstruct the concept of In-Between by placing “being in-between” at the centre of the experience that defines the contemporary world. In postmodern societies, individuals and institutions live in a state of perpetual transition between “rigid” structures that no longer function and new forms that have not yet been named; diagnoses such as risk society, liquid modernity, and social acceleration describe precisely the symptoms of this in-between-ness. This work brings together Plato's idea of metaxy, Arendt's public sphere of human relations, Turner's understanding of liminality and communitas, Bhabha's third space, and Bauman's analysis of liquid modernity/interregnum, condensing the common intuition emerging from a scattered literature into a conceptual core. The thesis put forward is that “In-Between” is neither merely a temporary void nor a purely chaotic interim period, but rather an ontologically potential-laden threshold, relationally an inter-human and inter-spatial network, and ethically and politically a space of possibility for plurality and inclusivity. While elaborating on these three dimensions of the concept, the article proposes In-Between not only as a subject but also as an interdisciplinary method of reading and thinking, thus offering a conceptual tool for discussions on social transformation, resilience, and new normative horizons.

KEYWORDS: In-Between, Liminality, Metaxy, Hybridity, Liquid Modernity.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF "IN-BETWEEN" IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

1.1. Framing The Problem

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the most common images used to describe social experience have been rupture, uncertainty, and speed. The predictable risks of classical industrial society have given way to new types of risks that cannot be calculated because they are "produced" and circulate on a global scale (Beck, 1992). Zygmunt Bauman interprets this situation under the heading of "liquid modernity," through the dissolution of institutional and individual forms, the loosening of bonds, and the transformation of identities from permanent to temporary and revisable (Bauman, 2000). The necessity of "reflexive self-narrative," emphasized by Giddens in defining late modern societies, also reveals that individuals are now compelled to construct a fragile, constantly reconfigured self rather than settle into predetermined roles (Giddens, 1991). These diagnoses are complemented by Hartmut Rosa's analyses of social acceleration: technological change, institutional transformation, and the pace of life produce a temporal regime in which "the present" is increasingly narrowed; the accumulation of the past does not coincide with the horizon of the future (Rosa, 2013). In such a context, people can neither feel wholly belonging to the relatively solid institutions of the old world, nor develop even a minimal conceptual consistency about what the "new" might look like. Daily life is experienced as a chronic state of "neither this nor that," caught between long-term employment relationships and project-based insecurity; national forms of citizenship and digital-network-based affiliations; and local life worlds and global circulation. This situation is not merely a state of mind peculiar to individual subjects; political regimes, social movements, and cultural forms also oscillate within a similar state of liminality. On the one hand, there is the loss of legitimacy of normative frameworks and institutional structures; on the other, new forms of collective organization that have yet to be named... Although Ulrich Beck's "risk society," Bauman's "liquid modernity," and Rosa's "social acceleration" concepts explain this experience from different angles, they share a common intuition: the crisis experienced in the contemporary world is not inherent only to specific institutional fields; it points to a deeper transformation that places our entire understanding of historicity, subject, identity, and space in an "in-between" position (Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Rosa, 2013).

Anthropology and social theory literature have long considered such states of transition and uncertainty through the concept of "liminality." Expanding on Arnold van Gennep's analysis of rites of passage, Victor Turner refers to the state of "neither the previous status nor the new status" in the middle of the ritual as liminal and reads this phase as a creative space where structures are temporarily suspended and new symbolic orders are tested (Turner, 1969). This line becomes even more radical in Bjørn Thomassen's work, which conceptualizes liminality as a fundamental experience of modernity; Thomassen treats the "in-between" as a state in which modern humans constantly live, never fully leaving it behind (Thomassen, 2009, 2014). Arpad Szakolczai, meanwhile, argues that modernity as an entire era has been transformed into an endless threshold experience through the idea of "permanent liminality" (Szakolczai, 2017). On the other hand, postcolonial theory, like liminality discussions, has made "being in between" a key theme. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space points to an intermediate area where cultural expressions are "neither entirely colonial nor entirely colonized," established through hybridity and translation practices (Bhabha, 1994). In this space, identities are not fixed; each encounter allows for the production of new meanings and strategies. Thus, "in-between" defines not only the byproduct of crises, but the very stage of cultural creativity and resistance. Despite this rich literature, we can say that the experience of "in-between" has been conceptualized in a scattered manner across different traditions of thought; these lines, stretching from metaphysics to political theory, from anthropology to sociology, often stand side by side without being interlinked. This is precisely the starting point of this article: to take these various concepts that enable us to view the crises of the contemporary world from the perspective of "in-between," not merely to compile them into a historical list, but to construct a coherent conceptual core under the heading In-Between by tracing the echoes and tensions between them.

1.2. Purpose And Thesis Statement of the Article

The main purpose of this article is to systematically introduce the concept of "In-Between" within both classical and contemporary thought, to reveal its metaphysical, political, and socio-cultural foundations, and to propose a philosophically defensible conceptualization. Rather than following a single theoretical school, the study draws on thinkers from different traditions, Plato's understanding of metaxy and Arendt's conception of

the public sphere between people, Turner's theory of liminality and Bhabha's third space, Bauman's diagnosis of liquid modernity and the literature on risk society and acceleration.

In this regard, the questions addressed in this article can be summarized as follows:

- What is "in-between" and in what sense does it transcend being merely a temporary "interim period"?
- How can the experience of being in-between be understood at the ontological (being and process), relational (networks between people and spaces), and normative/political (plurality, inclusivity, renewal) levels?
- What kind of theoretical and practical openings does this conceptualization offer for thinking about crises, possibilities for transformation, and resilience strategies in the postmodern world?

The central thesis of the article is that "In-Between" is neither merely a temporary void nor a purely fragmented intermediate stage but rather must be conceived as a three-dimensional concept. Accordingly, In-Between is:

1. Ontologically, a threshold state where rigid structures have loosened but not yet disintegrated, a state charged with potential. 2. Relationally, it is a network woven between subjects, groups, and fields, where communication and mediation intensify. 3. Ethically and politically, it is a space where plurality and uniqueness can become visible, where an inclusive and deliberative public sphere is possible.

By defending these three elements together, the article proposes "In-Between" as a transformation operator: a conceptual tool that neither endorses the existing order as it is nor romanticizes uncertainty but rather processes the tensions of in-betweenness as creative frictions.

To make the article's original contribution explicit vis-à-vis adjacent frameworks: whereas liminality primarily names ritualized threshold phases, interregnum diagnoses an epochal-political suspension, and hybridity/third space theorizes cultural translation under asymmetrical power, "In-Between" is developed here as an integrative, multi-scalar operator. It advances these approaches by (i) combining ontological, relational, and ethical/political dimensions in one model; (ii) treating in-betweenness not only as a descriptive condition but also as a normative horizon for plurality and inclusivity; and (iii) linking this conceptual work to designable mediating practices (e.g., urban and resilience labs) that intentionally build "in-between spaces" for experimentation and

dialogue (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969/2011; Gramsci, 1971; Bhabha, 1994/2012; Bauman, 2000; 2007; Voytenko et al., 2016; von Wirth et al., 2019).

1.3. Method And Structure

The method of this study is less a literature review in the classical sense and more an effort at conceptual-historical reading and philosophical genealogy. Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history approach, which invites us to think of modern historical time as a tense relationship between the past and the future as an "experience field" and "horizon of expectation," forms the backdrop to this endeavor (Koselleck, 2004). From this, we approach "in-between" not as a fixed term belonging to a single discipline or period, but as a set of meanings that emerge in different contexts and become layered over time. To this end, the article adopts a conceptual synthesis strategy that proceeds on three levels. First, the metaphysical and political-ontological dimension of "in-between" is explored through Plato's conception of metaxy and Arendt's emphasis on "the space between people." Second, Turner, Thomassen, and Szokolczai's discussions of liminality, read alongside Bhabha's third space and Bauman's analysis of liquid modernity/interregnum, will establish the anthropological and sociological framework of the experience of in-betweenness in the modern world. (Bauman, 2000; Bhabha, 1994; Szokolczai, 2017; Thomassen, 2009, 2014; Turner, 1969). Thirdly, the motifs derived from these discussions will be reworked in the subsequent sections of the article within a synthesis that comprehends the ontological, epistemological, and normative components of In-Between together. The method combines a hermeneutic reading of the concept with a normative concern. It is argued that is a concept suitable not only for describing "what is" but also for discussing "what could be"; therefore, the article will also briefly touch upon the practical and methodological consequences of the concept in the following sections. Thus, In-Between will acquire the status of an interdisciplinary philosophical concept, both as an object of analysis and as a mode of thinking. The general structure of the article is briefly as follows: In the second section, an intuitive and technical definition of "In-Between" is provided, and its ontological, relational, and processual dimensions are distinguished. The third and fourth sections examine Plato's conception of metaxy and Arendt's understanding of the public sphere positioned "between past and future." In the following sections, discussions of liminality, third space, and liquid modernity through Turner,

Bhabha, and Bauman are reinterpreted from the perspective of "in-between." Subsequent chapters expand the theoretical ecology of the concept with indirect contributions from thinkers such as Gramsci, Douglas, Merton, Buber, and Prigogine; the final synthesis chapter discusses the ontology, normative horizon, and methodological role of In-Between. Ultimately, the meaning of "living in-between" in the contemporary world and how this in-betweenness can be mobilized for a more inclusive and resilient social future is opened up for discussion.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: DEFINING "IN-BETWEEN"

2.1. *The Intuitive Definition Of "In-Between"*

When we say "being in-between" or "being caught between two things" in everyday language, we often mean not just a neutral distance between two points, but also a tense experience. "Being caught in-between" implies indecision, "being stuck in-between" implies pressure, and "stopping by in-between" implies a discontinuous but repetitive, rhythmic movement. In-between is a word that is both spatial (the road between two cities, the corridor between two rooms), temporal (between two classes, between two periods), and relational (the distance between two people, the difference between two generations). These multiple layers of meaning in language provide an intuitive starting point for conceptualizing "In-Between." English words such as "in-between," "betwixt," "interval," "gap," or, in more technical contexts, "liminal" and "interregnum" also refer to a similar experience: a state of being neither completely here nor entirely there, settled on the threshold. Liminality literature uses this in-between-ness specifically for the middle phase of rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969). However, our everyday intuition is broader than liminality: being in-between is an experience not only at a ritual threshold, but also between work and unemployment, childhood and adulthood, online and offline (Thomassen, 2009). In this article, we will define "In-Between" as a technical concept based on this intuitive grounding: In-Between is a productive space situated between fixed identities and structures and fully dissolved chaos, where relationships intensify but meaning has not yet fully crystallized. This definition brings together several elements. First, In-Between is neither order in the classical sense nor pure disorder; it is a threshold between the two, where possible new orders are emerging. Second, In-Between is conceived not only as an individual state of consciousness but as an "interval" where relationships, networks, and

encounters intensify. Third, meaning has not yet taken its final form in this field; categories, norms, and identities are open to negotiation. At this point, it is instructive to briefly mention a classical virtue ethics principle, the saying "In medio stat virtus" ("virtue lies in the middle"). Aristotle's doctrine of the "middle way," developed in *Nicomachean Ethics*, defines virtue as a moderate position between two extremes: courage between cowardice and recklessness, generosity between extravagance and stinginess (Aristotle, 2002; Kraut, 2018). More recent discussions of virtue ethics also use this Latin maxim to describe virtue's position "between extremes" (Camassa, 2023). However, the concept of In Between that we propose here cannot be reduced to a simple "middle way" or conciliatory centrism. The Middle is not a realm of moderation where extremes are erased, but a dynamic threshold where the tension between extremes is preserved, unresolved, and thus enables new formations. Standing "in the middle" here does not imply a static equilibrium, but a continuous movement of negotiation and re-arrangement.

2.2. *Three-Dimensional Conceptual Structure: Ontological, Relational, Processual*

It is not sufficient to conceptualize In between merely as a "state" or merely as a "relationship." To open up the concept analytically, we propose a three-dimensional structure: ontological, relational, and processual dimensions. These three dimensions make it possible to reorganize concepts such as "threshold," "in-between," "liminal," and "third space," which are used in a scattered manner in different disciplines, within a single framework. Ontological dimension requires thinking of In between as a quality related to certain states of the world. The middle stages described in Van Gennep's rites of passage or Turner's analyses of liminality point to a state of "suspension" in which individuals and communities do not yet fully possess their old identities or new statuses (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969). Similarly, Prigogine and Stengers' work based on chaos theory shows that new forms of order can spontaneously emerge in systems that are far from equilibrium and in fluctuating states (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). These two different traditions illuminate the ontological character of In-Between: In-Between is a state of being between stability and dissolution, but precisely in this state of "distant equilibrium" that new forms and meanings can emerge. The relational dimension conceives of In between not as a subject or structure, but by focusing on the connections themselves. As Arendt insists in

The Human Condition, when people come together, they create a world “between them”; politics takes place in this space of appearance (Arendt, 1958/1998). Similarly, in I and Thou, Buber conceives of the relationship as an event between “I” and “Thou,” beyond the psychological inner worlds of the parties; the real encounter takes place not within the subject, but in between (Buber, 1923/1970). Contemporary relational sociology also argues that social reality consists of a network of dynamic relationships rather than fixed entities (Emirbayer, 1997). From this perspective, In-Between is not the void between pre-given essences, but rather the relational field that transforms and patterns those essences. The processual dimension allows us to approach In between not as a state of “being in between” but as a process of transition and transformation. Turner's association of liminality with the middle phase of social dramas shows that In between is a process that unfolds over time; the individual and the community pass through this interval and re-articulate themselves into another structure (Turner, 1969; Thomassen, 2009). In Bhabha's discussions of cultural hybridity, the “Third Space” functions precisely as this kind of processual in-between: the most productive site of cultural production is not where representational regimes are fixed, but where contradictions and negotiations intensify (Bhabha, 1994/2012). These three dimensions also offer a new interpretation of the classical principle of “in medio stat virtus.” While in Aristotle the middle denotes a virtue embedded between two extremes (Aristotle, NE), contemporary virtue ethics literature increasingly reads the middle as a dynamic process of adjustment (Camassa, 2023). The concept of in-between radicalizes this dynamic reading: virtue is practiced not only at a fixed “midpoint,” but in an in-between that is constantly recalibrated, where ontological, relational, and processual dimensions intersect. Therefore, “standing in the middle” should be thought of not as a tension-free compromise, but as a practice that keeps the possibilities for transformation open.

2.3. Dissociation: In-Between ≠ Just Liminality / Anomie

The concept of in-between intersects with several powerful concepts in contemporary theoretical literature: liminality, anomie, and interregnum are the main ones. Nevertheless, equating In-between with any of these concepts is insufficient from both a theoretical and normative perspective. The aim here is to distinguish In-between by leaning on this literature, but without overlapping with it. The

concept of liminality was introduced in van Gennep's work on rites of passage and developed by Turner in terms of its structural and experiential dimensions (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969). The liminal stage is designed as a brief “threshold” between departure and re-entry, in the middle of a three-stage ritual structure. Thomassen shows that this concept can be generalized to modern political and cultural processes, thus allowing for the notion of “extended” liminal periods (Thomassen, 2009). However, liminality is always contingent on the assumption of transience: there is an “after,” and the threshold gains meaning in relation to this after. The concept of in-between loosens this assumption: it also encompasses situations in modern societies where thresholds become permanent, where people live in-between for long periods of time, even for generations. In-between is therefore a broader framework concept that also refers to structural and chronic “in-between” forms beyond moments of transition. Anomie, in the tradition of Durkheim and Merton, refers to a pathological in-between state characterized by the dissolution of the normative order and the incompatibility between goals and legitimate means (Merton, 1938). In Merton's famous article, anomie is associated with the tensions and deviations that arise when cultural ideals of success (e.g., wealth) cannot be achieved through institutionalized means (education, employment, etc.). In this context, “in-between” is largely synonymous with normlessness, lawlessness, and dissolution. However, the concept of In between, while including versions of normative void or collapse, is not limited to them. In between encompasses not only the absence of norms but also situations where norms are open to negotiation, reestablished, and pluralized. Therefore, unlike anomie, in between designates a field that does not always have to be pathological but also includes creative processes of re-establishing norms. The concept of Interregnum is particularly associated in political thought with Gramsci's famous statement: “The old is dying, the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, the most varied symptoms of illness appear” (Gramsci, 1971). This sentence is frequently referenced in both political theory and contemporary analysis to describe periods when a hegemonic order is dissolving, and a new one has not yet taken shape. Bauman's descriptions of “liquid modernity” and “interregnum” also depict a prolonged transitional period in which institutions are dissolving but new forms of stability have not yet emerged. In this usage, interregnum is a macro-level diagnosis focused primarily on the political-institutional level. The

concept of In between, on the other hand, aims to consider thresholds at the institutional, cultural, and everyday levels together: the transition between neighborhoods in a city, an individual's drift between unemployment and precarious work, a migrant's hybrid identity formed between two cultures, all are different faces of In between. This distinction reveals that In between is a framework concept that carries both risk and opportunity. Unlike liminality, in between's "end" is not guaranteed; unlike anomie, in between is not merely normlessness, but a stage where new norms are jointly invented; unlike interregnum, in between is not limited to state-form and hegemony crises but also includes relational and experiential thresholds at the micro level. Returning here to the principle of "in medio stat virtus," the concept of In between takes seriously the dangerous and productive nature of this "middle": the middle is neither a banality where extremes are erased nor a mere crisis; on the contrary, it is conceptualized as a field where crisis and creation, dissolution and construction, loss and renewal are intertwined.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL GENEALOGY I: FROM METAPHYSICS TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

3.1. *Metaxy In Plato: Between Deficiency and Abundance*

The first strong move toward taking "in-between" seriously as a concept appears in Plato's Symposium, in Diotima's account of Eros. In this account, as relayed by Socrates, Eros is neither placed among the gods nor identified with ordinary mortals; he is a daimon, an intermediary between the two, "neither mortal nor immortal" (Plato, Symposium 202d-203a). The name of this intermediate identity is precisely metaxy: a mode of being that stands between two extremes, but whose stance is not a static "in-between-ness" but a continuous movement of orientation and translation. Diotima's mythological genealogy works this intermediate position through the dialectic of lack and abundance: Eros is the child of Penia, meaning lack, and Poros, evoking possibility, source, and "finding the way" (203b-204a). Thus, Eros emerges as both needy and creative, both poor and enterprising. Classical and contemporary commentators emphasize that in Diotima's conception, lack is not a defect to be suppressed, but the dynamic of movement, seeking, and learning (Adams, 2024; Boersma, 2019; Fussi, 2009). According to this reading, Eros is not a "completed possession" but a journey fueled by lack. In this context, the first feature of metaxy is that it is a desire movement directed from below upward.

Diotima's famous "ladder of love" depicts an ascent from individual bodies to beautiful souls, from practical virtues to the love of wisdom, and from there to the contemplation of "Beauty itself" (210a-212a). Each step on this staircase is a more comprehensive treatment of a deficiency at the lower level; child, work, law, knowledge, and ultimately contemplation are successive figures of mortal beings' attempts to transcend their own limitations (Boter, 2017; Nally, 2023). What lies in between is not a static "midpoint" here, but a transitional zone generating traffic from deficiency to abundance. The second feature is that metaxy is a space of communication and translation. Diotima describes Eros as an intermediary being who "carries messages" between gods and humans, flowing prayers and responses, requests and granted favors in both directions (202e-203a). Thus, metaxy is not merely an ontological state of "neither this nor that," but circulation itself: meaning, value, desire, and knowledge are mutually translated and reshaped in this intermediate space. Eric Voegelin's reading of metaxy radicalizes this point: he interprets human existence as an ongoing tension between God and nothingness, finitude and infinity, order and chaos, and considers this tension a structural feature of "metaxi consciousness" (Voegelin, 2000; Duraj, 2021). The third feature is that metaxy is a gap in which deficiency is creatively processed. According to Diotima, Eros is the mortal's desire to "possess the good forever"; this desire manifests itself not only through biological reproduction but also through the establishment of laws, the creation of works of art, and the pursuit of knowledge and virtue (206e-208b). Therefore, Eros transforms its own deficiency into a kind of productive motor: mortals, thanks to their awareness of their deficiency, are driven to leave traces that transcend themselves. Contemporary literature interprets Diotima's narrative precisely for this reason, not as a "self-enclosed, selfish identity," but as a relational orientation established with others and with the good itself (Adams, 2024; Boersma, 2019; Obdrzalek, 2010). Based on these three characteristics, Plato's metaxy allows us to think of In between in three dimensions: (i) an ontological field of tension established between human existence, deficiency and abundance, ignorance and wisdom, mortality and immortality; (ii) a communicative interface operating between gods and humans, ideas and the sensible world, body and soul; (iii) a pedagogical process space where deficiency is not suppressed but rather productively engaged. Viewed this way, the "in-between" is not a void but an intense relationality where deficiencies and

possibilities meet. The metaphysical root of the concept of In-Between in the article is based on this Platonic idea of metaxy: humans are always “in between” and are therefore transformable beings.

3.2. *The World In Between in Arendt: Public Space and Judgment*

The motif of metaxy, constructed on Plato's vertical axis (gods–humans, mortal–immortal), takes on a horizontal, earthly form in Hannah Arendt. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt defines “the world” as a “common totality of things” that stands between people, both uniting and separating them. In her famous analogy, the common world “does for those who sit around the same table what the table does for them”: it stands between us, bringing us together, but also keeping us at a certain distance from each other; that is, like any “in-between,” it both connects and separates. According to Arendt, the public sphere emerges thanks to this interposed world; politics is possible in this “space of emergence” where people are visible and audible (Arendt, 1958/1998). Arendt's understanding of the public sphere is decisive for our concept of In-Between on two levels. First, the public sphere is not a concrete space, but a relational interval. Arendt sees the network of relationships that people weave through acting and speaking together as the true bearer of political reality: power is not a property stored within individuals, but something that actually emerges “when people are together” and in the space between them (Arendt, 1958/1998; Dolan, 2000). Therefore, in the Arendtian sense, the in-between encompasses not only physical spaces but also the entire fabric of encounters established through action. Hol's (2005) reading of the public sphere through Arendt details how this space is not an “empty space,” but rather a world-object that carries law, debate, and equality: people can only be both close and distant to each other when there is a shared world between them. Secondly, Arendt considers this space as the condition of freedom. In her essays in *Between Past and Future*, the crisis of modernity is defined precisely through the nature of this gap: tradition has collapsed, horizons that provide stability for the future have disappeared; as a result, the “void” between past and future has become a reality experienced not only by philosophers but by everyone (Arendt, 1961/2006). As Norberg (2011) points out, for Arendt, crisis is a situation in which individuals cannot find their way with ready-made prejudices but are nevertheless forced to live together; precisely for this reason, crisis is a privileged “in-between time” for developing the capacity for judgment, the ability to “visit” the

perspectives of others. In Arendt's analysis of this crisis, the in-between space serves a dual function. On the one hand, the gap between past and future deprives us of “ready-made recipes of tradition,” making the production of shared meaning difficult; the weakening of the public sphere leads to reality itself becoming contested. On the other hand, this same gap also opens up a space of liberation for the practice of thinking and judgment: in this interval, which is not pre-framed by any tradition, people have the opportunity to rename the world, make new beginnings, and establish new forms of freedom (Benhabib, 1988; Norberg, 2011).

The two motifs we borrow from Arendt are decisive for the conceptualization of the In-Between in this article.

1. The In-Between is the space of freedom. Freedom, in Arendt, is not an internal state of will, but the capacity to “begin something new”; it only emerges in practice in a world shared

with others, that is, in the public space of the in-between (Arendt, 1961/2006; Arendt, 1963). Therefore, the In-Between is not an abstract metaphysical “middle,” but the stage of freedom. 2. When the In-Between is neglected, shared reality collapses. When the “shared world” carried by the public sphere through law, institutions, and public discourse weakens, people can no longer see each other as coming from “the same world”; in Arendt's words, without the table that pulls the world between us, we “pile” on top of each other. As Hol (2005) and Canovan (1985) show, this situation signifies a structural rupture in terms of both democratic politics and the legitimacy of law.

When we juxtapose Plato's metaxy with Arendt's “world in-between,” the concept of In-Between appears as a space where both vertical (lack–abundance, finite–infinite) and horizontal (self–other, private–public, past–future) tensions intersect. In-Between, at this initial genealogical stage, is conceived neither as a purely metaphysical “order of being” nor as a purely institutional public sphere; it is a “common interval” that connects the two, making human transformability possible on both cosmic and earthly levels.

4. PHILOSOPHICAL GENEALOGY II: FROM RITUAL TO CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

After examining the metaphysical and political-ontological roots of the “in-between” through Plato and Arendt, in this section we trace two important anthropological and postcolonial strands of the concept. Victor Turner's understanding of liminality and *communitas* allows us to think of “in-between”

as a social threshold that emerges in ritual processes; Homi K. Bhabha's analyses of the third space and cultural hybridity, on the other hand, elevate this threshold to the level of cultural expression and identity negotiation. Thus, In-Between becomes a plural concept shaped both in the social "laboratories" produced by ritual transitions and in the tense, contact zones between cultures.

4.1. Turner: Liminality, Communitas, And Permanent Thresholds

Turner's conception of liminality is based directly on a re-reading of Arnold van Gennep's classic work *Les rites de passage* (1909). Van Gennep, comparing the rites of passage of very different societies, shows that they generally consist of three fundamental stages: departure (separation from the old position), threshold/limen (interim), and re-entry (integration into the new position) (van Gennep, 1960). The second stage is particularly noteworthy, as it belongs neither to the previous status nor to the new status that has yet to be attained; van Gennep likens this stage to a neutral transition zone located between two regions, "belonging nowhere entirely." Turner radically expands this threshold concept based on his field research on the Ndembu rituals in Zambia. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, he defines liminality as a state in which individuals are "between positions defined by law, tradition, and custom," a state in which social structure is suspended, and he interprets this state through the dialectic between 'structure' and "anti-structure" (Turner, 1969/2011). The liminal individual is neither fully attached to their previous social role nor settled into their new role; they are symbolically "naked," stripped of name and title, positioned in a state of temporary uncertainty. Turner's original contribution is to show that this liminal state is not merely a "void" but also an intense field of social experience. In the liminal phase, the rigid status and hierarchies that govern everyday life can be temporarily dissolved; in place of this dissolution comes what Turner calls *communitas*, an egalitarian and intense experience of unity. *Communitas*, unlike the anonymous "sociality" of industrial societies, is a "structureless" but highly meaningful unity in which people perceive each other not so much in terms of their roles and masks, but in terms of their naked human condition (Turner, 1969/2011; 1974). At this point, Turner conceives of *communitas* as an "anti-structure" that is opposed to structure but cannot be reduced to structurelessness: When the liminal phase ends, this egalitarian sense of unity does not disappear entirely; it seeps into the reestablished

structure in the form of new symbols and relationships. The tension between structure and *communitas* becomes the engine of social renewal. As Thomassen (2014) carefully demonstrates, Turner's analysis opens the way to thinking of liminality not merely as a ritualistic moment of transition, but as a general model of social change (Thomassen, 2014). Another important step in Turner's conceptualization is the distinction between "liminal" and "liminoid." He argues that while liminal experiences in premodern societies were mostly associated with compulsory and collective rituals, similar threshold experiences in modern societies take voluntary and individual forms: activities such as art, sports, festivals, and performances are, according to Turner, liminoid spaces that enable stepping outside the structure and experimenting with alternative forms of relating (Turner, 1974). This distinction offers a powerful insight into how experiences that are non-ritual but liminal in nature, such as youth cultures, protest movements, or alternative living spaces, can be conceived in today's society. This line of thought is further developed by thinkers such as Thomassen and Szokolczai. Thomassen argues that modernity can be understood as a liminal experience in itself; the modern subject constantly lives in "in-between" positions (Thomassen, 2014). Szokolczai, meanwhile, uses the concept of "permanent liminality" to argue that the modern world is shaped by never-ending threshold processes, and that liminality has thus transformed from a temporary intermediate stage into a structural condition (Szokolczai, 2017). These anthropological and sociological readings make two important contributions to our conceptualization of In-Between. First, liminality shows us that In-Between can be thought of as productive chaos: uncertainty and loss of status are not only threats but also opportunities for creative dissolution and reconstruction. Second, it presents the idea that liminal and liminoid spaces are experimental "laboratories" where new forms of social organization are tested. Turner's *communitas* names these spaces where hierarchies are loosened and egalitarian, intense relationships are formed; Thomassen and Szokolczai show that these experimental spaces are expanding toward the center of modern society. In this sense, it becomes possible to think of the in-between not merely as a threshold to be crossed, but as a social process that must be worked on, institutionalized, and ethically guided.

4.2. Bhabha: Third Space and Cultural Hybridity

While Turner's concept of liminality, which focuses on ritual thresholds, helps us think of the "in-between" in the context of the temporary suspension of social structure, Homi K. Bhabha carries this in-between-ness into the realm of cultural representation and identity. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues against understandings that define identity in fixed and essentialist categories, maintaining that cultural meaning is always produced "in between," through processes of translation and negotiation. The fundamental concepts developed in the book, hybridity, mimicry, interstice, third space, aim to capture this productive in-between (Bhabha, 1994/2012). Bhabha's concept of the third space is at the center of a movement of thought that aims to disrupt classic colonial dichotomies, colonizer/colonized, East/West, self/other. As he argues in *The Location of Culture*, cultural production is most productive where meaning is most ambivalent; the third space is precisely the area where this ambivalence, these opposing positions, meet not in pure form but in mutual collision and translation (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Batchelor, 2008). Here, hybridity refers not to a "mixture of two pure cultures," but rather to the process of rearticulating cultural forms that have never been pure, within asymmetrical power relations. The most striking feature of the third space is that it forces us to think of identities not as fixed points, but as negotiated processes. As Bhabha emphasizes in his interview titled *The Third Space*, colonial encounter does not merely produce oppression and domination; it also creates an intermediate space where the colonial language and symbolic order are unexpectedly reversed, imitated, and rewritten (Rutherford, 1990). As Batchelor (2008) and Kalua (2009) underline, this third space can be read as a productive tension that unsettles colonial discourses and opens room for negotiation and resistance. This framework is particularly useful for understanding the cultural dimension of In-Between. On the one hand, Bhabha offers a powerful theoretical critique of myths that define national or ethnic identities around a "pure" and homogeneous essence; on the other hand, he associates hybridity not only with loss and rootlessness but also with the source of new meanings and strategies. Diaspora studies, research on migrant identities and forms of multiple belonging, have widely used Bhabha's concept of the third space to understand the subjective experiences of those who live "in between" (Kalua, 2009; Papastergiadis, 2000/2013). For migrants, minority communities, or individuals positioned between two (or more) cultures, In-

Between is not only a space of tension and exclusion, but also an empowering space where new perspectives and skills develop. What makes the third space significant in terms of our concept of In-Between is that this space is simultaneously a scene of both resistance and creation. The practices of mimicry and translation analyzed by Bhabha produce partial and displaced repetitions that reveal the gaps and contradictions within the colonial discourse rather than simply reproducing it (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Batchelor, 2008). These shifts make room for new subject positions and new narratives. Therefore, the cultural dimension of In-Between can be thought of not only as a buffer zone where tensions between identities are stored, but as a field of production where meaning itself is negotiated and new commons are invented. When Turner and Bhabha are read together, two complementary facets of the concept of In-between emerge: Ritual liminality and *communitas* reveal the dimension of In-between that temporarily "deconstructs" social relations but, precisely because of this, opens up space for new forms of relating; while the third space and hybridity reveal the dimension of In-between that disrupts and reconfigures cultural narratives, identities, and regimes of representation. Thus, in-between emerges as a conceptual nexus operating at both ritual and cultural levels, as well as micro (subjective experience) and macro (political and social formations) levels.

5. PHILOSOPHICAL GENEALOGY III: LIQUID MODERNITY AND THE MACRO INTERREGNUM

5.1. *Bauman: Liquid Modernity and Interregnum*

Until now, we have thought of the "in-between" primarily in terms of ritual, culture, and public life, through relatively "local" thresholds. Zygmunt Bauman's work takes this in-between space to a higher level, to the very macro structure of the era. The central claim in Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000) and subsequent works is that the "solid" modernity that characterized classical industrial society is dissolving, giving way to a "liquid modernity" in which institutional and identity forms are increasingly transient and fluid rather than permanent (Bauman, 2000, 2007). Bauman depicts "solid" modernity through career structures promising lifelong employment, relatively consistent national identities, and strong welfare state institutions. In this world, the individual's life course can be understood in terms of an ideal of predictable

stability; risks are largely managed at the nation-state level, and institutions serve as both a burden and a guarantee for the individual (Bauman, 2000; Gane, 2001). Liquid modernity, on the other hand, is defined precisely by the dissolution of these "heavy" structures. Bauman characterizes this transformation as a movement from a rigid "hardware" modernity to a light, flexible, and constantly reorganized "software" modernity (Bauman, 2000). In this new situation, bonds become loose; relationships, employment contracts, identities, and forms of settlement become easily reversible, short-lived, and fragile. As Caldas (2009) notes in his reading of Bauman, the metaphor of liquidity points both to the low cost of dissolving bonds between individuals and to the resulting systems becoming "unable to produce lasting stability" (Caldas, 2009). This fragility feeds a form of social sentiment in which uncertainty becomes normalized and change appears as the only constant (Bauman, 2007). It is precisely at this point that Bauman reintroduces Antonio Gramsci's famous interregnum metaphor. Gramsci describes the crisis in Prison Notebooks as follows: "The old is dying, the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, many sickly symptoms appear" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 276; Achcar, 2022). Bauman reads this sentence not merely as a historical note but as a diagnosis summarizing the state of the contemporary world. Bauman frequently uses the metaphor of "skating on thin ice": a life where constant acceleration is necessary to avoid falling, where the ground beneath us is not thick and reliable, but riddled with holes and undulating (Bauman, 2012). Here, interregnum no longer refers only to a short interval between political regimes, but to a long period of transition in which institutions, norms, and frames of meaning are dissolving. As Carlo Bordoni proposed in his discussion with Bauman, our current situation should be read not only as "liquid," but also as an interregnum: a "macro-interregnum" in which the legitimacy of the institutions of the past has dissolved, while the possible forms of the future have not yet gained clarity (Bauman & Bordoni, 2014; Bordoni, 2016). The defining feature of this macro-interregnum is the mismatch between local and global scales. Bauman repeatedly emphasizes the gap between the de facto interdependence produced by globalized economic and communication networks and political institutions that remain largely confined to the national scale (Bauman, 2000, 2007). While production, finance, ecological risks, and migration movements operate at the global level, democratic representation and accountability mechanisms remain "local" and fragmented. In Bauman's words,

this mismatch imposes the necessity of "solving global problems with local tools," which in turn generates a constant sense of inadequacy and political helplessness (Bauman, 2000; Gane, 2001). Thus, Bauman's diagnosis of liquid modernity reveals the macro-sociological dimension of In between: not only individuals' careers or identities, but institutions, normative frameworks, and hegemonic narratives themselves are suspended at a threshold, "neither in their previous form nor in their new form." Neither the nation-state nor the market, neither classical class politics nor new social movements can be the sole regulatory center. What emerges is a multi-layered In between at both the institutional and cultural levels; What Gramsci called "symptoms of illness" – increasing inequalities, insecurity, authoritarian tendencies, conspiracy narratives – can be read precisely as symptoms of this interregnum (Achcar, 2022; Fraser, 2019).

5.2. *The Interregnum as a Meta-Challenge*

Bauman does not leave this interregnum situation merely as a diagnosis; he also refers to it as a "meta-challenge." Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity and various interviews, he describes the most fundamental problem of the modern world as the gap between a humanity that is effectively intertwined on a global scale and political instruments that remain local and fragmented (Bauman & Donskis, 2013). He argues that this gap must be seen as a "high-level task": He argues that if we cannot bridge this gap, no other problem, climate crisis, migration, social justice, technology ethics, etc., can be permanently resolved, as they are all derivatives of this structural imbalance (Bauman, 2013; Jacobsen, 2014). Bauman's "meta-challenge," in this sense, is a normative diagnosis that forces us to take modernity's "in-between" seriously. The reason why classical solutions, more state, more market, nostalgia for a "return to the past," or progressive optimism of the "technological progress solves everything" variety, do not work is that they all perpetuate the fixed ground assumptions of rigid modernity. Liquid modernity, however, is an In-Between where the ground itself is unstable; where institutions, identities, and regimes of knowledge are constantly being reconfigured. In this situation, the real question is not the restoration of the old or the miraculous invention of something completely "new"; it is how this in-betweenness will be managed, how it will be made meaningful, and by which ethical-political principles it will be guided. It is precisely here that the concept of In-Between proposed in this article emerges as a possible

response to the meta-challenge diagnosed by Bauman. Thinking of the In-Between not as a “void” whose uncertainty must be eliminated, but as a process space that must be guided, partially reverses the pessimism of the picture painted by Bauman. Being caught between two extremes is not a paralyzing fate here, but a situation requiring design and negotiation. Bauman's global-local divide, in this sense, can be read as a concrete example of the macro dimension of In-Between. On one side, global capital flows, climate regimes, deviating supply chains, and digital networks; on the other, national parliaments, local governments, civil society organizations, and everyday life practices... Rather than viewing the lack of coordination between these two levels solely as “inadequate governance” or “bad politics,” conceptualizing it as an in-between space also changes the search for solutions. The question now shifts from “which institution should regain sovereignty?” to “which intermediary institutions, hybrid organizations, and multi-level networks can be established in this In-Between?” Indeed, in recent years, both in theory and practice, network-based forms of governance, city-scale experimental platforms, transnational civil society networks, and resilience initiatives operating with a “laboratory” logic exemplify efforts to fill this In-Between (Honeybone, 2020; Voytenko et al., 2016; von Wirth et al., 2019). Bauman's perspective enhances the importance of such initiatives; for the meta-challenge is not merely a conceptual diagnosis, but also a call to design new scales and new connecting narratives. Positioning In between as a theoretical response to meta-challenge in this context requires undertaking a two-pronged task. First, the descriptive task: to realistically diagnose the macro-interstitiality produced by liquid modernity, the dissolution of institutions, the fluidity of identities, the fragmentation of normative frameworks, and to acknowledge the extent to which this uncertainty is structural. Second, the normative and design task: to reshape this interstice through deliberately constructed in-between spaces for communication, solidarity, and the creation of shared norms. This dual task is also consistent with Nancy Fraser's contemporary reading of Gramsci's famous phrase. Discussing neoliberalism's hegemonic crisis, Fraser reads the present as a moment in which “the old is dying, the new cannot be born,” arguing that this moment carries both danger and opportunity for the construction of a new counter-hegemonic bloc (Fraser, 2019). Bauman's meta-challenge forces us to rethink this Gramscian In-Between in a globalized context; our concept of In-Between, meanwhile,

offers a conceptual framework that attempts to systematize this necessity. Thus, the discussion of liquid modernity and interregnum reveals that the In-Between operates not only at the level of individual experience or micro-relationships, but also on an epochal scale. In the remainder of the article, we will discuss in more detail the possible responses to this meta-challenge, particularly those that are inclusive, pluralistic, and resilience-focused, by addressing the ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions of this macro-interregnum together.

6. OTHER THEORETICAL ECHOES AND CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENTIATION

The more conceptually concentrated it becomes, the more possible it is for experiences “stuck between two extremes” to transform from a mere collection of scattered intuitions into an explanatory framework. In previous sections, we outlined the main axis through metaxy, public space, liminality, third space, and liquid modernity. In this section, we briefly introduce five lines of thought that do not directly work under the name “In-Between” but are positioned in the same gap, between order and disorder, norm and anomie. Gramsci, Douglas, Merton, Buber, and Prigogine point to intermediate spaces in different disciplines that cannot be explained by the logic of either stable order or pure chaos. Their contributions both deepen the theoretical framework of In-Between and allow us to distinguish it from related concepts such as “liminality,” “anomie,” or “void.” The aim here is not to produce a new list of names, but to make visible the already accumulated “in-between literature” along these lines and to reveal the boundaries within which the concept of In between can be defended as a specific conceptual proposal.

6.1. Gramsci: Hegemony And the Liminality of Civil Society

Gramsci's concept of the “general (integral) state” breaks with the view that equates the modern capitalist order solely with legal-administrative apparatus: the state is a broader formation that encompasses both the “political society,” the realm of coercive apparatus, and the “civil society,” where consent is produced (Gramsci, 1971). Within this framework, civil society emerges as an interval between the “naked” functioning of the economy and the state based on naked force, but one that cannot be entirely reduced to either. Institutions such as schools, churches, media, unions, and families weave a dense fabric of meaning in this very interval,

mediating between everyday life and macro power relations. Gramsci's famous distinction between "maneuver warfare" and "positional warfare" further sharpens the political importance of this space. Instead of a rapid, frontal "maneuver warfare" directed at the state apparatus, he proposes a long-term "position warfare" based on gradually transforming the meanings and values within institutions and everyday "common sense" (Gramsci, 1971; Egan, 2014). Thus, the main strategic arena is no longer just the parliament or the streets, but the civil society space that lies between the two, linking consent and coercion. The concept of In-Between renames this picture: Civil society is an In-Between that spans the state and society, coercion and consent, economic structure and cultural meaning. Gramsci's "positional warfare" is precisely the hegemonic struggle waged in this In-Between; forms of subjectification, identities, and "normal" behavioral patterns are produced and debated in this space. Read in this way, the In-Between appears not only as thresholds and transitions, but also as a thick social fabric in which consent, counter-hegemonic projects, and new forms of "common sense" are forged (Candeias, 2010).

6.2. Douglas: Purity, Danger, And Boundary Anomalies

Mary Douglas's analysis of "dirt" in *Purity and Danger* offers a powerful anthropological metaphor for thinking about In between. For Douglas, "dirt," in her famous phrase, is "matter out of place" (Douglas, 1966). Dirt is not an inherent property of things; it is merely the name given to an element that does not fit into a particular classification system, that violates boundaries, that blurs categories. Therefore, wherever dirt appears, an invisible classification order, a kind of symbolic order, is indirectly brought to the fore. As Douglas emphasizes, "out-of-place" elements are not only a threat but also carry creative potential. It is possible not only to suppress them, to expel them, but also to rethink the classification system, to review the categories, to redraw the boundaries; indeed, Douglas specifically points out that "removing dirt" is not a passive act of cleaning, but an active act of reorganizing the environment (Douglas, 1966). Within this framework, the concept of "in-between" can be thought of as a space where "out-of-place" people, ideas, and practices are not individually stigmatized as deviations, but rather where they are gathered, boundaries are questioned, and the classification system is opened up for debate. In-between is a boundary-laboratory where the anomalies Douglas refers to are addressed at the

social level, and where who is considered "inside" and who is considered "outside" is renegotiated (Campkin, 2013). Therefore, In-Between is not only the birthplace of "danger," but also of new regimes of meaning and inclusive norms.

6.3. Merton: Anomie And the Need for New Norms

Merton's concept of "anomie" allows us to see the difference between norm dissolution in transitional periods and In-Between. Social Structure and Anomie In his article, Merton argues that the structural mismatch between culturally overvalued success goals and the legitimate means of achieving them leads to the loss of normative coherence (Merton, 1938). According to Merton, when society imposes the same ideals of success on everyone but limits the opportunities for lower classes to achieve those ideals through legitimate means, what comes into play is anomie, the breakdown of the normative order. Anomie is primarily a pathological condition in Merton's schema; under this pressure, individuals are driven toward "innovative" (illegitimate means to achieve the goal), "reactionary," "retreating," or "rebellious" forms of adaptation (Merton, 1938, pp. 672-682). However, when Merton's fifth type of adaptation, "rebellion," simultaneously rejects cultural goals and institutionalized means and turns toward designing new goals and tools, the difference between anomie and In-between becomes clear: Anomie describes the dissolution of existing norms; In-between, however, refers to the space where new norms are collectively invented and negotiated in the midst of a dissolved normative order. In this sense, In-between is a situation where anomie is transformed from a passively "endured" state into a stage for normative creativity. While the structural pressures analyzed by Merton explain the conditions that make In between possible, the concept of In between advances a normative proposition that these pressures do not merely produce deviance and crime but can also be used to produce new collective norms and forms of solidarity (Orru, 1987; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001).

6.4. Buber: The I-Thou Encounter And "Das Zwischen"

Martin Buber's dialogical philosophy offers a unique language to name the existential and relational dimensions of In between. In *I and Thou*, Buber argues that humans relate to the world through two fundamental word pairs: "I-It" and "I-Thou." The "I-It" relationship represents an attitude that objectifies the world, classifying it and

experiencing it as ready-to-use 'things'; the "I-Thou" relationship, on the other hand, expresses a genuine encounter established with the other through reciprocity, openness, and mutual call (Buber, 1970). Buber's original contribution is that he locates the center of this relationship neither in "I" nor in "Thou," but between the two, in *das Zwischen*, "in-between." As later commentators have emphasized, "the I-You relationship is a relational field with poles of I and You; its center is in the between (*Zwischen*)" (Wilde, 2021). This space is not merely a psychological state of empathy, but an ontological "in-between": a shared world that is neither entirely internal nor entirely objective, where being is revealed only through encounter. The concept of In between, expanding Buber's dialogical ontology, allows us to consider not only the ethical-spiritual relationship between two individuals, but also the "shared world" between groups, institutions, and fields. Buber's statement, "in the beginning there is relationship" (*im Anfang ist die Beziehung*), supports the thesis that Between is not merely a transitional state but one of the essential modes of existence (Buber, 1970; Mendes-Flohr, 2019). From this perspective, strengthening In between is not merely a political or institutional issue; it means preserving I-You encounters, that is, real spaces of reciprocity.

6.5. Prigogine: Order Out of Equilibrium and In Between as a Critical Zone

Ilya Prigogine's work on open systems and "dissipative structures" offers a scientific metaphor for In between. In *Order Out of Chaos*, Prigogine and Stengers argue that open systems far from equilibrium, such as certain chemical reactions or ecological structures, reach "bifurcation points" at certain thresholds, where small fluctuations can push the system toward new, more complex forms of order rather than causing it to collapse entirely (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). In this framework, neither perfect equilibrium nor complete disorder is creative; creativity emerges in the "critical zone", literally "in-between", where the system partially loses its stability but does not completely disintegrate. Entropy becomes not only a condition for dissolution but also for leaping to higher levels of order under the right conditions. Prigogine's model has often been used as a metaphor in social theory to understand non-equilibrium processes such as revolutions, organizational transformations, and crises. The concept of in-between translates Prigogine's insight of "non-equilibrium order" into the social sphere: periods when institutional

frameworks are shaken, meaning maps dissolve, but have not yet completely collapsed, are as much an opportunity for the spontaneous organization of new collective forms as they are for pure "dissolution." Viewed in this way, In-Between is not merely a space for "damage control" limited to crisis management; it is a critical threshold region where creative possibilities multiply (Euchner, 2020).

6.6. The Literature of In-Between and the Conceptual Autonomy of In-Between

The lines discussed in this section, though developed independently of each other, collectively point to a "literature of in-between": Civil society between hegemony and consent (Gramsci), anomalies that reveal the limits of classification systems (Douglas), the need for norm dissolution and norm re-creation (Merton), the relational world arising between I-Thou (Buber), and new forms of order emerging in non-equilibrium processes (Prigogine). None of these alone defines In between; however, all of them can be read as pre-enclosures that prepare the different dimensions of In between. Therefore, In between carries a specific claim beyond being an "umbrella concept" summarizing this literature: it is neither merely a pathological anomie where norms dissolve, nor merely the temporary liminality of ritual thresholds, nor merely cultural hybridity, nor merely the technical name for non-equilibrium processes. In between is conceptualized as a transformative space at the intersection of these, with ontological (the opening of being in a critical zone), relational (the bonds that constitute the in-between), and ethical-political (jointly establishing new norms and narratives) dimensions. The next step is to place this plural literature within a more systematic conceptual matrix where In between can be transformed into a normative and practical theory.

7. SYNTHESIS: THE ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND ETHICS OF "IN-BETWEEN"

In the previous sections, we traced "in-between" across different disciplines and at different scales: from Plato's *metaxy* to Arendt's world of human relations, from Turner's liminality to Bhabha's third space, from Bauman's liquid modernity to the more indirect contributions of Gramsci, Douglas, Merton, Buber, and Prigogine. In this section, it is time to place this scattered thread within a framework, in other words, to propose a foundational "core" that brings together the ontological, epistemological, and ethical/political dimensions of the concept of In-Between. What we are doing here is not repeating the

discussions in the previous sections, but making clear three fundamental claims that emerge from them: (i) In-Between is an ontological thesis concerning certain states of the world; (ii) an epistemological position is necessary to comprehend the world experienced in In-Between; (iii) An ethical/political stance in favor of remaining in In between and expanding it, in the direction of plurality and inclusivity, is possible.

7.1. Ontological Synthesis: Thresholds Laden with Potential

When we read Plato's conception of metaxy alongside Turner's liminality and Bauman's diagnosis of interregnum, it becomes clear that the first and most fundamental dimension of In-Between is ontological. For Plato, Eros's intermediate position, which is "neither god nor man," is a field of tension between deficiency and abundance, finitude and infinity; it is precisely this tension that defines man as an "upward striving" (Plato, *Symposium* 202d-212a; Voegelin, 2000). Metaxy, thus, is not "neither here nor there," but rather a continuous movement between two poles, a potentially charged openness. Turner's conception of liminality carries this tension to the social level. The liminal individual is positioned at a "threshold" where established statuses and norms are suspended; in this space where everyday hierarchies dissolve, an egalitarian and intense experience of unity emerges, which he calls *communitas* (Turner, 1969/2011). The liminal phase is neither the simple absence of the old order nor the ready presence of the new order; it is an in-between time, a time when symbolic forms are tried out, when roles and identities can be experienced "differently." As Thomassen (2014) shows, it is even possible to read modernity as a whole through the lens of liminal experience; thus, the threshold ceases to be a momentary moment of ritual and becomes a long-term mode of existence. Bauman's analyses of liquid modernity and interregnum extend this threshold mode to the scale of an era. He argues that we are living in an interim period where the institutions of solid modernity, lifelong employment, stable class and identity positions, and a strong welfare state, are dissolving, while a new, inclusive, and stable order has not yet emerged (Bauman, 2000; Bauman & Bordon, 2014). The metaphor of interregnum, borrowed from Gramsci, precisely names this state of "the old dying, the new unable to be born"; Szakolczai's (2017) concept of "permanent liminality" also emphasizes the continuity of this macro-interregnum.

Combining these three strands, we can formulate In

between as an ontological thesis:

In between is a potentially charged threshold where order is loosening but has not yet disintegrated; thanks to this loosening, the signs of new forms become visible.

This threshold is neither the static "intermediate being" of classical metaphysics nor the passive "being stuck in between" of everyday language. On the contrary, it is a field of intensity where relationships, symbols, and possible futures are concentrated. Plato's movement of Eros from deficiency to abundance, Turner's circulation between structure and *communitas*, and Bauman's fragile transition between solid and liquid modernity can be read as manifestations of this field of intensity at different scales. Two conclusions emerge from this ontological perspective. First, in between should be thought of not as a "void" but as an overflowing space: a space where unnamed possibilities, conflicting demands and desires, and incompatible norms overlap, making it both exhausting and creative. Second, it is clear that in between is multi-scalar: it is not a single moment of transition, but a mode of existence operating at different levels, from individual life trajectories to institutional transformations, from cultural hybridization to the global interregnum (Thomassen, 2014; Bauman, 2000).

7.2. Epistemological Dimension: How Is Knowledge Produced In Between?

If the world is ontologically "in between," then the ways of knowing it must also take this in-betweenness seriously. The classical model of knowledge, in which a single perspective stands at the center and hierarchically orders others, is a model that both Arendt and Bhabha insistently question. In *Between Past and Future*, Arendt describes the modern crisis as a state of humanity suspended between collapsed traditions on one hand and an as-yet-unformed future on the other; in this situation, the loss of "ready-made criteria" condemns us to the faculty of judgment, the capacity to 'visit' other people's perspectives, to see the world "through the eyes of others" (Arendt, 1961/2006; Norberg, 2011). For Arendt, judgment is not pure subjective taste or technical reasoning, but an "intermediate" activity: neither entirely the voice of internal conscience nor the mechanical application of external rules, but a shared world design established between the two, based on multiple perspectives (Benhabib, 1988). Bhabha's concept of the third space proposes a movement that is epistemologically akin to this Arendtian judgment. In *The Location of Culture*, he

argues that cultural expressions are always produced in an “in-between,” in processes of translation and negotiation; the third space is precisely this in-between space where fixed representations dissolve, meaning shifts, and is reconstituted (Bhabha, 1994/2012). In his interview with Rutherford, he describes the third space as a field that not only mimics the language of colonial power but also displaces it, reveals its gaps, and produces “half-familiar, half-foreign” discourses (Rutherford, 1990). **Combining these two lines of thought, an epistemology based on In-Between can be roughly summarized by the following principles:**

1. Multiple perspectives: Knowledge arises not from the viewpoint of a single subject, but from the interaction of multiple perspectives. What Arendt calls an “enlarged mentality” is the practice of including the possible judgments of others in one's thinking (Arendt, 1961/2006). Bhabha's third space also shows that meaning is produced not from a single center, but from encounters and clashes. 2. The centrality of translation and interpretation: In-between is, in the truest sense of the word, a space of translation. Different language games, normative frameworks, and

lifeworlds are attempted to be translated into each other in this space. This translation is never complete; as Bhabha emphasizes, it is precisely this lack and shift that creates the possibility of new meanings and new subjectivities (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Rutherford, 1990). 3. Reflexivity: Thinking in-between requires problematizing one's own position. The judging subject neither speaks “from nowhere” nor “only from its own place”: it is a reflexive agent that takes into account the historical, cultural, and institutional determination of its position. This reflexivity is also consistent with the experience of “modernity closing in on itself,” as highlighted by modern social theory (e.g., Beck's risk society and Giddens' analysis of late modernity) (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

Within this framework, knowledge becomes a practice of constructing a shared world, going beyond the mere “accurate representation of fixed external objects.” In between's epistemology is not a relativism that denies reality, but rather a cautious claim that multiple perspectives can create a shared horizon of reality through conflict and negotiation. Knowledge is not always incomplete and debatable, but precisely because of this, it can be corrected and made common.

7.3. Ethical And Political Dimension: Plurality, Inclusiveness, And Metriopatheia

The ontological and epistemological dimensions

of In between naturally open up ethical and political questions: If the world is structurally “in-between” and our knowledge is also constructed in this in-between, among multiple perspectives, how should we live and how should we make decisions together? What we propose here is a three-principled framework that could be called the “ethics of in-between”: inclusivity, useful tension, and metriopatheia. Arendt's concept of “plurality” forms the first pillar of this framework. In *The Human Condition*, she defines the fundamental characteristic of the human condition as “a multitude seeing the world at the same time, but from different places”; politics is the arena where this plurality becomes visible, where different voices and actions both limit and enrich each other (Arendt, 1958/1998). From this perspective, inclusivity is not merely a call for moral tolerance, but a condition for preserving the reality of the world: The exclusion of certain groups, perspectives, or experiences from the In-Between means the narrowing and fragility of the shared world. Bhabha's third space also offers a critical warning at this point: homogenizing politics based on myths of pure identity impoverish the field of cultural meaning as they suppress hybrid and in-between experiences (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Kalua, 2009). The second principle is useful tension. The ethics of in-between is not a conciliatory “middle way” that seeks to quickly eliminate contradictions; it is an attitude that seeks to make tension productive. Here, there is also an intersection with Chantal Mouffe's understanding of agonistic democracy: Political conflict is not a pathology that must be completely eliminated, but rather the source of democratic energy; what is important is to be able to keep this conflict within a common framework, not in the form of hostility, but in the form of “adversarialism” (Mouffe, 2000). The middle ground is conceived as an area where precisely these kinds of tensions can exist, but where they can be negotiated without turning into a destructive civil war. The principle of “useful tension” implies a political vision where different demands and identities do not simply erase each other, but where new syntheses can emerge from their friction. The third principle is metriopatheia, a concept borrowed from classical virtue ethics: emotions that are measured but not dulled. Aristotle's definition of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* as the “middle” position between two extremes is summarized by the saying “in medio stat virtus” (Aristotle, 2002). Modern virtue ethics discussions interpret this “middle” not as a static point, but as a dynamic balance adjusted according to the situation (Camassa, 2023). In the

context of ethics in between, *metriopatheia* means balancing emotions that swing between two extremes, for example, the desire for fundamental certainty in the face of uncertainty versus nihilistic despair. Bauman's diagnosis of liquid modernity allows us to clearly see these emotional extremes: on the one hand, authoritarian, exclusionary reflexes fueled by intolerance of uncertainty; on the other, passivity resulting in the feeling that "nothing ever changes" (Bauman, 2007; Bauman & Donskis, 2013). *Metriopatheia*, without succumbing to either of these extremes, suggests maintaining the capacity for action while acknowledging the reality of uncertainty: neither a simulation of false certainty nor a hopeless retreat. When these three principles are considered together, the ethics of In-Between can be summarized as follows: an ethical/political stance that broadens rather than narrows the boundaries of who and what counts as "in-between"; that shapes and transforms conflict rather than suppressing it; that yields neither to panic nor indifference in the face of uncertainty. Such an attitude brings together Arendt's emphasis on plurality and beginning, Bhabha's analysis of hybridity and the third space, and Bauman's call for meta-challenge (Arendt, 1958/1998; Bhabha, 1994/2012; Bauman & Bordoni, 2014). In this framework, being in-between becomes not only a situation we find ourselves in, but also a normative orientation that can be consciously chosen, an art of "standing in-between."

8. METHOD AND PRACTICE AS IN-BETWEEN: A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

We have thus far primarily considered In between as a theoretical concept. However, the power of the concept lies not only in its ability to describe the world, but also in its invitation to rethink how we work and how we intervene. This section offers a series of principled suggestions for transforming the ontological-epistemological-ethical framework of In-Between into research design and practical initiatives: thinking of "in-between" as a liminal space for interdisciplinary work; designing co-production and liminal spaces; and finally, discussing a concrete framework example on the axis of communication-culture-resilience and the logic of liminoid spaces such as "Resilience Labs."

8.1. Principles Of In Between-Based Research

Bringing In between to the methodological level first requires reconceptualizing research itself as an "in-between" activity. Interdisciplinary literature is precisely the institutional expression of this in-between-ness. As Repko (2006) and Klein (2018)

show, interdisciplinary work is not merely a matter of borrowing from different fields; it is an effort to bring different forms of knowledge, concepts, and methods into a new wholeness through integration. The stage for this endeavor is the In-Between of disciplines: neither belonging to a single discipline nor floating in a transdisciplinary "void"; an intermediate space where boundaries become permeable and concepts and methods are rearticulated. In this respect, the first methodological principle based on the In-Between is to make boundary work conscious. Research should be designed not to "correct" the data drawn into a particular discipline, but to make visible the frictions that arise at the boundaries of disciplines and to produce conceptual innovation from these frictions. As Klein (2018) emphasizes, integration is not about "averaging" different perspectives, but about developing new frameworks capable of carrying the complexity produced by the differences between them. Second, the epistemological dimension of in between highlights co-production and participatory methods. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) literature emphasizes the central role of experiential knowledge and peer-to-peer dialogue rather than leaving knowledge production to the monopoly of experts (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008; Cornish et al., 2023). In the words of Reason and Bradbury (2008), action research aims to jointly develop practical knowledge that serves "the flourishing of individuals and communities." This is directly compatible with the in between epistemology: knowledge is not a one-way transfer between the researcher and the "field," but emerges from the relationship and action processes established in between. Methods such as workshops, focus groups, co-design sessions, and dialogue circles based on story sharing can be seen as tools that consciously construct this in between. Thirdly, In between-based research requires the creation of conscious liminal spaces. Adapted interpretations of Turner's liminal/liminoid distinction for modern society demonstrate how critical experimental spaces, play, art, festivals, laboratories, are for testing new forms of relationship (Turner, 1974). In current literature, structures such as "Urban Living Labs" are discussed precisely as such liminoid spaces: intervals that transform cities into open platforms for multi-actor experiments, partially free from norms but institutionally recognized (Frantzeskaki et al., 2018; von Wirth et al., 2019; Blezer et al., 2024). As Voorwinden et al. (2023) demonstrate, such laboratories can enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration by providing a "creative positive

liminal space.” Therefore, research based on in between does not merely collect data “there”; it views the scene itself, who comes together, which roles are suspended, how a sense of equality and transience is created, as part of the design. In this sense, the research design is a small-scale in-between architecture.

8.2. Three-Column Example: Communication, Culture, Resilience

To concretize how the theoretical framework can be translated into practical design, it is possible to propose a three-column example program scheme: Communication, Culture, and Resilience. These three columns carry the ontological–epistemological–ethical dimensions of in between into different practical fields. The Communication pillar treats In between as a space for mediation and negotiation of meaning. Plato's metaxy was conceived as a channel through which desire and knowledge flow between the mortal and the immortal; in Arendt, the public sphere is the stage where people construct a world “between them” through action and speech (Arendt, 1958/1998). Habermas's theory of communicative action conceptualizes communication not merely as the transfer of information, but as a form of rationality “oriented toward mutual understanding” (Habermas, 1984). When these three lines are combined, the communication column conceptualizes In between as a dialogue space where meaning, emotion, and responsibility are negotiated between different actors. Methodologically, this means designing dialogue sessions that suspend hierarchies as much as possible, rights-based storytelling, mutual translation practices, and communication workshops based on conflict transformation. The culture column draws on Bhabha's understanding of the third space and hybridity. Intercultural in-betweenness is considered not only as a source of identity tension but also as a creative resource (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Kalua, 2009). This pillar can rely on tools such as art-based interventions, joint exhibitions, hybrid narratives, and multilingual media production that encourage “joint story production” among immigrants, minority groups, different generations, and disciplines. The aim is not to reproduce pure identity myths; rather, it is to strengthen In between as a shared but plural cultural space. The resilience column, following Turner, Bauman, and Prigogine, treats crises not as anomalies to be suppressed but as “testing grounds” for new arrangements. In the social-ecological systems literature, “resilience thinking” emphasizes that shocks and uncertainties

can create windows of opportunity for renewal and transformation, not just risks (Folke, 2006; Folke et al., 2010). At the urban scale, a growing body of research shows that experimental urban laboratories and temporary interventions function as platforms that simultaneously address climate adaptation, social inclusion, and infrastructure resilience (Amorim et al., 2022; Alatalo et al., 2025; von Wirth et al., 2019). The resilience pillar, by integrating this literature with the in between framework, proposes viewing local moments of crisis, such as neighborhood transformation, drought, or economic shocks, as liminal spaces deliberately designed to test new forms of solidarity. Together, these three pillars move In between beyond being merely an abstract concept, concretizing it through communicative mediation, cultural hybridity, and experimental resilience practices.

8.3. Liminoid Spaces and Resilience Labs

Turner's concept of “liminoid” for modern societies defines threshold spaces that are based on voluntary participation rather than compulsory rituals, and that have the nature of play, art, and experimentation (Turner, 1974). For In between to be implemented in practice, precisely this type of liminoid space must be consciously designed: neither completely detached from “normal”

functioning, nor simply reproducing it; temporary laboratories that bring different actors together and enable them to experiment with new forms of relating. In current literature, “Urban Living Labs” and similar platforms are discussed as institutionalized examples of such liminoid spaces. Von Wirth and colleagues (2019) define urban living labs as spaces for jointly designing and testing sustainability solutions; these spaces make the boundaries between municipalities, civil society, the business world, and residents permeable. Frantzeskaki and colleagues (2018) show that these laboratories produce new meanings and forms of ownership in urban transformation processes by combining “sense of place” with experimental interventions. Amorim et al. (2022) and Alatalo et al. (2025) examine urban living labs from the perspective of critical infrastructure resilience and citizen participation, emphasizing that these spaces offer forms of “experimental governance” that enhance crisis preparedness and adaptation capacity. The idea of Resilience Labs, as a more general expression of these discussions, makes In between conscious design principle. Such a laboratory, for example in a city, brings together representatives from universities, local government, civil initiatives,

and the private sector around a specific theme (climate crisis, digital inequality, migration and adaptation, etc.) for a limited period of time. Participants are neither entirely within their institutional roles nor completely free from them; as Turner describes, status and hierarchies are partially "relaxed," *communitas*-like egalitarian encounters are encouraged, but the resulting outputs are subsequently fed back into institutional structures (Turner, 1969/2011).

The design logic of such a Resilience Lab based on In between can be summarized as follows:

- Ontologically, the lab creates a zone of uncertainty where the existing order is not completely dismantled but experimentally "stretched."
- Epistemologically, multi-actor co-production brings together different types of knowledge (expertise, experience, local knowledge) in in between to produce new syntheses (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Cornish et al., 2023).
- Ethically and politically, inclusive participation requires facilitation practices that support creative tension and measured emotional engagement ("*metriopatheia*"); thus, conflict areas are made visible, and these conflicts are channeled into transformative rather than destructive processes.

Ultimately, taking in between seriously at the methodological and practical level requires rethinking the "laboratory" metaphor not merely as a technical testing ground, but as the design of social, cultural, and political threshold spaces. In-between, here, becomes the name for new bridges to be built between disciplines, actors, and possible futures.

8.4. Two Brief Illustrative Examples

Example 1 (cultural / social): In-Between becomes visible in migrant and diasporic belonging, where individuals and communities navigate between languages, legal categories, and symbolic orders. Here, the "third space" is not only a theoretical metaphor but a lived practice of translation and negotiation through which new hybrid forms of identity and solidarity emerge (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Kalua, 2009; Papastergiadis, 2000/2013).

Example 2 (institutional / applied): Urban Living Labs illustrate how cities can build institutionalized liminoid spaces between municipal administration, academia, civil society, and residents in order to experiment with climate resilience and shared norms. In such labs, uncertainty is not eliminated but deliberately designed as a temporary condition for co-production, negotiation, and learning (Voytenko

et al., 2016; Frantzeskaki et al., 2018; Alatalo et al., 2025; Voorwinden et al., 2023).

9. CONCLUSION: LIVING IN THE IN-BETWEEN - CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND OPEN QUESTIONS

9.1. Summary Of Theoretical Contributions

This article attempted to bring together a seemingly disparate set of concepts and insights – from Plato's *metaxy* to Arendt's inter-human public sphere, from Turner's liminality to Bhabha's third space, from Bauman's diagnosis of liquid modernity and interregnum to the more indirect contributions of Douglas, Merton, Buber, and Prigogine – The first contribution was not merely to point out the similarities between these concepts and metaphors, but to propose "in-between" as a multi-scalar umbrella concept that does not reduce "in-between" to a singular threshold moment by tracing the echoes and tensions between them. The second contribution was to think of In-Between within a three-dimensional conceptual structure, within an ontological–epistemological–ethical framework. Ontologically, In-Between was conceptualized as a threshold charged with potential, where order loosens but has not yet disintegrated, and where signs of new forms can be seen; epistemologically, it was argued that knowledge production occurs not so much from singular perspectives but rather in processes of intersection, translation, and negotiation, that is, "in-between"; ethically and politically, In between was approached as a space of possibility for an "ethics of in-between," shaped around the principles of plurality, inclusivity, and *metriopatheia* (measured feeling). The third contribution is to present this framework as a new conceptual tool for discussions of social transformation and resilience. Under conditions of liquid modernity and permanent liminality, In-Between not only names the state of crisis we find ourselves in; it is also proposed as a methodological principle that can be translated into practical forms such as experimental urban laboratories, collaborative production processes, liminoid spaces, and "Resilience Labs."

In this sense, "In-Between" extends liminality beyond ritual transition, interregnum beyond epochal diagnosis, and hybridity/third-space beyond cultural identity work by articulating a shared relational and normative core that can guide interdisciplinary analysis and practice.

9.2. *The Limits and Risks Of “In-Between”*

However, the normative pull inherent in the concept of In-Between also carries certain risks. The most fundamental risk is the romanticization of uncertainty and “being in between.” The literature on liminality and interregnum shows that threshold spaces are not always liberating; they can sometimes produce structures that condemn individuals and communities to a state of endless waiting, insecurity, and manipulability (Szokolczai, 2017). Migration regimes, precarious labor markets, and endless “temporary” states of emergency exemplify the destructive and exploitative forms of In-Between; these situations cannot easily be softened with creative threshold metaphors. Another risk is assuming that in between is free from power relations. Critical studies on participatory processes, collaborative production, and urban living labs remind us that these areas can also reproduce asymmetrical power relations and carry the risk of becoming “participatory decor” (Voytenko et al., 2016; Du, 2020). Similarly, Fraser, while discussing the current crisis of hegemony, warns that discourses of pluralism and difference can be instrumentalized to legitimize the neoliberal order (Fraser, 2019). Therefore, in between is not a “neutral void” but a space where power recirculates in transformed forms. Therefore, one must be cautious against both romanticizing and nativizing tendencies in the use of the concept.

9.3. *Open Questions for Future Research*

The article is an attempt to construct In between philosophically and theoretically; the strength and limitations of this framework can only be tested through concrete field studies. The first open area is empirical studies. Although migration and diaspora

experiences are often associated with the concept of the third space (Bhabha, 1994/2012; Kalua, 2009; Papastergiadis, 2000), the In between perspective invites us to examine not only the identity tensions of these experiences, but also their dimensions of norm creation, everyday resilience, and the production of new commons. Similarly, youth movements, feminist and queer organizations, digital public spheres, or climate justice networks can be read as in-betweens that are neither fully institutions nor fully “outside”; detailed field studies examining these spaces through the In between framework are needed. The second open area is normative questions. Is it always good to expand the In-Between? In some cases, softening the extremes may mean softening the demand for justice; closing some thresholds and protecting some boundaries may be necessary. As Mouffe's understanding of agonistic democracy reminds us, democratic conflict requires an institutional framework; an In between that is completely diffuse and not tied to any institutional place carries the risk of loosening political accountability (Mouffe, 2000). Therefore, defending the In-Between does not mean rejecting institutions entirely; it means rethinking institutions in ways that do not stifle the In-Between, but rather carry and protect it. A final question is conceptual: Studies that systematically compare the In-Between with related concepts such as liminality, anomie, precariousness, the middle class, and the gray zone, clearly outlining similarities and differences, are not yet sufficiently developed. Such conceptual mapping would more clearly show where the framework proposed here is explanatory and where it falls short. This article can be read as an attempt to initiate such a discussion: an invitation to remember that living in In between is not only a necessity but can also be a conscious conceptual and practical choice.

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