Emancipation in postmodernity : political thought in Japanese science fiction animation

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CONCLUSION

Emancipation in the Modern History of Political Thought and its Problematics

One of the most pressing yet often neglected problems among political theorists is that of method. Political theorists have hardly asked the question of *how* and *why* in their studies. They often examine philosophical canons and thoroughly discuss the meaning of particular political ideas such as power, emancipation, or domination, and yet they seem less concerned with the nature of their sources. They hardly address questions of how they decide to examine one set of texts as relevant intellectual sources for their inquiries rather than others; why do they solely focus on the European canon of modern social and political thought while neglecting non-European thought; should they care about the non-textual materials that are omnipresent in contemporary society as additional media of political thought?

This thesis addressed these problems in the study of political thought, and began with two basic goals focusing on Japanese animation as an example of non-European and non-textual forms of political expression. The first goal was to explore how anime serve as a philosophical inspiration for political thought in thinking through the philosophical idea of emancipation. The second is to propose new aspects of the idea of emancipation through analysis of the selected anime. As the analyses have demonstrated, science fiction anime engage in two kinds of philosophical exercises: *illustration* and *innovation*. That is, anime illustrate existing philosophical ideas in tangible way; and create original, novel arguments through thought experiments. The analysis of *Time of Eve* and *Psycho-Pass* shows anime illustrate existing ideas of power, domination and resistance discussed by Fredric Jameson or Michel Foucault in lively and accessible ways. The analysis of *Evangelion* and *Appleseed*, however, demonstrates how anime can illuminate new aspects of the concept of emancipation by developing thought experiments that challenge existing understandings of the theme proposed by philosophers, social and political theorists. In *Evangelion*, the emancipation of an individual is to imagine an alternative self; while emancipation in *Appleseed* involves rejecting essentialist ideas about species such as humans or posthumans and thinking about hybridity. As I argued throughout the thesis, anime is a valid source for political theorists exploring pressing political ideas, as it illuminates familiar philosophical concepts in new ways. Since anime is one among a number of social and cultural practices that mediates political thinking in our time,

political theorists should include those materials as part of their studies rather than dismissing them as having nothing to do with their scholarship. In short, I have argued for anime's validity as a medium of political thought, and demonstrated how we could analyze anime for this purpose.

Since my concern is with questions of the idea of emancipation and research methods in political theory, the first two chapters of this thesis were devoted to examining the existing literature on emancipation in political thought and the materials and methods that leading political theorists use in order to clarify the contributions and limitations of the descipline, and to make room for alternative sources of political thought such as anime.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the idea of emancipation has generated one of the most sophisticated discussions in political theory, shaped by Karl Marx, the Frankfurt School, and poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault. There are two contested views on the idea of emancipation: emancipation as progress and the antonym of domination on the one hand, and emancipation as a process that exists in a dialectic relation to domination on the other. As for the former, Marx and Habermas maintained a strong belief in Enlightenment thought, that is, ideals of progressive transformation based on reason and rationality as a force of human emancipation, and the abstract universal idea of human beings. For Marx, emancipation involves the transformation of the socio-economic structure of capitalism into communism. In the new historical stage, human beings will recover their species-being or the common essence which makes their life as human beings distinct from that of animals. Marx considered human emancipation to be closely related to reason and rational thinking as these faculties are part of the common human essence expressed through labor. For Habermas, by contrast, emancipation of human beings is not about historical changes in the socio-economic structure, but rather about the creation of the communicative autonomy of all participants in an *ideal speech situation*. In this communicative autonomy, all members of society can discuss how to create and develop the idea of the good society for all regardless of class, ethnicity, gender or any other forms of inequality. Habermas considered that all human beings with linguistic and communicative capacities inherently have sufficient reason and rationality to achieve mutual consensus. Thus, for Habermas, human emancipation is already embedded in communication and human beings are able to achieve this goal through linguistic communication.

As for the others, philosophers such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Foucault are very suspicious about ideas of emancipation based on Enlightenment thought. They focused on the dark side of Enlightenment thought and the ways in which the idea of emancipation and human knowledge based on reason and rationality – the means of emancipation – have been closely related to power and domination in the history of modern Europe. They discussed how the development of modern technology and knowledge about nature and human beings are inevitably involved in power and power relations. For them, knowledge derived from reason and rationality was not necessarily associated with a positive and progressive movement towards emancipation. Rather, domination

and emancipation exist in a dialectical relationship because emancipation tends to produce new forms of domination. Indeed, these European thinkers provided radical critiques of Enlightenment thought wedded to the ideas of human emancipation and progressive transformation that have been so influential in modern European societies.

The modern history of the idea of emancipation, in the orbit of Marx and various responses to him by later theorists including poststructuralists, represents a serious and sophisticated debate. There are nevertheless several potential limitations, if not problems, with regard to the materials and methodologies found in these works. That is to say: the field is predominantly European and textual. It is simply true that this brief history of emancipation is solely based on modern European history, yet it presents itself as part of *the* (universal) history of ideas, rather than a modern European history of ideas. There is a clear absence of non-European thought. Moreover, with some exceptions, these scholars restrict themselves to analysis of text-based materials, rather than non-textual forms of political expression. Indeed, one wonders how we could assume we are discussing universal human emancipation if we are so exclusively studying canonical texts written by European thinkers. These texts by Marxists, critical theorists and poststructuralists in Europe are important and valuable, as the attention given to them in political and social theory around the world testifies, but it does not mean that these texts are the only valid source of materials for the study of political ideas or that there is no other way to imagine political alternatives.

It is worth noting that Adorno, Horkheimer and Foucault did include unconventional source materials for philosophy and political theory beyond philosophical treatises, and have shed new light on the conventional understanding of political ideas. Adorno and Horkheimer traced Enlightenment thinking through not only European philosophy, but also social and cultural criticism including art, literature, film and anti-Semitism in Europe and the United States. Adorno and Horkheimer's main concern in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ([1944] 1997) is to investigate the nature of Enlightenment thinking in Western civilization. They examined how the idea of enlightenment has been deeply rooted in history, culture and actual life in Europe and the United States, and hence they didn't examine any non-Western materials. As for Foucault, apart from the examination of a wide range of historical texts including academic texts of the human sciences, he pays great attention to various social practices – the modern institutions of Europe such as prisons, hospitals, and schools (as well as neglected bodies of texts such as various documents produced by those institutions) in his genealogical works. By investigating the relation between power and knowledge, his work shows the ways in which the "truth" had been contingently shaped through discourse over centuries in modern Europe. To some extent, the originality and innovation in the work of Adorno, Horkeimer, and Foucault would be grounded on their unconventional approaches and sources in traditional philosophy. Distancing oneself from conventional sources of knowledge such as academic philosophical texts, exploring unconventional materials and critically reflecting on

philosophy could bring insights to the field of political thought. Nevertheless, neither Adorno, Horkheimer, nor Foucault looked at non-European or non-American texts as sources in their philosophical inquiries.

Antonio Gramsci and Tosaka Jun have made more systematic studies when considering the problems of traditional mainstream method of philosophy and the possibilities for other approaches to philosophy. Chapter 2 looked at their works because they offer theoretical grounds for studying everyday life as philosophy. Witnessing the dynamic of modern capitalist societies and a series of socialist movements, Gramsci and Tosaka developed the original ideas of the intellectual and everydayness in the 1920s and 1930s. Their sophisticated theories of the intellectual and the everyday provide evidence about the significance of everyday social and cultural practices such as anime as an important locus of philosophy and politics, and the necessity of serious engagement by philosophers with people's everyday life as part of their vocation.

Gramsci and Tosaka criticized traditional intellectuals and academic philosophers, and their approach to knowledge that focuses on studying academic or philosophical texts in an abstract manner. They proposed that traditional intellectuals pay little attention to concrete social and cultural practices, as if they have nothing to do with their intellectual activities. For Gramsci and Tosaka, this is an inappropriate approach to philosophy since the essence of philosophy must be the critique of common sense and people's worldview. They both contend that philosophers must recognize concrete everyday practices as the subject of philosophy, rather than distancing themselves from them. For them, it was those practices that have shaped and reshaped people's common sense and worldview. Thus, everydayness has both a political and philosophical significance.

Gramsci was well aware of the role of culture in politics. For Gramsci everyday social and cultural practices are the object of philosophy as the social hegemony of one group cannot be achieved without consent of other social groups through their everyday life. Gramsci thought that social hegemony is maintained and challenged through everyday practices including people's common sense. Thus, for Gramsci, philosophy must be the philosophy of praxis and the criticism of common sense. Likewise, Tosaka fought against the social hegemony of fascism in his time through social and cultural criticism because people's everyday practices were increasingly occupied by an abstract and idealized idea of the nation and national culture. For Tosaka, philosophy means a materialism that is grounded on the concrete everyday practices of the present, not an idealism based on a metaphysical meaning of practice and abstract reality assumed to exist in a timeless manner.

Importantly, both Gramsci and Tosaka considered that everyday life is dynamic rather than static, and hence there is always a possibility for counter-hegemonic acts and social change. Gramsci and Tosaka envisaged a new common sense and new morals through the criticism of

contemporary everyday life. Taking Gramsci and Tosaka's arguments on the nexus between philosophy and everyday life, we can now see anime – a major cultural force and everyday cultural practice in Japan and beyond – as an important site for philosophical inquiry. Anime is a potential intellectual source for political theorists exploring pressing political ideas.

As part of their intellectual and political projects, Gramsci and Tosaka redefined the idea of intellectuals in modern capitalist society. They thought of intellectuals as a sociological and a moral group that function to shape culture and worldviews in both maintaining and challenging existing forms of social hegemony. The new type of intellectual in rising social groups – organic intellectuals for Gramsci, and journalists for Tosaka – plays an important role in leading other members of society since they are more actively involving in society than traditional intellectuals such as scholars or priests. In Edward Said's (1994) account, Gramsci's organic intellectuals could be anyone who works in the field of knowledge industries connecting either with the production or distribution of knowledge in contemporary society. Organic intellectuals attempt to "gain the consent of potential customers, win approval, marshal consumer or voter opinion" and "constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets" (Said 1994, 4).

Along with Gramsci, Tosaka and Said, I argued that experts in the anime industry such as animation directors, animators, scriptwriters, and anime critics can be understood as organic intellectuals who actively engage in society through their intellectual activities, and try to gain the consent of potential fans and viewers. These experts in the anime industry struggle to change the minds of fans and viewers and expand markets. Much like experts in modern mass journalism, anime experts lead potential viewers to new modes of cultural production and consumption.

Anime as Political Thought: Illustration and Innovation

If we recognize anime as a cultural practice and an intellectual product that shapes and reshapes parts of contemporary society, how could we study anime's political thought? This was my next question. Reviewing the existing methods and approaches available to study political thought and political ideas, both conventional and unconventional, I proposed a *trans-medial approach* to the study of anime and its political expressions found in its narrative and visual aesthetics.

A trans-medial approach combines two existing approaches to study anime's expressive potentials: what I called the *thematic-oriented approach* and the *medium-oriented approach*. These two research orientations both have their strengths and limitations for our current purpose of study. Literary scholars such as Napier (2005) employ the thematic-oriented approach to explore how anime expresses a particular philosophical theme or idea (e.g. identity, gender, technology) through the narrative. This approach allows us to study the philosophical idea in question through anime, but

it is less concerned about anime's visual narrative than the way in which ideas are expressed through its narrative. Media scholars such as Lamarre (2009) take the medium-oriented approach to study anime's medium specificity and anime's relation to other media. This approach allows us to study anime's expressive potentials but it is less concerned about how a particular philosophical idea is depicted through the narrative or in non-visual elements (i.e. dialogues, narration or written texts). I have argued that we should pay attention to both thematic and aesthetic aspects of the animated moving image in order to understand anime's political thought, as these two aspects are closely integrated into anime's visual narrative.

The in-depth analyses in this thesis show how anime offers interesting explorations of aspects of emancipation and related concepts of alienation, domination and resistance which would not be possible through texts, or at least would be difficult to do in the same way as anime does, most simply through telling stories and expressing ideas with images and sounds. The first two analytical chapters show how the science fiction anime illustrate familiar concepts of power, domination and resistance discussed by political theorists, while the next two chapters show how the anime perform a series of thought experiments that challenge existing understandings of philosophical ideas, confirm theories, demonstrate the possibilities for an alternative world, and hence contribute to ongoing philosophical discussions.

The analysis of *Time of Eve* suggests that this anime demonstrates the possibility of political alternatives through the creation of a space, even an imaginary one. Borrowing the term *utopian enclave* from Fredric Jameson (2005), I argued that a unique café in *Time of Eve* functions as a utopian enclave where people can distance themselves from everyday experiences, reflect on existing social norms and values, and potentially develop alternative forms of political thinking. According to Jameson, utopia is a distinctive process of spatial and social differentiation that makes alternative imaginations of society visible and thinkable. Utopian narrative is not merely a representation of an ideal society but a "determinate type of praxis" whose function is a critique of status quo in the existing society (Jameson 2008, 392).

Set in a near future wherein human beings use robots and androids widely in society, *Time of Eve* depicts the absolute hierarchy and control humans maintain over robots, a state of affairs that has become naturalized in society. Yet there is a café called Time of Eve whose house rule prohibits the discrimination between humans and robots. The café become a utopian enclave where the rule differentiates the cafe spatially and socially in terms of human-robot relationships. Customers in the café (both humans and robots) are confused about the new situation at first, but they gradually feel and imagine what alternative human-robot relationships would be like. *Time of Eve* vividly juxtaposes omnipresent discourse about absolute human control over robots and its ineffectiveness in the café through protagonist Rikuo's eyes. Rikuo's changing attitude to androids and his complex emotional reaction first occurs inside the café and later expands outside the café. Rikuo starts to

question existing hierarchical relationships between humans and androids and the prevailing anti-android discourse in society. I argued that the café becomes a locus of resistance for Rikuo and other main characters, and *Time of Eve* presents a form of emancipation that involves ceaseless struggle and the hope for a new human-robot relationship as a political alternative.

The analysis of *Psycho-Pass* examines contested ideas of emancipation, domination, and security in the future digital surveillance society, and shows how the anime illustrates modern forms of security and power discussed by Michel Foucault. I argued that *Psycho-Pass* challenges Ken Booth's (1991) idea of emancipation as a way to true security, and confirms Michel Foucault's (2007) notion of security as domination. For Booth, security is the absence of threats at the level of human individuals, and to free people from a range of constraints that prevent them from pursuing what they would like to do freely. In Booth's conception, security stands in opposition to power or domination. Foucault, by contrast, suggests that security in modern society is an advanced form of control and domination of the population called governmentality. Governmentality is achieved through a range of advanced technologies and knowledge on the basis of political economy to manage people's health and productivity.

Psycho-Pass illustrates in a lively fashion the ways in which the forms of power described by Foucault (i.e. disciplinary power, knowledge and biopower) function to achieve security and social order in digital surveillance society. The Sibyle System and the Psycho-Pass – a mass surveillance system and visualized mental status – become an iconic symbol of governmentality in *Psycho-Pass*. The system monitors people's mental conditions by collecting, analyzing and processing personal data to maintain security. Based on detailed analysis of their personal data including Psycho-Pass, the system also provides the population with personalized physical and mental health care as well as judging the career prospects of every individual. Highly advanced knowledge and technologies of risk management are applied to the entire population. Control is also achieved through people's routine practices. Individuals constantly check their Psycho-Pass and receive regular check-ups, medication or counselling to manage their mental health. Maintaining a good Psycho-Pass becomes a priority for them and people modify their behavior.

The visual narrative of *Psycho-Pass* presents a close relationship between security and visibility. The cinematography of noir creates an effective sense of anxiety and insecurity. The character design in a dark tone matches the atmosphere of the dystopic fictional world. Visually distorted space immediately expresses a sense of insecurity. The hologram technology is extensively used to show how security is connected to visual protection and control of social and private space. A range of visualized technology (i.e. the Psycho-Pass, the Dominator weapon, environment holograms, holographic personal assistants) functions as an immediate reference of security, knowledge and power in the narrative. I argued that the relation between domination and emancipation is dialectical in *Psycho-Pass*. An ideal society without threats and fears – a vision of

emancipation – is achieved through the control of populations through the highly advanced technology and technique of mass surveillance.

The analysis of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* not only illustrates some of the familiar aspects of alienation as theorized by Melvin Seeman (1959) (i.e. powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement) but also addresses the contradictory elements in Seeman's notion of alienation. Protagonist Shinji attempts to ease his sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement by conforming to the accepted social norms and social values of fighting against the aliens. Yet fighting against the aliens does not ease other aspects of Shinji's alienated feelings of normlessness and isolation, as the aliens are not simply an absolute enemy anymore in the later part of the story. The transformations of the aliens into different forms blur the clear binary distinction between humans and aliens, friend and enemy, and the Self and the Other, which is the basis of the justification to fight them. The anime portrays the alienated feelings of the protagonist and his inner struggles through effective visual narrative techniques such as still images, voiceover narration, montage, abstract visuals, effective use of colors, as well as written texts.

Analyzing the alternative universe in the final episode, I argued that Shinji is possibly emancipated from his sense of alienation through imagination. In the alternative universe, Shinji is neither alienated nor participating in the fight against aliens anymore as we have seen the intense visual effects depicting Shinji's psychic struggles have disappeared in this imaginary world. As long as he is imagining other possibilities, Shinji can cope with his alienated situation in the living world where he has to fight against aliens. In short, imagination is a form of emancipation.

The analysis of *Appleseed* demonstrates how the anime performs a thought experiment challenging a philosophical argument of *species-relativism* proposed by Nicholas Ager (2010) and his fixed and homogenous conception of human beings. Ager argues that human beings share unique experiences and values such as aesthetics and emotional sensitivities that make human beings a single and distinct biological species. Ager proposes that we should reject enhancement technologies that upgrade our current human intellectual and physical capacities because this kind of enhancement will eventually make human beings into another species – posthumans – and bring about an end to humanity.

Set in future society wherein humans and genetically engineered posthumans live together, *Appleseed* depicts the possibility of shared experience and values between humans and posthumans, and the limits of a standpoint that projects a fixed, homogeneous nature for human beings, which is similar to Ager's. I argued that *Appleseed* provides a counterexample to challenge an essentialistic understanding of human beings and an immutable boundary between humans and posthumans. *Appleseed* depicts the contradictory boundary between humans and posthuman bioroids effectively in a variety of ways from character design to narrative. The main posthuman character Hitomi is

attractively created in exactly the same way as protagonist human Deunan. The narrative depicts posthumans as more humane and caring beings than other humans such as essentialists. Presenting the contrast between inhuman humans and humane bioroids, *Appleseed* effectively leads the audience to question the boundary between humans and posthumans, and the social arrangement based on anthropocentrism.

Over the course of the story, protagonist Deunan fights against the essentialists' attempts to destroy either humans or posthumans. Deunan is against a homogeneous understanding of species, which is similar to the premise of Ager's species-relativism. Rejecting both camps of human essentialists and posthuman essentialists, Deunan chooses to continue the struggle for "the true new race" in the climax. I interpreted Deunan's mention of the true new race as a *hybrid* between human and posthuman that can bring a new situation beyond the existing species category of human or posthuman. I argued that this *hybridity* becomes a possible political strategy for going beyond human essentialism as a form of emancipation. *Appleseed*'s position here is similar to that of postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha. Bhabha (2004) argues that the originality or purity of race, culture or nation is unsustainable because all cultures are constructed in hybrid form in the space called the *Third Space*. This intermingling space has a political significance since it "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (Rutherford 1990, 211). *Appleseed* provides a useful source with which to consider the issue of difference and the boundary between human and posthumans.

The science fiction anime titles selected for this analysis all clearly convey existing or new aspects of political ideas of emancipation, power, domination and resistance through the narrative combining a wide range of verbal, visual and acoustic elements of moving images. Those visual and acoustic narrative techniques – animated mise-en-scène (character design and background design, motion design, color and line), cinematography (camera angle, camera movement, shot, special effects), editing, and sound – are all integrated into story telling. Those techniques effectively work to depict a series of events, characters, their emotions, their social relations, and the fictional worlds in which the characters live. For example, *Time of Eve* and *Appleseeed* depict a hierarchical social relationship between humans and posthumans and its contradictions, not only through dialogues and narrations, but also in the portrayal of humane humans and posthumans (androids and bioroids) and their emotions with visual and acoustic elements such as character design, motion design, voice acting, cinematography, music and so forth. Similarly, *Psycho-Pass* and *Evangelion* depict characters' feelings of anxiety, security, and insecurity not only with dialogues or narrations, but also with image design, particularly background design. Importantly, background design plays a crucial role in anime in depicting both the external and internal worlds of characters. The backgrounds not only depict various settings of the fictional worlds (e.g. place, landscape, and

cityscape) where characters find themselves, but they also embody the characters' emotions. The analysis of Shinji's inner struggles in *Evangelion* is a prominent example of this.

Limitations of the Work and Suggestions for Future Research

This investigation into science fiction anime offers a new source and method for political theorists. In establishing my framework, I have also offered a research method for others interested in studying the visual expression of political ideas in animated moving images. As visual culture has increasingly shaped part of the cultural, social, political and academic landscape in contemporary societies, political theoriests must attend the significance of visual culture including anime as an additional form of political expression, and seriously engage with it in order to understand the political thinking and political thought of our time. In presenting my research on science fiction anime and its philosophical expositions, I proposed to analyze the intersection between politics and visual culture by situating science fiction anime's expressive capacities in the context of contemporary political thought. Nevertheless, as a direct consequence of my research questions, methodology, and selection of titles, the study has some limitations, which need to be considered. I hope that these limitations are not detrimental ones but rather serve to encourage others interested in investigating anime's political expressions further. I suggest two possible directions for further research: anime's new aesthetics and anime's visual communication in specific socio-political contexts.

Firstly, it is worth exploring the work of new generations of anime creators, anime aesthetics and the possibilities of alternative expressions in thinking about politics. There are obviously many interesting anime titles that I did not include to limit the scope of this study. Innovative visual styles and narrative strategies have a potential to attract viewers, and perhaps also invite them to rethink their surroundings and imagine alternatives. For example, animation director Yuasa Masaaki employs an extreme hybridity of visual styles mixing photographic, photorealistic, pen drawing, and animetic style and creates distinctive aesthetics. Yuasa's works – *Mind Game* (2004), *Kemonozume* (2006), *Kaiba* (2008), *The Tatami Galaxy* (2010), *Ping Pong* (2014) – are all visually experimental and potentially intellectually provocative. Recent popular animated TV series based on original manga such as *Attack on Titan* (2013) and *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* series (2012-2013; 2014-2015) use a mixture of traditional anime techniques and manga-inspired techniques, vivid colors and 3D CGI technologies extensively to achieve a series of stunning visual effects. Shinkai Makoto's works – *Voices of a Distant Star* (2002), *The Place Promised in Our Early Days* (2004), *5 Centimeters Per Second* (2007), *Journey to Agatha* (2011), and *The Garden of Words* (2013) – seem to question the centrality of the character and its image design in anime. Shinkai effectively uses the landscape in

depicting the character's emotions in his films (Walker 2009, 8), rather than using the character's image and movement.[83] The short animated films series "Japan Anima(tor)'s Exhibition" (*Nihon Animator Mihonichi*) presented by Anno Hideaki's Studio Khara and the leading media company Dwango is an exciting project that seeks to encourage further exchange and innovation in the animation industry in Japan. The series showcases a wide range of high-quality animation, both original works and spin-offs (e.g. Anno's *Evangelion* series, and other manga and novel adaptations), as well as music videos created by both junior and established animators. A new title is available for online streaming each week since its launch in November 2014. As anime is changing through innovations driven by creators and new technologies, an understanding of its expressive potentials and capacities is needed more than ever.

Secondly, it is crucial to study the ways in which anime and popular visual culture become powerful media that are part of the shaping and reshaping of political discourses in Japan and elsewhere. I believe that there is interesting sociological or anthropological work to be done on anime and its relation to political discourse in Japanese society, or other East Asian societies. The primary goal of this study was to examine anime's expressive capacities as a medium of thought to challenge existing mainstream sources of knowledge in the field of political theory, rather than to investigate the political/cultural significance of anime within Japanese society or elsewhere, or the ways in which anime is produced, consumed and interpreted in specific sociocultural contexts. This choice is partly because anime's political/cultural significance in Japanese society has already been studied elsewhere, and because anime is such a rich and sophisticated medium it is possible to explore it in multiple ways across national and disciplinary boundaries. This is not to say that specific sociocultural contexts are important in analyzing anime; on the contrary, it would be very worthwhile to continue this investigation further by tracing anime's cultural sighificance through a variety of broader social and political discourses in Japan and elswhere.

Governments, business sectors, media companies, religious groups, artists and fans use anime as a tool to express ideas, attract and persuade the general public and target audience, as well as a visual metaphor in the East Asian context. In 2008, the Japanese government produced a documentary animation *Megumi* (2008) on the abduction of the Japanese nationals by North Korea in 1977; it was subsequently shown in cinemas and through the internet in nine foreign languages (Headquarters for the Abduction Issue, Government of Japan 2008). Media franchises or *media mix* based on military themes with a cute twist have recently been very popular in Japan. Mizushima

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[83] Walker (2009, 8) suggests that "Landscape, and its relation to the individual, is a recurrent image employed in Shinkai's films, a visual configuration in which this parallelism of contrasting scale is constantly put forward." For further discussion on the landscape in Shinkai's work, see Katō (2009).

Tsutomu's animated TV series *Girls und Panzer* (2012)[84] and Kadokawa Games' online game franchise *Kantai Collection* (2013)[85] are one of these examples. The combination of cute girls and the detailed military references to real-life tanks and battleships during World War Two appears to be very bizarre, and one wonders if the recent popular consumption of a fantastical military imagination is merely another hit in the popular *mecha* genre and nothing to do with real politics, or whether it could be part of a larger political discourse of banal militarism that reinforces the Abe administration's advocacy of Japan's remilitarization. In 2013, Hong Kong protestors used *Attack on Titan* (2013), the popular manga and animated TV series, as a metaphor of the threat of Chinese communist state and the mainland Chinese to Hong Kong during the July 1st protest (Garrett 2014). "*Attack on Titan* has been visually, materially, and rhetorically (re)imagined locally as Attack on China in popular online video and in other Hongkonger visual culture products" (ibid., 376). As *Attack on Titan* has been also very popular in Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan, one wonders what sort of political imagination or metaphors this anime generates in multiple locations. Political visions mediated through anime in multiple locations could be also a valuable source in thinking about everyday political thinking and political thought. I hope that this thesis can help others to study the intersection between anime and politics further, and understand alternative political expressions meaningful to many people not only within Japan but also other contemporary societies.

Anime: A Medium of Political Theory

This study examined the intersections between anime and political thought from theoretical, methodological and empirical angles. I have argued that science fiction anime is a useful site for political theorists to interrogate pressing philosophical ideas in a lively way. Anime can serve as an inspiration for philosophical exposition as well as engage with ongoing philosophical discussions through illustrations and thought experiments. Science fiction anime is imaginative fiction set in alternative worlds but what a viewer sees, thinks and feels about anime is real, and would have an impact on their ways of seeing and thinking about their surroundings. As Ursula K. Le Guin (1973,

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[84] The anime depicts an alternative universe where high school girls compete against each other with tanks in a sport called *sensha-dō*. The girls often admire the beauty of tanks with very detailed references to real-life World War Two tanks. The battle scenes are created with sophisticated CGI technologies.

[85] The online game hit over 2.5 million users since its release in April 2013 (Yasuda 2015). The game anthropomorphizes over a hundred battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers and submarines based on the real warships owned by the Imperial Japanese Navy as cute girls in naval uniforms. Players play the role of captain of the fleets and must build, repair and troop these fleets in order to fight against alien enemies.

43–44) suggests, "Distancing, the pulling back from 'reality' in order to see it better, is perhaps the essential gesture of SF. It is by distancing that SF achieve aesthetic joy, tragic tension, and moral cogency." Indeed, the selected science fiction anime do offer such aesthetic joy, tragic tension and moral cogency by distancing us (as viewers) from the familier reality. By showing some of anime's potentials as a medium of political expression, I have tried to include anime as a new intellectual source in studying political thought along with existing European philosophical canons. Yet I am not calling for the token contribution of Japanese anime for the sake of adding an exotic flavor or giving a new look to political theory. If political theory has to be about "the study of actual political thinking (or thought)" as Michael Freeden (2008) argues, and if imagination plays a central role in political thinking, "even the deepest kind of political conformism and any defense of the status quo" (Geuss 2010, x), it is time to look at imagination in everyday culture such as anime as a serious source of political thought in our time. This investigation is a corrective to the common assumption that non-European or non-textual forms of ideas and thoughts have nothing to do with "the common ideological heritage of mankind" (Fukuyama 1989, 9). It is also a corrective to the assumption that the study of popular culture such as anime is a fluffy, frivolous diversion for philosophers and political theorists. If we acknowledge that philosophical ideas and arguments are mediated, formed and challenged in multiple ways in visual culture such as anime, and that anime has been an indispensable part of everyday social and cultural practices to many people in multiple locations, philosophers and political theoriests should not exclude anime as a potential source of human knowledge. Viewing anime becomes a fresh opportunity to do philosophy in its own right. Imagining how the characters feel about themselves, their social relations, and their living world, distancing ourselves from the familiar social reality, thinking about alternative social realtions and political visions, all these practices become part of philosophical exercises. In other words, anime becomes a medium of intellectual and aesthetic intervention in studying political thought. Challenges to and transformations of the intellectual traditions of political theory are certainly afoot. One of the most exciting developments in the study of political theory in recent years is that academics have started to take alternative approaches and explore new sources across disciplinary, cultural and medial boundaries in their scholarship. Academics' critical engagement with everyday cultural practices is needed more than ever. I hope this thesis contributes to movement in this direction.