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Article

Demanding Politics

Adam Rosen-Carole

Abstract: Derrida's interest in implicating the serious in the frivolous and vice versa, or more broadly, what one might call his writerly shamelessness, evinces an exorbitant narcissism, a writerly ethos of refusing censorship, an "hyperconceptual" penchant for excess that seems to both condition his truly unparalleled and startlingly acute insights, but also to suffuse his texts with so many loose threads and frayed edges that these texts cannot but seem suspiciously underdeveloped, or brittle in their very grandiosity—as if something were being hidden, or perhaps avoided, by means of their unlimited capaciousness. This paper poses the question of whether Derrida's writerly impudence, the iconoclastic dimension of deconstruction, squares with the requirement of mutual authorization to critique constitutive of normativity. If Derrida's writerly practice is as given to unregulated and unregulatable excess as it seems, might there be an at once anti-democratic and philosophically problematic aspect to its seemingly anti-authoritarian ethos of unlimited affirmation? The question will be whether the "consumption of concepts that it produces as much as it inherits" renders deconstruction, by virtue of its nominalism, a form of nihilism—a creative consumerism.

Keywords: Derrida, democracy, aporia, dissemination

Whence and what to make of the experience of Derrida's promise? Whence and what to make of the breakneck enthusiasm, even euphoria, that his writings both embody and inspire: the audaciously arrogated license to put into play marginal moments, unconsolidated currents, rhetorical proclivities, and performative parapraxes, generally, textual ephemera, and to play them off against the official ambitions and self-understandings of the texts under consideration; or the quasi-surrealist insouciance emanating from unbidden textual juxtapositions and encouraged by the minor shocks of revelation issuing from these daring conjunctions, and perhaps further emboldened by the larger-scale yet quiet tremors to which these shocks conduce? Whence and what to make of the exhilarating waves of displacement coursing through these texts,

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overcoming us like a flood—the experience, somehow wanted, of barely staying afloat and sometimes going under, as wave after wave surges, overtakes us, and washes away the boundary markers in relation to which, whether wittingly or no, we had previously acquired our bearings? Whence and what to make of the affective and ethico-theoretical affirmation, that is, in Derrida's idiom, the experience of the openness to transformation of what seemed assured, of the excess of inheritance and futurity disrupting in advance the consolidation of any individual or collective identity, the sense of masochistic gratitude in the face of forces mandating self-relinquishment?

Whence and what to make of the quasi-surrealist, or more broadly, anti-authoritarian rebelliousness regarding form evident everywhere in these writings—the perspicuous liberty of genre jumping and of innovative textual assemblage, the liberality of neologism, paleonymy, polysemy, equivocation, and dissemination; the extravagant overloading of texts with multiple, untotalizable perspectives or voices, indeed the incitement to or ratcheting up of aporia? Whence and what to make of the inspiring suggestion of an extraordinary, even inexhaustible, potentiation of thought issuing from extreme textual hypercompression; the as-if-unstoppable momentum of thought spilling over into the inceptive schematizing of lines of research that there is never time or world enough to develop and thus that dangle enticingly on the horizon of a possible inheritance? Whence and what to make of the daring engagement with manifestly unserious or otherwise objectionable motifs, or more generally, the daring relinquishment of self-possession and risking of disciplinary abjection, indeed of cultural disrepute and dismissal, even the risking of intelligibility altogether for the sake of heeding, which is to say, probing and imaginatively, attentively exploring the impulses of thought—for instance, the idiomatic, borderline idiotic constructions by which Derrida frequently finds himself claimed, indeed fixated, and to the analysis and development of which, it might be said, whole texts are dedicated? Whence, then, and what to make of Derrida's drivenness? Whence and what to make of the contagiously self-confident imaginativeness, the semantic, syntactic, and strategic liberality of these writings, their resistance to and all but iconoclastic repudiation of the questions and topics traditionally or contemporaneously prioritized in the relevant reception-traditions of the texts to which Derrida attends with such hypercritical vigilance? Whence and what to make of a capaciousness of interest so unlimited as to suggest the climate of the curious child forever intrigued by its object world and suspicious of the officious adult world and its disciplinary demands; the wonderstruck experience of witnessing the excavation of ontological infrastructures long sedimented under layers of metaphysical construction and encrusted within routine forms of thought, practice, and institutional life, and more, of being afforded a passkey with

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which to unlock trajectories of thought repressed or censored, curtailed but not extinguished by longstanding metaphysical priorities and proprieties—thus, in a way, being on "the right side of history," namely, on the side of the vanquished? Whence and what to make of the application- or iteration-frenzy, the dizzying delight and experience of investiture in finding that basic deconstructive thought-forms or patterns of attention that can get traction in an exceptionally wide and diverse field of discourses, institutions, and practices—from philosophy to law to literature to politics to art and architecture to gender, race, sexuality, and class, to theology and religion to historiography to neuroscience and contemporary biology to psychoanalysis, and so on? Whence, then, and what to make of the experience of Derrida's promise?

Of course, it is news to no one that Derrida's writings have provoked their fair share of frustration, consternation, condescension, disbelief, and contempt; indeed, such writings have occasioned an anomalous, while not unprecedented, outpouring of vitriol. But I wonder whether the liberty with which yet another insulting and largely undiscriminating invective is launched, the self-arrogated license to heap abuse upon these writings is cleanly separable from the experience of their promise. By no means do I want to suggest that censorious critique or maliciously uninformed invective, in its haste to disparage and dismiss, merely symptomatizes the anxious registration of a "dangerous truth." I very much doubt that repudiation and aggressive neglect either always, or in the case of Derrida's negative reception in particular, register a threat to be warded off, and so betray a lack of self-confidence, an incipient awareness of difficulties with one's own commitments otherwise occluded by, indeed disguised in the form of the bravado of self-assertion and institutional closing of ranks. So I am not claiming, as the old cliché about resisting psychoanalytic interpretation would have it, that the negative reception of Derrida is merely resistance, thus, an oblique testimony to the difficult truth of what is aggressively disclaimed or quickly glossed over and rejected. But neither am I certain that polemicizing against Derrida is merely a *rappel à l'ordre*. Perhaps Derrida's promise and the liberties taken in arrogantly demeaning and dismissing his work draw from the same source; they are inseparable, though hardly indistinguishable, offshoots of a common root. Call that root, for the moment, nihilism, which is to say, disenchantment, thus Enlightenment, or if you prefer, modernity. As this cannot but sound much more provocative than I mean it to be, let us then try an older word: nominalism. Or perhaps a more familiar phrase: the truth of skepticism. But as these rephrasings hardly allay the provocation I would rather avoid, let me suggest another way of thinking about the convergence of Derrida's promise and his easy dismissal or aggressive debasement. Perhaps both the promise and the disdain evince a

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fundamental disrespect. Having in common this disrespect, they draw on their disrespect though differently—in Derrida, disrespect takes shape as impudence, impertinence, and unabashed self-authorization, while in the vituperations of his more brazen critics, disrespect takes shape as a somewhat disingenuous outrage, the outgrowth of an unplaceable annoyance. Certainly they both take liberties, Derrida as much as his critics. And this being-at-liberty is what I mean to call attention to. If I *were* to offer anything like a symptomatology of Derrida's negative reception, I might be tempted to say that the wild outpouring of derision and self-confidence bolstering condescension toward Derrida's work registers the disrespect embodied in that work however swathed in the etiquette of adventurous French philosophy it might be. Though ethical perhaps to a fault and generous beyond belief, though *very* rarely given to malicious barbs or to aggressively self-promoting, thus other-diminishing, overestimations of his accomplishments, indeed quite tasteful in his weaving of thoughtful impertinence into magnificent textual tapestries, Derrida answers to no one. Just consider the unending difficulty of attempting to pin down what questions he is addressing or registers he is working in at any moment, or what the conceptual entailments of his claims, concepts, or nonconcepts might be, let alone what the overall ambitions of his works might be. To write in a way that demands judgment is one thing—all modernist works aspire to autonomy and so demand judgment as a condition for the appreciation of their unprecedented accomplishments. But to write in a way that is so equivocal as to answer more or less equally well to any number of ideas about what the writing is up to, to court or even to taunt the question of infinite regress is something else. That Derrida answers to no one is, perhaps, the intolerable disrespect replayed in his critical chastisements.

So the question is, again, whence and what to make of the experience of Derrida's promise. Whence and what to make of his adeptness at infusing sturdy conceptual architectures and long-entrenched horizons of philosophical ambition with open-ended possibilities, and the fascinated interest and uncanny optimism, indeed the faith and hope, this inspires?

In view of this question of faith and hope, allow me to open a brief parenthesis. Following Derrida's death, melancholic trends of incorporation and refusal of loss, by which I mean performances of fidelity to the master and giving way to anecdote among those who should, and do, know better, were remarkably prevalent, even the predominant form of grieving. I suspect that these melancholic trends had something to do with the loss of the faith and hope that Derrida's writings had inspired. What brought on the melancholic fidelity to Derrida's texts, themes, and rhetorical registers, and the accompanying, albeit implicit, self-debasements, the denial of the worth of one's own work, language, and interests silently subtending exegetical

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fixation and rhetorical assimilation, was, I suspect, the loss of the *specter* of Derrida hovering over the academic scene, or over culture more broadly—the loss, then, of a promising cultural force keeping in check tendencies to metaphysical extravagance and inscribing at least a moment of hesitation and a pang of bad conscience, if not second thoughts, in those who would pursue "obviously deconstructable" discourses or practices. And if, following Freud strictly, melancholia presupposes a narcissistic object choice, one might wonder about what was lost with the loss of Derrida. Some of our grandiosity perhaps? A support for ressentiment-fueled fantasies? What these melancholic trends perhaps suggest is that what was lost was the promise of Derrida, a promise unilaterally ascribed to him (though he did little to resist this ascription, and so is, in a way, responsible for it), the promise to make the academy, and perhaps culture more broadly, safe for our unconventional interests, our enthusiasms and creative energies, for our more or less unruly impulses. His promise, which he never made but by which he was bound, was to make the world hospitable, or more hospitable, to the impertinence or extravagance of thought, the savagery of thinking. But of course it wasn't, indeed couldn't be, Derrida who was responsible for the relative hospitability of the academy and of cultural practice generally to non-hegemonic interests. To be sure, Derrida's magisterial intellectual accomplishments and writerly exemplarity, along with his celebrity, exerted an impressive influence on the academic world, encouraging tolerance and even, within limited sectors, enthusiasm for forms of thought and expression that would not have so readily gained a hearing, and perhaps would never have been risked in the first place, perhaps not even entertained, without him. But this impact, however impressive, is not to be overestimated. Perhaps what was lost then was, in part, the illusion of hospitability: the faith and hope misting over our vision of the propitiousness of contemporary academic, and more broadly, cultural, practice for unruly and counter-hegemonic interventions. Perhaps what this faith and hope, this promise, allowed us to forget, or neglect, is that, to amplify a thought of Benjamin's, "the attempt must be made [ever-]anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it."[1] As Derrida's death paradoxically eventuated in the dissolution, or at the very least, the diminishment, of his cultural specter—this would be the scenario of the death of the primal father, or of Moses, in reverse—perhaps what was lost with his death was a fantasy support that had been sustaining the mutual admiration society, in short, the academic insularity that had grown up around or in view of his work.

[1] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken, 1969), 255.

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These speculations aside, my central concern is with the experience of Derrida's promise and its sources; basically, the way his writings draw, or drew, their enthusiasts into a realm where the topics of concern hover in their potentiality appear unfinished, unsettled, indefinitely capable of more. My question, in short, is this: *Is this how we would like to imagine ourselves?* To experience Derrida's texts is to experience a slipping free from the grip of traditional authority as much as from the self-arrogated authority of the contemporary; it is to be present to the spontaneous interruption of seemingly settled oppositions, conceptual entailments, and horizons of ambition; it is to experience the startle of unprecedented insight, and innovative, unanticipated and intriguingly opaque, developments; generally, to experience Derrida's texts is to experience the unbinding of what had seemed bound by law. The experience of contingency as the experience of possible agency, of indeterminacy as intrigue, of aporia as re-beginning—an experience of initiation: This is Derrida's promise. Coming undone in the effort to reconsolidate, thus permanently available to the unforeseen; unlimitedly exposed to the event of the future and the inheritance of the immemorial past; constitutively unsettled and undecided, indeed undecidable, and more, interestingly incomplete, always already given over to adventure; inherently excessive, over teeming with potential, thus, in a word, promising—Is this how we would like to imagine ourselves? Basically, as determined but undetermined, historical yet free? You might say that we must be so. But I wonder whether we are capable of it.

Under conditions of neoliberalism, which is to say, when institutionally enshrined pressures toward privatization, deregulation, and financialization conduce to the erosion of anything even resembling substantial ethical life, let alone political self-determination, and even make the liberal orientation toward individuation, that is, toward the accomplishment of a life through the lifelong development and active embodiment of an integrated structure of normative priorities, but an anachronistic fantasy, or a piece of ideology; when the confidence in upward mobility, meritocracy, job security, social equality, and enduring intimacy gives way to the experience of unrelieved precarity and a reorientation toward surviving, just getting through or staying afloat amidst the ongoing crisis, or series of disjointed crises, that ordinary life has devolved into; when good life fantasies fray under the pressure of imperatives to constantly adjust to the inscrutable conditions of survival, when energies are consumed by the need for hypervigilant attention to these ever-altering conditions, and normative enthusiasms give way to the depressive realism of survival mentalities; when the hope that one's life might amount to something succumbs to attrition attending the dissolution of the institutional and intersubjective conditions for self-realization, let alone political self-

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determination; generally, when confidence in the capacity to accomplish a life, to lead a life rather than be pushed and pulled by inscrutable episodic forces contracts into frenetic scrambling to stay afloat by perpetual adjustment, that is, gives way to the depressive mania of accumulating aptitudes in the hope that one might have something to offer the oppressors; then, under these highly compromised conditions of possibility, the allure of Derrida's promise might make itself felt with an *extraordinary* intensity. It is not for nothing that Derrida's promise really began to have its impact with his American reception in the 80s, which is to say, at precisely the moment when neoliberalism was on the ascendant, and peaked in the 90s, when the fantasies supporting enthusiasm about neoliberalism crumbled in the face of its harsh realities.

Here a reference to Marx seems apposite. This is Marx, from *The German Ideology*:

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is ... directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men .... Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear ... as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. —real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology, men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.
>
> In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the

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> development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence .... Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.[2]

Or, a little more succinctly:

> Since the Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men (just as the Old Hegelians declared them the true bonds of human society) it is evident that the Young Hegelians have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness. Since, according to their fantasy, the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness, and thus of removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e. to recognise it by means of another interpretation. The Young-Hegelian ideologists, in spite of their allegedly 'world-shattering' statements, are the staunchest conservatives. The most recent of them have found the correct expression for their activity when they declare they are only fighting against 'phrases.' They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only

[2] Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* [1845-6/1932] (Progress Publishers, 1968), in <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>.

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> opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world.[3]

In Derrida's writings, ideas do what we perhaps cannot, or not so readily: namely, survive and transform, assimilate, absorb, integrate and differentiate endlessly, come apart and recompose without breaking down or losing sense altogether. Derrida's writings are perhaps, or rather, have perhaps become, repositories of our fantasy selves under conditions of neoliberalism, screens upon which our fantasy selves are, under such conditions, anxiously projected, enthusiastically encountered, but also preserved from the ruination they would befall were one to more directly engage them, attempt to live them out. These writings are, thus, in a way, fantasies of neoliberalism, or have become such. Is it then something like what Marx describes as German ideology that is experienced as so enticing and vexing in these eminently and exquisitely French, which is to say, good-life-inclined or good-life-embodying texts? Is contemporary French philosophy, as mediated by its American reception, now the locus of German ideology?

Whence and what to make of the experience of Derrida's promise? Whence and what to make of Derrida's counter-metaphysical, yet, from Marx's perspective, idealistic, thus still metaphysical projection of survivability and transformability? Whence and what to make of the metaphysical claim that iteration implies unremitting exposure to, even the necessity of, alteration? Concepts in Derrida's writings are exposed in advance to unpredictable developments while at once inscribed inexorably by their history of production and reception, thus are unlimitedly exposed to the future yet unbreakably bound to the past. Might some of the allure, some of the promise of these writings have to do with the sense, or the wish, that if this is true of concepts, then perhaps it is something of which we are capable? Derrida insists that the impossible happens all the time. Conceptually, ideationally, sure enough. But practically, matters are less certain. Is the insistence that the impossible happens all the time not an expression of the perspective of privilege, indeed of the extraordinary privilege of the globetrotter? Is Derrida's promise not a fantasy of liquid modern life?

Derrida's writings are, on the one hand, clear and precise in their conceptual architecture, ambitions, and insights; indeed, they can be annoyingly monotonous, even monomaniacal: undecidability, autoimmunity, antinomy, aporia, contradictory injunction or double injunction, difference, double constraint, double bind—all name, more or

[3] *Ibid*.

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less, the same. Derrida is always pulling off the same trick: demonstrating that the insurpassable metaphysical drive toward the origin, the arche, the foundation, the elemental, or the proper is sourced in, thus, interrupted in advance by the anxiety of processual differentiation which it attempts to allay through the resolution of the event of differentiation into clear cut, hierarchically organized oppositions. But on the other hand, Derrida's writings are errant creatures, full of surprises and overteeming with unresolved tensions: frequently given to detours, studded by enticing hints and undeveloped gestures, prone to suspensions of argumentative and narrative development, suffused with prominent details that seem inassimilable to their overall trajectory, prone to surprising philosophical and rhetorical turns and other ways of keeping our interest peaked on edge, anticipatory of a final moment of revelation in the light of which all that precedes it would be retrospectively revealed as a coherent whole ... which of course never comes, rather, is always forthcoming. They are highly regulated, integrated, and readily identifiable yet uncoordinated, indeed sort of random, or idiosyncratic, both semantically and syntactically; at least stylistically identifiable, but in shambles, turbulent, ever on the verge of coming apart, disarrayed. Can we not see ourselves in the image of these texts? Can we not make out our desires and fears? Unremittingly exposed to unanticipatable developments yet remarkably repetitive, somehow integrated, even fixated, yet very loosely assembled: Is this not how we desire to see ourselves; indeed, we cannot but desire to see ourselves under neoliberal conditions, and at once, is this not how fear that we might, in fact, be? Might Derrida's promise be, to some extent, a symptom: the simultaneity of desire and anxiety supporting their mutual occlusion? Might the experience of the promise of these writings not shield us from our condition, that is, from *both* our desire and our anxiety, by enacting, ideationally, the ideal life under conditions of neoliberalism? Might their contact with what is unbearable about our fate, that is, our unrelieved precarity that somehow coordinates with an oppressive monotony, condition their capacity to elicit enthusiasm over the ideal presentation of this fate, its emphatic affirmation?

Derrida's writings are, unlike we, frayed and depressed denizens of neoliberalism, tireless. They are as tireless as we would like ourselves to be, or tireless in the way we would like to be: tirelessly intrigued and ambitious rather than tirelessly inventive in our scrambling to accommodate the obscure and ever changing conditions of survival. That the most remarkable qualities of Derrida's writings, such as sustained enigma or undecidability, can function defensively, protecting from boredom or from a despairing acknowledgement of a pervasive boredom, as well as from the anxiety of overproximity, thus from the experience of being overwhelmed, and can protect against detachment, thus protect the promises of the object one cannot

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bear to let go, and so defend against acknowledging the consequences of laying down one's defenses—all of this is perhaps related to the promise of Derrida's writings, a material-fantasmatic condition for Derrida's writerly practice as much as for its enthusiastic reception. Is it merely incidental that so much in these writings remains in a state of suspended development, remains, thus, as potential? Might the overabundance of potential be in some way, or in certain cases, an avoidance of carrying thought that thereby staves off disappointment? And so it keeps us bound to the disappointments of the present via the imagination of their possible redemption? Is there too much future in Derrida? Too much enthusiasm? Too much interest? And speculation? Too much promise, then? There is nothing that Derrida cannot make fascinating; indeed, his fascination is contagious. But to what extent is such fascination itself compensation for a dull yet exorbitantly anxious actuality?

The experience of Derrida's writings is the experience of a tolerable and so desirable dissonance, a lightly discomfiting, because aestheticized, frenzy. As Marcuse puts the point in his essay, *Affirmative Culture*, "only in art has bourgeois society tolerated its own ideals and taken them seriously as a general demand. What counts as utopia, phantasy, and rebellion in the world of fact is allowed in art. There affirmative culture has displayed the forgotten truths over which 'realism' triumphs in daily life. The medium of beauty decontaminates truth and sets it apart from the present. What occurs in art occurs with no obligation."[4]

"Deconstruction," Derrida once remarked, "is seen as hyperconceptual, and indeed it is; it carries out a large-scale consumption of concepts that it produces as much as it inherits—but only to the point where a certain writing, a writing that thinks, exceeds the conceptual 'take' and its mastery. It therefore attempts to think the limit of the concept; it even endures the experience of excess; it lovingly lets itself be exceeded."[5] Derrida's writerly practice is certainly extravagant. A patient and protracted, rigorously immanent conceptual labor, to be sure, never heedless of the official ambitions and self-understandings or authoritative, traditional interpretations of the texts under scrutiny, or simply reckless in its enthusiasm for exposing aporia there where a text or tradition seems most self-confident, self-centered, or fully accomplished. Yet this writerly practice is nevertheless nothing less than exorbitant, indeed somewhat itinerant in its associational expansiveness and more than ambitious in its principles of construction. Derrida's writings are, one might say, extra-clinical enactments

[4] Herbert Marcuse, "Affirmative Culture," in *Art and Liberation*: *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume Four*, ed. by Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge 2007), 100.

[5] Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow . . . A Dialogue*, trans. by Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 5.

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of the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis to say everything that comes to mind, but without the focusing force of transference, and without an analogue to the assumption of unconscious determination. Their extraordinary capacity to sustain exposure to and integrate without thetically or thematically flattening, thus to assemble, or constellate, fleeting impressions and potentially misleading or distracting, certainly unauthorized impressions and connections with concerted, conceptually focused, philosophically pointed and pertinent, immanently critical readings is both their glory and the source of a worry. Derrida's interest in implicating the serious in the frivolous and vice versa, or more broadly, what one might call his writerly shamelessness, evinces an exorbitant narcissism, a writerly ethos of repudiating repudiation, a "hyperconceptual" penchant for excess that seems to both condition his truly unparalleled and startlingly acute insights, but also to suffuse his texts with so many loose threads and frayed edges that these texts cannot but seem suspiciously underdeveloped, or brittle in their very grandiosity—as if something were being hidden, or perhaps avoided, by means of their seemingly unlimited capaciousness. "Beauty," says Marcuse, again in *Affirmative Culture*, "is fundamentally shameless. It displays what may not be promised openly and what is denied the majority."[6] One way to phrase this worry would be to ask whether Derrida's writerly impudence, the iconoclastic dimension of deconstruction, squares with the requirement of mutual authorization to critique constitutive of normativity, or with the normative conditions of meaningful content generally. If Derrida's writerly practice is as given to unregulated and unregulatable excess as it seems, might there be an at once anti-democratic and philosophically problematic aspect to its seemingly anti-authoritarian ethos of unlimited affirmation? Derrida unconditionally affirms one aspect of democracy, namely, the right to unlimited critique, which he equates with the university without condition, but not so much the egalitarian dimension of democracy, the requirement of mutual authorization.

The question is whether the "consumption of concepts that it produces as much as it inherits" renders deconstruction, by virtue of its nominalism, a form of nihilism—a creative consumerism. And the further question is: Is creative consumerism the most that we can hope for ourselves? Is an agile, creative consumerism the best sustainable good life fantasy on offer? Is the last gasp of fantasies of the good life on the verge of attrition?

Keeping in mind the earlier suggestion about disrespect, as well as Marcuse's claim that "What occurs in art occurs with no obligation," let me conclude by suggesting that Derrida's writings perhaps give new meaning to an old line by Walter Benjamin: "there is no document of civilization that is

[6] Marcuse, "Affirmative Culture," 100.

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not at the same time a document of barbarism."[7] It is Derrida's barbarism that I most admire and worry over.

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[7] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 256; Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," in *New German Critique*, 5 (Spring 1975), 35. (translation modified)

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Article

Eliciting a Sense of Normativity in Derrida through Honneth's Theory of Recognition

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Abstract: In this paper, I will attempt to explore the problem of normativity vis-à-vis the condition of subjectivity as an irreducible "Other." The focal point of this paper is to explore Derrida's essay Violence and Metaphysics and elicit the possibility of acquiring a normative sense of ethics in the light of his turn towards Levinas' philosophy. With this I intend to lay down the fundamental issues regarding subjectivity and objectivity via Honneth's theory of recognition. At the end of this paper, I will propose the possibility of reaching an equilibrium within the issue of subjective and objective norms.

Keywords: Derrida, Honneth, normativity, theory of recognition

Introduction

The particularity of an individual has never failed to elicit the tolerance that we have often associated with justice. In the conception of a normative practice, we find that the strength of subjective experience by the particularity of an individual drives us to create exemptions and even bridge the gulf between objective normative values and subjective particular values. The danger that we face in these times is to fall prey to the proliferation and accessibility of individual particularity when it comes to subjective values. The increasing ease in which subjectivity is proliferated is heralded by the growing advances of technologies that allow individuals to project subjectivities to social spheres. We cannot help but acknowledge the fact that individuality and social fragmentation is becoming more ubiquitous; though it may have to conform to prevailing structures of transmission from existing norms and social practices, the possibility in which an individual subjectivity is proliferated has very little social, economic, and political resistance as opposed to the past decades that we have experienced.

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Axel Honneth's theory of recognition provides us with the mechanism for understanding how the equilibrium between subjectivity and objective normative values are reached and at the same time disrupted. These normative values do not supervene social practices of ideologies and recognition of values. They are, as Honneth asserts, quasi-transcendental normative principles. This quasi-transcendental nature of Honneth's sense of normativity can be further appreciated through the appropriate understanding of normativity through the underpinnings of metaphysics as a semi-fixed system of values to which the telos of ethics can be guided accordingly. The difficulty of articulating this can be seen in the tone of the Honneth's readers; for example, in the case of Kompridis, normativity poses a problem towards the understanding of recognition primarily because he thinks that recognition can be an instrumental force that imposes identity through normativity.[1]

My assertion is that Kompridis is unable to see past the problem of Honneth's theory of recognition in a broader trajectory. Though I agree with Kompridis' statement that recognition is over-burdened by a multitude of social and political demands,[2] I argue that these problems arise as a consequence of over-valorising subjectivities to the extent that they become detrimental to the autonomous social cohesion due to social fragmentation. Furthermore, the current trend in philosophical research leans towards disdaining or rejecting "metaphysical" conceptions of normative values in as much as they are restrictive and oppressive to identities. Following the post-humanist and post-structuralist narratives, there is a strong rejection of fixed and over-arching principles that elicit a metaphysical sense of normativity.

My goal in this paper re-affirm the ontological and perhaps the metaphysical quality of normativity, which I think is gravely misunderstood in the criticisms against Honneth's recognition theory. To do this, I turn back to Derrida's reading of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* in the essay *Violence and Metaphysics.* I have three reasons to explore these connections: (1) firstly, among the critical philosophies available, Derrida's critique of metaphysics provides an even-handed take on normativity, not only as a linguistic product, but also as an ethical system. I have argued elsewhere that Derrida's critique of ontology is through the opposition between ipseity and difference, that is to say, that there is a constant erasure and retention of metaphysics within any system of normativity.[3] In Derrida's jargon, the notion of the trace serves as an important reminder that metaphysics is meaningful only in so

[1] Nikolas Kompridis, "Struggling over the meaning of recognition," in *European Journal of Political Theory*, 6:277 (2007), 286-287.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Roland Theuas Pada, "The Paradox of Ipseity and Difference: Derrida's Deconstruction and Logocentrism," *Kritike*, 1:1 (2007), 45-46.

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far as it is a product of always already existing and at the same time the 'yet-to-come.' Simply put, understanding the quality of normativity as a metaphysical product necessarily entails that it is coming from already existing epistemic structures that are stable enough to bring forth a sense of social coherence, and yet at the same time provide ample room for revision, adjustment, and critique. (2) Secondly, Honneth turns back to Derrida's discussion of asymmetry in this particular essay to emphasise the importance of subjective experience in realising change within normative practices to which recognition becomes possible, particularly, in the notion of friendship.[4] Honneth adopts this stance in his current work, initially as a revision of his use of Herbert Mead's philosophical anthropology,[5] and later on adopting it as an immanent foundation for institutions that reproduce norms.[6] In doing this, Honneth is able to fill in the gap left by the assumption of love as the hypothetical origin of institutions in the family, which is by no means a very limited perspective of institutions that may not necessarily represent the genesis of contemporary institutions. (3) The last reason for this is that Honneth himself acknowledges a closer affinity to the productive discussion of normativity towards Derrida's take on the economics of ethics.[7]

The position of this paper is that Honneth's recognition theory is cyclical in a sense that normativity ought to be understood as the end and the beginning of recognition. Honneth's affirmation of social cohesion in the form of *cooperative individualism*[8] highlights his emphasis on individuation that is deeply anchored towards the value that is generated within an already existing social structure. This provides Honneth a somewhat stable ground to which the frivolous and tempestuous nature of individuation becomes tempered with existing normative values, thus, avoiding the antisocial and schizoidal tendencies of anarchism. The dynamics invested upon the theory of recognition allows a greater sense of normative flexibility without derailing the fundamental importance of individuation in the realisation and fulfilment of freedom. By providing an immanent critique from within existing social structures,[9] norms acquire an adequate sense of stability and at the same time provide individuals room to resolve conflict through the revision of normative values that are no longer practical or desirable.

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[4] Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundation of Critical Theory,* trans. by Joseph Ganahl (UK: Polity Press, 2007), 217-218.

[5] Goncalo Marcelo, "Recognition and Critical Theory Today: An Interview with Axel Honneth," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 39 (2013), 210.

[6] Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right,* trans. by Joseph Ganahl (UK: Polity Press, 2014), 136-138.

[7] Marcelo, "Recognition and Critical Theory Today," 217.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Axel Honneth, "The Normativity of Ethical Life," trans. by Felix Koch, in *Philosophy Social Criticism*, 40 (2014), 824.

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My turn to Derrida is likewise tempered by this position; in his reading of Levinas' work, Derrida presents the extremes in which a normative reconstruction may take place within the trajectories of Levinasian ethics. I see a very strong analogue in Derrida's pronouncement of the inescapable disposition of ethics with metaphysics between Honneth's idea of normativity and individual subjectivity. The tension that is seen with these concepts is the inevitability of ethics to function with metaphysics,[10] as somewhat similar to the idea of individual recognition without norms and social institutions.

Derrida's Productive Undertaking of Ethics and Metaphysics

Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics"[11] lays out this problem of subjectivity both as the condition and possibility of ethics. This work presents a working solution of how Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* could be read amidst its denial of metaphysics, which despite Derrida's incisive critique, articulates Levinas' intention of emphasizing the importance of ethics and difference. A notable motif also appears in this work as Derrida continues to take his reading of Levinas under the three H's of philosophy, namely, Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. This long essay begins with an enigmatic lament, which perhaps, is directed towards the state of philosophy and metaphysics. This long passage is worth recalling in this discussion:

> That philosophy died yesterday, since Hegel or Marx, Nietzsche, or Heidegger—and philosophy should still wander toward the meaning of its death—or, that it has always lived knowing itself to be dying; that philosophy died one day, within history, or that it has always fed on its own agony, on the violent way it opens history by opposing itself to nonphilosophy, which is its past and its concern, its death and wellspring; that beyond the death, or dying nature, of philosophy, perhaps even because of it, thought still has a future, or even as is said today, is still entirely to come because of what philosophy has held in store; or more strangely still, that

[10] To clarify, my persistent use of metaphysics as a preference over ontology is a conscious one. No matter how hard we work out the differences, an ontology will always find its function as a metaphysical one insofar as an ontology needs to press its assertion as if it were a stable presence. Otherwise, the risk of the inability to talk about 'beings' in a stable form will make any theoretical assertion fleeting and futile.

[11] Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference,* trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge Classics, 2001).

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> the future itself has a future—all these are unanswerable questions … It may even be that these questions are not *philosophical*, are not *philosophy's* questions. Nevertheless, these should be the only questions today capable of founding the community, within the world, of those who are still called philosophers; and called such in remembrance, at very least, of the fact that these questions must be examined unrelentingly, despite the diaspora of institutes and languages, despite the publication and techniques that follow on each other procreating and accumulating by themselves, like capital or poverty.[12]

Through his reading, Derrida analyses the fundamental flaw of Levinasian ethics that is rooted in its critique of metaphysics. As a critique of philosophical telos, Derrida reflects on philosophy as a form of science that cannot project the actual of the future with accuracy. What he finds lamentable is that in this projection of futural possibilities, responsibility is often neglected as an other of possibilities. The figurative use of philosophy, as if it was a person or an individual, is characterised by the ethos of responsibility that points to it as both the victim and the responsible party for violence. The question of possibilities in philosophy is *metaphysical*, insofar as it is oriented towards an anticipatory discourse of what is to come after its projections; thus, ultimately, making it responsible for the consequences of its discourse. Going back to Heidegger's question of originary import— "why are there beings at all instead of nothing?"[13] —brings us to the realisation that existence is always an already existing pre-condition of philosophy. In this case, we find the existing temporal conditions of understanding being rooted to a sense of historicity, a historicity that entraps us with the impotent capacity to retrieve a lost past and look forward to an uncertain future. The question of ethics and the question of being present a tension that Derrida finds in Hegel and is divided on opposite poles in Husserl and Heidegger.[14] Husserl, through his phenomenological approach, was depicted as a gentler and more subordinated reception towards being. Heidegger is seen as a transgressor of being; through his ontological emphasis of grasping being,

[12] Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," 97-98.

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

[14] Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," 100.

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Dasein is obligated to be always *ahead-of-itself*,[15] which is aptly depicted in the idea of *Vorlaufenheit*.

Husserl and Heidegger, despite their faults, were for Derrida cognisant of the fact that these emphases on tradition and approximation had to be met in a shifting sense of balance that had to produce a productive discourse. Derrida aptly refers to this shifting sense of balance as an *economy*.[16] Moving further into Derrida's reading of Levinas, the issue of metaphysics as an inherently violent mechanism of normativity is pitted with this dilemma of productivity. On one hand, if metaphysics takes a position that imposes its will on the Other, (the marginalised, misaligned, meek, and misappropriated), the Other is alienated and it becomes inevitably the receiving end of violence. On the other hand, if the Other is taken as a superior, an Other that we cannot speak of but only speak to,[17] the Other that is infinitely exterior to me,[18] we risk the violence of hesitation.[19] The issue of productivity in Levinas had some solutions to these problems as Derrida notes; for example, the analogue between man and god imposes a theological premise in order for ethics to be over and above metaphysics.[20] Believers of theological premises of ethics would find this moral imperative very attractive to the extent that normativity can be elicited without the force of coercion with the exception, of course, of teleological ends that are not stated explicitly within the norm.[21] Regardless of the belief system in a theologically inclined telos of normativity, both believers and non-believers ought to look at the benefit of finding some sense of moral stability within the framework of theology or religion. It is through this theological limit that we are able to recognise the condition in which human subjectivity is understood in its infinity, not in a positive sense of certitude, but rather in a negative epistemic sense. The infinity of the Other is not a positive existential infinity. Death lingers as a constant possibility for the Other as well as ourselves. The Other is infinite because of its dialectical asymmetry.[22] The Other is unknowable in its totality for two reasons. The first is because of its interiority that is never revealed in totality; we only know the Other insofar as it reveals itself in its manifestations through which we have a *trace* of its interiority, which can be distorted by language, culture, aesthetic sensibilities, etc. Second, another

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 310.

[16] Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," 100.

[17] *Ibid*., 128.

[18] *Ibid*., 139.

[19] *Ibid*., 184.

[20] *Ibid*., 134.

[21] For example, the use of indulgences to build lavish and expensive cathedrals, or perhaps to promote a social condition beneficial to the theological institution.

[22] *Ibid*., 133.

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source to which we can appropriate a negative sense of infinity is the limits to which our epistemic certainty of possibility is faced with uncertainty when it comes to the possibilities that might befall the Other. This is where we are able to criticise and even elevate the understanding of metaphysics as a possible source of violence. Likewise, if we were to take Derrida's stance of the *double-gesture*, we could also see the possibility in which an emancipatory discourse is able to liberate the Other from violence through the criteria set by already existing norms.

The point of the matter is that the essential *difference* between our objective and subjective norms is nevertheless subject to the varying flexibility and stability found in the metaphysics of ethics. The productive discourse of ethics in Derrida provides a practical and realistic understanding of how ethics could be grounded on moral principles that is already in practice by revealing its limited epistemological underpinnings that can result in violence. The need for stable foundation for ethical and moral criteria serves a functional purpose that cannot be denied in the perspective of theology. This stable foundation is only a springboard to understand a more fundamental basis for normative ethics, for no matter how we turn back to a theological principle, our practical ascent towards these metaphysical principles will be subject to the contrasting values experienced within the norms of practical life. It is worth mentioning here that Hegel, despite his obsession with the development of the objective spirit, looks at the ethical world as one that is abandoned by god,[23] to which Hegel pronounces that the ethical life ought to be realised outside the confines of the divine. Though it is difficult to conceive the possibility of finally seeing the owl of Minerva flapping its wings at dusk, we must not take it for granted that the movement of ethics towards the realisation of its telos ought to be made by human subjects.

To which direction can we turn then? The understanding of our moral circumstance moves us to a relevant understanding of social relations as a supervening norm—that morality, regardless of its metaphysical or theological origin, depends entirely on the bonds of society that gives meaning towards its enactment. Derrida, in his effort to salvage the problematic disavowal of metaphysics in Levinas, points out the following fundamental issues in understanding ethics and its entwinement towards metaphysics. (1) Ethics, in the sense of metaphysics, is only meaningful and productive when it is understood as a *noema*.[24] As a system that brings normativity into practice, ethics has to provide a relatively stable ground to guide and direct actions of social interactions. Without this stable framework,

[23] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. by S.W. Dyde (Ontario: Batoche Books Ltd., 2001), 13.

[24] Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," 152.

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ethics becomes useless since it will not be able to provide room for dispute within society. If individuating values take an ahistorical perspective, disregarding established norms and ethical principles, then all values would be lost because they will immediately become insignificant to a totally external Other. (2) The relative stability of metaphysics is an economy of difference. The reason that I think Derrida uses this concept is that economics, insofar as it intends to reproduce itself in any social discourse, has to undergo a constant series of revision to achieve its stable and productive ground. The success that we see in the immanent auto-critique of capitalism holds this reference towards economics as a meaningful one, that despite its self-contradictions, the economic force of capitalism allows it to adjust and maintain stability within its structure. Ethics, as an economy of difference, holds the human subjects and objects of ethics as active participants within its reproduction.

Ethics then is not simply a normative principle with its subjects and objects blindly conforming to a metaphysical telos. The will to transform and shape the normative grounds of ethics lies precisely in the economic function of violence. Violence here is not in the purest sense of violence as an absolute form of transgression of the Other; it is a violence that is necessary for us to pursue a ground for recognising Otherness. Violence is something that we need to acknowledge in order to reconcile the objective forms of values to subjective ones, just as we will acknowledge that the Other has to be spoken of in order to be receptive to the Other.

Eliciting Normativity through Difference

To begin with, Honneth's sense of normativity is social; this is much pronounced with his adoption of Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. As opposed to ideology, Honneth's perspective takes normativity as a product of interplay between societies and individuals, with the consideration that society is an always already given. Ideologies, on the other hand, take root in an individual perspective that can take the shape of normativity when it is disseminated and consumed socially and institutionally. In this sense, we can say that the difference between Honneth's critical theory, as opposed to let us say Slavoj Zizek's, is that the former is concerned with the looping effect of normativity from social relations towards the individual, then back again towards the individual once more. The latter differs insofar as the approach towards understanding the normative effects of ideology and how it evolves becomes manipulated, or to a certain extent, perverted, is quite linear. This difference is articulated by the tone of the works that they produce; Honneth is much inclined to move towards social transformation from within social relations

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and institutions, while Zizek may tend toward a tempered and critical form of revolution.

Derrida's sense of difference allows us to elicit a clearer sense of normativity in Honneth as much as we would benefit from Honneth's sense of normativity in understanding the direction of ethics in Derrida's difference. The adoption of receptivity and openness towards the Other from Levinas' ethics provides Derrida a strong normative foundation in understanding social relations as a productive negotiation. The receptivity towards the other is justified insofar as it provides a foundation for social relations, which in turn, serves as the starting and continuous self-reproduction of normativity. Difference as an essential normative feature of ethics reverberates the oscillating function of ethical principles that is found in Hegel's ethical life; it is stable and self-adjusting insofar as it adapts to immanent fluctuations of subjectivities within the social sphere. This ethical turn in Derrida's writings is adapted in his latter works that question the status of relations in friendship[25] as well as social and institutional responsibility.[26]

Honneth's appropriation of intersubjectivity as a receptive openness to individual differences is a comprehensive way of addressing social reproduction through the mechanism of normativity. Through this perspective, it is possible to address the question of the origin of social relations through normativity and at the same time diagnose social pathologies that generate domination and violence. Honneth's agenda of providing a critique of already institutionalised norms and how our social practices are informed through their deployment[27] gains epistemic clarification through the understanding of difference. A word of caution, however, is required. Difference in Derrida's writings does not simply refer to individuation through the irreducibility of subjectivity. Difference ought to be taken as a product of similarity as a stabilising principle. These mechanisms of difference contribute to the relative stability and flexibility of metaphysical concepts. These concepts are still anchored to a historicity and are open to transformative or creative appropriations of individualised interpretations. The difficulty that a reader of Honneth's works faces is understanding the *difference* in which normativity takes place. In Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition*, Honneth's idea of normativity is falsely accused as a product of struggle to which more "peaceful experiences of recognition"

[25] Cf. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. by George Collins (London: Verso, 2006), 271.

[26] Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy*, trans. by Peter Pericles Trifonas (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 14-17.

[27] Marcelo, "Recognition and Critical Theory Today," 216.

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can be substituted.[28] By taking the idea of "struggle" quite literally, Ricoeur accuses Honneth's model of recognition as a possible source of "bad infinity"; particularly, when norms over-impose a great objective ideal in which the subject has no power or capacity of attaining.[29] Ricouer's criticisms serve as an important nuance that we can learn from Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics." That violence, in the case of metaphysics, is not absolutely and necessarily as infinitely demanding in the positive sense. The sense of demand from the Other is a negative infinity in which the subject is epistemologically hampered by its own recognition of the Other as a possibility. In other words, objectivity is never taken as an *absolute* criterion for normative expectations. The same warning is given by Honneth in his essay on the normativity of the ethical life, which discourses on normativity should steer clear of Hegel's philosophy of the spirit.[30] The teleological trajectory of normativity is not meant to be understood as an absolute objective end that can be projected or plotted; rather, it is a continuous process of progressive change through which the workings of normativity ought to be understood. Thus, in this sense, struggles for recognition ought to be understood not as struggles in which violence in its absolute form takes place. Struggles for recognition ought to be interpreted as moments in history that attempt to shift the trajectories of norms toward the direction that is accepted by subjective experiences.

Normativity and Recognition

The task of understanding recognition is under the heavy scrutiny of subjectivity insofar as it is deeply anchored on the shifting values of norms established by social practices. Furthermore, the greater the level of social complexity girded by increasing the population and technologies that proliferate subjectivities, the more it requires a cautious approach in deploying recognition as a productive critique of normativity. Ricouer's attempt, for example, to provide a lexical understanding of recognition[31] runs short of disclosing actual instances of recognition since it fails to acknowledge the complexity of synchronic and diachronic use of recognition. Belabouring the actual meaning of recognition becomes the theme of his work insofar as the idea of normativity is seen as a broad and encompassing principle that undergirds the structure of social relations. Normativity, for one, is not simply observed in an institutional level to which rights are seen in a firm

[28] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition,* trans. by David Pellauer (London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 186.

[29] *Ibid*., 218.

[30] Axel Honneth, "The Normativity of Ethical Life," 808.

[31] Ricouer, *The Course of Recognition*, 1-21.

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legal and juridical definition. Legal rights, as a normative prescription, provide a stable principle in which norms have a rigid enactment of rights. The limitation of this, however, is that it does not inform us of actual social practices that are already deployed by social interactions, regardless of whether it is supported by norms that are imposed by laws and rights.

I argue that Honneth's recognition theory is the realisation of norms in the individual through which the practice and critique of norms become possible. While it is possible to fixate and alter norms, it is also implicit that norms ought to have a historicity in which their practice takes place in an already given context. The productive aspect of recognition begins when one is able to realise that norms are off-tangent from an individual's expectation or actual practice in social relations. The ability to change and alter norms has to be tempered by the condition in which norms are accepted and recognised. One has to 'struggle' through existing social practices that can lead society to the understanding that the norm in practice is no longer true to its teleological aims. Honneth's discussion of Hobbes and Machiavelli is an account of how subjectivities began to gain a stronger foothold in rapidly changing social structures from Medieval to Modern European societies. We can account for two factors that led to the recognition of subjectivities in Honneth's reading of Hobbes and Machiavelli. Firstly, the change in the method of manufacturing, specifically, publishing, gave rise to the influx of thoughts and ideas through innovations in printing.[32] The second factor comes in the form of the realisation of selfishness and egotism as a general disposition of individuals[33] to which a greater power or political force has to tame and curb in order to maintain a relative sense of social cohesion. This cycle of hegemony, however, is not practical in the sense of maintaining power through force or coercion.

Honneth's recourse to Hegel's notion of the ethical life provides a more productive way of assessing and recognising social structures that inform normative practices. Resolving and disputing normative structures through leaders and violence is not only impractical, it is also improbable insofar as it forgets the fundamental fact that autonomy and freedom are pervasive human factors that have to be accounted in every normative social structure. Through Hegel, Honneth aims to achieve an explanation of the possibility of an ethically integrated community of free social subjects.[34] This has been a consistent theme from his early works up to his most current writings, such as *Freedom's Right*. The issue with this Hegelian theme, however, is how Honneth can explain the origin or genesis of the ethical life.

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[32] Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, trans. by Joel Anderson (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 8.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Ibid*., 13.

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The three spheres of recognition initially formed a quasi-historical account of how norms are gradually introduced and participated upon by individuals within society. A general theme that Honneth also adopts from Hegel is the function of recognition to provide a negative dialectic of self-realisation through social interactions. For Hegel, the realisation of the self is objectively reached only insofar as it suppresses its own self in the recognition that its objective form is neither complete with its self nor is it complete with the Other.[35]

The self, insofar as it is historically situated, has to integrate itself to existing norms in order to work its way to recognise and be recognised by the social structure. The difficulty of proposing a genesis or a quasi-transcendental framework is realised when Honneth adopts G.H. Mead's philosophical anthropology. The three spheres of recognition have to start with a fundamental ground in which intersubjective receptivity occurs without any recourse to self-interest and egotism, namely, in the sphere of the family. The development of the concept of an 'I' is in itself a struggle to situate the 'me' in the three spheres. The sphere of love, for example, begins with the family and the child's relationship in which the child, as a starting point, is received with open receptivity. The child at this stage recognises itself through the negativity that occurs between itself as a 'me' and that of the interest of the family or the primary caregiver. To note, despite the open receptivity, the struggle for recognition presents itself when the child realises the presence of normative structures within the social unit of the family.[36] The normative process of individuation is immediately realised when the child becomes aware of his difference and his need to have his difference recognised by the immediate social environment. As I have pointed out earlier, this situation need not be limited to the function of social units such as the family; it can extend to less formal social groups to nations accepting strangers or foreigners from their culture with open receptivity to gradually integrate them as participants of social norms. Differences in individual subjectivities contribute to the formation and reproduction of norms insofar as they either affirm or point out pathological problems in the practiced norms that are given societal and institutional force. In this sense, the claim for rights which later on leads to its realisation as esteem is epistemically founded on norms that issue a legitimate rapport to recognition in an objective and subjective level.

[35] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit,* trans. by A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111.

[36] Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition,* 101.

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Conclusion

As a consolation, Honneth does retain an imperative observed in the work of Levinas and continued through Derrida's appropriation. Love as an important intersubjective starting point of social relations pervades regardless of whether it may exist for norms or against norms. One can only imagine that the struggle for recognition itself is rooted in the desire of individual subjects to be recognised and be once more integrated into society as a desire to be united with the condition of normativity. Needless to say, struggles towards recognition are already conditioned by the fact that parties that aim towards the change of normative structures are also attempting to shape normativity to be once more integrated within society. In conclusion, one can understand that individuality is an essential component that prevents normativity from becoming violent insofar as its stability is entirely dependent on social cohesion. Likewise, social cohesion improves the state in which normativity reaches an equilibrium that sustains its own self-reproduction. Honneth's theory of recognition accounts for Derrida's ethics of difference insofar as difference is what makes recognition possible; without difference, the possibility of establishing norms from a practical and historical perspective becomes impossible. In the same line, the lack of difference also robs us of the ability to critically assess and re-orient the trajectories of objectified norms.

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Article

Doing Business with Deleuze?

Finn Janning

Abstract: This essay has two parts. The first part gives a brief overview of the foundation of economics. The second part contains a broader outline of the way in which philosopher Gilles Deleuze thinks of ethics. In the second part, I also explore the potential connections between Deleuze's thoughts and economics. Especially, I focus on the concepts of "human capital," "empowerment," and more fruitful, the concept of "power-with" as proposed by organizational theorist, Mary Parker Follett. By doing so, I try to minimize the gap between economics and ethics as presented here. Finally, I determine whether it is possible to do business with Deleuze.

Keywords: Deleuze, economics, ethics, power

Introduction

The French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, provides an interesting distinction between morals and ethics: the difference between a transcendent set of values or norms and immanent modes of existence.[1] The first tells us what we must do, whereas the other asks what might be possible. Such an ethical and immanent approach, of course, opens up the much more challenging task of deciding how to act or what to affirm since no predefined norms can guide us. It emphasizes that ethics begins when one needs to make a decision on an uncertain foundation.

Let me propose a simple example: You are a business leader making a decision. However, soon you realize that your personal values interfere

[1] Most notable his immanent ethical thinking is present in the following works: *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza,* trans. by M. Joughin (Zone Books, 1997); *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. By R. Hurley (City Lights Books, 1988); *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by M. Lester (Continuum, 2004); and *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by H. Tomlinson (Continuum, 2002). Some of the guiding ideas in these works are—how one acts instead of reacts; how one evaluates instead of judge. Deleuze writes, e.g., in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: "We always have the beliefs, feelings, and thoughts we deserve, given our way of being or our style of life." *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 1. There is not outside norm to benchmark against.

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with the values of the stakeholders as well as the workforce. It is a dilemma. How do you make a responsible decision?

The difference between morality and ethics is that the former is guided by fixed categories or criterion, for example, whether one needs to focus on the consequences or whether one has a duty to comply with one's stakeholders. The consequences could be related to financial outcome, image and brand value, the number of future clients or partners, etc. Similar, duties could refer to what Boxall and Purcell call "best fit," for instance, the organization's duty to adapt the norms and ideals of the society or the industry. The point is, according to Boxall and Purcell, that the business should be shaped according to the norms and ideals of the context, at least, if the business is to avoid losing strategic advantages.[2]

In ethics—as Deleuze understands it—no such rules exist. Ethics is, rather, related to one's *approach* when one cannot step outside the immanent movement of becoming to see whether one's actions fit. In an ethical approach, one attempts to become aware in the sense that the observer and the observed melt together. The point is to see what might be possible or what one can also do. That is to say, not to add perspectives from higher normative positions, but to unfold what is real but yet to be actualized.[3] Ethics, therefore, is related to the freedom to become what one can, not necessarily what one will become as a practice of being.[4]

My thesis is that the distinction between philosophy and economics is one of freedom. One might call it a difference between *existential freedom*

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[2] See P. Boxall and J. Purcell, *Strategy and Human Resource Management* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 72 cf.

[3] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (Columbia University Press, 1994), on page 156 they write: "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract." This quote emphasizes that another possible world might come into being, because the ideal is not understood as something abstract (or unchangeable); rather, it is related to time as change.

[4] Some of the critical points mentioned here are already articulated in the work of the Frankfurt School critical theorists such as Marcuse, Adorno, and Honneth. For example, Honneth raises a strong critique towards the ideals that guide human behavior in today's competitive society, e.g., the ongoing demand for self-realization that easily can turn into an unhealthy self-obsession. Thus, Honneth is critical towards the spirit of capitalism. However, unlike Deleuze, his position is normative. Honneth criticizes the social pathologies, e.g., when an unhealthy self-obsession leads to stress, depressions, low self-esteem and self-respect, from a healthier position. Deleuze does not operate with a "healthy" norm. Rather his critique is based on an evaluation of what happens here and now, which may or may not cause sad or joyous feelings. In one of Deleuze's last essays, he seems to raise critical questions from what might appear to be a normative position, e.g., when he states: "We're told that businesses have souls, which is surely the most terrifying news in the world." Yet, the problem is not whether the soul of capitalism is good or bad (based on what criteria's?), but to go further. See G. Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," in *Negotiations,* trans. by M. Joughin (Columbia University Press, 1995), 181. See also A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. by J. Anderson (Polity Press, 2005).

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and *economic freedom*. An existential freedom can be seen as a mixture of having the *courage* to oppose constraining norms and ideals and the *creative* or *imaginative* power to establish fruitful relations. The point is not to oppose or plead for another position. Instead freedom is a preposition trying to relate to what might work.[5] To put it simply: Economic freedom reduces existential freedom to gain profitable advantages. The context is given. Therefore, doing business with Deleuze would basically lead to at least one drastic change, that is, a change where the human being is no longer outside the equation. First, though I will outline a brief understanding of economics, I will then turn to Deleuze to see whether it is possible to do business differently.

Economics

Economics deals with the production, distribution, and consumption of services and goods on a national, trans-national, and organizational level.[6] At times, it can be difficult to distinguish these concepts; for example, when one is consuming a product, one is at the same time distributing and producing. For simplicity, think of social media and how reading a blog post can be viewed not only as consumption but also as production (i.e., interpretation) and distribution. When one likes or comments on a blog, one is at the same time consuming, distributing, and adding value to the product.

In a modern business organization, an employee not only produces but also consumes and distributes ideas, different forms of life, culture, knowledge, services, moods, etc. Hence, a growing part of the global workforce is producing immaterial goods and services, such as knowledge, communication, events, happiness, etc. Some theorists talk about "affective labor" or "immaterial labor."[7] The concept is interesting because it emphasizes how "social life itself becomes a productive machine."[8] It is also interesting because it addresses the main problem of modern business organizations, which is how to avoid limiting or controlling the potential productivity that stems from social life itself.

One question emerges: Does the general business organization acknowledge that the values produced in an organization presuppose the forms of life that support them? A realistic answer is "no." Let me mention

[5] This understanding of freedom, I will show, is also related to the concept of 'power-with' as defined by M. P. Follett and E. W. Holland. See also F. Janning, "Who lives a life worth living?," *Philosophical Papers and Review*, 4:1 (2013), 8-16.

[6] See e.g., R. G. Hubbard, R.G. and A.P. O'Brien, *Economics* (Pearson Education, 2012).

[7] See e.g. Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2001); Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Radical Thought in Italy. A Potential Politics*, ed. by P. Viorno & M. Hardt (University of Minessota Press, 2006).

[8] Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Penguin Books, 2005), 148.

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one example. The concept of "human capital" emphasizes how the "human" within businesses adds value that can be measured in capital. However, reporting on human capital is not a random measurement; instead, the measurement of the employee must be linked to the overall performance of the business.[9] A way of measuring employees is the "human capital indicator," which identifies the human value of the enterprise. Such worth is equal to the employment cost multipled by the human asset worth.[10] The term "human asset worth" refers to capability, potential growth, personal performance, and alignment with the organization's value set.[11] The point is that capability or growth is of value if it fits into the organizational context. As one researcher says, "Not surprisingly, workers with human capital on average earn more than those with less human capital."[12] In other words, if employees can deliver what they should, then they are valued employees. However, what if they could deliver more? What if the business culture is too narrow in its understanding of growth, capacity and value?

The use of a concept like "human capital" emphasizes that a rational business decision is one guided by the potential economic profit, not, for instance, happiness, joy, or well-being.[13] Of course, one might simply ask why a business organization, or its leaders, should subordinate the motive of profit for well-being. The almost forgotten management or organizational theorist Mary Parker Follett is worth recalling. She writes: "We all want the richness of life in terms of our deepest desires. We can purify and elevate our desires, we can add to them, but there is no individual or social progress in curtailment of desires."[14] The richness that all human beings desire is, as I read Follett, a good life—a life filled with more moments of happiness than sadness, for example. Another problem with the term "human capital" is the question of what to value even when the context is strictly financial. As some ask, "Should workers' pay depend on how much they work, or on how much they produce?"[15] This question asks what the scarce resource is: time or

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[9] M. Armstrong, *Armstrong´s Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice,* 12th edition, (Kogan Page, 2012), 74.

[10] *Ibid*., 75.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] G. N. Mankiw, *Principles of Economics* (South-Western, 2004), 412-13.

[13] See also Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Routledge, 2002). Marcuse shows how critical reason or resistance has been suppressed by the dominating rationalism of capitalism. The success of capitalism can be seen as how it has seduced the employee to believe that he or she is free. Instead, it has only eliminated dissent by making people content and uncritical. The one-dimensional man is stuck with conformity and, I might add, the predictability of doing business. I would like to thank one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to Marcuse.

[14] M.P. Follett, *Dynamic Administration. The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett,* ed. by H.C. Metcalf & L. Urwick (Harper & Brothers, 1940), 145.

[15] Hubbard and O'Brien, *Economics*, 622.

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product. However, how do we distinguish between the time that is used and the product produced? For obvious reasons, it can be difficult to define the time used when we are dealing with intangible or immaterial products such as knowledge, culture, services, etc. How much time does it take to come up with a good idea? Is it one second, or is it the result of months of hard work? How does the organization measure time when employees can work anywhere and anytime?

Economic rationalization orients itself according to the expected revenue. Human capital represents the accumulated training and skills that an employee possesses. Therefore, the logic is that the higher the level of education is, the higher the production will be, which again leads to higher demand for employees with a high level of human capital. Therefore, the general level of education is, apparently, measured with respect to how well it sells or at least produces products that can be sold. In other words, the value of education depends on the output per day.[16] People like Socrates (who did not even publish a research paper) and the Dalai Lama do not fit into this equation, perhaps because they generate experiences or a space where different experiences can emerge, not necessarily cash flow (even though other people might cash in on their teaching). In other words, perhaps the degree is not really what matters but how an employee approaches things, how he or she thinks, feels and acts. In short: the form of life of the employee.

In addition, one could mention that people with a higher education, unfortunately, also suffer from more stress due to increased pressure from peers as well as social and personal ideals and norms. However, this tendency is normally absent in the theory of economics even though it might tell us that it is the time, not the output per day, that is the scarce resource since high producers tend to burn out before average producers.[17]

This valorization of the economy guides not only our behavior inside a business organization but also what is prestigious, what brings or has status, and how one is recognized. Thus, economics as the guiding tool of measurement affects how we understand freedom.[18]

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[16] *Ibid*., 606.

[17] It might also show that the level of intensity plays a crucial role as well as the guiding norms and ideals that indicate what one should do instead of acknowledging what the person can do well. Recent studies in psychology, however, emphasize that, if one is encouraged to do what one does well, it will ignite one's passion so that one is more likely to flourish. See, e.g. M. Chizschentmilahy, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Harper Collins, 2007); E. L. Deci and R.M. Ryan, *Handbook of Self-Determination Research* (The University of Rochester Press, 2002).

[18] I am thinking of the everyday use of terms such as "economic freedom" or "the free market." Similarly, one might find it easier to define concepts such as security, responsibility, trustworthiness, reliability, credibility, etc., by putting the term "economic" in front of each word: economic security, etc. Values, apparently, become valuable only when they can be measured on the bottom line.

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With this brief overview in mind, I will now focus my attention on Deleuze's engagement with ethics.

Ethics as a Composition of Power

According to Deleuze, one must resist the dominating norms and ideals in society and try to see oneself as an event, as a body that gradually happens or takes form.[19] Life ploughs one's body, leaving not only scars and wrinkles but also experiences, knowledge, awareness, etc. For Deleuze, ethics is, as mentioned previously, a typology of immanent modes of existence that replaces morality that always relates existence to transcendent values.[20] Philosophy, therefore, does not have a political power but an ethical power. An ethical power is a composition of powers, for example, when different forms of life or modes of existence can live side by side, without one being reduced to the other.[21]

Thus, Deleuze might appear arrogant (or naïve) in claiming that philosophy is the only possible ethics. However, it should not be read as a prerogative of doing well. On the contrary, the claim is made because philosophy is an immanent practice that provides space for different forms of life. Ethics is about behavior (ethology) and practice (ethos), but the process of learning, that is to say the form of life, is also a practical behavior.[22]

What, then, does philosophy do? Instead of focusing on what there is, for example, by trying to see what certain organizational movements represent, the philosopher tries to pay attention to what has not yet been actualized but is nevertheless real. This means that stress and burnout are real organizational differences that cause human differences. Such differences are overlooked if we focus only on the same form of expression, such as stress or burnout. What is interesting, therefore, is not curing those who suffer from stress to make the business productive again. Rather, it is coping with the differences or forces that lead to stress. Becoming, in other words, is immanence actualized as practice. The process of becoming is unpredictable; it does not move between fixed states such as healthy and sick. Instead, one tries to understand the change undergone by each employee who suffers from stress. Some helpful questions could be as follows: What is this person

[19] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by M. Lester with C. Stivale (Continuum, 2004), 24.

[20] G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. by R. Hurley (City Lights Books, 1988), 23.

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] Anthony Uhlmann, "Deleuze, Ethics, Ethology, and Art," in *Deleuze and Ethics,* ed. by Nathan Jun and Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 154.

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absorbing? How does this affect the person's ability to think, to feel, and to act? What overpowers this person's ability to act freely?

Instead of focusing just on workload, time, and energy, one might also notice how norms, ideals, the need for recognition, intensity, pressure, and so forth affect the employee. That is to say, instead of framing what happens to represent certain available solutions, the philosopher becomes interested with what happens and explores solutions that might open up. This is a process where the philosopher allows himself or herself to be affected by forces, perhaps even forces that one is trained to overcome. The process means that the philosopher's relation to the organization changes. The organization is no longer viewed from one position but from multiple positions. In other words, the organization is no longer viewed from its ideal position or set of values but from all positions.

Why is this not happening? The answer is the same as the one Benjamin Franklin once gave: "Remember that time is money."[23] It is, but time is also what changes us.

A philosophical practice, as outlined here, asks what these symptoms tell us. They tell us that some leaders, for instance, are affirming the wrong things unless the desired output really is stress. The point is not trying to explain why one suffers from stress, or at least one should be cautious about whether an explanation merely refers to a given frame of abstractions. Instead, one constantly tries to actualize what is being formed without neglecting that it can become something else. Literally, one moves around because one's vision depends on one's bodily position. Some guiding questions could be as follows: Are some forms of life being prevented from flourishing? How can these more productive forces be affirmed?

As already shown, the concept of human resource management (HRM) implies that the "resources" are employees. The resources belong to the employer. Therefore, the resources are measured as human capital. This assumption also stresses a relation with classical economic theory through the idea of the "right of ownership." Similarly, it also operates with limited image of what a human being is and what one might be able to do. Performance management, for example, is an ongoing process that ensures that the workforce's activities and output match the goals of the organization. However, it is evident that matching the goals or fitting in does not encourage employees to become self-determined or innovative. Instead, it encourages predictability, perhaps, because predictable employees are easier to manage.

[23] Here quoted from Max Weber, *Den protestantiske etik og kapitalismens ånd* [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism], (Nansensgade Antikvariat, 1995), 26. Weber uses Franklin to illustrate how the spirit of capitalism is reducing the meaning of life to a quest for profit.

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From the perspective of philosophy, the philosopher does not (and cannot) preach about good behavior from a higher and more lucrative position. Philosophy is not a game where the one with the highest ideals wins. Instead of being part of a field or discipline such as HRM, the philosopher is part of life, part of the social practice that no one can control completely. Instead, the philosopher aims at affirming that which works or functions for no other reason. In other words, the affirmation does not serve a purpose but is the purpose. What is worth affirming no one knows beforehand, because no predefined norms can guide us. The possible world is not real—not yet; it exists only in its expression.[24] The practice is ethical because it is experimental. It is given space for what is in the midst of being expressed, that is, the bliss of action. As Deleuze writes about Spinoza's *Ethics*, it "is necessarily an ethics of joy: only joy is worthwhile, joy remains, bringing us near to action, and to the bliss of action."[25] It aims at affirming that life brings joy or forces one to think, because by affirming these forces, this joy, the forces of life will return.[26] It is an example of a responsible and sustainable ethics since it is passing on what lives. One matches what happens. How does one do that?

Amor Fati

In *What Is Philosophy*? Deleuze and Guattari write:

> The event is actualized or effectuated whenever it is inserted, willy-nilly, into a state of affairs; but it is *counter-effectuated* whenever it is abstracted from states of affairs so as to isolate its concept. There is a dignity of the event that has always been inseparable from philosophy as *amor fati*: being equal to the event, or becoming the offspring of one's own events.[27]

The kind of creation that philosophy effectuates moves from the actual toward the virtual. The virtual is a force that illustrates how a problem always is something that one overcomes by establishing innovative or creative connections that open up new paths. Ethics, at least as presented

[24] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 17.

[25] Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 28.

[26] This idea is a spinoff from Nietzsche's 'eternal return' that he defines: 'Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?', see F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by W. Kaufman (Vintage, 1974), 271. Deleuze follows when he writes: 'whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return,' as he writes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 68.

[27] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 159.

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here, are not based on being or essence, for instance, that knowledge is to know something *about* something fixed. 'There is no other ethic than the *amor fati* of philosophy.'[28] Therefore, the sole purpose of philosophy is to become worthy of the event, that is, what happens while it happens. One might emphasize that *amor fati* or being worthy of the event easily leads to passive acceptance of what is. It does not. Instead, the point is to relate *amor fati* to what happens, as well as what might happen.[29] Philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari write, "does not look for the function of what happens but extracts the event from it."[30] The point is that philosophy does not encourage suffering, for instance, by making room for a moralistic victimization of what happens. Unfortunately, this often happens when transcendent values or norms produce more victimization than a true will to act. For example, instead of feeling sorry for those who suffer from stress or burnout, one simply needs to change the leadership style that maintains or even creates a culture of stress.[31] Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari try to avoid victimization when they take "complaint and rage to the point that they are turned against what happens so as to set up the event, to isolate it, to extract it in the living concept. Philosophy's sole aim is to become worthy of the event …."[32] Affirm that in life in order to encourage growth. That is to say, see stress or burnout as something healthy, the body's last resistance against what is killing it.[33] As Colombat writes, 'life is constituted by all the forces that resist death.'[34] This ethical approach tries to become the event; that is to say, it acts with it. It composes new meaning, new values from the middle of the event.

It is an *affirmative practice* that affirms (or repeats) that which brings life to the event or affirms the living in the event. It is a practice that affirms the being of becoming. Too often, we do not notice what is in the midst of becoming because we are guided by expectations, habits of following transcendent norms or values. For example, that a higher is better than a

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[28] *Ibid*., 159.

[29] Levi R. Bryant, "The Ethics of the Event: Deleuze and Ethics without Αρχη," in *Deleuze and Ethics*, ed. by Nathan Jun & Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 32.

[30] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* 160.

[31] The psychologist Zimbardo has shown how it is leaders (i.e., the system) that maintain or create a culture (i.e., the situation). It is important because it is the culture or situation that affects the individual. In other words, norms, group pressure, roles, obedience, need to belong, etc. make it difficult to uphold personal values without being affected at all by the situation. See P. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008).

[32] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* 160.

[33] F. Janning, "The Happiness of Burnout," in *Journal of Philosophy of Life*, 4:1 (2014), 48-67.

[34] A. P. Colombat, "November 4, 1995: Deleuze`s death as an event," in *Man and World*, 29 (1996), 245.

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lower level of output per day. Still, one might ask Cervantes if it is better to have written *Don Quixote* or a list of 100 books that no one can remember afterwards.

Ethical practice—instead of following higher ideals or norms—tries to bring together the forces of an event; that is to say, it makes room for what is coming in the middle of what happens. The ethic of joy, as Deleuze names it, is related to this practice because it emphasizes the joy of being alive and nothing else. These forces are joined in the virtual event of the concept that ties the forces together, pushing it forward. In that sense, the concept is a gesture that carries something or passes something on to the next generation. The force to act is understood here as the will to act and create room for things to grow. Of course, the virtual event of the concept is never fully actualized. One can never fully claim to have actualized the virtual concept of a financial crisis: values, norms, ideals, language, etc. Instead, a philosophical concept tries to safeguard or make room for that which is becoming. It is a generous practice because it aims at sustainability.

Let's all get Rich

Today, more and more people have the opportunity to create something new due to a general improvement in standards of living and welfare, as well as to technological inventions. However, many people restrain themselves or—more likely—are controlled by the norms and ideals that rule most societies. The will to create, therefore, requires courage. To put it differently, the *amor fati* that Deleuze and Guattari speak about is both critical and creative. An affirmative practice both stands against the dominating norms and ideals and creates a virtual event where something *might* become. It is between this courage to *resist* the habit of following the norms rather than what brings life and the ability to *create* that existential freedom emerges. An economic freedom, on the other hand, is predictable.

An immanent ethics, as suggested here, is far more risky than being able to refer to a transcendent set of laws or values. Such a transcendent practice is often used within business such as HRM, especially when one tries to motivate by external means instead of intrinsic ones. However, the moral teaching diminishes to some extent when more and more people try to organize their capacities differently when they share knowledge and information, for instance, on the Internet in a way that differentiates itself from a classical zero-sum game. The economy rests upon exchanges that are based on scarcity. One example illustrates this:[35] If one has 100 euros in one's

[35] The example is well known, but it came to my attention reading an interview with Michel Serres (1998), *Knowledge´s Redemption.* The interview is available online <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9810/msg00137.html>.

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pocket and a friend has nothing, by giving the friend 100 euros, one will end up with nothing. This is an example of a zero-sum game. However, knowledge operates in the opposite fashion. If one knows something and teaches or shares this knowledge with a friend who does not know it, then he or she will know it, but unlike the money in one's pocket, the one who shares it will still know about it as well. This is another way of illustrating that knowledge or wisdom is not a scarce resource. Once one passes on knowledge or ideas, then it is up to the next talented person to do something with it. Still, one might argue that knowledge is a privilege of the few or more commonly that some institutions try to protect knowledge, thereby making it scarce. But hackers, blogs, open universities, open access to research articles, virtual pirates, etc., are resisting the dominance of the traditional press and the illusion of one omnipotent faculty of knowledge, such as universities. No one seems to have the patent on what is really worth knowing. Of course, this development is not without risks or problems. Not only will a lot of the information on the Internet be more or less irrelevant, just as, when one experiments, it opens room for various forces, but some might also be more angry than loving, etc. Still, the point is to be worthy of what happens, to see what it also opens for. That is the challenge. Relying solely on an existing moralistic system does not prevent wrongdoing, but it prevents one from becoming something else.

If we changed the norm from ownership toward borrowing, then maybe we would be more careful about what we pass on. We might all get rich in a way that might not be measured in human capital but nevertheless be worth aiming for. The point being that the values produced are not held in common, that is shared by everyone in the business organization; rather, they are produced in common. Follett writes about democracy that it 'rests on the well-grounded assumption that society is neither a collection of units nor an organism but a network of human relations …. The essence of society is difference, related difference.'[36] Hence, Follett posits a useful distinction between 'power-with' and 'power-over.' Holland writes: 'Power-with emerges from the articulation of differences each of which contributes positively to a whole that is thereby greater that the merely arithmetic sum of its parts.'[37] Or as Follett herself puts it: 'you have the right over a slave, you have rights with a servant.'[38] Power-over is for Follett, not a real power, because it hinders the growth of the employee. '[G]enuine power is not

[36] Here quoted from Eugene W. Holland, "Nomad Citizenship and Global Democracy," in *Deleuze and the Social*, ed. by Martin Fuglsang and Bent Meier Soerensen (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 197.

[37] *Ibid*., 198.

[38] M.P. Follett, *Dynamic Administration. The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett,* ed. by H.C. Metcalf & L. Urwick (Harper & Brothers, 1940), 101.

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coercive control, but coactive control. Coercive power is the curse of the universe; coactive power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul.'[39] The concept of power-with as well as coactive power highlights a social activity, that is, the strength of participating.[40]

Let me return to HRM. One of the more interesting concepts within HRM in recent years is the concept of "empowerment." Seen from a business perspective, the workforce is free to do whatever is possible within the limits and the logic of economy. Put differently, empowerment allows the employee and organization to respond faster and more flexibly to the demands of the market.[41] Thus, it is freedom in decision-making within certain limitations, such as the market and the values of the organization.

Seen from a philosophical perspective, "empowerment" is to establish a space for that which is in the process of becoming, even if it appears to go beyond the logic of the economy, such as allowing employees not to do what they want within the framework of the business but *to will what they can*. This requires both courage and imagination, that is, the courage to allow and encourage true "empowerment," as well as belief in one's ability to nurture what might emerge. The point is that philosophical "empowerment" might open up something that others might benefit from because they are not able to imagine it, such as new knowledge, new ideas, new services, new meaning, etc. It might even be a lack of both courage and creative imagination that has brought the economy to its previous crises. In other words: the economy lacks an affirmative practice that cares solely about that which gives life instead of just repeating the pattern of past successes or trying to fit in for the sake of money.

In other words, the way "empowerment" is used concurs more with "power-over" than "power-with," basically, because it homogenizes the differences of the workforce. Yet, it is not the uniqueness of the employee, which makes him or her of value, but each employee's power to articulate difference that might contribute.[42]

In the final part of this paper, I will return to the concept of freedom to emphasize how a business organization as well as a society is always defined by what it makes possible rather than its differences.

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[39] M.P Follett, *Creative Experience* (Longmans, Green and Co, 1930), xiii.

[40] Here I follow Holland, "Nomad Citizenship and Global Democracy," 198.

[41] B. Dive, *The Healthy Organization. A Revolutionary Approach to People & Management* (Kogan Page, 2004), 114.

[42] Holland, "Nomad Citizenship and Global Democracy," 197.

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A Life

Against this background understanding of ethics, morals, and a potential affirmative practice—where the last might be the tool to overcome the dehumanizing element of the economy—I turn to freedom. To explore this concept further, I will say a few additional words about the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?*

Philosophy is a social practice that, unlike religion or economics, does not refer to transcendent authorities. Instead, philosophical thinking takes places on a plane of immanence. The point is that philosophy creates concepts in a concrete meeting with a non-philosophical field. There is no other world that one can refer to. Philosophy for Deleuze is not a meta-discipline, and it does not refer to a meta-language. This practice means that philosophy does not aim at explaining, reflecting, or representing a higher set of norms or ideals. The plane of immanence changes just as the thoughts change with it.

Now, if we relate this practice to a philosophy *about* the economy, then the philosophy relates to the economy within the framework or limitations of the economy. Instead, the point in this essay is to enhance the potential liberating thoughts or energies that already take place within an economic system. This is a difference between economic freedom and existential freedom, between relative and absolute freedom. Deleuze and Guattari say that philosophy drives or forces economics' relative change processes to the absolute, that is, to the limit of one's knowledge. It does so by turning it against itself to address 'the coming people,' the one's yet to be expressed. Hereby, it aims at passing life on to the next generation.

In contrast, when HRM believes that human resources belong to the organization, then it not only limits these resources' growth potential (and thereby minimizes their future business potential but, more importantly, it misses the point that the center of attention should not be the human or the resources, even though the former at least would make more sense) but "a life." A life is a multiplicity. For this reason, I have stressed the importance of the articulation of differences, rather than playing a specific role that fits the organizational ideal.

Why, then, is "a life" of importance? Because the way in which one produces new values, new ideas, and new ways of overcoming a problem—in other words, how one is innovative and creative—is also part of how one thinks, feels, and acts. Similarly, one's mode of existence is crucial for the values that one might generate. How one thinks, feels, and acts is part of all the actual and potential connections or relations that "a life" already has, as well as those it might create due to its various encounters. It is exactly on the level of encounters that the philosophy of economics is limited; it operates with "best practices," which is why it formulates new future goals based on

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past successes or the best way to "fit in."[43] In other words, economics does not overcome its own inner limits. It is chasing its own shadow. Moving toward a more affirmative practice means staring one's limits straight in the face, extending one's wrinkles around the eyes to the absolute.

The concept of 'the people to come' does not refer to a specific class; as such, it should not be associated with Marxism and class struggle. At least, I do not understand it this way. Rather, 'the people to come' refers to those forms of life, those modes of existence, for which there is no room or space for today. Those people who are neglected or those forms of life that no one listens to. Once again, the affirmative practice does not define its action by means of various contrasts. Instead, by its focus on what might grow because it is growing. "Becoming is always double, and it is the double becoming that constitutes the people to come and the new earth."[44] An affirmative practice is a continuous process of liberation, that is, becoming. Unlike the classical biblical saying (or claim) that the truth will set one free, an affirmative practice is free to pursue the directions that function in a life regardless of the norms or ideals that one might have to sacrifice. Only a free person will have the courage to follow what he or she must to overcome what is hindering his or her power to enhance a life. Only a free person has the will to create or invent what is needed for this form of life to exist in the future. This, of course, is an ongoing process that, unlike most economics, is in no hurry. A life worth living is not worth rushing. It is to be enjoyed.[45]

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[43] Boxall and Purcell, *Strategy and Human Resource Management*, 73.

[44] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 109.

[45] It may sound utopian, however, perhaps "*utopia* is not the best word," as Deleuze and Guattari say in *What is Philosophy*?, 100. Why do they say that? Thomas More coined the concept utopia in his novel *Utopia* – where it refers to an Island placed somewhere in an unknown sea. Utopia is the good place that does not exist yet (e.g., the dream of a society that will never be). For this reason, Ernst Bloch says "our epoch has brought with it an 'upgrading' of the utopian—only it is not called this anymore. It is called 'science fiction.' Quoted from I. Buchanan, *Deleuzism. A Metacommentary* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 117). Deleuze and Guattari, as Bloch predicted, actually do refer to another science fiction writer, Samuel Butler and his novel *Erewhon.* The title *Erewhon* is an anagram that "refers not only no-where, but also now-here." *What is Philosophy?*, 100. Instead of seeing utopia as a place, Deleuze and Guattari see it as an approach or process. Hereby they affirm the constant becoming-other, i.e., now and here there is a potential that might be actualized in the creation of a better future. They do not operate with an ideal model, i.e., a perfect utopian island. The "better" future is unknown until it is being created. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that one should connect "with what is real here and now in the struggle against capitalism, relaunching new struggles whenever the earlier one is betrayed"—because of this understanding, they doubt that utopia is the best word. There is, at least for them, no predefined direction to their narrative; instead, it is an ongoing struggle or experimentation (which, I guess, sounds less dreamy). See *What is Philosophy?*, 100.

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Conclusion

It seems like the systemic vulnerability of economics is caused by its own unwillingness to risk and experiment with what is yet unknown. This is seen when business organizations favor "best practices" or simply try to "fit in" to what will secure the best return of investment. In addition, it is seen through a concept such as "human resources" and how an organization concordantly evaluates the performance of the employees. Ownership is the end of creativity or innovation. These tendencies (business norms) lead merely to the grim problem of reducing the human to a form of human capital, where the human capacity is reduced to a monetary unit.

As a possible alternative, I suggest (in line with many other thinkers) that one must see each human being as a mode of existence, a life, basically saying that, if a life is not reduced, then this affirmative approach might overcome the manageable simplicity of economics. Here, I refer to the tendency to quantify what cannot be measured beforehand, such as what a life worth living is. Such a life cannot be measured in smiles per day but in general well-being, moments of happiness, and the ability to bring joy to one's life because one actually is allowed to pursue one's power to overcome setbacks in life.

To be empowered within a business organizational frame is to keep everything relative, which is never enough to keep the human being alive and flourishing. Instead, to be empowered philosophically is to overcome struggles in life, which is to live a life on the edge on one's knowledge. It is there on the ridge that one becomes free by resisting the convenient or habitual patterns of repetition, as well as becoming inventive to create possible forms of life that suit one's capacity. The challenge is to will what we can. Such will is both responsible and sustainable because the will shows faith in the future when it creates a culture where a potential becomes actual. It is here that Follett's distinction between 'power-over' and 'power-with' becomes fruitful. The concept 'power-with' emphasizes how the employee is free to express or articulate what he or she can do *with* the group that he or she encounters.

Thus, doing business with Deleuze means to experiment in order to see what we might be able to do with others. It means constantly questioning what is, which is done by affirming what is in the midst of becoming. Some might object that this does not work in a business organization, that it is too risky, but those people are at the same time saying that "the people" or "a life" is not what counts.

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Article

Battle of Pornography: Philosophy and the Fate of the Absolute

Virgilio A. Rivas

Abstract: Throughout the essay the terms 'pornography' and 'philosophy' are rendered synonymous in the sense that philosophy exhibits a pornographic character, a unique way of looking into the thing itself otherwise declared by Kant to be beyond representation. But, by going where Kant hesitated to go, we claim that it is rather the goal of pornography in the last instance to extract the thing itself against his insistence that there is only one way we can reach the unfathomable without incurring self-contradiction. In this paper, we are assigning this illicit thing-in-itself the equivalent of the fourth term that we are deploying against the third term of the so-called argument of correlationism (which Kant is said to have ushered in Western thought) where subject and object, existing in a relation of co-dependence, is covertly supervised by a third term, the other half of the subject which splits itself in two (subject and object). The third term is no less the moral subject which guarantees the relation of co-dependence against which we propose the fourth term (or simply, the *fourth*) as a figure of diverse modalities of becoming. And as this may surprise if not repel the ultra-moderns among us, we also contend that as early as Plato the 'fourth' is already in place within the tradition of philosophy though at most, and even today, deemed practically unrealizable.

Keywords: Absolute, correlationism, fourth term, pornography

Introduction

The paper is divided into five sections, including a brief conclusion, the first section being a sort of foregrounding the direction of the paper in terms of Plato's oblique treatment of the critical role of male guardians of the *Republic*. In this short introductory section, Plato's treatment of the guardians is redirected to an affirmation of a sort of

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undoing gender identity.[1] This kind of undoing also sort of critically recomposes the direction of the dialogue in the *Republic* in light of the problematic landscape of governing an ideal city. The concept of the noble lie is briefly discussed in this section which forms the crucial background of governance for which Socrates admonished his male audience to pursue, but as we will contend in this section, with a different purpose in mind. Under focus here is Plato's attitude towards the young male elite of his time tasked to pursue a rather difficult path of rulership vis-à-vis their reluctance to govern the polis. In the *Republic* we can, for instance, read into Plato's notion of poetic mimesis,[2] exercised by these young male elite, a subtle critique of the dominance of the male figure. Yet, as one scholar observes, the critique "raises a problem [Plato] ultimately cannot settle."[3]

This leads us to a brief discussion of the first section with regard to Deleuze's interest in Plato's dialogues which to him exhibit a consistent affirmation of tension, underlining the fact that where the task of modern philosophy is to overturn Platonism, "[the] overturning should conserve," as Deleuze importantly asserts, "many Platonic characteristics [which] is not only inevitable but desirable."[4] Plato's lack of commitment to resolution lends us a critical frame within which to pursue the task of extracting a desirable absolute out of indifference to categories of sexual difference (which we will tackle in the third section).

The second section briefly introduces the notion of the 'fourth term,' building on a number of crucial leads from Deleuze and Guattari. As with these two thinkers, the *fourth* is not a term that has a subject in it, identifiable as a substance as in traditional ontology, but rather a term whose very nature transcends humanistic categories. The term thus approximates a Deleuzian "line of flight" pursuing an "aparallel evolution through to the end."[5]

The third section attempts to redraw the contemporary debate on *correlationism* which we will briefly recapitulate in this section. In the main, the debate puts the legacy of Kant into question, especially the concept of a subject capable of mastering the inherent contradictions or antinomies of

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[1] See Ronald Bogue, *Deleuzian Fabulation and the Scars of History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 20.

[2] See Arne Melberg, "Plato's Mimesis," in *Theories of Mimesis* (University Press Cambridge: Cambridge, 1995), 10-50.

[3] See Wendy Brown, "Supposing Truth Were A Woman … : Plato's Inversion of Masculine Discourse," in *Political Theory*, 16:4 (November 1988), 594-616.

[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 59.

[5] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Vol. 2, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1987), 11.

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reason.[6] It is this reflexive practice of the subject that is under interrogation in the correlationist debate at the same time identifying a number of areas neglected by Kant.[7] The section focuses on the contemporary critique of correlationism which, according to Meillassoux, is Kant's most notorious achievement.[8]

The fourth section is a brief introduction to Agamben's concept of pornography as it relates to the paper's main theme—philosophy as pornography. The pornography in question is philosophy's quest to attain an understanding of the absolute, the thing-in-itself that as early as Kant's dismissal of its supposed knowable properties has been consigned to that which ultimately human knowledge is unable to represent. The importance of this section is underscored through our discussion of the difference between two pornographic faculties (strong and weak pornography) which complements the familiar difference between Copernican and Ptolemaic models of the cosmos. (We will also briefly identify examples from D.H. Lawrence and Marquis de Sade to underscore how attempts to demonstrate the absolute can end up complementing its historically enforced obscurity, meaning, its pornographic background).

The conclusion follows the arguments of the preceding section, briefly recomposing the arguments for and in behalf of the fourth term.

Plato's Early Intervention: A Deleuzian Experiment

Why evolution favoured the difference of the sexes or why there are different sexes after all is still an open question.[9] Throughout known history, however, the male figure has taken upon itself to act as the *third term*, as the guarantor of the paradoxical structure of the difference between the sexes.

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[6] See Immanuel Kant, "The Antinomy of Pure Reason," in *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Incorporated, 1996), 458-559.

[7] For much recent account of this contemporary challenge to Kant, see Leon Niemoczynski, "21st Century Speculative Philosophy: Reflections on the 'New Metaphysics' and its Realism and Materialism," in *Cosmos and History: Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 9:2 (2013), 13-21. See also a number of recent publications dealing with speculative realism that has come out recently: Levy Bryant, *Onto-Cartography. An Ontology of Machines and Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism. Problems and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles. More Speculative Realism* (Washington: Zero Books, 2013); Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things. On Speculative Realism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), and Tom Sparrow, *The End of Phenomenology. Metaphysics and New Realism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

[8] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008).

[9] See John Gribbin and Jeremy Cherfas. *The Mating Game. In Search of the Meaning of Sex* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2001).

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Psychoanalytically, this is known as the standpoint of the subject 'who knows' which is always the male or the paternal metaphor of the Father.[10] In this light, the mastering (in the sense of the epistemic) figure of the father becomes a non-sexual expression of the paradox of sexual difference.

Arguably, Plato was the first to introduce this concept, not without the contradiction it purposively evokes, in terms of the male guardianship of the *Republic*. There the male figure is treated as a subject that we contend approaches the character of a machine on the grounds that machines are non-sexual; in short, transcendent to the paradoxicality of the 'sexed' subject.[11] To make sense of this Platonic gesture, we need to recall Plato's concept of the 'noble lie'. In the *Republic*, the lie is thought up by the class of guardians.[12] But the over-all tone of Plato's dialogues can tell us that he was ill at ease with this concept. Take note that in the *Republic* Socrates' audience was all-male; most were trained in sophistry but were reluctant to govern. They would put on a sense of responsibility by accepting Socrates' challenge to build an ideal city, yet when Socrates exposed the actual burdens that come with governing the polis they complained that he was making it difficult for philosophers to rule the city.

The noble lie is the lie that rigid class distinctions, which sets the guardians apart from other classes, accords well with the natural state of things. The lie is the supremacy of elite and esoteric knowledge over the presumed ignorance and common sense knowledge of the lower class. But as a lie any claim to which cannot be professed. In short, the guardians are not allowed to practice their sophistry.

We may argue here that Socrates proposed the noble lie because his audience were males and posing as philosophers. In addition to banning the practice of sophistry (which is also correlated to a certain practice of individuation), Plato proposed restrictions on the sexual rights of guardians (that is to say, over their wives) and emotional right (over their progenies). Seemingly at all fronts the masculine is reduced to a machine. The masculine loses its absolute singularity and thus, arguably in essence, non-existent.[13]

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[10] Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis," in *Ecrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 445-488.

[11] This somehow prefigures Guattari's description of 'motherless machine.' During his post-collaboration period with Deleuze, Guattari speaks about a motherless machine which "does not speak for a cerebral father, but for a collective full body, the machinic agency on which the machine sets up its connections and produces its ruptures." See Felix Guattari, *Chaosophy. Interviews and Texts (1972-1977)*, ed. by Sylvere Lotringer, trans. David L. Sweet, Jarred Becker and Taylor Adkins [Los Angeles, California: Semiotex(e), 2007], 97-98.

[12] See Allan, Bloom (trans.), *The Republic of Plato. Translated with notes, an interpretive essay, and a new introduction by Allan Bloom*, 2nd edition (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 63-96.

[13] Cf. n. 11.

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Plato's ambivalence towards the male elite of his time might well be occasioning here a subtle critique of the masculine which, as noted previously, he cannot however firmly settle.[14] Hence, we are more inclined to follow Deleuze whose project of overturning Platonism convinces us that an experience of Plato's ambivalence is possible outside of familiar Aristotelian critiques which have influenced the reception of Plato up to this day. Deleuze rather sees in Plato "his own flights of intoxication,"[15] a vertiginous dialectic, which lies at the root of his rationalist scheme. This however may prove to be his actual strength: "[Lacking] a reason in terms of which we could decide whether something falls into one species rather than another."[16]

In short, we are taking the same treatment of Plato with regard to his dialectical exposition of the nature of the masculine which ties up to his complicated view of governance. In the final analysis, Plato's (delirious) concept of reason "[permits] the construction of a model according to which the different pretenders can be judged." Deleuze adds: "What needs a foundation, in fact, is always a pretension or a claim."[17] If the male audience of Plato can claim to have the necessary intelligence to govern, then certainly the *Republic* is the right foundation in need of the kind of intelligence they may claim to possess. And yet, as soon as the foundation is built after aspiring guardians of the *Republic* (Socrates' young audience) agreed to pursue the ideal city in the full measure of speech (the city in speech, *kallipolis*), each has to take on the responsibility to become other than what he used to be, in light of the familiar sanction against property ownership and the right to one's offspring/s, the non-filiation extending to emotional and sexual affairs with women; all in all, a demand to lose oneself in the process of linguistic creation of the polis.

In this context the male guardians of the *Republic* may also be said to be undergoing what Deleuze and Guattari describe as becoming-woman (or becoming-other),[18] "a becoming that lacks a subject distinct from itself."[19] We are inclined to further explore this notion of becoming-other (or –woman) as that in which no term can be adequate to it since "its term exists only as taken up in another of which it is a subject."[20] The self-dissolving, becoming-woman/other of the subject is essential to the linguistic

[14] Cf. n. 3.

[15] Gregory Flaxman, "Plato," in *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage*, ed. by Graham Hones and John Roffe (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 13.

[16] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 59.

[17] Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, trans. by Marx Lester (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 255.

[18] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 238.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] *Ibid*.

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construction of the *Republic* (*kallipolis*) whose very foundation is premised upon the supreme value of interaction over sophistry, dialogue over monologue; altogether a city condemned to the dialectical demands of communication. As to the sexed becoming of the guardians, it is well to point out that insofar as the "becoming-woman serves as a point of reference, and eventually as a screen for other types of becoming (example: becoming-child in Schumann, becoming-animal in Kafka, becoming-vegetable in Novalis, becoming-mineral in Beckett),"[21] the veritable becoming-woman of the guardians in Plato's *Republic* would have provided us the best founding example of becoming-city. The notion of becoming-woman points to a "sexualization in rupture"[22] in which, as Guattari continues to extend a Deleuzian line of becoming, the "becoming feminine body shouldn't be thought of as belonging to the woman category found in the couple, the family, etc."[23] On hindsight, the *Republic* is an attempt to prevail over the binarism of sexual relationship as well as the ideological and procreative function of the family. Juxtaposed the becoming-woman to the status of the male guardians and we obtain what radically approaches "a mutative undoing of male and female identities [creating] a line of flight toward some … unmapped gendering of the human."[24]

The Machinic Subject and the Fourth Term

For all intents and purposes, this 'unmapped gendering of the human' may be further compressed in the notion of desiring-machine[25] where the relation of man to machine constitutes desire itself.[26] In contrast to the psychoanalytic method of "chasing [desire] back" to Oedipal signification involving the mother, father, son/daughter as pre assigned subject roles,[27] desiring-machines, as Deleuze and Guattari describe them, "represent nothing, signify nothing, mean nothing, and are exactly what one

[21] Guattari, *Chaosophy*, 229.

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] Bogue, *Deleuzian Fabulation*, 20. See also a fabulous essay about a complementary notion of sexlessness by Mike Roland Hernandez, "The Silence of the Sexless Dasein: Jacques Derrida and the Sex to Come," in *Filocracia*, 1:1 (February 2014), 98-114; also, an excellent take on Lacan's notion of desire by Darlene Demandante (in relation to the problematic of love that we would like to approach instead as a problem of the absolute [*cf*. our section on Agamben). See Darlene Demandante, "Lacanian Perspectives on Love," in *Kritike*, 8:1 (June 2014), 102-118.

[25] Guattari, *Chaosophy*, 72.

[26] *Ibid*. This is one of the sections of *Chaosophy* (Part I) where both Guattari and Deleuze were interviewed regarding their collaboration. The section cited herein bears the title "In Flux," third section of Part I of the book.

[27] *Ibid*., 173.

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makes of them, what is made with them, and what they make in themselves."[28]

Desiring-machine takes as its model of the subject the idea that "humans constitute a machine as soon as this nature is communicated by recurrence to the ensemble of which they form a part under specific conditions."[29] Above all, the concept of machine deterritorializes the traditional concept of the subject, the *cogito*, in terms of uncoupling the subject from its self-projective aims, leaving it with nothing but a recurrence in contrast to "Oedipal projection."[30] In the following light, Guattari outlines the deterritorializing nature of the machine in relation to the logic of representation, or a kind of projection that enables the Cartesianism of the subject: "The machine stands apart from all representations (although one can always represent it, copy it, in a manner that is completely devoid of interest), and it stands apart because it is pure Abstraction."[31] By 'pure abstraction' Guattari means "nonfigurative and nonprojective."[32] The role of recurrence in this uncoupling movement of the machine in relation to the traditional subject is far more obvious than one could imagine. Recurrence is at play when the desiring-machine "[puts] desire in contact with [the libidinal world of connexions and breaks]" which "constitute," for instance, "the nonhuman element of sex."[33] In this sense, desire is recurrent relative to the connexions and ruptures it makes with nonhuman assemblages and is in the process also made with them. One can speak here of the recurrent nature of desire as the very heart of anomaly that enables and disenables at the same time the subject in its process of becoming-other, as -woman, -child, -animal, -vegetable, or -mineral.

Interestingly, Lacan had once his eyesight set on this recurrent anomaly, with regard to its critical purchase on the practice of psychoanalysis and its concept of desire, except that in the end even this portentous kind of anomaly, as he argues, "bears more on the subject's relationship to what one *cannot* know."[34] In principle, the anomaly is what 'one cannot know,' that which neither has object nor end.[35] Lacan extends

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[28] See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 288.

[29] Guattari, "Balance Sheet for Desiring-Machines," in *Chaosophy*, 91.

[30] *Ibid*., 97.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Ibid*., 100.

[34] Willy Apollon, Daniel Bergeron, and Lucie Cantin, *After Lacan. Clinical Practice and the Subject of the Unconscious*, ed. by Robert Hughes and Kareen Ror Malone (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 4.

[35] See Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), 34-35.

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this argument in Seminar XI (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*) when he speaks of the concept of *aphanisis*.[36] This concept signifies the division of the subject from within, such that self-mastery is impossible: "[When] the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as 'fading', as disappearance."[37]

But where the subject appears as such, as vanishing, George Bataille, a contemporary of Lacan, argues that at the same time something is "[doubled]" to the extent that it [completes] knowledge into a kind of "non-knowledge."[38] Bataille is proposing here a different concept of the self (*ipse*), a self "doomed to communication,"[39] as it "goes no less from inside to outside, than from outside to inside."[40] By all means, this is different from Lacan's recourse to the symbolic, exemplified by the law,[41] which penetrates the subject from without, an invasive process that gives the subject its own self-coherence. It is of interest to note here that Kant's moral philosophy serves as Lacan's model of the law as a necessary sticking point to the recurrent movement of desire, blocking further internal metamorphoses presumed to be potentially destructive. Lacan is referring to the necessity of the moral law which is the Law of the Father whose function is as usual Oedipal in nature: "Experience shows us that Kant is more true, and I have proved that his theory of consciousness, when he writes of practical reason, is sustained only by giving a specification of the moral law which, looked at more closely, is simply desire in its pure state, that very desire that culminates in the sacrifice … of everything that is the object of love …."[42] Incidentally, Kant's legacy would figure prominently in the contemporary turn to speculative realism which we will briefly introduce in the next section.

The Correlationism of Kant

Quentin Meillassoux (2008) coined the term 'correlationism' to refer to a dominant motif of philosophizing that since after Kant's so-called

[36] Lacan borrowed and later modified this concept from Ernst Jones. In Jones, *aphanisis* connotes "the fear of seeing desire disappear," whereas in Lacan's modified version, it acquires the meaning of the fading of the subject." See Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 207.

[37] *Ibid*., 218.

[38] See Allan Stoekl, *Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion and Postsustainability* (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 219, n. 10.

[39] *Ibid*., 232.

[40] *Ibid*., 70.

[41] It is in this sense that Guattari speaks of Oedipus as the "entropy of desiring-machine." See Guattari, "Balance Sheet for 'Desiring-Machines'," in *Chaosophy*, 98.

[42] *Ibid*., 275.

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'critical' intervention in the history of Western thought has radically transformed our understanding of metaphysics by laying bare the constitutive limits of reason that no knowledge can exceed without incurring self-contradictoriness. The term 'correlationism' is adopted by the speculative realist movement (which has since its first meeting in Goldsmiths, London, influenced a whole new different way of thinking, standing astride many familiar divides or boundaries of philosophical persuasions, such as between realism and idealism, etc.[43]) whose pioneers include Meillassoux himself, Ray Brassier (the first expositor of François Laruelle's non-philosophy), Graham Harman, and Iain Hamilton Grant. In one of the first works to elaborate the new philosophical movement, Harman briefly describes the anti-correlationist position of the speculative realists:

> Authors working in the continental tradition have generally claimed to stand beyond the traditional dispute between realism ('reality exists outside our mind') and idealism ('reality exists only in the mind'). The correlationist alternative, so dominant that it is often left unstated by its adherents, is to assume that we can think neither of human without world nor of world without human, but only of a primordial correlation or rapport between the two.[44]

We may also speak in the above light of something like the non-decidability of difference in terms of grounding the problem of identity that has haunted philosophical speculation since Aristotle. In this sense, indeterminacy is the most intelligible form of correlationist thinking where difference guarantees the indeterminate relation, say, between thinking and action, thought and praxis, mind and matter, etc. Difference is the location of contradiction where the mutual indeterminacy of the two terms is sustained by a reflexive term, the *third*, or simply, the *subject*. Since Kant the paradoxicality that organizes itself around this term guarantees the relation that binds the 'two terms' in a relationship always nurtured by tension.

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[43] Cf. n. 7. The transcripts of the meeting were first published in *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, Vol. III (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2007) with the theme 'Speculative Realism.' The movement has since then transformed with the advent of fresh attempts to formulate a new form of realism in an anthology of essays that came out in 2011. See Levy Bryant, Graham Harman and Nick Srnicek eds., *The Speculative Turn. Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011) and recently, with a flurry of major publications, further exploring the new trend (cf. n. 7).

[44] Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 3.

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In its contemporary philosophical purchase, the 'third term,' or what applies as the reflexive position of the subject, may be traced to Kant's paradigmatic Copernican turn. Recall that Kant's version of Copernican revolution is a philosophical extension of the modern scientific turn from Ptolemy's model of the cosmos. Just as in Copernicus, Kant's controversial interpretation gave the subject, vis-à-vis the place it occupied in the Ptolemaic model, a new and absolutely radical purpose. Notwithstanding their pronounced differences, however, in both cosmological accounts, the center is a privileged figure. For Ptolemy, the subject is the center of divine attention; for Kant, it is the center of action, discovery, and judgement. Against the function of the Ptolemaic subject trapped in space, Kant argued for the formal temporal status of the subject moving around the object of knowledge. This enabled Kant to postulate a subject term, the *third*, capable of foregoing its self-centering, its self-rigidification (in contrast to the rigidity of the subject's position in Ptolemy) yet in the form of centering what is otherwise than a subject, namely, the object of knowledge.

Kant thus softened the standpoint of the subject in the form of dissolving its rigid instantiation by otherwise centering, or rather, mastering the object of knowledge. Here, centering acquires a second-order sense, that of *mastery*, in contrast to *positionality*. Kant did for philosophy what Copernicus had done much earlier for astronomy—to make objects (the universe and the world, etc.) conform to reason (performing a centering act by reflexively or self-consciously decentering itself). The Copernican revolution in science allowed Kant to decenter the subject whose former status as a center was nonetheless reducible to a passive recipient of impressions coming from the outside world, hence, giving the impression that it is the outside world that thinks on behalf of the receiver. By decentering the subject Kant was able to center the universe in the sense of making it a positive target, a focus of critique, which involves a not so complicated operation—the privilege of thinking is snatched away from the object/universe, even from God.

In both models of the cosmos, the function of gaze is critical. Regardless of the positionality of the subject, whether as wanting attention or directing attention, overall, the gaze communicates a point of view, a *pov*. Borrowing a pornographic expression, this *pov* (point of view, usually of the male pornographic subject) approaches a concept of the subject invested with reflexive nature by Kant. Arguably, the reflexive subject takes a distinct pornographic view in relation to the object of representation which we can also describe as approaching a kind of feminism in its act of exposing the conditions of possibility of knowledge that has always gravitated around the figure of the masculine. By *feminism* we mean the *decentering* of the Ptolemaic auto-positioning of the subject on a fixed point of instantiation.

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However it remains the standpoint of a male subject that has managed to wean itself away from its obsessive auto-positioning hungry for attention. This could well be the standpoint of the feminist masculine which in itself carries a potential for becoming-other (though unrealized in Kant), the feminine, recall the argument of Guattari, acting as a "screen for other types of becoming."[45]

The feminism that is introduced here is an attribution already implied in Kant.[46] The attribution wishes to articulate a certain notion of rehabilitation, recovery, and reformation. Kant's Copernican revolution is therefore feminist in this respect—he corrected the hardcore pornography of metaphysics by unstiffening a certain practice of phallocentrism. But, as Meillassoux argues, to a certain extent this Kantian reflexivity managed to rob us of an important pornographic focus. This is not to mention that the feminine potential of critical philosophy that Kant initiated eventually fell into a moral abyss, unable to pursue lines of becomings to their radical extent. Reflexivity is that capacity to induce guilt that strikes at the heart of masculine indulgence to masturbatory excess, enabling the subject to appropriate guilt as the new object of knowledge. The world or the cosmos, as in Ptolemy's model where either thing applies as the object of knowledge (emphasis on the cosmological purchase), is displaced by the subject that has become the center or object of renewed attention and intensity where the emphasis now shifts into the moral purchase of, presumably sufficient, cosmological model. In other words, the subject has been recentered by Kant's Copernican revolution, curiously by way of Ptolemaic counter-revolution. Exposing the kernel of this argument, Meillassoux offers a radical interpretation of the central assumption of this revolution:

> The philosopher thereby claims to have carried out what he calls, following Kant, his own Copernican revolution—a claim which cannot but strike us as a fantastic obfuscation. In philosophical jargon, 'Copernican revolution' means that the deeper meaning of science's Copernican revolution is provided by

[45] Guattari, *Chaosophy*, 229.

[46] Feminism is meant to counteract the *pov* or male pornographic gaze so long as it stays within the business of representing the thing-in-itself. Pornography, as we have so far utilized its concept, is a metaphor for philosophy's quest to understand the absolute (or the thing itself) insofar as it takes its business to be one of 'seeing.' In this light, feminism attempts to counter-act from within the robustness of the male *pov* by appealing to the soft side of philosophy and also by denying to it its final word on the absolute. In Kant, this is precisely the case—the thing-in-itself is unknowable, if not impenetrable.

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> philosophy's Ptolemaic counter-revolution ... in other words, *its eminently speculative character*.[47]

The Ptolemaic counter-revolution would make its impact on the role of philosophy as pornography, if we mean *pornography* as a certain professional way of looking into the essence of things, the bareness of in-themselves structures of things, the absolutes of the world, or nature and cosmos. But instead of pursuing the utmost logical direction of the Copernican revolution (by maximizing the speculative character of the Ptolemaic model), Kant finally disavowed speculation or hardcore pornography as a means to obtain the absolute in favor of a kind of softcore pornography, intrinsic to the declaration that speculation alone cannot fully attain the absolute, that which ultimately denies to the subject the capacity to attain it. Such denial amounts to knowledge annulling itself in the face of the unattainable.[48] For Kant, the comprehension of the thing-in-itself, the absolute, is not for any science to achieve, not for speculation to attain to. It is rather for morals to deny that it can be grasped without knowledge annulling itself. Unsurprisingly, in Kant, the thing-in-itself becomes a moral problem in its own right.

But notwithstanding his critical exposition, Meillassoux is not critiquing Kant for the inherent limitations of his system, rather for his reluctance to pursue the radical direction of his thought. The fault of Kant is his star, so to speak. Recall the famous conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason*: "Two things fill the mind with new and ever increasing admiration and reverence, the more frequently and persistently one's meditation deals with them: *the starry sky above me and the moral law within me*."[49] Kant's fault begins with this own scientific inclination—by any measure his star—which he would expand later on to the realm of morals. It is well to note here that Kant's reduction of scientific knowledge to the empirical laws of nature is in fact a double reduction. Empiricism is reduced to the apprehension of phenomenal laws understood as surface effects of a more fundamental relation to the unknowable, that is, in the absence of any ontological criterion. Recall that Kant would reduce this criterion to freedom whose unmistakable essence is rather easy to spell out but feared by Kant for its Leibnizian-Wolffian dogmatism.[50] The limitation of logical or empirical apprehension of the phenomenal world would lead Kant to assume that a deeper understanding of reality is beyond the reach of the sciences. And yet it is just about the same operation that is made to apply to the apprehension

[47] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 192.
[48] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, viii.
[49] *Ibid*., 204.
[50] *Ibid*., 35.

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of the noumenon, extending the use of logical or empirical reasoning that Kant invested otherwise with moralistic rather than speculative direction. Kant is referring here to the universal precondition of all knowledge, namely, (moral) freedom.[51]

As it is of belief in God, (moral) freedom is arguably the same condition of possibility of science whose radical purchase in relation to the absolute Meillassoux seeks to revive in Kant (and against Kant as well). Meillassoux argues: "[Thought] is capable of the 'absolute,' capable of even producing something like 'eternal truths'; and this despite the various destructions and deconstructions that all traditional metaphysics have undergone over the last century and a half."[52] However, for Meillassoux, the apprehension of the 'absolute' is possible by mathematization, not by morals. "The mathematizable," he argues, "indicates a world capable of autonomy—a world wherein bodies as well as movements can be described independently of sensible bodies."[53]

But where Meillassoux argues for mathematization as the only way to apprehend the absolute, we are building instead on the radical possibilities of attaining the absolute in terms of "diverse possible modalities"[54] of becoming, that is to say, other than the mathematical. But first, philosophy must reorient its relation to the absolute.[55] This aspect of the paper will be dealt with in the following sections.

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[51] *Ibid*., 442-59.

[52] Quentin Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign," Lecture at Freie Universitat Berlin, April 20, 2012, trans.by Robin Mackay, in <www.spekulative-poetic.de>, Date accessed March 20, 2014.

[53] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 101.

[54] Guattari, *Chaosophy*, 230.

[55] Incidentally, one of the characteristic approaches of critical theory in relation to the notion of the 'absolute' concerns mainly with Hegel's concept of Absolute Spirit and how it supplies an essential dialectical background for overcoming the divide between, for instance, the ideal and material dimensions of reality. It is in this context that the characteristic resolution of critical theory in terms of, as Bolaños puts it, the "overcoming the divorce between … psychical and material conditions of human existence" becomes no less a highly abstract augmentation of the correlationist argument. Hegel's dialectical unity between these two dimensions of the real is a necessary completion of the Kantian correlation, whereby foreclosing the possibility of transcending the correlation in post-Hegelian philosophy. The price of such foreclosure has been for a long time characterized by the very inability of philosophy to attain an understanding of the absolute, for instance, in the deconstructive strategy of endless "overmining" and "undermining" (using Harman's terminologies) of the infinite plasticity of language. See Paolo Bolaños, "What Is Critical Theory? Max Horkheimer and the Makings of the Frankfurt School Tradition," in *Mabini Review*, 3 (2013), 6; see Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Alresford, Hants, UK: Zero Books, 2011), 10-11).

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The Restoration of the Absolute

Two intervening examples interest us here, D.H. Lawrence and Marquis de Sade. Lawrence and de Sade are examples of how moral pornography is restated in otherwise naïve attempts to reorient our understanding of the absolute by forcing it to conform to something else. On the one hand, while throwing the whole weight of his literary genius against the sexual practices of bourgeois society, D.H. Lawrence aims to achieve a kind of pornography that approaches the level of 'realizing' a hidden asset. This asset, according to him, is rendered as "dead loss" by bourgeois economy in terms of repressing desire and, afterwards, channelling it to social goods. This is the moral hypocrisy immanent in the liberal posture of modern social organization whose foundations are built on the strong ideals of freedom, including freedom of commerce and the practice of individual autonomy which finally shattered the old regime, its feudal economy and cultural parochialism. Bourgeois economy is pornographic (but not pornographic enough) on the side of keeping desire practically 'untouched,' impenetrable, by making it substitutable for consumption of social goods which take the place of the possession of the 'thing' itself, or rather, an asset capable of the absolute. Lawrence's counter-argument to this notion of repressed asset is free sex which he describes in the following: "I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly. Even if we can't act sexually to our complete satisfaction, let us at least think sexually…. [Our] business is to realize sex."[56]

However, Lawrence's pornographic challenge to moral hypocrisy simply restates the kind of pornography inherent in bourgeois society in terms of validating the libidinal economy that he at the same time rejects. The key to understand this point lies in the mechanism by which desire is circulated and exchanged, that is, in Lawrence's unstated declaration, to put this hidden asset back to social circulation (as he does in his fiction of free sex whose public consumption through his readership still follows the logic of the market); in general, by realizing sex in cultural discourse serving as production factory and consumption hub of otherwise substitutable forms of desire, replaceable assets, consumable absolutes. In short, to ensure that the absolute (or desire) stays in the correlation, that is, as a repressed asset, which alone may be allowed to fuel the industrial and commercial engines of both production and consumption necessary to maintain the status quo which in turn enables the fiction of free sex but not its possession.[57] The

[56] See D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterly's Lover and A propos of Lady Chatterly's*, ed. by Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 308.

[57] I am indebted here to David Bennett's wonderful essay "Burghers, Burglars, Masturbators: The Sovereign Spender in the Age of Consumerism," in *New Literary History*, 30:2

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circle of desire, from production to consumption and vice-versa, ensures that desire cannot escape.

On the other hand, it is well to note in passing de Sade's assault against moralism grounded on a curious scientific conception of Nature. We would like to underscore here de Sade's assault on two fronts, namely, 1) his attack against moralism and, 2) his rejection of the positivism of science (in favor of a certain rehabilitated notion of morals founded on a dialectic that is said to be immanent in nature). de Sade writes in the *Philosophy in the Bedroom*: "Nature … has sometimes need of vices and sometimes of virtues … in accordance with what she requires."[58] In this sense, Nature, for de Sade, "thwarts one's pleasure at every moment, all the while creating desires beyond the bounds of human possibility."[59] To which de Sade responds through a dialectical notion of transgression exemplified in extreme practice of pornography. By imitating the self-destructive tendency of Nature in his practice of sadism, de Sade's transgressive dialectic is entrapped within an irremissible correlation from which there is no escape—humans are also part of Nature. And yet, this very impossibility of escaping Nature will be rechanneled into a medium of culture (culture as second nature) where de Sade's imitation of nature's transgressive dialectic is realized, particularly, in commercial pornography. In this type of pornography, porn actors are "monitored" and "supervised" according to a porn script written precisely to imitate the transgressive nature of the sexual act (which imitates the transgression of nature by way of the sexual instincts) before the camera.[60] The script and the camera thus enable a certain kind of transgression by eliminating and removing, in an attempt to liberate desire, "sexual fantasies from behind the scenes,"[61] from the privacy of the bedroom or whatever, whereby ultimately, by "[posting] them (…) in one's immediate vicinity,"[62] transgression is seized from nature's jurisdiction to become the sole prerogative of freedom. Modern commercial pornography, with the camera and script at its disposal, therefore offers an exit from nature's transgressive dialectic. Sadean pornography in this sense technically recomposes the paradigmatic invention of culture as second nature; a moral exit from the steely necessity imposed by nature through the

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(Spring 1999), 269:294. In principle, we are simply rehearsing Bennett's positions in this paper, yet with an added twist regarding the absolute as an asset or capability, *a propos* of the focus of this section on pornography as a way to attain the absolute.

[58] D.A. F. de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, trans. by Richard Seaver and Austin Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press 1966), 360.

[59] Alan Weiss, "A New History of Passions," in *October*, 49 (Summer, 1989), 104.

[60] *Ibid*.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] *Ibid*.

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use of practical reason. Here, the moralism of Sadean pornography lies in monitoring and supervising the practical expressibility of human desire.

To a certain degree this is what Kantian correlation already endorses—viewed in the special light of de Sade's transgression, moral freedom secures the conformity of the (otherwise unreachable) thing-in-itself to human purpose (the moral side) whose most categorical command is the perpetuation of the species (through the subsumption of Nature). In this sense, de Sade is much closer to Kant than one could imagine.[63] Transgressive dialectic presupposes an inescapable correlation between freedom and nature which cannot be exceeded, anyhow, by any transgressive means. What can actually take the place of unattainable transgression (in place of a more active possession of the absolute) is a liberal, albeit, painful imitation of nature's transgressive dialectic. In this way, nature is divested of its own dialectic (in de Sade) in the same manner the quest for the absolute is abandoned in favor of practical reason (in Kant).

The consequences of the loss of absolute. Deprived of an absolute to pursue, the human subject becomes alienated from its own constituted history and, as a consequence, takes so much interest in itself—takes itself unnecessarily if not fantastically as the un-constituted site, the abyssal foundation of the absolute. Arguing from Agamben's critique of a similar form of pornography in the guise of the nullification of the absolute,[64] alienation from pornography, let alone, from hardcore, operates in terms of enabling a type of subject oblivious to its negotiated and constructed nature.[65] Interestingly, Agamben describes this erratic kind of nullification (which resonates in modern philosophy's reflexive turn 'inward') in the following example he made in relation to the cinema:

> Film historians record as a disconcerting novelty the sequence in *Summer with Monika* (1952) when the protagonist, Harriet Andersson, suddenly fixes her gaze for a few seconds on the camera ('Here for the first

[63] See Lacan, "Kant with Sade," in *Ecrits*, 645-668.

[64] Agamben's words are 'nullification of the pure'. See Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. by Jeff Fort (New York: Zane Books, 2007), 89.

[65] In her essay "Reading Wild, Seriously: Confession of an Epistemophiliac," Lynn Worsham identifies a distinctive "symptom of scopophilia" in one's desire to see truth for oneself, underscoring the erotic component of the visual in the practice of hermeneutics, for instance, which incidentally, as Worsham adds, is structured and organized by a phallocentric investment in "the machinery of research." What we intend to exploit in Worsham's thesis is the correlation between demonstration of proof and scopophilia which comes close to our notion of philosophical pornography vis-à-vis the thing-in-itself. See Lynn Worsham, "Reading Wild, Seriously: Confession of an Epistemophiliac," in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 22:1 (Winter, 1992), 42.

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> time in the history of cinema," the director Ingmar Bergman commented, "there is established a shameless and direct contact with the spectator'). Since then pornography has rendered this procedure banal: in the very act of executing their most intimate caresses, porn stars now look resolutely into the camera, showing that they are more interested in the spectators than in their partners.[66]

By way of analogy, the actor's interest in the spectator may be likened to the counter-revolution of Ptolemy, so to speak. Within the pornographic setting, actors are expected to perform a Kantian decentering in the sense that each actor is expected to move around the object of knowledge, discovery or action. When a spectator looks in front of the camera, the Kantian revolution exposes what it assumes it has already suppressed, namely, the centering of the Ptolemaic subject craving for attention. The actors crave for attention outside of one another as if the object of attention, the actors themselves, inside the pornographic setting, is not enough to motivate them, not seductive enough to pursue the action that each craves from one another. In short, the Kantian revolution is found wanting. For his part, Agamben proposes how pornography may be reclaimed in light of the Kantian dilemma:

> The unprofanable of pornography—everything that is unprofanable—is founded on the arrest and diversion of an authentically profanatory intention. For this reason, we must always wrest from the apparatuses (of pornography and the fashion show)—from all apparatuses—the possibility of use that they have captured. [67]

Of interest to note here is what immediately strikes to us as Agamben's oblique criticism of Kant's correlationism, offering us a clue as to how we can conjugate a certain idea of profanation to Kant's idea of the absolute which renders the absolute already impure to begin with. Agamben asserts:

> Sacred or religious were the things … removed from the free use and commerce of men …. [If] to consecrate

[66] Agamben, *Profanation*, 89.
[67] *Ibid*., 92.

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> (*sacrare*) was the term that indicated the removal of things from the sphere of human law, to profane, meant conversely, to return them to the free use of men…
>
> The thing that is returned to the free use of men is pure, profane, free of sacred names. But use does not appear here as something natural; rather one arrives at it only by means of profanation.[68]

Here, the absolute would have to be diluted if it is to have any use at all. The absolute, either in science or metaphysics which all desire it, is judged in Kant by the moral criterion of reason. All disciplines of knowledge could only arrive at the absolute *absolutely* on moral grounds. But the moral grounds in this sense have always been an economy of sort, a moral economy that apportions the use of the absolute according to different methods of appropriating its value which also delimit the disciplinal autonomy and integrity of all sorts of objective knowledge (science, mathematics, etc.). Moral reason is economic reason through and through; in short, a profane business of expenditure. It is in this sense that from the beginning the absolute is already impure. Even supposing, expenditure is capable of the absolute, parenthesizing Meillassoux.[69] In Kant, reason is capable of the absolute, albeit, a moral absolute shy of a kind of absolute otherwise suppressed by Kant in favor of the moral pornography of reason. In this sense, nothing is actually returned for the free use of men. What is nonetheless made to appear as absolute for the free use of humanity is the absolute of the moral ground of metaphysics at the expense of the absolute/s that can be attained by other modes of apprehension, individuation, discovery and becoming.

Conclusion

We may argue in conclusion that the study of the thing-in-itself is beyond Kant, beyond the correlationism of subject and object, beyond the human subject (the third term) which profanes the absolute but not for the sake of the absolute. The absolute nonetheless can be radically pursued on condition that the subject (the third) has finally abandoned its faith in itself. It is in this new condition of the subject that the profanization of the absolute renders itself to the comprehensive *pov* of the subject, the full transparency of the absolute, its impurity and contingency, by the most

[68] *Ibid*., 73-74.
[69] Cf. n. 52.

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radical pornographic means; in other words, of the same approach as Agamben's profaning of the absolute.

Agamben's approach may be further complemented by a kind of restoring the absolute which requires, at least for Meillassoux, the reconstitution of Ptolemy into the modern discourse of truth if only to finally reveal how philosophy is unable to pursue the absolute in its most radical sense. Meillassoux's declaration that 'thought is capable of the absolute' attempts to break the Kantian spell that limits access to the apprehension of the absolute to the moral pornography of reason (as we argued in the preceding sections). However, Meillassoux's strong bias for the speculative kernel of scientific reasoning (whose chief model is Galileo), which, he argues, could radicalize our understanding of the absolute by formal mathematical means, is only one possible modality of the kind of becoming that approaches the modality of the *fourth* term.

But the emphasis on the mathematizable may not be entirely novel as Plato was the first to elaborate the critical import of mathematical deduction as a preliminary ascent to the dialectical contemplation of the Forms, or eternal truths. The single most important contribution of Meillassoux, however, lies in defending the mathematizable as the only direct access to the absolute which previous philosophies ignored or fell short of pushing through to its most radical extent. On the advent of the 19th century, mathematics received renewed attention, for instance, in Kant's critical intervention by exposing the pure speculative basis of mathematics[70] (along with other sciences) though in the end was subordinated to the demands of moral reason. This is the context of Meillassoux's criticism of Kant. By subordinating speculation to morals, Kant finally surrendered to the sciences the speculative kernel of reason after using up its resources to forge a revolution in philosophy already drained by centuries of metaphysical speculation without the benefit of self-critique.[71] Since then, science has conquered the *great outdoors*, further extending the speculative to the unravelling of the most ancestral thing-in-itself (the notion of ancestrality in Meillassoux), or the origin of the universe.[72] In the meantime, philosophy even today remains stuck in the moral correlationism of subject and object, or a kind of "primordial rapport between the two"[73] in a closed circuit of reflexive communication that must be sheltered, kept from harm's way, against the radical pornography of the profane, of the thing-in-itself that science otherwise is continuing to conquer. The question however remains if this absolute can be returned to the free use of humanity, in light

[70] Kant, "Preface, Second Edition," *Critique of Pure Reason*, 17.
[71] *Ibid*., "Preface, First Edition," 8.
[72] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 10.
[73] Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux*, 3.

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of Agamben's notion of the utmost possibility of its profanatory use, or if it is rather increasingly drifting away into the uninhabitable dimension of the cosmos which risks making the absolute totally unprofanable, hence, resistant to "arrest and diversion of its profanatory intention."[74]

Faced with such concern, the emancipation of the fourth term from the correlationism of Kantian reflexivity through Meillassoux's scientific diversion of the absolute must, therefore, be complemented by the possibility of arresting its tendency to shape up into severe, irresponsible act of diversion where nothing may be returned to the free use of humanity; or, if something could be returned, a veritable statistical delirium; assets hidden away in intractable codes, unassimilable signs, dizzying algorithms, not to mention, corporate balance-sheets barely communicable to the majority of the human race, speaking of the social circulation of goods rendered as 'dead loss' (in bourgeois society), etc. Where nothing meaningful and intelligible is returned for the possibility of its free use, there the absolute becomes another correlationist material available for moral (pornographic) capture.

Even supposing, the fourth term is an object still in need of unpacking. After all, one can still interpret this term as yet another Kantian correlationist term, albeit, disguised if not coded (as if returned for further human consumption), assigning the same value to the cognizing capacity of the subject at the expense of the non-subject (or the object itself) otherwise consigned to potential readiness for human purposes. It may be argued that it is still the function of cognition to filter the mutation of the object in consciousness. But contrary to the Kantian project in which concepts speak the subject, we are rather inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's conception of "[concepts] that speak the event."[75] The event is where concepts speak of the Other,[76] of becomings rather than being. As speech of becoming, a concept is the outcome of "diverse possible modalities"[77]of becoming beyond the moral economy of the subject, of the *third* that is blocking all other lines of metamorphosis. So far, we deemed it most desirable that this metamorphosis stands for the term in which all other expressions of becoming are packed together for purposes of conceptual designation, apropos of the Deleuzian concept of the event, the *fourth*.

Finally, in terms of understanding the absolute, conception in light of the *fourth* is deployed to nullify the absolute's moral relation to the subject. From here, it may now be possible to speak of unbinding the subject

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[74] Agamben, *Profanation*, 92.

[75] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 21.

[76] *Ibid*.

[77] Guattari, *Chaosophy*, 230.

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from correlationism in order that a new event of creation can at last trigger a new type of delirium, a new people.

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Article

Ethics of Worldliness: The Ethical Character of Arendt's Political Thought

Yosef Keladu

Abstract: This paper aims to reconstruct Arendt's ethics of worldliness from her specific way of thinking about the world and how judging an action takes place in it. For Arendt, by thinking we show our responsibility for the world into which we are thrown. In judging a political action we are directed by ethical constraints to come from the world itself and the verdict of spectators. That means, when we judge we should be aware of the things that an action could bring to the public realm and what others might say about it.

Keywords: Arendt, ethics of worldliness, thinking, responsibility

Introduction

In *The Human Condition,* Arendt claims that among the three human activities—labor, work, and action—it is only action that is political because it is done in the presence of other people. This means that the condition of action is plurality.[1] The sphere of action is a sphere of plurality where we disclose ourselves to others and interact as distinct and free persons. Action discloses a world or the public realm in which every individual freely reveals his or her distinctiveness to others. Like action, politics is also based on human plurality and deals with "coexistence and association of different men."[2] Arendt identifies action with politics, in the sense that action is political and politics is action. It is political action. This identification means that Arendt's thinking about the world or politics proceeds from the actual events or actions taking place in the world and not from abstract concepts or ideas. However, unlike other political theorists

[1] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7-8.

[2] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 93.

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who base their thought on empirical data, Arendt prioritizes the factical and experiential character of human life as an acting being in the world.

In her political theory, Arendt intends to liberate politics from the hold of abstract and universal truth. But, in so doing, as George Kateb argues, Arendt "subordinates practicality and morality to the aesthetic potentiality of politics."[3] Hence, Kateb charges Arendt with promoting an immoral politics. This paper argues that Kateb's charge is groundless and suggests that Arendt's political thought is inherently ethical. Following Andrew Schaap, I call Arendt's ethics as 'the ethics of worldliness.'[4] However, unlike Schaap who considers Arendt's ethics only from the world-disclosing potential of politics that depends on action and judgment,[5] I construe her ethics as coming from her thinking of the world and judging an action.

Ethics deals with human beings, their mode of being or what they are capable of, what they can do. Raymond Geuss uses the term ethics to refer either to "rules that contain restrictions on the ways in which it is permissible to act toward other people" or to the "whole way of seeing the world and thinking about it."[6] I take Geuss' second sense of ethics as a way of thinking about the world in what I construe to be Arendt's ethics. While worldliness is a technical term to designate the material condition of the world or the man-made condition of human existence. For Arendt, the world is not the nature or the earth, albeit it is needed to build a home and to preserve human life. The earth becomes the world in the proper sense only when "the totality of fabricated things is so organized that it can resist the consuming life process of the people dwelling in it."[7] In other words, it is only through human works that the earth becomes a place of worldliness. Therefore, in this paper, the ethics of worldliness would be taken to mean a way of thinking about the man-made condition of human existence.

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[3] George Kateb, *Patriotism and Other Mistakes* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), 151.

[4] Alice MacLachlan describes Arendt's ethics as an ethics of plurality on the basis of the political character of human action. She argues that Arendt's theory of political action reveals her deep ethical concern for the condition of human life. See Alice MacLachlan, "An Ethics of Plurality: Reconciling Politics and Morality in Hannah Arendt," in *History and Judgment*, ed. by A. MacLachlan and I. Torsen (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference, 2006), 3. Garrath Williams calls it political ethics because when we act in the world, we pay attention to the idea of responsibility and the on-going responsiveness to the world. Responsibility for the world is inherent in the action itself. See Garrath Williams, "Love and Responsibility: A Political Ethics for Hannah Arendt," in *Political Studies,* XLVI (1998), 940.

[5] Andrew Schaap, *Political Reconciliation* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 53-69.

[6] Raymond Geuss, *Outside Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 6.

[7] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1961), 210.

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Thinking about the World and Responsibility

Before elaborating on Arendt's thinking about the world, it is necessary to look into what she means by thinking. Arendt claims that thinking is different from reasoning for two grounds. First, reasoning is seductive in so far as it is loaded with answers. In reasoning, people intend to find an answer for their own behavior, action and even belief. It is meant to justify something that ought to be un-thinkable. Ordinary people such as the Nazis and Adolf Eichmann justified their evil action by reasoning that they just followed the order. In our time, terrorists find the same reason behind their violent actions, whether religious or ideological. Second, reasoning is secretive. Arendt calls it 'ice-cold reasoning' because it is done in the loneliness of a fantasized world where one relies only upon him- or herself. Here, reason is 'inner coercion' for a self-justification or self-confirmation that has no relationship with others, thus, fitting man "into the iron band of terror."[8] This is exactly what Arendt sees in the logicality of ideological thinking as displayed by totalitarian regimes, such as Hitler in Germany.

In contrast to reasoning, the precondition for thinking is solitude which is not the same with loneliness. A solitary man is alone with himself, while a lonely man, though in the midst of others, has lost the experience of being with others.[9] It is in the condition of solitude that man exercises his capacity of thinking. Here Arendt turns to the exemplary figure of Socrates. In Arendt's view, Socrates is an example of thinker who knows himself before engaging in a dialogue with the interlocutoers. This means that knowing oneself is the condition for knowing to live with others.[10] In solitude, Socrates is not alone but with himself because he is in a situation of a constant dialogue of the 'two-in-one' and the product of this dialogue interrupts the citizens' lives and drives them away from conformity—whether from opinion (*doxa*) or from socially acccepted norms or values or type of behavior.[11] Thus, Arendt claims that thinking is done in solitude when it is "a dialogue between me and myself; but this dialogue of the two-in-one does not lose contact with the world of my fellowmen because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought."[12]

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[8] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: A Harvest Book and Hartcourt Inc., 1951), 478.

[9] *Ibid*., 476.

[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 21.

[11] Roger Berkowitz, "Solitude and the Activity of Thinking," in *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, ed. By Roger Berkowitz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 241.

[12] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 476.

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Since thinking is always related to the world, then it allows us to gain access to the world of appearances. Arendt appropriates Kant's distinction between intellect (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*) that is not merely empirical but also ontological. On its most fundamental level, Kant claims that, as quoted by Arendt, the distinction between reason and intellect lies in the fact that "the concepts of reason serve us to conceive (*begreifen*, comprehend), as the concepts of the intellect serve us to apprehend perceptions (*Wahrnehmungen*)."[13] From Kant's perspective, Arendt claims that thinking is not the same as knowing because the goal of the intellect is cognition or knowing and the highest criterion for cognition is truth. However, that truth is factual because it is derived from the world of appearances or what is given to the senses. This factual truth depends on the evidence of the senses. While the goal of the faculty of thinking or what Kant calls 'reason' is to understand or think the meaning of what already exists in sense perception. The faculty of thinking takes for granted the existence of something in the sense perception and wishes to understand what it means for it to be.[14] The implication of Arendt's appropriation of Kant's distinction between intellect and reason, Robert Burch argues, is that cognition and the thirst for knowledge never leave the world of appearances. In fact, whether it is common sense or scientific investigation, all are inherent in the world of appearances. The desire to know is the desire for the full presence of the object and so thought is essentially derived from and within the world of appearances.[15]

For Arendt, thinking is an unfinished process and employs neither history nor coercive logic. She refers the former to modern philosophy that absolutizes or universalizes its idea and the latter to the logical determinism of totalitarian ideologies. Since thinking is an unfinished process, then any thought that happens to emerge should be treated as partial and open to criticism, or as Burch puts it: "The end of thinking is the ongoing process of thinking itself, self-destructive in being ever self-critical and self renewing."[16] Buckler calls Arendt's treatment of thinking as a "self-consciously mediated standpoint," which presupposes an epistemological mediation and a temporal mediation. The former is necessary to avoid conceptual closure and open up the possibility of communicating the product of thinking; and the latter to avoid historical closure in order to

[13] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: A Harvest Book and Hartcourt, Inc., 1978), 57.

[14] *Ibid*., 57.

[15] Robert Burch, "Recalling Arendt on Thinking," in *Action and Appearance*, ed. by Anna Yeatman (London: Continuum, 2011), 18-19.

[16] *Ibid*., 12.

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recognize that political actions are meaningful regardless of their historical locations.[17]

This understanding of thinking is the entry point for Arendt's notion of thinking about the world. Arendt claims that thinking is a response to a call coming from the nature of things. Thinking is bound to the reality and takes its bearing from the world. Here Arendt turns to Walter Benjamin who had 'the gift of thinking poetically.'[18] This kind of thinking is like a pearl diver who goes down into the depth of the sea to unfasten 'the fragments'—the pearl and the coral—and carry them to the surface. In the same way, thinking poetically means delving into the depth of the past and bringing into the world of the living what was survived in a new crystalized form as 'thought of fragments.'[19] For Arendt, in order to think anew we must go beyond the traditional philosophy and methodology and let the fragments or the objects of the world reveal themselves and inform our thought. This implies a conviction that there is novelty in any event in the world. Thus, Arendt emphasizes the importance of getting into the events themselves or in her own words: "To look upon the past with eyes undistracted by any tradition' and to 'dispose of a tremendous wealth of raw experiences."[20] The reliable source for thinking about the world is the world itself because the world can be meaningful in itself.

Thinking about the world presupposes attentiveness to the events of the world and implies a 'political commitment,' a commitment to take responsibility for what is happening in the world. Human beings must get out of themselves in order to be aware of and respond to the reality of the world.[21] Arendt believes that humans have the capacity for "building, preserving, and caring for a world that can survive us and remain a place fit

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[17] Steve Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 8.

[18] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: A Harvest Book & Harcourt Inc., 1955), 205.

[19] *Ibid*., 206. Seyla Benhabib sees the affinity between Arendt and Adorno because both have the 'Benjaminian moment' in their emphasis on the importance of going on thinking despite the break of civilization brought about by the Holocaust and the rise of the social in modernity. Arendt and Adorno believe that in the midst of a dark period, we must learn to think anew by liberating ourselves from the power of false universals and by being attentive to the actuality or the things that appear themselves. This is what Arendt calls 'thought of fragments" or what Adorno calls "the primacy of the objects." Seyla Benhabib, "Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian Moment," in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations* (California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 33.

[20] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 12.

[21] Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11.

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to live in for those who come after us."[22] There are two meanings of responsibility in Arendt's perspective. The first meaning refers to a sense of care for the world, which means to know or understand the world. In this context, Arendt, for Straume, is the most politically concerned of all political philosophers because of her emphasis on the importance of conceiving politics as the care for the human world.[23] One of the most important task of politics is to keep itself open for a self-questioning, reflexive and ongoing discourse. That means, political institutions should facilitate the forthcoming of many different perspectives. In *Men in Dark Times*, Arendt writes:

> … for the world is not humane just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse. (...) We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.[24]

The second sense of responsibility has to do with the acceptance of the givenness or the affirmation of life in the world. Arendt speaks of the world as the givenness since we are born into an existing web of relationships. Arendt criticizes Rahel Varnhagen who attempted to deny her Jewishness for the sake of being assimilated into the German culture. Varnhagen thought that by thus assimilating herself she would show her care for the country where she lived in. The fact shows that Varnhagen failed in erasing her trace as a Jew. For Arendt, Varnhagen would succeed if she assimilated herself as a distinct Jew with her Judaism's heritage. She claims: "In order to really enter an alien history, to live in a foreign world, she had to be able to communicate herself and her experiences."[25] Being a Jew is a gift and Judaism is her givenness or her world. Thus, Varnhagen should be grateful and be responsible for her own identity and experience as a Jew. The acceptance of the givenness is a matter of grace. There is something in us that needs to be thanked for, that is, life because it is a gift given to us. Here, responsibility for the world is not something that can be demanded of us but is our response to the world. It is a 'burden to be borne

[22] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 95.

[23] Ingerid Straume, "The Survival of Politics," in *Critical Horizons*, 13:1 (2012), 114.

[24] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 24-25.

[25] Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writing*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 26.

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by human beings' because the world where we live in is "both an undeserved gift and an undeserved burden."[26]

If life is a gift and the world is the givenness, then how is evil a part of human life in the world? How can we be grateful without justifying the evils? For Arendt, evil is neither deep nor demonic and so it does not infect the world at depth and make us despair about it. In order to fully understand this claim, let us turn to Arendt's discussion of guilt and collective responsibility. After the Holocaust, the question is raised concerning whether or not the ordinary German citizens assume collective responsibility for the crimes committed by the Nazis. Like Jaspers, Arendt affirms that they should be collectively responsible by virtue of their belongingness to a political community. However, unlike Jaspers who draws responsibility from his understanding of guilt,[27] Arendt claims that the feeling of guilt is not the origin of political responsibility. Without doing something wrong, Arendt argues, there is no reason for people to feel guilty. Making guilt collective not only disregards the possible innocent people but also it diverts our attention from the actual perpetrators. It is a kind of "whitewash of those who had done something" because "where all are guilty no one is."[28] Therefore, when the ordinary Germans assured each other and the whole world that they felt guilty of what had happened during the Holocaust, they are either morally confused or playing intellectual games.[29]

For Arendt, guilt and responsibility must be distinguished from one another. In her postcript to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt agrees that Eichmann should be condemned not for his political responsibility but for his guilt.[30] Of course, Eichmann is politically responsible, but in the court, his individual guilt or innocence must be the basis for condemning him. It is

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[26] Mark Antaki, "The Burden of Grace: Bearing Responsibility for the World," in *Quinnipiac Law Review*, 30 (2012), 514.

[27] According to Jaspers, criminal guilt is related to the violation of laws—whether it is natural or positive law—and lawbreakers should haven been convicted by a court. This guilt meets with punishment. Political guilt belongs to all citizens who are presumed to bear the deeds of their government by virtue of their membership. All citizens should be responsible for the consequences of the misdeeds of their regimes. It meets with liability. Moral guilt is the personal responsibility one bears before one's own conscience either because one has done something wrong or conforms to an immoral system, because one is indifferent to the sufferings of others, or because one fails to resist a criminal regime. Metaphysical guilt occurs when people fail to show absolute solidarity with their fellow human beings regardless of their particular relations to them. Human solidarity brings a feeling of guilt to those who have done nothing to prevent the evil deed. See Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. by A. B. Ashton (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 25-26.

[28] Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 28.

[29] *Ibid*., 29

[30] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Penguin Group Ltd., 1963), 298.

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clear that for Arendt when we talk about guilt we always refer it to something that pertains to morality or law, whereas responsibility refers to politics. Thus, from the perspective of politics, responsibility should be understood in the context of either belonging to a political community or doing something.[31] That means, one feels guilty because he is member of a community and has done something that offends the community where he belongs.

Arendt criticizes the European Jews who denied their Jewish heritage as a political identity and desired a change that would not compel them to act and, worse, would not compel them to voice out their opinion. According to Arendt, the European Jewish should have done something about what they had experienced as a political group by having their own opinion about what had happened to them. When she was challenged by Günter Gauss in an interview about her own situation where she left Germany and later became a USA citizen, Arendt defends herself by claiming that she at least has had an opinion since 1933. She responds to the challenge: "I tried to help in many ways (and) I must say it gives me a certain satisfaction. I was arrested ... I thought at least I had done something!"[32] Arendt is not a Zionist but her constant relationship with some prominent Zionist leaders gave her the chance to nourish her Jewishness.

For Arendt, responsibility is the link between individual deeds and belonging. This is clear in the story about Anton Schmidt, a German soldier who helped Jews to escape.[33] The significance of this story is the fact that Schmidt was a German who knew the situation and did something. In contrast, another German, Peter Bamm, knew about the Nazi atrocities but did nothing. Arendt acknowledges that from a political perspective, even in the midst of terror there are some people who are able to act.[34] Schmidt's action displays the link between action and natural givenness (being German), which is the most political dimension of responsibility. As a German, Schmidt was responsible for the crime committed by the Nazis,

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[31] Annabel Herzog, "Hannah Arendt's Concept of Responsibility," in *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, (2001), 41.

[32] Here Arendt refers to her involvement in the Zionist organization led by Kurt Blumenfield. Although Arendt was not a member of this organization, she was the one who put together a collection of all anti-Semitic statements. It was a risky task because to organize such a collection means to engage in what the Nazis called "horror propaganda." Thus, no Zionist could do that in order to protect the Zionist organization and Arendt joyfully took this job because it was an intelligent idea and it gave her the feeling "that something could be done after all." Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 5.

[33] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 231.

[34] *Ibid*., 233

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although he was not guilty. Schmidt's action—taking initiative to help Jews—changes the meaning of his givenness, being a German. Thus, by assuming responsibility, Arendt argues, people are urged to act and their acts can change the human world, and this has an impact on what it means to be a member of a given political community.

Judging Political Action

Arendt's identification of action with politics is by no means unproblematic. It seems to be contradictory because on the one hand, she celebrates political action but on the other hand, she is fully aware of the destructive effects of political action as displayed by the Nazi regime in Germany. Thus, how do we properly understand Arendt's celebration of political action in the face of the violent actions? Here the importance of judgment comes to the fore.

Reflective Judgment

Arendt deals with judgment in her book on Kant called *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, where she appropriates the latter's aesthetic judgment. Arendt makes two important observations regarding Kant's third critique, *The Critique of Judgment*, that shed light on her own idea of judgment. First, Kant never elaborates truth, "except once in a special context" because for him human beings are not intelligible or cognitive beings; Kant always "speaks of man in plural, as they really are and live in societies."[35] Second, for Kant, the faculty of judgment deals with particulars, maintaining that the fundamental act of reason is judgment in general and the possibility of giving a judgment on a thing or an event has equal weight. For Kant, judgment bridges the gap between the phenomenal world and the noumenal order of being.[36] Kant distinguishes between reason through which we recognize the experiential condition of knowledge and intellect that enables us to grasp the noumenal order. Thus, in judgment, we freely

[35] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 13.

[36] According to Kant, there are two kinds of judgment, namely reflective and determinant judgments. In a reflective judgment, the particulars are given beforehand while in a determinant judgment, the universal is given and the particulars are subsumed under them. In the first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes: "Judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under it. If the universal (the rule, principle, law) is given, then judgment, which subsumes the particular under it, is determinate ... But if only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely reflective." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 1987), 18-19.

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act to recognize the experiential condition of knowledge within the noumenal order.[37]

Drawing from Kant, Arendt acknowledges that there are two meanings of judgment in our common usage that need to be differentiated. In a general sense, judgment is taken to mean, "organizing and subsuming the individual and particular under the general and universal."[38] In this judgment, the particulars or concrete events in the world are identified through the standards that we have formed in our minds. The following illustration can explain what Arendt means here. When we say that a woman is beautiful because of one, two, three or more reasons, our judgment of the beauty of that woman comes first from our own idea or concept that we have formed in our mind. It does not come from that woman who appears herself. Here, judgment is rendering the standard that may or may not be appropriate to measure the thing that we judge. Another kind of judgment that is completely different from the first one is the judgment of aesthetics and taste. This judgment arises when we are confronted with things, which "we have never seen before and for which there are no standards at our disposal."[39] The precondition for judgment is the evidence of what is being judged and the ability to make distinction. It is the things as they appear themselves before us that drive us to distinguish between the beautiful and the ugly, between right and wrong. This second sense of judgment is what Kant calls reflective judgment.

Arendt finds in Kant's reflective judgment a new standard for judging that no longer moves from the universal to the particulars but conversely from the particulars to the universal. That means, instead of applying the accepted standards and given rules to the particular situations, in judging we deal with objects in themselves. When we judge, we draw some new principles that involve new concepts coming from an individual thing or situation.[40] Here, judgment is the ability to apply thinking into the particulars because judgment enables us to tell whether something is right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. It is "the manifestation of the wind of thought in the world of appearances."[41]

Arendt's appropriation of Kant's reflective judgment, Fine claims, is tied to the notion of common sense and the enlarged mentality. For Arendt, Kant is distinguished from other philosophers because of his interest in the world of appearances or the world of plurality. Being with others is

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[37] Max Deutscher, *Judgment after Arendt* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), xv.

[38] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 102.

[39] *Ibid*., 102.

[40] Deutscher, *Judgment after Arendt*, 150.

[41] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 193.

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indispensable for Kant, which he relates to the idea of common sense. In Arendt's view, common sense allows the subjective judgment to be contrasted with the possible judgment of others, transforming those judgments into something universally valid or at least universally communicable.[42] Arendt relates Kant's common sense to community sense, considered as capacities of the mind that enable people to participate in public life.

While Arendt admits the importance of common sense, we should not, however, overstate it and let it determine the content of our own judgment because common sense is only partially true. Here Arendt then turns to Kant's second idea of the enlarged mentality, taking into account others' points of view. Arendt calls Kant's enlarged mentality as "the train of one's imagination to go visiting."[43] This capacity is necessary for overcoming the subjectivity of our perception and making public the opinions for an ongoing discussion. From Arendt's own perspective, the enlarged mentality is, as Buckler puts it: "A capacity that becomes visible in the public realm as an opinion to be shared and discussed, a view that seeks the consent of others in non-ideally regulated discussion about how the world should be and what we wish to see in it."[44]

The Standard for Judging an Action

Arendt's claim that reflective judgment proceeds from the particular events in the world and not from the universal standards is applicable as well in the realm of morality. In fact, she firmly claims that the absolute moral standards have collapsed in the tragedy of the Holocaust that marks the breakdown of our civilization.[45] This collapse gives the impression that what we call morality consists merely of 'our habits' and is

[42] Robert Fine, "Judgment and the Reification of the Faculties: A Reconstructive Reading of Arendt's Life of the Mind," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 34 (2008), 165.

[43] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 43.

[44] Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Theory*, 28.

[45] In her essay 'Some Question of Moral Philosophy,' Arendt analyzes traditional morality as encountered in the totalitarian terror of socialism or Marxism in Russia and Nazism in Germany. With regard to Marxism, she claims that the characteristic of Lenin's morality is that it is a "naïve belief that once the social circumstances are changed through revolution, mankind will follow automatically the few moral precepts that have been known and repeated since the dawn of history." Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 53. However, with regard to Nazism in Germany, the totalitarian regime of Hitler changed the moral standard of 'Thou shall not kill' and 'Thou shall not lie' to 'Thou shall kill' and 'Thou shall lie.' Arendt writes: "Hitler's criminal morality was changed back again at a moment's notice, at the moment 'history' had given the notice of defeat. … This sudden return to 'normality' contrary to what is often complacently assumed can only reinforce our doubts." Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 54.

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no more than a set of mores, customs, and manners which could be exchanged with another set. Moreover, this set of mores, customs, and manners is uncritically accepted by ordinary people, in the sense that as long as moral standards are socially accepted, people never doubt what they have been taught to believe.[46] What concerns Arendt is the uncritical mind of people who are easily accepting of any given moral standard. For her, following universal standards has the possibility of shutting down the thinking process. This can be seen in the trial of Adolf Eichmann who was described as someone who was unable to think. Eichmann's constant repetition of phrases that he would like to find peace with his former enemies was considered an indication of his inability to think.[47]

Furthermore, Arendt is also concerned with the secret characteristic of Christian goodness in the sense that whatever man does, the actor must not know the goodness of his or her act. It is only God who knows the goodness of an act and not the actor or even the world. In this way, Arendt argues, an action is judged good or bad not by the actor but by God. Consequently, the goodness or badness of an action is secretive because it lies in the mind of God and so is unsuited in the public realm. In fact, when this goodness enters into the world, it becomes corrupted: "Goodness that comes out of hiding and assumes a public role is no longer good, but corrupt in its own terms and will carry its own corruption whenever it goes."[48] Since the idea of goodness does not come from the self and the world, it represents the absolute purity that cannot be questioned or talked about. The absolute nature of goodness threatens not only the plurality of opinions that constitutes the public realm, but also the freedom of other actors. It becomes despotic because it tends to be destructive. Or as she puts in *On Revolution*, it "spells doom to everyone when it is introduced into the political realm."[49]

What Arendt wants to demonstrate is that in the public realm, the goodness should not be the standard for judging an action because it indicates an inclination to legislate for politics from a vantage point that is outside of politics itself. Therefore, Arendt suggests that greatness, a principle generated in the action itself, be the standard for judging an action. Arendt relates action to the event of natality or birth, which she considers as *arche*, the principle of the beginning and of givenness. Both principles are coexisting and each gives rise to two different relations. The beginning gives rise to plurality and principle to singularity or uniqueness. Many people are born into the world, but each newly born introduces something anew to the

[46] *Ibid*., 54.
[47] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 4.
[48] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 77.
[49] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 84.

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world and appears to be a distinct and unique person. This means that the new beginning carries within itself its own principle that differentiates him or her from others. The unpredictability of an event of natality lies in the fact that the origin or the beginning carries within itself its rule or principle. That is exactly what happens in action. When one acts, one introduces something new, and as a new beginning, this action carries within itself a principle that makes it distinct from others. The unpredictability of action lies in the action itself as a new beginning that carries within itself its own principle.[50]

Arendt draws the term principle from Montesquieu's analysis of the nature of government and the principle behind its action. Montesquieu claims that the nature of government is what makes it as it is and the principle is what makes government act in a certain way. In this sense, the nature of government is its particular structure and the principle is the human passions that set it in motion. There can be many forms of government, but each form carries within itself a principle that underlies its own action. In the *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu claims that a form of government is animated by a spirit or *ethos*, which is understood as the affection that provides the principle of its action. For instance, the republican form is animated by the principle of political virtue; the monarchical form by the principle of honor; and the despotic form by the principle of fear.[51] From Montesquieu's perspective, Arendt claims that each principle operates 'from without' and exists in the world not as an abstraction but as an actual action which appears to others. That means each action reveals its own principle.

An action is tied to the individual through a principle, which the Greeks called *archein:* to originate, begin, or give a rule which is conditioned by this formative principle. This reveals the connection between the actor and the act, while the act itself combines the principle and its performance. "The greatest that man can achieve is his own appearance and actualization."[52] Thus, the principle is disclosed by the act in its performance and produces a novelty that only becomes intelligible after the fact. In this context, a principle is not an intention because it does not suggest a result

[50] Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt & Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 82.

[51] Garrath quotes Montesquieu as follows: "... (political) virtue, being love of the republic and thence of the (political) equality it offers; honour, 'the prejudice of each person and each condition,' meaning ambitiousness within a statue hierarchy, offered by bodies intermediary to sovereign and people; and fear, which reduces every subject to 'a creature that obeys a creature who wants,' the despot, submission to whose whims constitutes the only enduring law." Garrath William Garrath, "Love and Responsibility: A Political Ethics for Hannah Arendt," in *Political Studies*, XLVI (1998), 943.

[52] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 208.

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and offers no obligation to others. Unlike result and obligation that can be predetermined before the performance of an action, the greatest principle is only conceived after an action is performed and narrated in a story. She writes: "... the meaning of a committed act is revealed only when the action itself has come to an end and become a story susceptible to narration."[53]

In Arendt's account, the *arche* only sets the action into motion without directing it. These principles illuminate action. Since political action concerns with the phenomenal world of appearances, then these inspiring principles become fully manifest only in the performing act itself.[54] The principle as the specific meaning of action is identified after the fact by others who witness that action. One's action is judged by others or spectators to whom the actor appears. It is the recognition of spectators that gives meaning to the actor's deed and its significance for the common world. Without the presence of others who witness the actor's deed, the world in-between is not possible; and without the judgment of others, the meaning of action cannot be comprehensive. It remains partial because it depends only on the actor's own judgment.

The Ethical Character of Arendt's Reflective Judgment

Arendt's appeal to greatness as a principle that arises out of the performative action and the standard of judging a political action challenges the traditional and Christian moralities that tend to impose the universal and absolute moral principles to the realm of politics. This tendency is destructive or anarchic because it is a kind of "an escape from and the emasculation of, the inherently plural and conflictual sphere of politics."[55] Thus, the question that remains to be dealt with has something to do with the ethical constraint in Arendt's reflective judgment.

Arendt offers a judgment that is neither cognitive nor historical. It is not cognitive because it depends on the approval of others who have common sense. Judgment is not historical because it is not intended to posses a single judgment or choice, but rather it is always open for an

[53] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 82.

[54] Arendt beautifully writes: "Action insofar as it is free is neither under the guidance of the intellect nor under the dictate of the will—although it needs both for the execution of any particular goal—but springs from something altogether different which ... I shall call a principle. Principles do not operate from within the self as motives do ... but inspire, as it were, from without; and they are much too general to prescribe particular goals, although every particular aim can be judged in the light of its principle once the act has been started. For, unlike the judgment of the intellect which precedes action, and unlike the command of the will which initiates it, the inspiring principle becomes fully manifest only in the performing act itself ...." Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 152.

[55] Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Thought*, 126.

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ongoing discourse. Arendt suggests that in judging we should take into account other people's points of view or our judgment should be directed to others. This implicitly implies respect for others because, like ourselves, other people are also acting and speaking persons. They possess every right to have an opinion of their own about anything in the world. In the interview with Günther Gauss, Arendt claims that her thought is always grounded in "trust in people ... a trust—which is difficult to formulate but fundamental—in what is human in all people."[56]

Respect for other's points of view and trust in what is human in all people are actually interwoven in Arendt's writings. In fact, Arendt devotes so much attention to the individuals who not only did good and acted right but also bravely spoke in dark times about what is right and wrong. She discovers the latter in the figure of Socrates and other writers as discussed in her book *Men in Dark Times* who kept thinking and judging up to the point of sacrificing themselves for the sake of what they held to be right and good. They are the examples of people who still exercise their ability to judge in dark times because they "went really on their own judgments, and they did so freely; there were no rules to be abided by, under which the particular cases with which they were confronted could be subsumed."[57] The point is that Arendt still believes in the human capacity for judging things of the world.

The trust in the human capacity for judging implies that all human beings have this capacity in common and thus all people can judge from their different positions in the world. Consequently, any reflective judgment, albeit done in private and tied to a particular condition, is always liable to a common and ongoing discursive deliberation. In discursive deliberation one's own judgment is exposed to the public realm not to discover a cultural convention but rather to discover whether or not this particular reflective judgment is in accord with what is the best for the public realm. Buckler argues that Arendt's ethics cannot be assimilated with the communitarian thinking that appeals to the cultural convention as the ground for political ethics. This means that a set of shared or culturally inscribed conventions is considered as the basis for arranging the different perspectives about our common image of the good life at the political level. Although the cultural conventions no longer refer to the universal or absolute standards, they represent a kind of solidarity in belief, which is quite different from Arendt's emphasis on plurality. Consequently, Buckler claims that the communitarian grounding of political ethics would "threaten spontaneity and so neglect the political in favor of the imposition of a given

[56] Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 23.
[57] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 295.

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set of ethical prescriptions."[58] For Arendt, the ethical constraint of all judgments is the greatest deed or word that endures and the most radiant glory that one reveals in the human world.[59] Every time we pass a judgment on an action taking place in the world, we discern what is the greatest thing that action could bring to the public realm. In other words, in judging we are always conscious of the ethical constraints or imperatives that arise out of the public realm, which is the greatness of the public realm.

Furthermore, Arendt repeatedly claims that one's own judgment should be contrasted with other judgments or other points of view in an ongoing discussion. This process does not intend to attain an authoritative judgment, but rather to seek for the approval or disapproval of others who inhabit the same world. Here, the ethical constraint of Arendt's reflective judgment is not quite similar to a set of procedural principles. Of course, the procedural principles are derived from the process of public deliberations. This means that public deliberations produce a set of principles that carry substantive ethical authority that could provide criteria for the just arrangement of the institution in the polity. Although the procedural principles follow the practice of politics, Buckler argues that this process of public deliberation still appeals to the universal conditions of reflective judgment. This means that the point of reference is judgment, the citizens' faculty of passing judgment, and thus not necessarily the phenomenal conditions of appearance, which is central in Arendt's notion of reflective judgment. These phenomenal conditions "may provide a basis for political ethics, not because it presupposes substantive constraints but because it implies an understanding of how constraint might arise in the context of public realm itself."[60]

Arendt acknowledges that one particular judgment has validity but is never universally valid. Thus, every partial judgment is subjected to the public gaze or the verdict of spectators. In other words, when we pass on judgment on a particular action, we anticipate what others might judge about that same action. We are conscious of the verdict that might come from others. For Arendt, when we contrast our judgment with others', we search for the meaning of all the judgments in the common world. It becomes clear that Arendt's ethics advocates action and judgment and since both are primarily defined by their reference to the public realm and other people, then the ethical constraints or the imperatives are inherent in the public realm and the verdicts of spectators.

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[58] Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Thought*, 128.
[59] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 218.
[60] Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Thought*, 130.

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Article

Unintentional Consent

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Abstract: Some political philosophers have judged that it is absurd to think that there can be unintentional consent. In this paper, I present an example of unintentional consent, which I refer to as the adapted boardroom example. I consider reasons for denying that this is an example of unintentional consent but find that these reasons are unconvincing.

Keywords: Simmons, consent, unintentional consent, tacit consent

Introduction

Can there be such a thing as unintentional consent? At least two distinguished political philosophers have dismissed a yes answer to this question as absurd. Both do so when discussing the writings of Locke on consent to the government. One of these political philosophers, Joel Feinberg, tells us:

> Locke writes that a sure sign of consent to governmental authority (whatever the consenter's actual intentions) is one's continued residence in a country. But in the absence of a clearly presented choice and a formal convention for indicating consent (like the board meeting described above), this would be an "unknowing or unintentional consent," which is to say an absurdity.[1]

The other political philosopher is A. John Simmons, who tells us:

[1] Joel Feinberg, "Civil Disobedience in the Modern World," in *Freedom and Fulfilment: Philosophical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 167.

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> … Locke's suggestion that binding consent can be given unintentionally is a patent absurdity.[2]

I do not agree that it is absurd to suppose that there can be unintentional consent. Indeed, I suppose that there can be. [3] This paper focuses on the work of Simmons, specifically his article 'Tacit Consent and Political Obligation,' in order to contest the judgment that this is absurd.

A Definition and Two Answers

Why say that it is absurd to suppose that there can be unintentional consent? To say this is to say that unintentional consent is obviously impossible. Those who make this claim do not spell out the thinking behind it. It is important to do so because there is an immediate objection to the claim. The objection is that one can unintentionally consent to X by intentionally signing a contract but failing to read the small print which specifies X as something being consented to by signatories.

In response to this objection, it may be said that a case of this kind actually counts as intentional consent. What then is unintentional consent? Unintentional consent, it may be proposed, is to be understood as follows:

> A person unintentionally consents to X if, and only if, two conditions are met. Firstly, they consent to X without intending to. Secondly, they have not intentionally consented to something (e.g., a contract), which specifies in its content that those who consent to this thing are thereby consenting to X.

The second condition is there to rule out the small print cases described in the previous paragraph. I will work with this definition below. (For how well it fits with the literature on 'unintentional,' see the terminological note at the end of this paper.)

Working with the definition, we can readily anticipate two answers to the question of why it is absurd to suppose that there are any genuine

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[2] A. John Simmons, "Tacit Consent and Political Obligation," in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 5:3 (1976), 282.

[3] The material I offer to counter dismissals of unintentional consent also challenges Joseph Raz's account of consent. Raz says that consent is given by behaviour that is undertaken in the belief that it will change the normative situation of another and in the belief that observers will realize this, but I offer an example which casts doubt on this assertion. See Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 81.

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cases of unintentional consent. I shall refer to these answers as the meaning answer and the protection answer. Neither answer succeeds.

1. The Meaning Answer. One answer to why unintentional consent is impossible is that if one is using the word 'consent' as we ordinarily do, the very meaning of this word entails that consent must be intentional. Hence, to use this word as we ordinarily do and speak of unintentional consent is to contradict the definition of consent. And if one is not using this word as we ordinarily do, then one is talking about something else, different from what we are talking about when we deny that there can be unintentional consent, or so it will be said by a person who offers this answer. We can call this answer the meaning answer, because it appeals exclusively to the meaning of the word 'consent' to answer the question.

The meaning answer can be contested by adapting an example that Simmons gives of tacit consent.[4] I shall refer to his example as 'the original boardroom example.' It involves the chairman of a company, at the close of a company board meeting, saying, 'There will be a meeting of the board at which attendance is mandatory next Tuesday at 8 am, rather than at our usual Thursday time. Any objections?' The board members remain silent. In remaining silent, Simmons says that they have tacitly consented to the proposed meeting. Tacit consent is consent which is expressed not through performing an action, but through the absence of an action, in this case not raising an objection. Simmons specifies certain conditions that have to be met in order for inaction to be a sign of consent.[5] One condition he specifies is that there is a reasonable period of time in which objections or expressions of dissent are invited or appropriate. Another condition is that the means for expressing dissent are reasonably easy to perform. There are other conditions, all of which are conceived to be met in the example.

In the example, all board members are aware of the chairman's announcement. I shall now adapt the example in order to dispute the meaning answer. I will refer to the version of it presented in this paragraph as 'the adapted boardroom example'. Imagine that one member of the board stops listening significantly before the close of the meeting and daydreams instead. The chairman clearly makes an announcement about a mandatory meeting next Tuesday and clearly asks if there are any objections, but this person misses the information because he or she is not paying attention. He or she is perfectly capable of paying attention, but he or she does not. He or she is silent during the period in which objections are invited. In this adapted version of Simmons' example, the silence is not an intentional expression of consent, but it is taken as an expression of consent by the

[4] Simmons, "Tacit Consent and Political Obligation," 278-279.
[5] *Ibid.*, 279-280.

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chairman. Is the chairman mistaken to think that this board member has consented? It would be nothing extraordinary for the board member to later find out about the proposed meeting and be told, 'If you did not object, you consented. You now have to be there.' If not intending to consent entails that the daydreaming board member has not contested, in virtue of the very meaning of the term 'consent,' this needs to be argued for, because it is not at all obvious.

How can one argue for the meaning answer? A standard approach would be to begin with a definition of consent that is beyond reasonable doubt and then show that this definition entails that consent must be intentional. Simmons provides us with the following definition of consent, which is supposed to capture the ordinary meaning of the word 'consent' in the sense that is relevant for his article:

> When I speak of consent, then, I mean the consenter's according to another a special right to act within areas where the consenter is normally free to act.[6]

I have doubts about whether this definition is right. But even if it is right, the definition does not say that consent has to be given intentionally; hence, it is also not apparent from this definition that unintentional consent is a contradiction in terms.

In the sentence after the one quoted above, Simmons implies that giving someone else a right to act where the consenter is normally free to act has to be done intentionally:

> This is expressed through a suitable expression of the consenter's intention to enter such a transaction, and involves the assuming of a special obligation not to interfere with the exercise of the right accorded.[7]

But to simply assert this is not to argue that consent has to be given intentionally. No one who doubts that it has to be intentional would have any reason to be moved by this assertion alone. Furthermore, I wonder whether examples like the adapted boardroom example did not occur to Simmons and I wonder whether, if they had occurred to him, he would not have made the statement last quoted.

Now an understandable concern is that the adapted boardroom example is not a case of the daydreaming board member consenting, even

[6] *Ibid.*, 276.
[7] *Ibid.*

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tacitly consenting, because to consent to something is to inwardly approve of that thing and the daydreaming board member is not aware of the proposed rescheduled meeting in order to have this attitude. However, Simmons is careful to distinguish the sense of consent which is relevant for his discussion from the sense in which to consent to something is to inwardly approve of that thing:

> But this sense of "consent" is quite irrelevant to our present discussion, where we are concerned exclusively with consent in the "occurrence" sense, that is, with consent as an act which may generate obligations. An attitude of approval is completely irrelevant to the rights and obligations of the citizen who has it. When a man consents, he has consented and may be bound accordingly, regardless of how he feels about what he has consented to.[8]

Simmons is surely correct to think that there can be consent, in the sense in which he is interested, without an inner attitude of approval. If an inner attitude of approval were needed, then a person could far too easily deny that they have obligations after giving a sign of consent to something, because they could say that the giving of this sign was not accompanied by inward approval. For example, a person who gives a sign of consent to a meeting so as to not be at odds with the majority could later say that they have no obligations because they did not inwardly approve of the meeting. There should not be such an easy way out of obligations and so an inner attitude of approval cannot be required.

So far then there is no support for the meaning answer as to why unintentional consent is impossible. Furthermore, I think any attempt to establish this answer is going to be open to doubt. On the basis of the adapted boardroom example, it is open to doubt that the meaning of 'consent' implies that if someone consented, they did so intentionally. I do not see how it can be proved that there is this implication.

2. The Protection Answer. There is another answer that can easily be anticipated in response to the question, 'Why say that it is absurd to suppose that there can be unintentional consent?' This answer asserts that the intention requirement is the only barrier to others gaining claims over one's time, energy, body, mind and property. Others can say that you consented and without the requirement that consent has to be given intentionally, you will have no grounds to protest. The requirement that

[8] *Ibid.*, 290.

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consent be given intentionally is there to protect you from others gaining rights over you and your belongings, a protection that nothing else could give. We can refer to this as the protection answer.

I think this answer is mistaken. There is a different requirement that can also constitute a considerable barrier to others gaining claims over your time, energy, body, mind and property. We can call this different requirement 'the responsibility requirement.' According to it, a person only counts as consenting if he or she is responsible for giving the sign of consent. We do not need the intention requirement to have a barrier, because we can appeal to the responsibility requirement instead. And if we do appeal to the responsibility requirement, we can allow for some cases of unintentional consent, such as in the adapted boardroom example, where the daydreaming board member is responsible for not paying attention.

There is another point that is worth making here. Even if we begin by accepting the intention requirement, there is a challenge that must be dealt with. We must allow for intentional consent to change our rights. Can it not then change our rights in the following way: An act of intentional consent introduces the possibility of unintentional consent in select contexts, which was not there before?[9] To illustrate this change, imagine that to become a member of a certain company board one has to intentionally consent to various things, including that if one stays silent and does not object to the chairman's proposal, when it has been made clearly and objections have been invited, then one counts as consenting to the proposal regardless of one's intentions. Normally this is not stated explicitly, but there could be a contract in which it is. Does not intentional consent to becoming a member of this board therefore include a change in rights that introduces the possibility of unintentional consent as a board member? Given that an advocate of the protection answer allows for intentional consent to transform our rights, they need to explain why this particular transformation is impossible if they are to deny unintentional consent, and I cannot see any explanation available. (Note that cases of unintentional consent enabled by prior intentional consent are different from the small print cases that we are not counting as genuine unintentional consent. In cases of unintentional consent enabled by prior intentional consent, what is consented to unintentionally is not specified in the contract to which prior intentional consent is given.)

At a certain point in his text, Simmons gives an answer for why one specific form of consent, tacit consent, must be intentional. The answer he gives closely resembles the protection answer. Perhaps it is just a version of

[9] I have taken inspiration here from H.A. Pritchard's account of how promises give rise to obligations. See H.A. Pritchard, "The Obligation to Keep a Promise," in *Moral Writings*, ed. by H.A. Pritchard and Jim MacAdam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 259-260.

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this answer. So far we have no reason to think that the protection answer works. In the next section, I will show that Simmons does not adequately justify the answer he gives.

Simmons' Argument

The overall aim of Simmons' article is to evaluate consent theories of political obligation, which he refers to as consent theories for short. According to a consent theory of political obligation, we have obligations to obey the government because we have consented to do as it says. Now since most of us do not explicitly consent, the proponent of this kind of theory traditionally appeals to tacit consent. They say that we tacitly consent to follow the government's commands. In order to evaluate this appeal to tacit consent as the source of political obligations, Simmons tries to provide an account of tacit consent in general: what it is and what conditions must be obtained in order for it to be given. The original boardroom example is introduced as part of developing this general account. He then goes on to consider whether the general account he develops, when applied to the specific case of tacit consent to the government, results in a plausible theory of political obligation. He denies that it does.

Before making this denial, Simmons presents an argument that tacit consent can only be a source of political obligation if tacit consent to anything must be given intentionally:

> … consent theory's account of political obligation is appealing only if consent remains a clear ground of obligation, and if the method of consent protects the individual from becoming politically bound unknowingly or against his will. It seems clear that these essential features of a consent theory cannot be preserved if we allow that tacit consent can be given unintentionally.[10]

To be politically bound, as the expression is used here, means to have an obligation to obey the government. Simmons thinks that a consent theorist of political obligation has to accept the following argument:

> (1) There can be cases of political obligation resulting from tacit consent.

[10] Simmons, "Tacit Consent and Political Obligation," 281.

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> (2) There can only be cases of political obligation resulting from tacit consent if tacit consent to government authority protects an individual from becoming politically bound unknowingly or against their will.
> (3) Tacit consent to government authority can only protect an individual from becoming politically bound unknowingly or against his or her will if tacit consent to anything cannot be given unintentionally.

From (2) and (3):

> (4) There can only be cases of political obligation resulting from tacit consent if tacit consent to anything cannot be given unintentionally.

From (1) and (4):

> (5) Tacit consent to anything cannot be given unintentionally.

This argument seems very similar to saying, 'We cannot allow for there to be unintentional consent to one particular thing unless we allow for there to be unintentional consent to anything and we do not want to allow for that.' It is worth noting that Simmons himself accepts the (1) to (5) argument. He accepts that there can be political obligations from consent. His difficulty with consent theories of political obligation is that he does not think that there are enough consenters, either explicit or tacit, for this kind of theory to work;[11] or at least that was his view at the time.[12]

The objection I wish to make to this argument concerns premise (3): the premise that tacit consent to government authority can only protect an individual from becoming politically bound unknowingly or against his or her will if tacit consent to anything cannot be given unintentionally. Presumably, this premise is false if there can be unintentional tacit consent to some things yet there cannot be political obligations arising from unintentional tacit consent. This combination would mean that tacit consent does not have to always be intentional in order for one to not be at risk from becoming politically bound unknowingly or against one's will by tacit consent. Now consent theorists must allow that consent sometimes does not generate obligations. One kind of example is if one consents to do something radically evil to another. One is not now obliged to carry out the action. There are other kinds of example where consent does not generate

[11] *Ibid*., 290.

[12] For criticism of his earlier view, see A. John Simmons, "Consent Theory for Libertarians," in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 22: 1 (2005), 346-347.

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obligations, notably when it is the consenter who is in need of basic protection. (Consider, for instance, the case of a child who consents to hard labour.) If becoming politically bound unknowingly or against one's will is such a bad thing, I think there is room for the believer in unintentional tacit consent to say that no political obligation can arise from unintentional tacit consent, while maintaining that there are other obligations that can arise from it. Anyone who wishes to deny that there is room for this move needs to justify their denial, but Simmons provides no justification.

At present the two answers that can be anticipated for why unintentional consent is impossible are unconvincing and the closest Simmons offers to an answer, his argument against unintentional tacit consent, is no better. In light of the adapted example I have given, the onus is on those who think that unintentional consent is impossible to provide a compelling reason against this possibility. I cannot find any reason that serves to rule out the possibility.

Terminological Note

I have defined unintentional consent in a way that, I think, captures what Simmons and Feinberg mean by 'unintentional consent' when they claim that unintentional consent is absurd. There is a subtle literature on when an action is unintentional,[13] and perhaps Simmons and Feinberg have used the word 'unintentional' in a way that does not fit well with some strands of this literature. But I would be careful about transferring points from this literature to the context of the consent literature, because the crucial issue for evaluating Simmons and Feinberg's claim is whether there can be unintentional consent as defined here.

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[13] E.g. Ryan Wasserman, "Intentional Action and the Unintentional Fallacy," in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 92:4 (2011), and Alfred Mele, "Intentional, Unintentional, or Neither? Middle Ground in Theory and Practice," in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 49: 4 (2012).

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Article

Back to Nature and Moral-Spiritual Rediscovery: Lessons from Lao Tzu and St. Augustine on Human Conduct in Modern Society

Jove Jim S. Aguas

Abstract: Modern life is convenient, efficient and comfortable—thanks to the advancement in technology in the modern society. But it is also problematic, complicated and sometimes meaningless and it breeds complacency, greed and discord. So the question that confronts us today is: how do we live or conduct ourselves is modern society with all its trappings and yet preserve our sense of dignity and simplicity? How do we live a life that is comfortable and meaningful, efficient and contented, convenient and natural? To get some insights we turn to the past and look for some lessons from two important thinkers and masters from the Western tradition—St. Augustine and the Eastern tradition—Lao Tzu. They are two prominent thinkers who came from different cultures, different religious orientations and times. The society and time they came from may be different from ours but they can still offer us some lessons how to live a simple and meaningful life in a modern society. Lao Tzu tells us that we need to go back to nature, follow the way of the Tao and be guided by the *wu-wei*. St. Augustine advices us that while we are physical and mortal creatures, we need to rediscover our moral and spiritual nature and live according to our divine image. Indeed the wisdom of the past both from the East and West can definitely guide us and give us valuable lessons.

Keywords: St. Augustine, Taoism, *wu-wei*, human conduct

Introduction

While modern society with its advancement in technology, economics and business has made human life more comfortable, efficient, exciting and convenient, it has also bred discord, greed,

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complacency, and arrogance. Life seems so easy yet it is also problematic; life seems purposely driven yet meaningless; life seems so alive yet empty, so convenient yet so complicated. We have advanced in knowledge yet we lack critical consciousness. We have become intelligent as to harness the resources of nature, yet we have become insensitive and unwise as to how to preserve nature. Modern living and advances in technology is like a double-edged sword, they could be so good yet so dangerous; they could be so beneficial yet so harmful. We cannot reverse the course of time and go back to the past when everything was so simple, so natural yet so fulfilling and meaningful, at least compared to how things are now. And we cannot ignore the convenience, the excitement, the efficiency, and comfort of modern living. We cannot oppose this modern advancement and go against technology, because whether we admit it or not, life has been easy and convenient for us because of what modern technology can do for us. So the question that confronts us today is: how do we live or conduct ourselves is modern society with all its trappings and yet preserve our sense of dignity and simplicity? How do we live a life that is comfortable and meaningful, efficient and contented, convenient and natural?

Lao Tzu and St. Augustine are two prominent thinkers from different cultures, different religious orientations, and times. They may be remote from our present time and their type of society may be different from our present society and yet, they can still offer us some lessons how to live a simple and meaningful life in a modern society. In this paper, I will reflect on some lessons from Lao Tzu and St. Augustine on how to conduct of lives in a modern society. The wisdom of the past both from the East and West can definitely guide us today. At the onset, we can say that from Lao Tzu we get the admonition that we need to go back to nature, follow the way of the Tao and be guided by the *wu-wei*. From St. Augustine, we get the advice that while we are physical and mortal creatures, we need to rediscover our moral and spiritual nature and live according to our divine image. The world is not our final destination, we are in a spiritual journey, and our final destination is a world beyond this world. The two masters are telling us that we need to follow nature because we are one with it and rediscover the spiritual and moral nature within us.

The Tao and the Invariable Laws

Literally, *tao* means "way" or "path." The doctrines of Taoism are contained in the book "Tao Te Ching" which is attributed to Lao Tzu.[1]

[1] Lao Tzu, according to the *Records of History* by Sima Qian, is believed to have been an elder contemporary of Confucius and the author of the *Tao-Te Ching*. See *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, vol. 5 (New York: Thompson Gale, 2006), 192.

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Instead of presenting a philosophic system, Lao Tzu expresses a sense of the ultimate, underlying great principle, rule, or cause of "the way of all things." His vision of reality is holistic; it encompasses the totality of the cosmos. According to Lao Tzu, viewed holistically, the universe expresses harmony, purpose, order, and calm power, but when we attempt to separate things just to understand the parts without understanding the whole lead to error, suffering, and unhappiness.

Tao has several meanings: 1) the primordial principle from which all things emanate and which underlies all that is, 2) that which operates in all that is and which provides the natural way of being and acting, 3) that which provides norm of morality.[2]

Lao Tzu observes that although things are ever changeable and changing, the laws that govern them are not themselves changeable. These laws are called "invariables" from the Chinese word "ch'ang" which could also be translated as eternal or abiding. Hence for Lao Tzu, the word "ch'ang" is used to show what is always so and it can be considered as a rule. To be enlightened is to know the invariable law of nature. Among the laws that govern the change in nature or things, the most fundamental is that "when a thing reaches one extreme, it reverts from it." In the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu writes: "Reversion is the action of the Tao."[3] He also says: "Functioning everywhere means far-reaching, far-reaching means returning to the original point."[4] The idea is that if anything develops certain extreme qualities, those qualities invariably revert to become their opposites. Too much wealth will revert to poverty, too much power or strength will revert to weakness; conversely, too much ignorance will revert to knowledge. To resist this process or rule would be to go against the law of nature. The opposites are not only mutually causal; they are of merely relative value in comparison with one another. So, for instance, beauty has meaning only in relation to an opposite meaning of ugliness and the same is true with good and evil, difficult and easy and other opposites. Hence, the good and bad both exist in an everlasting exchange. Rain for example is good in time of drought and bad in time of flood.

These seem to be paradoxical theories, but they are not paradoxical, if one understands the fundamental law of nature. To the ordinary people who have no idea of this law, they seem paradoxical indeed. Lao Tzu says, "When the highest type of men hear the Tao, they diligently practice it, when the average type of men hear Tao, they have believe it, when the

[2] D. Liu, *The Tao and Chinese Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 4.

[3] *Tao Te Ching*, trans. by Ariane Rump (Hawaii: Society for Asian Comparative Philosophy, 1979), chapter 40.

[4] *Ibid*., Chapter 25.

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lowest type of men hear Tao, they laugh heartily at it."[5] To know the "invariable" is to be liberal, that is, to be without prejudice, to be generous towards things. The man who comprehends the "invariable" and relies upon it for his action does not follow his own partial opinion and therefore without prejudice. Because the Tao is "all pervading and unfailing";[6] the man who comprehends and relies on the "invariable" may likewise become all pervading and unfailing and thus he will not fail throughout his lifetime. This is called "practicing enlightenment." The enlightened man associates the Tao with spontaneity and creativity; he frees himself from selfishness and desire, and appreciates simplicity.

The *Wu-Wei* and *Te*

From the general theory that "reversing" is the movement of the Tao," the well-known Taoist theory of *wu-wei* is deduced. According to this theory everything comes from the ultimate "wu" or "nothing" which is the "unnamed" or the "invisible." The Tao consequently acts by "non-acting." *Wu-wei*'s literal translation means "having no activity" or "non-action," but it does not actually mean complete absence of activity, or doing nothing. It could mean lesser activity or doing less or acting without artificiality or arbitrariness.[7] The goal of *wu-wei* is to achieve a state of perfect equilibrium, or alignment with Tao, revealing the soft and invisible power within all things and, as a result, obtain an irresistible form of "soft and invisible" power.

Activities are like many other things. If one has too much of them, they become harmful rather than good. The purpose of doing something is to have something done or accomplished, but if there is overdoing, if there is excessive activity, then, the result may be worse than not having the thing done at all. A well-known Chinese story describes how two men were once competing in drawing a snake: the one who would finish first would win. One of them having finished his drawing he saw that the other man was still far behind, so decided to improve it by adding feet to his snake. Thereupon the other man said, "You have lost the competition, for a snake has no feet." Over-doing defeats its own purpose. Over-eagerness could lead to not accomplishing anything at all. To follow the wu-wei therefore is to act naturally and spontaneously. Artificiality and arbitrariness are the opposites of naturalness and spontaneity. Man should restrict his activities to what is necessary and what is natural. Necessary means necessary to the

[5] *Ibid*., Chapter 41.

[6] *Ibid*., Chapter 25.

[7] Fung Yu-Lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, Ed. by Derk Bodde (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1966), 100.

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achievement of a certain purpose, and not over-doing. Natural means following one's Te with no arbitrary effort. In doing this, one must take simplicity as the guiding principle of life. In ancient Taoist texts, *wu wei* is associated with water through its yielding nature. Water may appear to be soft and weak, but it can move earth and carve stone. The universe works harmoniously according to its own ways. When someone exerts his will against the world, he disrupts that harmony. The way of the Tao is the natural way; in nature, everything goes well with it and in it.

In the process of coming to be, each individual thing obtains something from the universal Tao, and this something is called "Te." The nature of a thing is it "Te" its power or virtue. The Te is the power of the Tao revealed in the world of phenomena, together with the 'virtue' that this power brings in anyone or anything that follows the 'way.' Virtue is genuineness or being true to one's own nature that is, avoiding artificiality and pretense. Man loses his original virtue or Te because he has too many desires and too much knowledge, and when he tries to satisfy his many desires, he obtains opposite results. In his desire to accomplish his many objectives, he resorts to artificiality; he breaks the law of nature, and moves away from the way of the Tao. Lao Tzu paradoxically also emphasizes that people should have little knowledge because knowledge itself is an object of desire. Knowledge enables man to know more about the objects of desire and serves as a means to gain these objects. But with increasing knowledge, man is no longer in a position to know how to be content and where to stop; the result is excess or the extreme. The wise man is very conscious of the work of the Te in everything, giving them the power to develop according to their own nature. He does not interfere, he just let things be. He follows the wu-wei and to follow the wu-wei is not to be passive but to conform to the law of Nature which is the law of the Tao working through its powers. Lao Tzu writes: "The all-embracing quality of the great virtue (te) follows alone from the Tao."[8] The man who is enlightened in the Tao and practicing enlightenment in his life embodies the Taoist ethical ideal; he is the sage. The sage is different from the common man. The sage knows the Invariables, the laws of nature and conducts his activities in accordance with them. He knows the general rule that if he wants to achieve anything, he must start from the opposite, and if he wants to preserve anything he admits in its something of its opposite, it one wants to be strong, one must start by feeling weak.[9]

In the sage, the paradoxical qualities of the Tao: being through non-being, action through non-action and strength through softness all are

[8] *Ibid.*, Chapter 21.
[9] Yu-Lan, 99.

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present. He understands that to yield is to be preserved whole, to be bent is to become straight, to be empty is to be full, to be worn out is to be renewed, to have little is to possess, to be plenty is to be perplexed. Therefore, the sage embraces the One, and becomes model of the world. He does not show himself, yet he is luminous. He does not justify himself, yet he becomes prominent. He does not boast himself, yet gains merit. He does not brag, yet he can endure long. It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.[10] The sage understands that strength is gained through softness. Lao Tzu further adds:

> What is most perfect seems to be incomplete; but its utility is unimpaired. What is most full seems to be empty; but its usefulness is inexhaustible. What is most straight seems to be crooked. The greatest still seems to be clumsy. The greatest eloquence seems to be stutter. Hasty movement overcomes cold. But tranquility overcomes heat.[11]

This is the way in which a sage or a prudent man can live safely in the society and the world in general and achieve his aims. This is Lao Tzu's answer and solution to the original problem of the Taoist, which was, how to preserve life and avoid harm and danger in the human world. This is also the lesson we can learn as to how to conduct and live in the modern world. The man who lives prudently must be meek, humble, and easily content. To be meek is the way to preserve ones strength and to be strong. Humility is the direct opposite of arrogance, so that if arrogance is a sign that a man's advancement has reached its extreme limit, humility is a contrary sign that limit is far from reached. And to be content safeguards one from going too far and therefore from reaching the extreme. Therefore Lao Tzu writes, "To know to be content is to avoid humiliation; to know where to stop is to avoid injury."[12] The sage therefore discards the excessive, the extravagant, and the extreme. The sage learns from the reversal motion of the Tao when to stop. Aware that when things develop extreme qualities they invariably revert to opposites, the sage is cautious that he does not over exert himself. He discards what is excessive and extravagant. Lao Tzu states:

> To hold and fill to overflowing is not as good as to stop in time. Sharpen a sword-edge to its very sharpest, and

[10] See *Ibid*., Chapter 22.
[11] *Ibid*., Chapter 45.
[12] *Ibid.*, Chapter 44.

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> (the edge) will not last long. When gold and jade fill your hall, you will not be able to keep them. To be proud with honor and wealth, is to cause one's own downfall. Withdraw as soon as your work is done. Such is heaven's way.[13]

The most important point to realize is that, in order to live in any specified manner, one must begin by living in a manner exactly the opposite. If we want to be strong we have to be weak because by being weak one is strong, by staying at the background, one is in the foreground. The man who knows the Invariables knows that the movement of the Tao is reversal. Therefore, he avoids going to the extremes. From Lao Tzu, we learn therefore that human conduct must characterized by spontaneity, humility, simplicity, non-interference and contentment.[14] Spontaneity best captures in a positive value what Lao Tzu meant by non-action. Non-action does not mean never acting at all; it means opposing only purposeful action that is why he said that a sage's behavior should take nature as its model. Thus to be a sage one must negate the attitude that one is an agent who must act to impose his will on everything and everyone around him. Humility is the best attitude of a sage. It keeps man from reaching the extreme. By being humble, one never reaches the limit. When things are done and one doing them humbly relinquishes all claims to merit, is far from the limit and he has mastered the natural way. Non-interference is also an attitude of the sage. Water symbolizes the behavior of the sage because it does not compete, but rather takes the path of least resistance. Since interfering in the affairs of others or the operations of nature is the worse product of willful activity, Lao Tzu advises us that we must back away from all meddlesome behavior. Such behavior is not only harmful but also pointless.

The Desires of Man

St. Augustine enunciates that religious faith and philosophical understanding are complementary rather than opposed and that one must "believe in order to understand and understand in order to believe." He combines the Neo-Platonic notion of the One and the Christian concept of a personal God who created the world and predestined its course. Our ultimate destination is God and St. Augustine insists that although we achieve a certain degree of happiness in the physical things for they are

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[13] *Ibid*., Chapter 9.

[14] Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 183.

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reflections of God's goodness, we cannot conceive of true happiness without the permanence that only God can assure. It is impossible to attain true happiness here in this world for it can only provide us with things that are temporary and fleeting. God is the supreme object and natural goal of our activity, the ultimate resting place of our love.

Since our desire for happiness is the love of God, no created good can capture our heart except by presenting a reflection of the absolute Good and portraying the countenance of God. Through its creative act, our will receive a direct participation in the subsisting goodness and it is for this reason that the movement of love can find repose only in God: "our heart is restless until it rest in Thee."[15]

According to St. Augustine, all men desire happiness and peace and everything is directed towards this goal. But the material man desires only a material happiness and a temporal peace; the spiritual man on the other hand the man who loves God, seeks a spiritual happiness and an eternal peace. These two loves produce two types of human beings and two types of states. St. Augustine enunciates that based on these two loves two cities are built, the earthly which built up by the love of self to contempt of God, and the heavenly, which is built up by the love of God to the contempt of self.[16] St. Augustine further writes:

> In the city of the world both the rulers themselves and the people they dominate are dominated by the lust for domination; whereas in the City of God all citizens serve one another in charity, whether they serve by the responsibilities of office or by the duties of obedience.[17]

For St. Augustine, the two cities based on the two loves of man cannot be separated. The good and the bad citizens are mixed. The real purpose of the citizens should be to attain harmonious living with each other and peace among them. St. Augustine wants to emphasize that the earthly dwelling is temporal and is but a shadow of a higher dwelling. He is firmly convinced that the earthly (society) must follow the ideal heavenly state, that it must live in concord and peace of righteous men in union among themselves under God and in God's presence. Through the process of time and by God's grace, the increase in religious conviction will diminish man's desire for the earthly or social life. However, the heavenly

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[15] St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. by John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books Doubleday, 1960) Book 1, chapter 1, 1, 43.

[16] St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. by Gerald Walsh, Demetrius Zema, Grace Monahan & Daniel Honan (New York: Image Books, 1958),Bk. 14, Chapter 28, 321.

[17] *Ibid*.

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city uses also the earthly peace in the course of its earthly pilgrimage. It cherishes and desires, as far as it may without compromising its faith and devotion, the orderly coherence of men's wills concerning the things which pertains of the mortal nature of man. Earthly peace is important in the attainment of heavenly peace. Hence, it does not mean that the two loves, the two desires, the two cities are irreconcilable. The temporal society or the human society is a preparation towards the ultimate goals, towards the discovery of faith, hope, and love of God through other people.

The Human Person as a Wanderer and his Ultimate End

The human person or man, for St. Augustine, is an intermediate creature between brutes and angels—a rational animal with a body and soul, guided and ordered by the loving Providence of a personal God.[18] The two characteristics faculties of the human person are the intellect and the will. The end of the intellect is the possession of the immutable Truth while the end of the will is the union with the immutable Good. The Truth and the Good are united into one in the Being of God. So for St. Augustine, the union and the possession of God is the ultimate destiny of man and Divine Providence guides man in his quest to attain his destiny.

However, man is a being of flesh and bone and exists and lives in the space-time continuum. He is also a man of this world and true to his material nature he also loves or desires the objects in this world. The goodness of creation is also the goodness of God.[19] But, for St. Augustine, although man is in the world, because he has a body, he is not of the world because he has a spiritual nature and his soul cannot find fulfillment in the world. The secular affairs of man are mere manifestations of his fundamental reality—the state of his soul. And it is the spiritual in man that gives integrity and meaning to his personal life and human destiny. The passing events in this world are mere pre-figurations and symbols to prepare man for his eternal destiny. For St. Augustine, it is the divine in man that directs him towards his ultimate end and destiny which is heavenly happiness. The divine image is the compass of human life. Thus, when it was shattered by sin, man became lost and disoriented. He became a stranger to his own nature, a stranger to his destiny, a stranger to himself. St. Augustine compares man's spiritual disorientation to a group of wanderers who wanted to return to their homeland. He writes:

[18] St. Augustine, *The City of God,* Bk. 5, Chapter 11, 111.
[19] St. Augustine, *City of God*, book 11, chapter 22.

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> Suppose, then we were wanderers in a strange country and could not live happily away from our fatherland, and wishing to put an end to our misery, determined to return home. We find however, that we must make use of some mode of conveyance, either by land or water, in order to reach the fatherland where our enjoyment is to commence. But the beauty of the country to which we pass, and the very pleasure of the motion, charm our hearts, and turning these things which we ought to use into objects of enjoyment, we become unwilling to hasten to the end of our journey and becoming engrossed in fictitious delight, our thoughts are diverted from that home whose delights would make us truly happy.[20]

Like wanderers, man seeks to return to his fatherland or homeland which is the Kingdom of God. Man's life is a spiritual journey, but is often distracted by the things of this world and he is continually entrapped in its temporal and material grandeur. One of the obstacles that can befall man in his spiritual journey is to love the world over God. He might get so absorbed in the passing grandeur of the world to the point of loving the creatures more than the Creator, not knowing that the material and temporal grandeur of the world is but an imperfect reflection of God. Man's excessive love for the world is a love that degrades man's own nature and true destiny.

God who is the end the destination of man's spiritual journey is the source of true happiness. "The striving after God is, therefore, the desire of beatitude, the attainment of God is beatitude itself."[21] Thus, God as the highest beatitude or happiness of man serves as the fundamental criterion for moral valuation. Man, however, cannot ascend to God without being detached from creatures or worldly things. Virtue entails an intellectual and moral purification through which our intellect and will are progressively detached from every sensible object. Man cannot ascend to God if he is attached to worldly things, he must abandon all attachments to worldly happiness. The virtues are thus important for they are those that temper the worldly desires of man. Through the virtues, man is able to detach himself from the worldly pleasures. The goal of this detachment and purification in this life is the future life, where man can have a loving contemplation of God.

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[20] St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by J. F. Shaw (London: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1952), Bk. 1, chapter 4.

[21] St. Augustine, *City of God,* Bk. 10, Chapter 22.

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St. Augustine therefore is telling us that while we naturally fall in love with the temporal order and material happiness, we need to realize that this is not our final destination. The ultimate end of our journey is union with God. What is needed therefore is to avoid the distractions of this world and focus on the end of our journey. We cannot be absorbed by the trappings of this world. Though we cannot deny the fact that like the wanderers we get distracted for indeed the world has its own grandeur, we need to realize that these are temporary and will not last forever. One way of resisting the temptations of the world is to practice the virtues of simplicity and humility. The heart that has so many desires of this world can be very restless and distracted. Pride which is the cause of the fall of Adam could lead to arrogance should be countered by humility. Humility restrains man from transgressing the will of God.

Conclusion

Lao Tzu and St. Augustine offer us complementary views as to how we should conduct ourselves in the modern world. For Lao Tzu human conduct should follow the way of the Tao, while for St. Augustine, it should conform to the command of God. While they take different points of views and starting points, both agree that there should be a guide to our conduct. For Lao Tzu, our guide is the way of the Tao and for St. Augustine, the law of God. Both advocate the importance of the virtues of humility and simplicity in one's conduct in society. They may differ as for the reasons for the value of these virtues. For Lao Tzu humility and simplicity are significant in human conduct in society because they safeguarded us from going to the extreme or reaching the opposite. For St. Augustine, these two virtues are important in man's journey towards God because they safeguard man from loving the physical and the material. Humility and simplicity are the opposite of arrogance and pride, vices which could lead man either to the extremes or to damnation.

St. Augustine and Lao Tzu both emphasized the importance of the spiritual. They may have different view of spirituality because for Lao Tzu it is taken from the concept of the Tao while for St. Augustine from his idea of God but they both recognized the value of the spiritual over the temporal. We should not be distracted by the temporal and contingent, instead we must focus on the things that are invariable and eternal. The world is indeed attractive especially because of its modern transformation, but they are contingent and temporary. The modern man is faced with various problems and he tries to solve these problems with material, economic, and sometimes military solutions. But the problems remain unsolved. St. Augustine and Lao Tzu are offering the modern man an alternative way, a

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way that is definitely old, but a wise alternative solution—moral-spiritual renewal and going back to nature. Greed and selfishness and other excesses of the modern man could be solved by the virtues of humility and simplicity, by man's turning and following the way of the Tao and the command of God.

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Article

Ang Pilosopiya ni Jean Baudrillard bilang Batayang Teoretikal sa Araling Pilipino

F.P.A. Demeterio III and Emmanuel C. de Leon

Abstract: This paper is basically a presentation of the tenets of Jean Baudrillard's philosophy in a language and level that can be easily understood by Filipino students and scholars of philosophy, cultural studies and Philippine studies. The discussion of Baudrillard's philosophy revolves around 1) his Marxist phase, 2) his anti-Marxist phase, and 3) postmodern phase. The ultimate aim of this paper is to suggest some aspects and dimensions of Philippine society and culture that can be analyzed using some of Baudrillard's thoughts as interpretive frameworks, as well as to challenge the said Filipino students and scholars of philosophy, cultural studies and Philippine studies to creatively and effectively appropriate such theories for the enrichment of the theoretical corpus of Philippine studies. This paper is part of a series of similar works done by one of the co-authors that dealt with Adorno, Schleiermacher and Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and Bultmann, Lyotard, and Bourdieu.

Keywords: Buadrillard, Philippine studies, postmodernism, hyperreality

Introduksiyon

Hangarin ng papel na itong mailahad ang mga mahalagang aspekto ng kaisipan ni Jean Baurillard (1929-2007), Pranses na sosyolihista, pangkulutral na kritiko, pilosopo, at isa sa mga pangunahing teorisista ng posmodernismo. Hindi lamang iinog ang papel sa wikang Filipino, bagkus ipapamalas ang antas ng diskursong maiintindihan ng mga kapwa Pilipinong nasa larangan ng araling kultural at araling Pilipino. Makatutulong ito sa mga wala pa masyadong kasanayan sa antas ng diskursong pilosopikal, sa mga Pilipinong mag-aaral ng pilosopiyang marahil hindi pa handang basahin ang mga primaryong teksto ni Baudrillard o ang mga komplikadong babasahin tungkol sa kanya na naisulat na sa wikang Ingles.

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Tunguhin din ng papel na itong matukoy ang ilang aspekto mula sa naturang banyagang diskurso para lalong mapagyaman ang teoretikal na korpus ng lokal na araling kultural at araling Pilipino.

Ipinanganak si Baudrillard noong 1929 sa Reims, isang tanyag na lunsod sa Pransia dahil sa kanyang nakamamanghang Gotikong katedral. Ayon kay Baudrillard, ang kanilang angkan ay mga magsasaka, subalit ang kanyang mga magulang ay naging mga kawani naman ng gobiyerno.[1] Doon sa Sorbonne University sa Paris, pinag-aralan ni Baudrillard ang Aleman. Sa mga panahong iyon labis siyang nababalisa tungkol sa sumisiklab na digmaan sa Algeria, na noon ay isang kolonya ng Pransia.[2]

Bilang tapos sa araling Aleman, nagturo si Baudrillard ng kultura at wikang ito sa isang sekondaryang paaralan, habang nagsasalin sa wikang Pranses ng mga aklat ng Aleman-Suizong manunulat at pintor na si Peter Weiss (1916-1982), ng Alemang Marxistang manunulat at direktor ng teatrong si Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), at ng Alemang sosyolohista at antropolohistang si Wilhelm Muhlmann (1904-1988), at habang pinag-aaralan niya ang mga akda ng Pranses na Marxistang sosyolohista at pilosopong si Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), at ng Pranses na kritikong pangkultural at semyolohistang si Roland Barthes (1915-1980).

Noong 1966, pumasok siya sa University of Paris sa Nanterre; nagtrabaho bilang *assistant* ni Lefebvre; nag-aral ng mga wika, pilosopiya, sosyolohiya at iba pang mga kaakibat na disiplina; nagtapos ng kanyang disertasyon sa sosyolohiya, na may pamagat na *Le Systeme des Objects* (The System of Objects); at nagturo ng sosyolohiya. Ang Nanterre ay kilalang balwarte ng mga makakaliwang mag-aaral at guro, kaya di maikakaila ang pagiging makakaliwa ni Baudrillard at ang kanyang pagkasangkot sa pag-alsa ng mga mag-aaral noong Mayo ng 1968.[3]

Natapos niya ang kanyang habilitasyon, o ang pangalawang disertasyon ng mga Europeyo, noong 1972, at nakakuha ng ranggong propesor ng sosyolohiya. Noong 1987, iniwan niya ang Nanterre at tumahak sa landas ng isang independiyenteng intelektwal at inter-disiplinaryong kritiko, habang tumatanggap ng pa-ilan-ilang trabaho bilang mananaliksik sa University of Paris-IX Dauphine, at bilang propesor sa European Graduate School sa Suiza. Si Baudrillard ay namatay matapos ang mahabang pakikipaglaban sa sakit na kanser noong 2007, sa edad na 77.

Masasabing ang kabuohan ng teoryang kultural ni Baudrillard ay nagkaroon ng maraming pagbabago at pag-iibang anyo mula noong dekada sisenta hangang sa unang dekada ng kasalukuyang siglo. Maaari nating

[1] See Mike Gane ed., *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews* (London: Routledge, 1993), 19.

[2] *Ibid*., 20.

[3] *Ibid*., 74.

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patawan ng tatlong yugto ang kanyang teoryang kultural upang mas madaling pag-aralan at unawain ito: 1) ang kanyang Marxistang yugto, mula 1968 hangang 1971; 2) ang kanyang anti-Marxistang yugto, mula 1972 hanggang 1976; at 3) ang kanyang postmodernistang yugto, mula 1976 hanggang 2007.

Marxistang Yugto

Ang Marxistang yugto sa kaisipan ni Baudrillard ay nag-umpisa sa kanyang disertasyon, na isinulat sa gabay nina Barthes at Lefebvre, at substansyal na matatagpuan sa kanyang mga aklat na *The System of Objects* ng 1968, *The Consumer Society* ng 1970, at *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* ng 1972. Ang pagiging Marxista ni Baudrillard sa panahong ito ay makikita sa kanyang pagbibigay ng Marxistang interpretasyon sa isang bagay na hindi masyadong pinaglaanan ng pansin ni Karl Marx (1818-1883): ang pagkukunsumo. Kung si Marx ay nakatutok sa produksyon, si Baudrillard naman ay nakatutok sa kabilang dulo ng mahabang tanikala ng modernong ekonomiya na walang iba kung hindi ang pagkukunsumo ng mga produkto.

Bago pa man ang lahat, dapat nating isa-isip na ang kapitalismong pinag-aralan ni Marx ay hindi na ang kaparehong kapitalismong pinaglalaanan ng pansin ni Baudrillard. Ang tawag ni Baudrillard sa sinaunang anyo ng kapitalismo ay "kapitalismo ng kompetitibong merkado," at sa kasalukuyang anyo naman ay "monopolyong kapitalismo." Kung ang kapitalismo ng kompetitibong merkado ay nakatutuon sa pagpapalaki ang produksyon upang maipababa ang presyo ng produkto, ang monopolyong kapitalismo, ayon kay Baudrillard, ay nakatutok sa pagpapatindi at pagpapalawak ng demand, sa pamamagitan ng patalastas, pagbalot at presentasyon, at pagmanipula ng moda.[4]

Ayon kay Baudrillard, noong mga taong 1920 hanggang 1960, dahil sa makabagong teknolohiya, lumawak ang produksyon na nagresulta sa pagbagsak ng mga presyo ng produkto. Ito na sana ang hinahangad ng kapitalismo ng kompetitibong merkado, na taliwas naman sa hangarin ng monopolyong kapitalismo. Nang lumaganap ang mga murang produkto, napag-isipan ng ilang kapitalista na gumawa ng mga produktong mamahalin at prestihiyoso, na taliwas naman sa hangarin ng kapitalismo ng kompetitibong merkado.[5]

Sa konteksto ng kapitalismo ng kompetitibong merkado, ang mga mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto ay kadalasan mga gawa sa kamay

[4] See Douglas Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard", in *The Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2014) <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/baudrillard/>, 30 March 2015.

[5] *Ibid*.

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ng mga ekspertong manlilikha at ibinebenta bilang mga obra maestro, o hindi kaya mga produktong nanggagaling sa malalayong lugar at ibinebenta bilang mga eksotikong bagay. Ngunit ang ipinapalaganap na mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto ng monopolyong kapitalismo ay hindi mga obra maestro o mga eksotikong bagay. Marahil may kaunting angat ang kanilang materyales at pagka-yari kung ihahambing sa mga karaniwang produkto, subalit nagmumula pa rin sa pabrika at bulto-bultong iniluwal ang mga mamahalin at prestihiyosong produktong ito. Ang kanilang pagiging mamahalin at prestihiyoso ay naka-ugat sa kanilang pagtatanghal ng mga tusong kapitalista bilang mga mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto. Samakatuwid, artipisyal lamang ang kanilang pagiging mamahalin at prestihiyoso.

Sa harap ng bumabahang mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto, naisip ni Baudrillard ang pagkukulang ni Marx bilang teorisista sa konteksto ng bagong anyo ng kapitalismo. Naintindihan ni Baudrillard kung paano nakatutok lamang si Marx sa *use-value* at *exchange-value* ng mga produkto. Kapag igigiit ni Marx ang dalawang kategoryang ito, magmumukhang baliw ang mga taong bumibili ng mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto sa halip ng mga mumurahing alternatibo. Batay sa ideya ng Amerikanong ekonomista at sosyolohistang si Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) tungkol sa *conspicuous consumption*, naisip ni Baudrillard na maliban sa usapin ng *use-value* at *exchange-value* ang mga produkto ay maaari ding maging midyum ng kapangyarihan, karangyaan at karangalan.[6]

Sa puntong ito ipinasok ni Baudrillard ang teorya ng tanda na binuo ng Suizong semyolohistang si Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) at ginamit na ni Barthes sa kanyang sariling pag-aaral ng mga tiyak na phenomenon tulad ng moda, pagkain, larawan, at iba pa. Dinagdagan ni Baudrillard ang *use-value* at *exchange-value* ni Marx sa *sign-value*. Ginawa niya ang komoditi bilang isang *signifier* na ang kaakibat na *signified* ay kapangyarihan, karangyaan at karangalan. Sa ganitong usapan, ang mga produkto ay binibili hindi lamang dahil sa kanilang praktikal na gamit, kung hindi dahil rin sa kanilang pagiging tanda ng panlipunang katayuan ng sinumang bumili sa kanila. Ipinaliwanag niya: "Ang pagkunsumo ay ang *virtual* na suma total ng lahat ng bagay at mensaheng kasalukuyang bumubuo sa mahigit kumulang isang diskurso. Ang pagkunsumo, habang ito ay makahulugan, ay isang sistematikong aksyon sa pagmanipula ng mga tanda."[7] Kapag ang nabiling produkto ng isang tao ay mamahalin, magsisilbi itong tanda ng kanyang mataas na katayuan sa kanyang lipunan.

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[6] *Ibid*.

[7] Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Objects", in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings,* ed. by Mark Poster (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 22.

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Kung *use-value* lamang ang umiiral, lahat sana ng tao ay bibili lamang ng mga mumurahing produkto. Subalit, ayon sa nakikita natin, masasabi nating nagtagumpay ang mga kapitalista sa paghimok sa mga mamimili na naisin ang mga mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto. Kaya iginiit ni Baudrillard na ang tao sa panahon ng monopolyong kapitalismo ay hindi lamang isang tagakunsumo ng *use-value* ng isang produkto, siya rin ay isang tagakunsumo ng *sign-value*.

Naniniwala si Baudrillard na ang lipunan sa ilalim ng monopolyong kapitalismo ay isinaayos sa pamamagitan ng pagkukunsumo at pagtatanghal ng mga produkto para mailathala ang identidad at katayuan ng bawat isa. Mayroon nang sariling hirarkiya ang mga produkto at sa pamamagitan ng pagkunsumo sa kanila nagkakaroon din ng hirarkiya ang bawat isa sa loob ng lipunan. Isinulat niya: "Sa antas ng indibidwal, kasama ang kanyang mga pangangailangan, kontradiksyon at negatibidad, ang sistema ay walang hugis (*fluid*) at diskonektado. Sa antas ng mga produkto, kasama ang lahat ng kanilang positibidad, ang sistema ay kodipikado, na uri-uri na, *discontinuous*, at masasabing integrado. Hindi ito interaksyon kung hindi sapilitang integrasyon ng sistema ng pangangailangan sa sistema ng mga produkto."[8]

Ang ideya ni Baudrillard na ang mga tao sa kasalukuyan ay naging mga tagakunsumo ng tanda ay isang mabisang paliwanag sa lumalaganap na konsumerismo. Kung bakit ang tao sa kasalukuyan ay tila naging isang hindi mapuno-puno at hindi mabusog-busog na tagakunsumo ay dahil siya ay naging isa nang tagakonsumo ng mga immateryal na tanda sa halip na maging isang tagakunsumo lamang ng mga materyal na *use-value* ng mga produkto. Binigyang diin niya: "Ang kumpulsyong ito na kumunsumo ay hindi epekto ng ilang sikolohikal na sanhi ... o ng kapangyarihan ng paggagaya lamang. Kung ang pagkunsumo ay nagmistulang hindi na mapipigilan, ito ay dahil ang pagkunsumo ay isang buong ideyalistikong gawain na wala nang kinalaman ... sa pagtugon ng mga pangangailangan, o sa prinsipyo ng reyalidad; ito ay nabigyan na ng enerhiya sa proyektong palaging hindi napupuno."[9]

May malaking pagkakaiba ang pagkonsumo ng *use-value* ng isang produkto sa pagkonsumo ng *sign-value* ng parehong produkto. Ang una ay nakakapuno at nakakabusog, samantalang ang pangalawa ay hindi. Halimbawa, ang taong bumili ng relos para gamitin bilang orasan ay hindi mangangailangan ng panibagong relos habang gumagana pa ang kanyang nabiling relos, dahil ang kanyang pangangailangan ng orasan ay napuno na o nabusog na. Subalit ang ibang tao na bumili ng relos bilang isang tanda ng

[8] *Ibid*., 14.
[9] *Ibid*., 25.

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kanyang mataas na katayuan ay maaaring mangangailangan kaagad ng mas mamahalin pang relos sa oras na malaman niya na may mga kasamahan na siya na mas mamahalin pa ang suot na relos. Kaya ang pagkunsumo ng ibang taong ito sa *sign-value* ng relos ay hindi mapuno-puno at hindi mabusog-busog.

Sa harap ng paglaganap ng konsumerismo, sa harap ng pagka-ingganyo ng tao sa mapang-akit na *sign-value* ng mga produkto, sa harap na pagkabaon natin sa sistema ng monopolyang kapitalismo, walang malinaw na programa o estratihiya si Baudrillard kung paano dapat lalaban ang tao. Hindi siya nagpahayag ng eksistential na pagtakwil sa sistema, at hindi rin siya nanawagan para sa isang rebolusyonaryong pagkilos. Ang sagot ni Baudrillard kung ano dapat ang gagawin ng tao sa konsumerismo at monopolyong kapitalismo ay mabubuo lamang matapos ang kanyang Marxistang yugto.

Anti-Marxistang Yugto

Kung sina Marx, Veblen at Saussure ang mga pangunahing impluwensiya ni Baudrillard sa kanyang Marxistang yugto, ang Pranses na sosyolohista at antropolohistang si Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) at Pranses na transgresibong manunulat na si Georges Bataille (1897-1962) naman ang gumabay sa kanya sa kanyang anti-Marxistang yugto na substansyal na matatagpuan sa kanyang mga aklat na *The Mirror of Production* ng 1973 at *Symbolic Exchange and Death* ng 1976. Pinuna ni Baudrillard sa yugtong ito ang pagkukulang ni Marx sa radikalismo at pagkamakakaliwa. Naniwala si Baudrillard na hindi totoo na labag si Marx sa kapitalismo at sa paghari-harian ng mga burgis dahil hindi raw tumagos sa pinakaugat ng mga bagay na ito ang klasikal na kritisismo ni Marx.

Hindi rin nasiyan si Baudrillard sa suhestyon ni Marx na ang proletarya dapat ang magkontrola sa produksyon, dahil para sa kanya ang Marxistang obsesyon sa produksyon ay walang pagkakaiba sa kapitalistang obsesyon sa produksyon.[10] Ipinaliwanag ni Baudrillard na kung matapos man ang inaasahang madugong rebolusyon, wala nang tunay na anti-kapitalistang alternatibong kaayusan si Marx bukod sa pag-asta ng proletarya bilang mga bagong kapitalista. Inihayag ni Baudrillard: "wala siyang (Marx) binagong pangunahing bagay: lalo na sa usapin tungkol sa paglikha ng tao sa kanyang sarili sa kanyang walang katupusang determinasyon, sa sa kanyang tuloy-tuloy na paglampas sa kanyang sarili patungo sa kanyang katapusan."[11] Kaya, taliwas sa inaakala ng nakararami

[10] See Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis, Missouri: Telos Press, 1975), 17-20.

[11] *Ibid*., 33.

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na si Marx na ang pinakamakakaliwa sa lahat ng mga makakaliwa at pinakaradikal sa lahat ng mga radikal, naniwala si Baudrillard na konserbatibo ang tunay na diwa ni Marx.

Para kay Baudrillard ang nakakubling konserbatismo ni Marx ang tunay na dahilan kung bakit hindi sumuporta ang Partido Kumunistang Pranses sa pag-alsa ng mga mag-aaral noong 1968.[12] Ang kabiguan ni Marx sa lubusang pagbatikos sa kapitalismo at sa naghari-hariang mga burgis, ang kabiguan ni Marx sa pagbigay ng reyalistikong alternatibong kaayusan na papalit sa kapitalismo, at ang kanyang mapagkunwaring radikalismo at pagkamakakaliwa ang ginawang batayan ni Baudrillard para idiin ang Marxismo bilang sukdulang lehitimasyon ng kapitalismo, ng mga burgis, at ng kunsumeristang landas ng buhay.

Matapos niyang itakwil ang Marxismo, bumuo si Baudrillard ng alternatibong programa na lalaban sa lalong lumalaganap at lumalakas na kapitalismo at kunsumerismo. Hinangad niya na ang alternatibong programang ito ay maging tunay na radikal at tunay na makakaliwa. Sa puntong ito ipinasok ni Baudrillard ang pananaliksik ni Mauss tungkol sa diskurso ng *potlatch* na matatagpuan sa Polynesia, Melanesia at Hilagang Kanlurang Amerika. Ang *potlatch* para sa mga katutubong lipunan ng mga nasabing lugar ay isang pampublikong pag-aalay ng isang tao ng mga regalo.[13] Sa pananaw ng isang modernong indibidwal, lalo ng kanluraning indibidwal, walang kabuluhan at mahirap intindihin ang aksaya ng yaman na kaakibat sa isang *potlatch*. Ngunit sa pananaw ng mga tao sa nasabing mga katutubong lipunan, ang *potlatch* ay isang ritwalistikong paglalathala ng kayamanan at kapangyarihan ng sinumang nag-aalay nito.[14] Sa katunayan, hindi mahirap intindihin ng mga Pilipino ang diskurso ng *potlatch* dahil hindi ito nalalayo sa ating diskurso ng pagpipiyesta, kung saan ang may pinakamalaki, pinakamasarap, at pinakamagarbong handaan sa isang nayon ay siyang kinikilalang pinakamayaman at pinakamakapangyarihan sa nayong iyon.

Ipinaliwanag ni Mauss na ang *potlatch*, taliwas sa inaakala ng mga modernong kanluranin, ay isa palang makapangyarihang mekanismo para buuin at kumpunihin ang katutubong lipunan. Sa pamamagitan nito nakikilala ng bawat katutubo ang kani-kanilang katayuan sa loob ng kanilang katutubong lipunan. Hinango ni Baudrillard ang diskurso ng *potlatch* bilang isang sistema ng pagpapahalaga na salungat sa sistema ng pagpapahalaga na ipinapairal ng kapitalismo. Kung sa pamamagitan ng *potlatch* inilathala ng isang katutubong indibidwal ang kanyang panlipunang katayuan at kapangyarihan sa pamamagitan ng pagbigay,

[12] See Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard."
[13] See Richard Lane, *Jean Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 2000), 48-53.
[14] *Ibid*., 80.

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inilathala naman ng isang modernong indibidwal ang kanyang panlipunang katayuan at kapangyarihan sa pamamagitan ng pag-angkin.

Pinayaman ni Baurdrillard ang diskurso ng *potlatch* gamit ang kaisipan ni Bataille tungkol sa heneral na ekonomiya na umiiral daw noong sinaunang panahon.[15] Ayon kay Bataille, sa loob ng heneral na ekonomiya ay nagaganap ang paglulustay, pag-aaksaya, pagpipiyesta at pag-aalay. Malinaw na taliwas ang mga ito sa pagpapahalaga na umiiral sa loob ng kapitalismo kung saan pinupuri ang pagtitipid, pagtitimpi at pagsisikap sa paggawa ng produkto. Ngunit, ayon kay Bataille, hindi lamang mas nauna ang sistema ng pagpapahalaga ng heneral na ekonomiya, ito rin ay mas sang-ayon sa kalikasan na tao na talaga namang nasisiyahan sa paglulustay, pag-aaksaya, pagpipiyesta at pag-aalay.[16] Kagaya sa nabanggit ni Mauss, ang ganitong diskurso ay nagbibigay ng makapangyarihang damdamin sa taong naglulustay, nag-aaksaya, nagpipiyesta o nag-aalay ng *potlatch*.

Gamit ang kaisipan nina Mauss at Bataille, binuo ni Baudrillard ang konsepto ng simbolikong pagpapalitan kung saan iminungkahi niya na ang tunay na paraan para mapuksa ang kapitalismo at kunsumerismo ay ang pagpuksa sa sistema ng pagpapahalagang kapitalista. Ibig niyang sabihin, sa halip na katigan natin ang pagtitipid, pagtitimpi at pagsisipag, itinuro niya na ang daan patungo sa katapusan ng kapitalismo at konsumerismo ay ang paglulustay, pag-aaksaya at pag-aalay. Isinulat niya: "kung may isang bagay na hindi naisip ni Marx, ito ay ang pagdiskarga, pag-aksaya, pag-alay, prodigalidad, laro, at simbolismo."[17] Ang simbolikong pagpapalitan ay ang alternatibong landas na inilahad ni Baudrillard na para sa kanya ay tunay na anti-kapitalista.

Medyo mahirap sundan ang landas ng simbolikong pagpapalitan na inilahad ni Baudrillard. Marahil, marami sa atin ang gugustuhin na lamang na labanan ang kapitalismo sa pamamagitan ng pag-iwas sa pamimili ng mga hindi kailangang produkto ng kapitalismo. Ngunit ang ganitong modo ng pakikipaglaban sa kapitalismo at konsumerismo ay magreresulta lamang sa pagdami ng ating ipong pera na sa kalaunan ay hahantong rin sa pagpapalakas lalo ng kapitalismo. Ang ideya ni Baudrillard ay hindi nalalayo sa kaisipan ng Alemang sosyolohista at pilosopong si Max Weber (1864-1920) tungkol sa pagtitipid, pagtitimpi at pagsisipag ng mga sinaunang Protestante, na naging pundasyon sa pag-usbong ng kapitalismo. Kung ayon kay Weber naging dahilan ang Protestanteng sistema ng pagpapahalaga sa pag-usbong ng kapitalismo, malakas nga ang puntos ni Baudrillard na mapupuksa lamang ang kapitalismo sa pamamagitan ng pagtakwil sa mga pangunahing elemento

[15] See Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard."

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, 42.

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ng sinaunang Protestantismo na nagsisilbi ngayong pundasyunal na sistema ng pagpapahalaga ng kapitalismo. Kaya tunay nga na radikal at makakaliwa ang alternatibong landas na inilahad ni Baudrillard kahit mahirap itong tanggapin bilang kongkretong programa sa pagkilos. Subalit, ang alternatibong landas na ito ay hindi rin nalalayo sa nabubuong hedonistikong landas ng buhay ng ilang indibidwal sa panahon ng postmodernismo.

Postmodernistang Yugto

Kung sina Marx, Veblen at Saussure ang mga pangunahing impluwensiya ni Baudrillard sa kanyang Marxistang yugto, at sina Mauss at Bataille sa kanyang anti-Marxistang yugto, ang Kanadyanong teorisista ng komunikasyon at pilosopong si Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) at ang grupong Situationalist ni Lefebvre naman ang kanyang naging inspirasyon sa kanyang postmodernistang yugto na pinasinayaan ng kanyang nabanggit nang aklat na *Symbolic Exchange and Death*.[18] Sa 1976 na librong ito nagpang-abot ang anti-Marxista at postmodernistang mga yugto ni Baurdrillard.

Alinsunod sa estilo ni McLuhan, gumawa si Baudrillard ng peryodisasyon upang maipakita ang relasyon ng kapanahunan, diskurso ng tanda at orden ng *simulacra*. Ang unang yugto sa kanyang periodisasyon ay ang kapanahunang midyebal, kung saan ang tanda ay nakatali pa sa kanyang *referrent*. Kaya sa kapanahunang ito ang tanda ay walang bahid ng kalabuhan. Dahil dito, nagdulot sa lipunan ang midyebal na tanda ng pagkakaroon ng bawat kasapi ng malinaw at hindi nagbabagong katayuan, at matatag na hirarkiya na walang patawad sa sinumang mangangahas sa paggulo sa malinis at malinaw na sistema ng tanda. Paliwanag niya: "Ang mga lipunang may *caste*, piyudal at makaluma, ay malulupit na lipunan, kung saan ang mga tanda ay limitado sa bilang at balot sa restriksyon. Tangan ng bawat isa sa kanila ang buong *interdictory* na halaga, at bawat isa ay isang *reciprocal* na obligasyon sa pagitan ng mga *caste*, o indibidwal; kaya hindi sila arbitraryo."[19] Kaya ang mga indibidwal na sumubok magmunghaki ng panibagong relihiyoso o politikal na interpretasyon at kaayusan ay kadalasang sinusunog o marahas na pinapatay. Para kay Baudrillard, sa kapanahunang midyebal hindi pa umusbong ang orden ng *simulacra* dahil nakatali pa ang tanda sa kanyang *referrent*.

Ang pangalawang yugto sa nasabing periodisasyon ay ang kapanahunan ng *Renaissance*, kung saan nakawala na ang tanda sa kanyang katangi-tanging *referrent*, at lumutang na ito para maghanap ng panibagong

[18] See Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard."

[19] Jean Baudrillard, "Symbolic Exchange and Death", in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 136.

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referrent. Kaya sa kapanahunang ito ang tanda ay naging sining. Isinulat niya: "Ang arbitraryong likas ng tanda ay umusbong kapag, sa halip na pagdugtungin ang dalawang indibidwal sa isang hindi nasisirang *reciprocity*, ang tandang ito ay mag-umpisa, sa signipikasyon, na kumunekta sa *disenchanted* na uniberso ng mga *signified*—ang kumon na *denominator* ng tunay na mundo, na kung saan walang sinuman ang may karagdagan pang obligasyon."[20] Dahil dito, nagdulot sa lipunan ang *Renaissance* na tanda ng mga bagong kaayusan, posibilidad at alternatibo. Ang sarado at matatag na kaayusang midyebal ay winasak ng *Renaissance* na tanda. Para kay Baudrillard, sa kapanahunang ito umusbong ang unang orden ng *simulacra*: ang tanda bilang sining na may taglay na samu't saring kahulugan.

Ang pangatlong yugto sa nasabing periodisasyon ay ang kapanahunan ng rebolusyong industriyal, kung saan ang tanda ay naging produkto na maaaring ipagpalit sa ibang produkto. Kaya sa kapanahunang ito ang tanda ay naging isang kopya mula sa napakaraming kopya na iniluwal ng mga modernong makinarya. Ipinaliwanag niya: "Ito ang mga tandang walang tradisyun ng *caste*, na hindi naranasan ang mga restriksyon tungkol sa katayuan, at na hindi na kailangang pekehin dahil nilikha sila sa dambuhalang bulto."[21] Dahil dito, naging abala ang modernong lipunan sa pagreplika ng mga tanda. Para kay Baudrillard, sa kapanahunang ito umusbong and ikalawang orden ng *simulacra*: ang tanda bilang kopya ng napakaraming kopya. Kung sa unang orden ng *simulacra* ang tanda ay umiiral bilang teyatro, eskultura, at dibuhung pintura, sa pangalawang orden nito ang tanda ay umiiral bilang sine at litrato.

Ang pang-apat na yugto sa nasabing periodisasyon ay ang kapanahunan ng postmodernismo, kung saan ang tanda ay naging reyalidad na mismo. Sinabi niya: "ang hindi-reyalidad (*unreality*) ay hindi na namamalagi sa guni-guni o pantasya ... kung hindi sa mala-halusinasyong pagkakamukha ng totoo sa kanyang sarili. Para matakasan ang krisis ng representasyon, ang reyalidad ay umikot-ikot sa kanyang sarili sa dalisay na pag-uulit-ulit."[22] Kaya sa kapanahunang ito naging abala ang lipunan sa mga gawain na kung si Marx ang tatanungin ay walang saysay sa usapin ng produksyon: patalastas, midya, impormasyon at komunikasyon. Para kay Baudrillard, sa kapanahunang ito umusbong and ikatlong orden ng *simulacra*: ang tanda bilang walang *referrent* at bilang reyalidad na mismo. Naniniwala siya na ang postmodernong lipunan ay labis nang nabighani sa pamang-akit na postmodernong tanda sa puntong kinumpuni na ng nasabing lipunan ang kanyang mga istraktura at proseso paikot sa nasabing tanda.

[20] *Ibid*.
[21] *Ibid*., 137.
[22] *Ibid*., 145.

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Kung ating babalikan, may apat na yugto ng kasaysayan na binanggit si Baudrillard. Maliban sa midyibal na yugto, ang mga ito ay may kanya-kanyang orden ng *simulacra*, at kanya-kanyang uri ng tanda. Ang postmodernistang yugto sa kaisipan ni Baudrillard ay nakatuon sa pag-aaral sa pangatlong orden ng *simulacra*, kung saan ang tanda ay lumulutang palayo nang palayo sa kanyang *referrent*, hindi upang maghanap ng panibagong referrent, tulad ng nangyari sa *Renaissance* na tanda, kung hindi upang lumago bilang isang independiyenteng tanda na kalaunan ay magiging reyalidad na mismo.

Sa isang panayam ni Jean Nouvel, ipinaliwanag ni Baudrillard ang kulturang namamayani sa panahong postmodernismo. Tinawag niya ang kulturang ito na "*aestheticization*," na masidhi naman niyang tinutulan. Ipinahayag niya: "tutol ako sa klase ng *aestheticization* sapagkat palagiang kasama nito ang paglaho: ang paglaho ng bagay, ang paglaho nitong nakatago na posibleng maipakita ng sining at malikhaing obra na kung saan ay lampas pa sa sinasabing aesthetics."[23] Ang nakatago o sekretong hindi naipakita ng postmodernong kultura ay katulad sa "*punctum*" na binanggit ni Barthes kaugnay sa potograpiya. Sa pamamagitan ng *punctum*, naglalaho ang kakayanan nitong maituro ang talagang totoo sa pamamagitan ng mga simbolo. Ang sining sa postmodernong panahon ay hindi na tumuturo sa sekreto. Ang sekretong ito ay hindi lubusang mailipat sa pamamagitan ng isang obra—hinding-hindi makokopya. Ibig sabihin, may pagkakatulad subalit hinding-hindi pa rin matutulad ang reyalidad sa pamamagitan ng isang obra maestra. Ngunit, dahil sa malikhaing obra, nagagawa nitong ibaling ang ating atensyon sa nasabing sekreto o lihim-na-kalaliman. Ito ang nawawala sa postmodernong likhang-sining. Sa pamamagitang ng industriya at teknolohiya ng sining, nababansot ang malikhaing pag-iisip ng tumitingin. Sa pamamagitan ng *aestheticization*, ang mismong obra na lamang ang lubusang nagpapakita. Naglalaho ang kakayanan nitong ipakita ang sekreto na dapat nitong ipinakikita. Kung kaya nga, hindi nagagawa ng postmodernong sining ang kanyang primordiyal na layunin na akayin ang mga tumitingin sa mga sekretong katotohanan.

May pagkamasalimuot ang pahayag ni Baudrillard na ang postmodernong tanda habang lumalawig palayo sa kanyang *referrent* ay nagiging reyalidad mismo. Paano nga ba magiging reyalidad ang isang tanda kung alam natin na ito ay nananatili pa ring isang tanda? May pagkametaporikal at may pagka-eksaherado ang takbo ng isip ni Baudrillard sa puntong ito. Ang ibig niyang sabihin ay kadalasan tayong mga tao sa kasalukuyang panahon ay nawalan na ng direktang koneksyon

[23] Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *The Singular Objects of Architecture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 19.

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sa ating mundo at lipunan, dahil ang ating kaalaman sa mga bagay na ito ay ipinamumudmud na sa atin ng telebisyon, radyo, internet at samut-saring babasin. "Samakatuwid," sabi niya, "ang midya ay hindi nagbibigay ng pagkakataon para sa sosyalisasyon, sa halip ay ang kabaligtaran ang ibinibigay nito—ang pamumudmud ng impormasyon sa masa."[24] Ang mga midyang ito ay hindi naghahandog sa atin ng makatotohan at neyutral na imahen ng mundo. Kadalasan, ang kanilang isinusubo sa atin ay mga imahen na dumaan na sa maraming *editing*, *enhancement*, *cropping*, *recycling*, at kung anu-ano pa. Sa bandang huli, mahirap nang tukuyin kung ano ba talaga ang kanilang tunay na pinagmulang *referrent*.

Kadalasan ang mga maningning na espektakulo ng postmodernismo ay binubuo ng mga tandang walang tunay na *referrent* sa reyalidad, kaya sa puntong ito masasabi nating sila na mismo ang reyalidad, o sa kilalang kataga ni McLuhan ang midyum na ngayon ang mensahe.[25] Kagaya kunwari ng isang litrato ng isang babaeng naka-*swimwear* na nasa pahina ng isang *fashion magazine*, na isang halimbawa ng postmodernong espektakulo na talaga namang kabigha-bighaning pagmasdan. Ngunit ang proseso sa pagbuo ng ganito ka ningning na litrato ay mahaba at kumplikado. Maari itong mag-umpisa sa pag-utos sa isang modelong magpapapayat muna ng ilang libra, sa pagpunas ng langis sa kanyang katawan, sa pag-spray-tan sa kanyang balat, sa pagmanipula sa mga ilaw at kamera sa loob ng estudyo, at sa pag-*edit* sa inisyal na kuha gamit ang isang *software*. Sa bandang huli, wala naman talagang ganoon ka ganda at kapayat na babae na nagsilbing *referrent* ng espektakulong nakaimprinta sa pahina ng naturang *fashion magazine*. "Nawawala na ang pagtatanghal sa mismong produkto," binigyang diin ni Baudrillard, "nariyan lamang ang malaswa at hungkag na porma. At ang mismong industriya ng patalastas ang ilustrasyon ng walang-katas at hungkag na porma."[26]

Ang litrato ng babaeng ito ay isa lamang sa bilyon-bilyong mga espektakulo na lumalaganap sa kasalukuyang panahon. At ang tawag ni Baudrillard dito ay "*radical semiurgy*," o ang pagdami ng mga tandang walang *referrent* at mga tandang sila mismo ang reyalidad. Hindi lamang naging pamalit ng reyalidad ang postmodernong tanda; sa patuloy nitong pagiging independiyente sa reyalidad, ito ay naging hyper-reyalidad pa. Ibig sabihin ang postmodernong tanda ay tinuturing nang mas makakatotohan pa kaysa totoo mismo, at mas may reyalidad pa kaysa reyalidad mismo.

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[24] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 81.

[25] *Ibid*., 82.

[26] *Ibid*., 93.

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Kung babalikan natin ang ating nabanggit nang litrato ng babaeng naka-*swimwear*, ang espektakulong ito ay magiging hyper-reyalidad kung gagamitin ito ng ilang tao na basehan upang husgahan ang mga tunay na babaeng naka-*swimwear* din. Dahil prinoseso nang mahaba ang litratong nasa *fashion magazine*, dehadong-dehado at walang kalaban-lang ang mga tunay na babae. Ang sitwasyon ng hyper-reyalidad ay nangyayari kapag ang mga tunay na ang dapat gagaya sa mga prinosesong imahen, sa halip na ang mga imahen ang gagaya sa mga tunay. Kapag ini-isip na natin na dapat ang mga suot nating damit natin ay kahalintulad sa mga damit suot ng mga modelong nasa *fashion magazine*, na dapat ang ayos ng bahay natin ay kapareho sa mga bahay na nasa *architectural manual*, na dapat ang pagkain natin ay dapat kamukha sa mga pagkaing nasa *cookbook*, o na dapat ang kapaligiran natin ay organisado at kasinglinis at kasinglamig sa isang *mall* o *theme park*, unti-unti na tayong lumulubog sa kumunoy ng hyper-reyalismo.

Ayon kay Baudrillard, ang hyper-reyalismo ay ang pagbubura sa pagkaka-iba ng reyalidad at ng tanda, at tinatawag niya itong implosyon ng pagkaka-iba. Habang patuloy na lumalangoy ang mga tao sa mundo ng hyper-reyalismo, unti-unting nabubura rin ang pagkaka-iba-iba ng kanilang mga konsepto. Dahil sa pagbaha ng kahulugan, na tila isinusuka ng *radical semiurgy*, nawawalan na ng kahulugan ang mga konsepto. Sa labis-labis na pagtatanghal at pagtatalakay sa tao, lipunan, panlipunang uri, pulitika, liberasyon, rebolusyon, ang mga ito ay nawawalan na rin ng kahulugan. Hanggang ang postmodernong tao ay nakatunganga na lamang sa harap ng mga maniningning na espektakulo ng postmodernong tanda. Sa implosadong mundo ng postmodernismo ang tao ay kadalasang sumisilong na lamang sa anino ng hyper-reyalismo upang pansamantalang malimutan ang sindak na dala ng *schizophrenia*, at ng pagkalulong natin sa mga bagay-bagay, at ng pagtampisaw natin sa mundong nawalan na ng pagkaka-iba-iba.

Kahit ganito kalagim ang nakikita ni Baudrillard, hindi niya hinusgahan ang postmodernong mundo. Marahil alam niya na burado na rin kasi ang pagkaka-iba sa tama at mali. Hindi na rin siya nag-alay pa ng alternatibong programang maaring magligtas uli sa tao mula sa lusak ng implosadong mundo. Marahil alam niya na burado na rin kasi ang pagkaka-iba sa mabuti at masama.

Mahahalagang Puntos sa Pilosopiya ni Baudrillard para sa mga Lokal na Pag-aaral ng Teksto at Kultura ng Pilipinas

Binanggit sa introduksiyon na isa sa mga hangarin ng papel na ito ay ang pagtukoy sa mga aspekto at punto mula sa kaisipan ni Baudrillard

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na may maiaambag para sa lalong pagpapayaman sa teoretikal na korpus ng lokal nating araling kultural at araling Pilipino. Kaya sa seksiyong ito hahalawin natin mula sa kanyang pilosopiya ang ilang aspekto at punto na magagamit natin sa pagpapayabong sa ating sariling tekstuwal at kultural na mga pagsusuri.

Una, malaki ang potensyal ng ginawang pag-aaral ni Baudrillard sa kanluraning penomenon ng pagkunsumo ng tanda sa pag-unawa kung gaano kalaganap ang kaparehong penomenon dito sa ating bansa. Gamit ang nasabing pag-aaral, maaari din nating alamin kung may pagkakaiba ba ang kanluraning pagkunsumo ng tanda sa ating sariling pagkunsumo ng tanda. Gayong kapansin-pansin ang angas, yabang at pagiging partikular nating mga Pilipino sa ating panlipunang katayuan, mas matindi kaya ang ating pagkunsumo ng tanda? Sinu-sino ang nagpapalaganap ng mga tandang ito at paano nila ito pinapalaganap? Maaari din nating dalhin pa si Baudrillard sa ating pagsisid sa medyo kakaiba nating pagkunsumo ng mga peke at pinekeng produkto. Maiuugnay kaya ang gawain kaugaliang ito sa konsepto ng pagkunsumo ng tanda ni Baudrillard?

Pangalawa, interesante ang konsepto ni Baudrillard tungkol sa mamahalin at prestihiyosong mga produkto at kung paano ang mga ito itinanghal ng mga tusong kapitalista. Maaaring gamitin ang konseptong ito bilang lente ng pagsusuri sa sarili nating mga produkto na itinuturing nating prestihiyoso. Ang mga *imported* na bagay na halos sinasamba na ng mga Pilipino ay kahalintulad ba sa mga mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto na ayon kay Baudrillard ay gawa ng monopolyong kapitalismo, o kahalintulad lamang ang mga ito sa mga eksotikong produkto ng mas lumang kapitalismo? May mga lokal ba tayong produkto na itinatanghal din ng mga Pilipinong kapitalista bilang mga mahahalin at prestihiyosong bagay? Kung sakali meron man, may pagkakaiba ba ang pagtanghal ng Pilipinong kapitalista sa kanilang mamahalin at prestihiyosong produkto sa pagtanghal ng mga kanluraning kapitalista sa kanilang kaparehong produkto? Kung sakali meron man tayong mga lokal na mamahalin at prestihiyosong mga bagay, paano kaya ang mga ito lumalaban sa mga *imported* na bagay, prestihiyoso man o hindi, na pinapahalagahan nang husto ng mga Pilipino? May potensyal ang konsepto ni Baudrillard hindi lamang sa postkolonyal na pagsusuri ng kunsumerismong Pilipino kung hindi pati na rin sa postkolonyal na pakikibaka laban sa ating neo-kolonyal na kalagayan. Ito ay dahil ang ibinunyag niyang gawain ng mga tusong kanluraning kapitalista na may kinalaman sa artipisyal na konstruksyon ng prestihiyo ng kanilang produkto ay posibleng gayahin ng mga nasyunalistang kapitalistang Pilipino. Kung meron man tayong ganitong uri ng mga kapitalistang Pilipino, artipisyal ding buuin ang prestihiyo ng

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produktong Pilipino sa antas na magiging mas prestihiyoso pa ang mga ito kaysa katumbas nilang *imported* na produkto.

Pangatlo, mahalaga ang ginawang konseptuwal na pagkakaiba ni Baudrillard sa pagitan ng monopolyong kapitalismo at kapitalismo ng kompetitibong merkado para mabigyang diin na ang katotohanang ang kapitalismo ay hindi isang monolitiko at hindi nagbabagong kumpigurasyon, kung hindi isang sistema na umiinog sa paglipas ng panahon at posibleng nag-iibang anyo kumporme sa kanyang konteksto. Ang aral na ito ay maaaring gamitin para suriin nating mabuti kung ano na ba ang kasalukuyang anyo ng kapitalismong umiiral sa bansa natin, o hindi kaya kung ano ba talaga ang kasalukuyang modo ng produksyong na umiiral sa bansa natin. Pero dapat nating asahan na ang mga lokal na anyong ito ay higit pang mas kumplikado kaysa modelong binuo ni Baudrillard para sa kanluran, dulot ng katotohanang ang Pilipinas ay isang neo-kolonyal na estado at isang maliit at mahinang manlalaro sa larangan ng globalisasyon.

Pang-apat, ang pagbatikos ni Baudrillard sa Marxismo ay maaari nating gawing modelo sa pagsuri sa uri, o mga uri, ng Marxismong dinidiskurso at itinataguyod dito sa ating bansa. Ano nga ba ang hugis ng *utopia*, o mga *utopia*, na ipinapangako ng mga ideolohiya at kilusang ito? Kaya nga bang labanan ng mga nasabing ideolohiya at kilusan ang kasalukuyang anyo ng kapitalismo, o ng anumang modo ng produksyon, na umiiral sa ating bansa? Makabuluhan pa bang pag-usapan ang pilosopiya ni Marx sa konteksto ng kasalukuyan nating lipunan? Maaari din nating pagnilayan ang kapangyarihan at praktikalidad ng iminumungkahi ni Baudrillard na heneral na ekonomiya at simbolikong pagpapalitan bilang landas patungo sa wakas ng kapitalismo. Sa konteksto natin bilang isang umuunlad pa lamang na bansa, ang heneral na ekonomiya at simbolikong pagpapalitan ba ay mga angkop at makatarungang estratihiya para labanan ang kapitalismo? Anu-ano kaya ang mga mas tugmang estratihiya na makapangyarihan, praktikal at reyalistiko nating magamit para puksain ang mga masamang elemento at aspekto ng kapitalismo at globalisasyon?

Panglima, iteresante ang konsepto ng hyperreyalismo ni Baudrillard na gamiting lente ng pagsusuri kung umiiral din ba ito, kung gaano kalaganap ito, at kung ano ang anyo nito sa ating bansa. Sa isang banda, katanggap-tanggap isipin na mahina ang presensya ng hyperreyalismo sa Pilipinas dulot ng katotohanang ito ay nililikha ng makabagong teknolohiya at sa konteksto ng isang bansang malawak ang *technological divide* maliit lamang ang tsansa nitong saklawan ang buong populasyon. Ngunit sa kabilang banda, katanggap-tanggap ding isipin na malakas ang presensya ng hyperreyalismo sa Pilipinas dulot ng katotohanang sa mga rehiyon na matatagpuan ang mga makabagong

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teknolohiyang ito, katulad ng mga *metropolitan area*, talaga namang babad na babad ang nagkukumpulang mga Pilipino sa mga terminal ng hyperreyalismo, katulad ng telebisyon, sine, *mall*, *computer*, radyo, mga babasahin, at mga kahalintulad na bagay/sistema. Ano kaya ang epekto ng hyperreyalismo sa kamalayan ng mga Pilipinong binighani na nito? May pagkakaiba kaya ang kamalayan ng Pilipinong hindi pa lumubog at ng mga Pilipinong lumubog na sa kumunoy ng hyperreyalismo?

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