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**KRITIKE** is the official open access (OA) journal of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), Manila, Philippines. It is a Filipino peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, and international journal of philosophy founded by a group of UST alumni. The journal seeks to publish articles and book reviews by local and international authors across the whole range of philosophical topics, but with special emphasis on the following subject strands:

- Filipino Philosophy
- Oriental Thought and East-West Comparative Philosophy
- Continental European Philosophy
- Anglo-American Philosophy

The journal primarily caters to works by professional philosophers and graduate students of philosophy, but welcomes contributions from other fields (literature, cultural studies, gender studies, political science, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, inter alia) with strong philosophical content.

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INTERVIEW | On Filipino Identity and Culture

An Interview with
Leonardo Nieva Mercado, SVD

Emmanuel C. De Leon and Marvin Einstein S. Mejaro

Abstract: In this interview, we closely encounter one of the most important contemporary Filipino philosophers who started to pick up the pieces of what he dubbed as “elements of Filipino philosophy.” The interviewers highlight the intellectual biography of Leonardo Mercado beginning from his childhood in Cebu, his seminary formation, his transfer to the University of Santo Tomas, the context of his venturing into Filipino philosophy, and his estimation concerning the status of Filipino philosophy that he pioneered. Additionally, Mercado’s thought-provoking comments and reactions concerning the insights of other scholars who reflect on Filipino philosophy are also presented.

Keywords: Mercado, Thomasian philosophers, Filipino philosophy, culture

A Child of Cebu City

Emmanuel de Leon (Interviewer): Father Mercado, you were born in Cebu Maternity Hospital on March 16, 1935. And you moved to Manila, and then to Quezon City. Father, please tell us something about your childhood in the province. How many are you in the family?

Leonardo Mercado: Childhood? Well, we were five. I was the eldest; then Lito and Marita. The youngest were twins—boy and girl. The girl died after two years due to meningitis. That time wala pa iyang cure, kasi panahon pa iyan ng mga Hapon (There was no available cure to meningitis during the time of Japanese Occupation).

De Leon: And how about your parents?

Mercado: My father, Manuel Mejia Mercado, was a dentist from Cebu. And, my mother, Engracia Jamin Nieva, was a nurse from Marinduque who decided to work at Cebu during that time. When my father died on
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[November 20] 1945, and my mother was employed as nurse at Philippine Tuberculosis Society [in Pasay City], we move to Manila from Cebu.

De Leon: Do you think there is a connection between your childhood experiences in Cebu and your academic work?

Mercado: Anything about philosophy when I was a boy, maybe none. I was simply a boy and nothing philosophical in me during that time.

De Leon: When it comes to your basic education in Cebu, how will you describe it? Where did you get your elementary and high school degrees?

Mercado: Okay. It was Japanese Occupation or Second World War. My Grade 1 and Grade 2 were with the RVM sisters1, and then came the bombing. ‘Di ba binomba ‘yan ng mga Amerikano? (Do you remember that it was bombed by the American soldiers?). So, we had to evacuate. We had to move from the province to the city and then to Bohol. Our house was burned because it was near the convent and the University (of San Carlos). That was a Japanese concentration camp, so it was bombed and the fire went as far as our place. The whole area was destroyed. I continued my elementary studies at Saint Theresa’s College; then I transferred to Cebu Normal School for my grade 5 until I finish High School.

De Leon: And what about the religiosity of your family, and your own religiosity when you were just a kid? Was it your dream to become a religious priest?

Mercado: Nothing at that sort. Well, my father was a religious person. I would say he would pray before he goes to bed and in cases such as [the celebration of] Corpus Christi, he would be among the ones who would carry the … Ano bang tawag doon? (How do you call that?)

De Leon: Kubol?

Mercado: Hindi yata [kubol] (I don’t think so). That was the thing that people carry to cover the Blessed Sacrament. He was very active on church activities.

De Leon: So, it was not your dream to become a religious priest?

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1 It was a parochial school named Santo Rosario which was ran by the (Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM) sisters during that time.
Mercado: No, it was not my dream.

De Leon: What led you to Christ the King Seminary?

Mercado: Well, I could not find money to pay my tuition in Mapúa [as an Engineering student], so I dropped out [laughs]. And this guy offered free tuition fees in the seminary, so I took it [laughs]. Just like that kind of “you lose nothing” if you enter this school [laughing out loud].

Marvin Einstein Mejaro (Interviewer): Father, in connection with what Emman asked earlier, why S.V.D.? Was that deliberate as well?

Mercado: Well, I was in an S.V.D. school, San Carlos University, and with these S.V.D. priests, and so on and so forth. That was the natural connection. I didn’t think of other congregation nor diocesan [formation].

De Leon: You are known as a solid academician, a brilliant philosopher. And, the S.V.D. congregation is also known as missionaries. How do you balance the two?

Mercado: Mission has many levels. Mission activity can be in terms of running a parish. The other level of mission is when it comes to education.

De Leon: And you were ordained in Rome in 1964. Tell us something about your experiences abroad.

Mercado: At that time, there was this policy of the Generalate to cross-enroll. During that time, there were Germans studying in America, Americans studying in Germany, Filipinos studying in Rome. I was one of the seminarians who were sent to Rome to study. Our class was international. We were eleven: there were Indonesians, Americans, Germans, Argentineans, and we were two Filipinos. So, halo-halo na ‘yan doon (So, we have mixed cultures in the formation).

De Leon: You studied philosophy or theology?

Mercado: That was [Licentiate] in Theology.

In UST and the Beginning of Writing on Filipino Philosophy

De Leon: Now, what led you to study in our alma mater, UST?
INTERVIEW WITH LEONARDO MERCADO

Mercado: Formerly, I was studying in [University of] San Carlos in Cebu. I enrolled there for one semester. But, that time, the main philosopher there died. So, I transferred to UST.

Mejaro: How was UST then, Father? Particularly the program in philosophy back then?

Mercado: That time, as you know, UST was traditionally scholastic. Then came in Dr. [Emerita] Quito; she was a new wave, as we know it. She was one of my teachers as well. She brought in new ideas and atmosphere here in UST. She introduced existentialism, structuralism, etc.

De Leon: Aside from Dr. Quito, who do you think are your influences? Who are the UST professors that influenced you the most?

Mercado: Nobody was significant, except Quito [laughing out loud]. In fact, Dr. Quito did not support my ideas. She was supposedly my dissertation adviser, but she did not advise me and she was not present during my dissertation defense [laughs].

Mejaro: Father, the way I read it, it seems to me that from the very start it was deliberate from you that you want to curve a different place in philosophy.

Mercado: As I was saying in one of my essays, it’s a form of nationalism. Nationalism should not be just personal; it must also be intellectual. The idea of “intellectual nationalism” was absent during that time. We can be Filipino through citizenship, but in reality we are “tuta” (“puppy”; colloquial term for “puppet”).

De Leon: You called that “tuta ng isip” in one of your articles.

Mercado: Yes, “tuta ng isip.” We followed Kierkegaard, we followed Sartre; We were colonized by them—hindi tayo malaya [sa isipan] (There was intellectual colonialism). So, I was trying to highlight a new form of nationalism during that time.

Mejaro: Father, I’m also interested in the topic of your dissertation. At that time, your dissertation seems to create a new path to a different topic. At that time, were you also doubting about the idea of a Filipino philosophy?

Mercado: No.
Mejaro: So, you are sure that it will create something different?

Mercado: I was just doing what I thought was correct.

De Leon: Can we say that your dissertation is a sort of “revolt” against the system during that time?

Mercado: Pwede nga ‘yan (You can say so). In fact, if you ask during that time: “Meron bang Filipino philosophy?” (“Is there a Filipino philosophy?”), that was a very big question back then. Even our professors did not know Filipino philosophy. For them, there is only one philosophy.

Mejaro: Did you feel the necessity of posing that question during that time? Some scholars would say we don’t need to pose this question. We should just do philosophy. For me, I see the need of posing this question to reassess where we are.

Mercado: Actually, I had a German teacher before saying that there is only one kind of philosophy—scholastic philosophy. Indian philosophy is not philosophy [according to him]; that kind of mindset that only Greeks can do philosophy and scholasticism was the only philosophy.

Mejaro: Meaning, there was a necessity of asking that question.

Mercado: Yeah.

On the Status of Filipino Philosophy

De Leon: In your 2005 article “Why I Started to Write on Filipino Philosophy,” you observed that “The literature on Filipino Philosophy is … growing. But the idea of Filipino philosophy was unthinkable when I started writing on it in the early 1970s”2. Father, what do you think is the current status of Filipino philosophy compared to the time when you were starting to write about it?

Mercado: Now?

De Leon: Yes.

Mercado: Well, my peers like Alfredo Co, Romualdo Abulad, and so forth, are doing great. Once in De La Salle University, there was a meeting there. Their philosophy department invited several Filipino philosophers. Of course, Dr. Quito was invited but she was just busy taking pictures [laughs]. Even Manny [Manuel] Dy Jr. and his colleagues in Ateneo were present in the said event. They gave talks and lectures.

De Leon: Is there an improvement or a decline when it comes to the status of Filipino philosophy?

Mercado: We can say that *quot capita, tots sensus* (so many heads, so many opinions). *Bawat isa ay may kanya kanyang ideya tungkol sa* Filipino philosophy. (Everybody has his own idea concerning Filipino philosophy). I think, pluralism is good, but my suggestion is that we must come together and stick to one topic. People write but there is no common theme—*sabog-sabog* (no common theme)! There is no common question! We do not talk to each other concerning our methodology. We should also stick to one topic, so that we can compare notes. Because, somebody said, “Kung walang written philosophy, walang philosophy” (“If there is no written philosophy, then there is no philosophy”). *Parang sinusabi na kung walang nakasulat, ibig sabihin ay wala na agad pilosopiya* (They seem to suggest that an absence of written material necessarily implies absence of philosophy). I don’t agree with that.

For example, there is a group of Aborigines in Australia [whose] grammar is not written in textbook. But, they speak their own language. *Ibig sabihin ba na kung walang nakasulat na grammar, wala na ring grammar ang mga tao?* Hindi! (Does the absence of a written grammar necessarily mean that people do not have grammar? I don’t think so!). Grammar is how you use the language. It is the language being spoken. So, the people speak the language, *ang problema lamang ay walang* written grammar (the only problem is that their grammar is not written in books). So, how do you make a written grammar? From the usage, you can infer the rules of grammar; that’s the same thing in Filipino philosophy.

But, there are so many ideas. Okay, let’s stick with one theme. In one event, we talk about “philosophy of man.” In another event, we talk about “philosophy of knowledge” so we can compare notes. We can be acquainted with the project of each other. *Kanya-kanya kasi tayo ng scope* (Everybody has his own personal philosophical scope). I agree with the importance of pluralism, but let’s stick to one theme. That challenge remains a challenge.

De Leon: What you just said has something to do with methodology. We can say that you designed your own methodology, that is, inference from
language structures and from words. What influenced the formation of your own methodology?

Mercado: When I was in a vacation in Italy, I asked some Linguistic scholars and they showed me some references. I fused the method of linguistics (as a science) and philosophy of language.

Mejaro: Father, why do we need to start from language? It seems that from your very first book it is also deliberate.

Mercado: I said there are many ways [of doing philosophy]. And, one of the methods is to infer philosophy through language. Kung anong behavior mo, may kinalaman ‘yun sa pag-iisip mo. For example, a young man, anong kilos niya?: Meron siyang sinusulat, dinadalaw niya ang isang dalaga sa isang address, may dala siyang rosas. Ibig sabihin, sa kanyang mga kilos makukuha mo ang isang kongklusyon na “Siya ay umiibig!” Iyan ‘yung mga pahiwatig, ‘di ba? (Your behavior has something to do with the way you think. For example, imagine the actions of a certain man. Imagine him writing, and visiting a young woman. He has brought with him a bundle of roses. From that set of actions, we can deduce that “he is in love!” Those are the implications, right?). There is a point of inference in behavior. The same thing with Filipino behavior. They can be inferred in language, as well as in signs and symbols. From them we can say there is a convergence also. So, you infer from language and behavior.

Another example, when we see someone, we usually ask, “Saan ang punta mo? Bakit nag-isang ka?” (“Where are you going? Why are you alone?”). Do we consider that as an insult? In some cultures, they see that as minding the business of other people. But that’s different for us. When you say in Ilokano, “Papanam?” or “Where are you going?”, was that an insult?

De Leon: No, Father? That’s a form of greeting for most of us.

Mercado: Yeah. That’s what I was trying to say.

De Leon: But, aside from the method of inference in language, have you conducted some fieldworks concerning Filipino Philosophy?

Mercado: As written down, there is none. There are existing [fieldwork that I have done] but they are not published.
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De Leon: There is a method in the field of history which they call “history from below.” Is it deliberate on your part to do also “philosophy from below”?

Mercado: Yeah, we can call it “philosophy from below”—philosophy from the people. I called it “from the implicit to the explicit.” People “practice” their philosophy, but they did not write something about it.

De Leon: So, for you, what should be the role of a philosopher?

Mercado: When it comes to the role of a philosopher, I used the analogy of a “partera” or a “midwife.” Does the midwife give birth? Hindi! (No!) She simply assists in the process. Ang manganganak ay ‘yung babae—ikaw lamang ay isang tumutulong sa panganganak (The woman will be the one to give birth—you simply assist in the process of giving birth). In the same way, people “know” philosophy and the role of the philosopher is to assist. You are just a facilitator. Hindi ikaw ang nanganganak sapagkat nariyan na iyan (It does not originate from you because it is already there).

Mejaro: Father, pwede po ba nating sabihin na bulky po talaga ang work na pagsisimulan natin sa Filipino philosophy like we are starting in language, behavior. Pwede po ba nating sabihin that the process is quite demanding? (Father, can we say that the task of doing Filipino philosophy is quite bulky, like we have to start in language and behavior? Can we say that the process is quite demanding?)

Mercado: No. In my case, my first article was on Filipino philosophy of time [Solidarity, 1972]. I used there the method of linguistics and observation of behavior. So, parang buo na naman iyon eh; Nandiyan na ang mga iyan. (It’s like there is already a foundation; It’s already there.) From your previous research, then come up with another topic related to that. It is easier doing that.

Reactions to Mercado’s Philosophy and Methodology

De Leon: Father, have you read books and articles reflecting on Filipino philosophy authored by other Filipino philosophers?

Mercado: Now?

De Leon: Now and before? Have you read the works of other thinkers reflecting on Filipino philosophy like Ferriols, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, etc.?
Mercado: Well, Ferriols was not writing about “Filipino philosophy.” That was not his concern. His only concern is his idea of “Meron” [laughing out loud]. He was also struggling to come up with his own philosophy, as far as we know he got stuck with “Meron” [laughs]. Wala namang more specific na [contribution], hindi ba? (It seems that his contribution to Filipino philosophy is not that specific).

De Leon: That’s an interesting comment [laughs]. If you are going to mention a specific title or idea of a certain Filipino philosopher, what do you think is closer to your basic concepts?

Mercado: Well, one Jesuit priest is following me. Sino nga ‘yun? (What is his name?)

De Leon: Albert Alejo?


De Leon: Do you agree with his re-appropriation of your concept of “kalooban”?

Mercado: Yeah. In a way, I agree with him. In fact, his basic methodology was coming from my writings. He seems to continue my basic questions.

De Leon: Usually, when they categorize Filipino philosophers, you will go with Florentino Timbreza.⁴ Do you agree with that? Maybe because you and Dr. Timbreza were doing something related to culture.

Mercado: Yeah. But, I’m not sure about his methodology. Parang “sabog” (It seems to be “disorganized”) [laughing out loud]. I cannot measure my concepts in relation to his style of doing philosophy.

³ See Albert Alejo, Tao po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao (Quezon City: Office of the Reasearch and Publications — School of Arts and Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990).

De Leon: Have you encountered the works of F.P.A. Demeterio III who evaluated the status of Filipino philosophy after 30 years of the publication of your book? He also evaluated the directions for Filipino philosophy. Do you have specific comment about it?

Mercado: I gave you the article related to that. In that article that I gave you, I already discussed my comments and suggestions. Just read it! Can you give me other authors who labor on Filipino philosophy?

De Leon: Here in UST we have R.T. Pada. He wrote an article titled “The Methodological Problems of Filipino Philosophy.”

Mercado: I don’t know him yet. Sino pa? (Who else?)

Mejaro: Si Emmanuel Batoon po.

Mercado: I think he is writing his dissertation on me, ‘di ba? (is it so?)

De Leon: He wrote articles about your anthropological approach in doing philosophy.

Mercado: I know it exists but I haven’t read his articles [laughing out loud]. Nasa Kritike ‘yun, ‘di ba? (Was it published in Kritike?)

De Leon: Yes, Father! Let’s talk about some points mentioned by R.T. Pada. In his paper, Pada surveyed the method of several Filipino philosophers. He comments, “There is a certain sense of ambiguity when Mercado tries to assert that tools and methods in evaluating Filipino philosophy ought to be done in a non-Western category. This problem is further complicated by the fact that Mercado often cites Western philosophies to found most of his arguments ....” How will you comment about this, Father?

Mercado: Okay. Methodology wise, it is inference through language. Is this method limited to any nationality? Another method is inference from

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6 In the recent previous issues of Kritike, the works of Batoon and Pada have dealt with Filipino philosophy. See footnote numbers 6 and 7.
7 See Emmanuel Batoon, “Tracing Mercado’s Anthropological Perspective (First of Two Parts),” in Kritike, 8:1 (2014), 1-23. See also Emmanuel Batoon “Tracing Mercado’s Anthropological Perspective (Second of Two Parts),” in Kritike, 8:2 (2014), 1-18.
behavior. Is it confined to any nationality? Hindi! (No!) Anybody can use this tool to analyze a worldview, ‘di ba? (right?) So, hindi ibig sabihin kapag Ilokano, hindi na pwedeng gumamit ng pamamaraan ng mga Tagalog. (Being an Ilocano does not hinder you to apply a method being used the Tagalogs).

Mejaro: So, Father, can we also say that we should also invite ambiguity in language because it’s also necessary?

Mercado: No. What I was saying is that the language contained philosophy. Nandoon na [sa wika ang pilosopiya]. (Philosophy is an element of language). You simply explicate it. Again, the analogy of unwritten grammar that I mentioned a while ago. The rules of grammar must be inferred from the existing practices. If you talk about Filipino worldview, behavior, and so forth, nandoon ang mga ‘yan [sa mga tao] (people embody their lifeworld). But, how do you make them explicit? That’s another question. These are the methods that I found useful. If you find other useful methods, okay then, show it to me!

De Leon: So, the method should not be an “original” one?

Mercado: Not necessarily.

De Leon: Another comment that Pada posed is that your idea of Filipino philosophy is ahistorical. Meaning, “it neglects that significant influence of colonial forces that have shaped and affected the Filipino behavior.” He pointed out the absence of Spanish and American influences in your study of Filipino volkgeist. How will you comment, Father?

Mercado: For example, I talked about “kalooban” based on the language and behavior of the people. There you infer philosophy. What is “ahistorical” in that method, ‘di ba? (is it?) The language exists. In other words, the language is historical. I used the tool of inferring from the existing or historical language of the people. Then, what is “ahistorical” in my method? I don’t understand that.

De Leon: Maybe Pada was pointing out that the “Filipino” is a by-product of different influences.

Mercado: I agree with that. But, the question is ‘yung “Filipino” ba ngayon ay iba sa “Filipino” noong araw? Pareho ba o hindi? (Is today’s concept of being

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9 Ibid.
“Filipino” different from that concept of being “Filipino” in the past? Yes or no?)

De Leon: It’s analogous—partly the same and partly different.

Mercado: Let’s put it this way. ‘Yun bang Ingles ni Shakespeare kung ikukumpara sa Old English, pareho ba sila? Magkaiba sila! Pero, Ingles pa rin. (Is the Shakespearean English the same compared to Old English? They are different! But, it’s still English.) Language, as well as culture, will always change. But, the question is, “Is today’s English totally different from the old one?” Another thing is, “Are you the same person ten years ago and now?”

De Leon: The same and different [laughs].

Mercado: The human cells change every seven years, ‘di ba? We have new set of cells every seven years. There is the sameness and difference. So, there is continuity also. Same thing in being Filipino—there is growth. There are sameness and difference.

De Leon: So, is it your project to look for that “sameness” in Filipino worldview?

Mercado: No. That is not my project. I just want to make them more explicit.

De Leon: You simply describe what is there?

Mercado: Yes. What is ahistorical there? [laughs].

The Language Use and Intellectual Colonialism

De Leon: Let’s talk about your use of language in doing Filipino philosophy. You wrote it somewhere that writing in Tagalog during the 1970s was not yet fashionable. Do you think your observation is still valid today?

Mercado: That is because we live in a globalized world. They say, “The world must speak English.” So, it is a tool. There are also technical terms that you cannot translate in Filipino language. The thing is, we must use the colloquial language or the language being use by the people. That is the living language or living reality.

De Leon: Komportable din po ba kayo sa paggamit ng Filipino? (Are you comfortable in using the Filipino language?)
Mercado: Yeah.

Mejaro: Father, I observe that there is a certain kind of “hybridity” in your writings, meaning you can jump from philosophy to theology. You have Elements of Filipino Philosophy, Elements of Filipino Theology, on Filipino ethics, to name few. How do you see all these things, Father, in terms of your philosophizing?

Mercado: I don’t see any problem in doing that.

Mejaro: Because it is good to point out that we are open to other fields—that philosophy is not narcissistic of its own system. Parang ‘yan po ang nakikitang ko doon. (That’s what I observed in your style of doing philosophy).

De Leon: In relation to the point of Einstein, Father, you were also cited in the field of sikolohiyang Filipino, anthropology, social science, etc. Do you intend to influence in the said areas of knowledge?

Mercado: I don’t have that intention to be cited [laughs]. I organized several conferences in sikolohiyang Filipino [in Tacloban]. I participated in theological conferences. I spoke in Iran about Muslim studies. So, it is multidisciplinary. I think philosophy can go to any domain. And, we must use different sciences of our time.

De Leon: In relation to that, what role do you think Filipino intellectuals, in general, and Filipino philosophers, in particular, should play in the development of public debates and public policies? How are we going to be relevant to Philippine society?

Mercado: Okay. The goal is the development of the Filipino people and to have what we call “kasarinlan” (autonomy). That should be the main focus. The point is sometimes when we embrace other cultures there is a tendency to be dominated by that culture. Parang nagigiting alipin tayo (we tend to become slaves). Unlike the Japanese, they maintain their independence, scholars can accept foreign things, but they know their being Japanese. So, the thing here is our being “imitators”—gaya-gaya tayo malimit sa iba. Kung anong mayroon sa kanila, dapat mayroon din dito sa atin [kahit hindi naman lapat sa ating situasyon]. (Most of the time, we imitate Western culture. We want to imitate their unique way of life even if they are mismatched with our situation).
INTERVIEW WITH LEONARDO MERCADO

We have our own philosophy and thinking, and we should be free to do that. Unless you are colonized intellectually by some cultures, then you will think that we are inferior. Then you will quote foreign philosophers because they are your heroes [laughs]. We should be free and not a slave.

De Leon: When it comes to the status of doing philosophy in our country, are we in the right track? What are we doing wrong and what are we doing right?

Mercado: Let’s begin small. Let’s have a seminar on different themes. For example, a seminar on “kalooban.” Let’s invite speakers who are Ilokano, Bisaya, Bikolano, etc. Okay. We may agree or disagree on that seminar, but that is healthy. Then, next time we talk about different topic like values or education. The discussion must only have one topic and let’s find what is “Filipino” in that topic of discussion. Let’s begin with some building blocks.

That’s my proposal to different philosophical societies. Let’s have a series of seminars on only one topic, then discuss, compile, print, and debate about them. Eventually we have a corpus of Filipino philosophy.

De Leon: Father, binabasa po ba ninyo ulit ‘yung mga nasulat na ninyong libro? (Do you reread the books that you’ve written?)

Mercado: Oo naman. Meron din. (Yes. Sometimes.)

De Leon: When was the last time that you reread Elements of Filipino Philosophy? [laughs].

Mercado: Pero, nasulat ko na ‘yan (But, I’ve written that already), why should I read? [laughs].

De Leon: If there is something that you are going to revise in your book Elements of Filipino Philosophy what is that?

Mercado: Wala naman akong nakitang kakaiba eh [laughing out loud]. Kasi ganito: halimbawa nagtatayo ka ng building, hindi ba mayroong pundasyon? Kung gusto mo pang magkaroon ng second floor, third floor, fourth floor, kahit ilan pa idagdag mo ryan, ang mahalaga ay mayroon nang matibay na pundasyon. (I did not see anything inconsistent in my book. It’s like when you are building a structure, foundation is the most important. If you still want to construct a second, third, fourth, or as many floors as you want, it is important that you have a solid foundation).
Mejaro: So, Father, is it also deliberate na parang may progression talaga akong nakikita sa works ninyo? Na sa first book hanggang sa ngayon doon pa rin nanggagaling sa naunang libro? (So, Father, is it also deliberate on your part that I can see a progression in your works? You are consistent from the very start until now that you still go back to the fundamental theses of your first book?)

Mercado: Yeah. Mayroong ibang aplikasyon na (Some are applied already). I applied it to law, ethics, psychology, theology. Philosophy can go anywhere.

Mejaro: Father, ano po yung mga binabasa ninyo ngayon? O mga projects na gusto pa ninyong gawin? (Father, what are you currently reading? Or do you have projects in progress?)

Mercado: Projects? Wala namang projects (I don’t have projects). Sometimes you are assigned to teach a particular course, I write my lectures, compile them, edit, and then publish. My books are like that. They are series of articles delivered in different fora.

Mejaro: May niluluto po ba kayong topic ngayon about certain matter? (As of the moment, do you plan to write concerning a certain topic?).

Mercado: I’m teaching now. There are some brilliant ideas inside the classroom and I’m planning to write about them for publication.

De Leon: If you are going give some pieces of advice to budding Filipino philosophers, those who want to follow your footsteps, what is that?

Mercado: Okay. That’s a good question! Advice? I would say stick to one theme that is near to your heart. Then, write it down! Like the analogy of a drop of water. That is very small, but it will surely make a ripple. Stick to the topic that is near to your heart. Anywhere you start, that is the same procedure.

De Leon: Minor questions po para lang pampagana (some trivial questions) [laughing out loud]. First, what is the last book that you read, Father?

Mercado: The Breviary [laughing out loud].

De Leon: What is your favorite food, Father?

Mercado: Ah, I prefer vegetables and fish. I tried to eliminate meat in my diet.
INTERVIEW WITH LEONARDO MERCADO

De Leon: What is your favorite place here in UST?

Mercado: Favorite place? Maybe the library.

Mejaro: Nice one, Father! Library [laughing out loud].

De Leon: That’s all, Father. Maraming salamat po! (Thank you very much!)

Mercado: Are you doing your M.A. or Ph.D.?

Mejaro: Ph.D. po. This interview will help us a lot in writing our dissertation.

Mercado: Good luck sa inyo at pagbutihan ninyo! (Good luck and excel with what you are doing!)

End of interview

Department of Philosophy, University of Santo Tomas, Philippines

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Appendix 1: A Bibliography of Fr. Leonardo Nieva Mercado, SVD
(by Emmanuel C. de Leon)

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<th>Books</th>
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**Graduate Studies Works**
Reflections on the Status of Filipino Philosophy

Leonardo N. Mercado

Abstract: This short essay contains some of my musings concerning the present status of Filipino philosophy. These reflections may be divided into three parts. First, on the existence of Filipino Philosophy. Second, my reactions to the evaluation of F.P.A. Demeterio III on Filipino philosophers. Third, a proposal for the future undertakings of philosophical institutions in our country.

Keywords: Demeterio, Filipino philosophy, indigenous thought, culture

In 1974, after I came out with my first book, Elements of Filipino Philosophy, the work was met with skepticism. The reaction is understandable because the majority of our academe were still hooked to the Western intellectual and cultural dominance. But, in his preface to my book, The Filipino Mind, which came out in 1994, George F. McLean, the secretary of the Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, wrote:

Leonardo Mercado was one of the first to appreciate the philosophical significance of this evolution. When he wrote his first book on the subject the World Congresses of Philosophy were being devoted regularly to philosophy and science (Varna 1973, and Dusseldorf 1978); it was not until the Montreal Congress in 1983 and after a long struggle that culture was recognized as a philosophical theme, and indeed became a locus for philosophical investigation.

1 A report delivered to the Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research (PAPR) on 7 December 2014.
The offering of Filipino philosophy in our universities, colleges, and seminaries has slowly grown. And, it fermented the interest of students and teachers.

The Report of F.P.A. Demeterio III

Thirty years after I came out with my first book, F.P.A. Demeterio III of De La Salle University evaluated the status of Filipino Philosophy. He examined the “status and directions for Filipino Philosophy” in the writings of seven philosophers, namely: Fernando Zialcita, Florentino Timbreza, Emerita Quito, Romualdo Abulad, Napoleon Mabaquiao, Rolando Gripaldo, and Alfredo Co. Demeterio concludes:

Hence, in having rendered obsolete the question “Is there a Filipino philosophy?,” Filipino students and younger scholars of philosophy could select which among the twelve highly developmentally useful forms of Filipino philosophy they want to work on. By doing so, their consequent philosophical researches would hopefully contribute to the further enrichment of Filipino philosophy until the question, “Is there a Filipino philosophy?” fades away from the Philippine historical horizon.

However, Demeterio excludes me in his study for the following reason:

Leonardo Mercado (1975), who without a doubt is one of the pioneers of Filipino philosophy, is not included in this comparative study because he tended to insist on a singular form of Filipino philosophy, which is the cultural, anthropological, or ethnophilosophical discourse. Unlike Mercado, many of the pioneering Filipino philosophers discussed the myriad forms of the mode of existence of Filipino philosophy.

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4 Ibid., 212.
5 Ibid., 313.
In Table 1 of his article, Demeterio comes out with sixteen forms of Filipino philosophy according to their strengths, weaknesses and overall assessments: (1) grassroots/folk philosophy; (2) lecture on scholasticism/Thomism; (3) lecture on other foreign systems; (4) critical philosophy as non-academic discourse; (5) application of logical analysis; (6) application of phenomenology/existentialism/hermeneutics; (7) critical philosophy as an academic method; (8) appropriation of foreign theories; (9) appropriation of folk philosophy; (10) philosophizing with the use of the Filipino language; (11) textual exposition of foreign systems; (12) revisionist writing; (13) interpretation of Filipino worldview; (14) research on Filipino values and ethics; (15) identification of the presuppositions and implications of the Filipino worldview; and (16) study on the Filipino philosophical luminaries.6

The classification of Demeterio shows that the philosophers mentioned still have not totally cut off their apron strings from the Western masters. He writes:

To conclude, this paper has shown that out of the sixteen forms of Filipino philosophy, one should no longer be referred to as a philosophical discourse, namely, folk/grassroots philosophy; two have low developmental usefulness, namely, the lectures on Scholasticism/Thomism and the lectures on other foreign theories; one has a medium developmental usefulness, namely, (1) critical philosophy as non-academic discourse; (2) application of logical analysis; (3) phenomenology/existentialism/hermeneutics as an academic method; (4) critical philosophy as an academic method; (5) appropriation of foreign theories; (6) appropriation of folk philosophy; (7) philosophizing with the use of the Filipino language; (8) revisionist writing; (9) interpretation of Filipino worldview; (10) research on Filipino values and ethics; (11) identification of the presuppositions and implications of the Filipino worldview; and (12) study on the Filipino philosophical luminaries. Concerning no. 9 on the appropriation of folk philosophy (as represented by Timbreza, Quito, Mabaquiao, and Gripaldo), the author praises its “highly developmental usefulness due to use of Filipino concepts and system of thinking.” Concerning no. 4

6 Ibid., 212.
(interpretation of Filipino worldview by Zialcita, Quito, Timbreza, Co, Abulad, Mabaquiao, and Gripaldo), the author proposes the said interpretation as a guide to Filipino academicians.7

After one year, Demeterio came out with a follow-up study. It is entitled “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy.” The study evaluates the writings of 26 individuals based on the academic institutions from the entire country. Demeterio classifies them according to the following categories of Filipino philosophy:

1. The exposition of foreign systems,
2. The application of logical analysis,
3. The application of phenomenology and hermeneutics,
4. The appropriation of foreign theories,
5. As revisionist writing,
6. As academic critical analysis,
7. As the interpretation of Filipino worldview,
8. As research of Filipino ethics and values,
9. As the appropriation of folk spirit,
10. As the study on the presuppositions and implication of the Filipino worldview,
11. As the study of the Filipino philosophical luminaries, and,
12. Philosophy in the Filipino language.8

My Reactions to the Report of Demeterio

What do I think of the categories of Demeterio? The following is my understanding of Filipino philosophy. It will be in the areas of “the interpretation of Filipino worldview,” “the interpretation of ethics and values,” as well as “philosophy as reflected in Filipino language/s.”

We assume there is a modal Filipino, meaning the majority which is pictured in a bell-curve with extremes spread to the left and to the right. The representatives will range from the indigenous groups who live on the mountains or in the seas like the Badjaos to the sophisticated dwellers of the exclusive places in Metro Manila. The majority in the center depicts the modal Filipino.

7 Ibid., 312.
Every people has a world view, which is how a people views reality from their perspective. It is like viewing outside the window from the inside. Now if the view is from the outside to the inside, that is culture. Luzbetak defines culture as “a dynamic system of socially acquired and socially shared ideas according to which an interacting group of human beings is to adapt itself to its physical, social, and ideational environment.”9 The philosophy of a people is how they view and judge reality from their perspective, that is, from the inside. We assume that Filipino identity is both dynamic and static. As dynamic, it is like saying that the English of Shakespeare is English, which is partly the same and partly different from modern English.

A part of culture is the ideational, which includes concepts and values; this is the area of philosophy. Now somebody will object: “If there is no written philosophy or text, then that group of people has no philosophy.” The objection may be applied to language. If there is no written grammar, then there is no language. But, the members of the tribe perfectly speak their language even if there is no written grammar. The grammar has to be observed and written down by a language scholar. Australian national television reported that the language of a group of Australian aborigines is about to vanish because their few members are dying out. So, a Caucasian anthropologist spent his time with them, learned their language, and wrote down its grammar. When applied to worldview and philosophy, here is the example of the unwritten grammar becoming written.

Demeterio says that one area of Filipino philosophy is the study of Filipino philosophical luminaries. For example, to study the writings of Jose Rizal may yield insights on Filipino philosophy. We must remember that each person embodies three levels: the universal, on one extreme, and the particular or individual, on the other extreme, and the national in the middle. In Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, the Jewish money-lender, Shylock explains that he as a Jew has emotions like the rest of humankind. The other extreme is the individual. The Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, as an individual has his unique traits. For example, his height which has been computed as four feet and eleven inches (as based on his clothes in Fort Santiago) or even as low as 4’6” according to one eye-witness. Has his short height affected his character and also his philosophy? (The same question may also be applied to Napoleon Bonaparte who was quite short). The Filipino in Rizal is what he has inherited from his family and acquaintances. He also embodied the knowledge and philosophies he has gained from his Western education and travels.

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Another example is Immanuel Kant. Does he represent German philosophy? A Prussian or northern German with the strong sense of duty, his doctrine of categorical imperative does certainly reflect north German culture and values. Or how has French culture influenced Blaise Pascal and Henri-Louis Bergson?

The Western stress on the individual has influenced the Western emphasis on human rights, like the right to private property, liberty, and pursuit of individual happiness.

In short, if Filipino philosophy is the making explicit of the Filipino world view and philosophy as reflected in their culture, then there are different methodologies for achieving that. I have used several. One is through linguistic methodologies, such as the phenomenology of behavior and comparative oriental philosophy.

A Proposal

If a people’s philosophy consists in making explicit their world view, allow me to make a proposal. Let us begin with an example. In social philosophy, Western thought values the individual in preference to the social. For example, the law has two sides: duties and rights. This theme on human rights has occupied the modern Western thought from Hobbes onwards. Let us summarize here what we have treated elsewhere. Although the following brief summary may do injustice to this wide field, at least I want to point out a broad panorama in the light of the individual and the social.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) theorizes that primitive humans were anti-social. There was no state then. Hobbes postulated that the transition to being social was through the establishment of the Social Contract. For the sake of achieving peace, the early humans decided to renounce voluntarily their individual liberties and give it to an absolute ruler. The state operates through the rule of law which assures individual freedom and protects private property.

John Locke (1632-1704) modified Hobbes’ theory of social contract. Locke modified it by not making absolute the power of the ruler, that people have the right to revolt against a tyrant ruler, that the government has checks and balances, that there should be separation of church and state.

In France, Charles-Louis de Secondat (1689-1755), better known as Baron de Montesquieu, added sociological factors to the concept of law. He said that the law must consider the climate of the country, its political and

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economic conditions, the temperament of the people, their customs and traditions. In short, the law must factor in the people’s culture.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) taught that sovereignty resides in the people and thereby inspired the French Revolution. Through the Social Contract, the people became intelligent in running their own affairs. Since the power of the law comes from the people, the law must also have popular backing.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) also stressed the individual. His theory of self-legislation is the heart of his practical philosophy. The self-legislation is “Act so that the maxim can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation.” The law is to obeyed for its own sake (again, self-legislation). Laws for him are framed in his individualistic philosophy.

The individualism of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) stresses the individualistic pursuit of happiness insofar as such a pursuit does not infringe on the rights of others. Hence, the first form of government is one which insures the most liberty for its citizens.

Although the list of Western thinkers is not exhaustive, we can see the drift, that is, how Western thought in general has this individualistic direction. We cannot, however, be simplistic because there are others who may also think otherwise.

The point I am driving at is this: If Western philosophers are products of their culture and world view, we see that their philosophies somehow complement each other. They are variations of the same theme and individualism.

My proposal is the following: that the philosophical institutions encourage various Filipino philosophers to write on a common theme. If various Western philosophers through the ages wrote on the individual and human rights and individual freedom and therefore enriched the topic, something can be done if Filipino scholars write on the Filipino as a social being, on human duties and their implications. Another possible area is on the philosophy of becoming (in contrast to being). Our Oriental mind is like the Chinese principle of yin and the yang. There may be other themes.

In this postmodern age, we may thus show the rest of the world the riches of Filipino thought.

References

ARTICLE | On Filipino Identity and Culture

The Quiapo Leap: 
A Kierkegaardian Reading 
of the Religious Experience of the 
Black Nazarene Popular Devotion1

Rhochie Avelino E. Matienzo

Abstract: In 1521, the Spanish conquistadores brought Christian faith to the Philippine islands. Through centuries, this faith is infused with the indigenous culture of the people paving a way to what is known today as “Filipino popular devotion.” One of the most famous among its rituals is the annual Traslación devotion in honor of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila. In recent decades, there has been a vast measure of literature on this religious phenomenon. However, most of them are either written by social scientists or religious experts and very seldom has it been explored in a philosophical manner. This paper aims to reflect on the religious experience of the Black Nazarene popular devotion in order to provide a philosophical appreciation of this unique Filipino faith, in particular, and to provide an avenue towards a deeper understanding indigenous culture and Christian faith, in general. In meeting this aim, the study invokes Søren Kierkegaard’s existentialism and its discussion on “faith” illustrated in two of his renowned works Fear and Trembling and Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

Keywords: Black Nazarene, Traslación, leap of faith, double movement of faith

1 The essay was originally presented at the International Conference for Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue in a Pluralistic World: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives, in Constanta, Romania, held on 1-2 June, 2016. The seminal theories of this work were formulated in “Kierkegaard goes to Quiapo,” in Scientia (June 2014), 43-71.
Introduction

Every 9th of January, millions of barefooted men parade the streets of Quiapo, Manila, in the ardent hope of getting close to the 16th-century wooden figure of a suffering Christ. Since its first Translación (Spanish for “passage”) in 1787, numerous claims of miracles have been attached to the wooden figure. Based on the numbers recorded from 2004 to 2014, a significant increase of 4,000% (300,000-12,000,000) participated in the annual feast.\(^2\) However, because of the odd cultic character of the devotion, it is yet to be officially recognized by the Catholic Church. Considered as an “unofficial cult,”\(^3\) the increasing cases of injuries, death, and damage to property\(^4\) each year has led both foreign and local observers to describe the


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phenomenon as “religious frenzy,” “idolatry,” “irrationality,” “fanaticism,” and “superstition.” Despite calls for Catechism, government warnings of bomb threats, and death toll, there is no indication that the Quiapo phenomenon will be stopping anytime soon.

Hence, the following questions: Despite all the risks and criticisms, why do devotees increase each year? What are their intentions? What is the meaning enclosed in the religious experience of a devotee? What are the elements of such belief?

At present, while there exist a number of studies in anthropology, sociology, religion, and theology that investigate the Quiapo phenomenon, there are virtually no philosophical studies on it. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to philosophically understand the religious experience of the Black Nazarene popular devotion. In order to achieve this aim, I will adopt the 19th-century Danish existentialist Søren Kierkegaard’s notion of “faith” as a methodology in coming up with a fresh understanding of the religious phenomenon. The choice of framework is based on the extensive study of “faith” illustrated in two of his major works: Fear and Trembling (1843) and Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846). Both texts suggest that the highest meaning of life is achieved through one’s experience of faith. This is

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8 Ibid.


11 One of the pioneers in the study of popular religiosity, Jesuit Catalino Arevalo, urges researchers to investigate the spirituality of the Black Nazarene devotions for two reasons: first, it is an opportune occasion where people connect to their faith with God and second, there exists an insufficient number of studies conducted despite its prominence and immensity of followers. Cf. Jose Clemente F. Ignacio “Understanding the Devotion to the Black Nazarene,” paper presented at the National Liturgical Congress, Loyola School of Theology, Quezon City, 19 January 2011.
illustrated in Kierkegaard’s discussion of the “movements of faith” or, as widely known in the English speaking world, the “leap of faith.” I also borrow the anthropological approach of “participative-observation” in order to describe the religious experience of the informant-devotees during the Traslación of 2014, 2015, and 2016 in Quiapo. Hence, the method is phenomenological but in the context of a “metasociological descriptive analyses” of the self-situation and social constitution experienced as features of the world. Specifically, the study uses the “Lakaran” method (“journey on foot”) which was initially performed by spirituality and culture scholars Teresita Obusan and Leonardo Mercado to cull out meanings beyond what is physically observed in the modern day Quiapo district. The methodology is informed by Apolinario “Hermano Pule” de la Cruz’s (1815-1841) concept of a journey with fellow countrymen in order to empower themselves during the Spanish period. By literal walking on foot with the Quiapo devotees, the “hiyang” method is understood as “pakikipagkapwa” or “intersubjectivity.” Through this, informant-devotees share own personal journeys with minimal hesitation and intimidation during the interviews.

14 Teresita B. Obusan, Mystic or Mistake: Exploring Filipino Mysticism (Quezon City: Institute of Spirituality in Asia, 2008), 39-48. Mercado likewise used “lakaran” method associated with phenomenology in his study of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo and the Sto. Niño in Cebu City popular religiosity. He explains that the word “lakad” or “to walk” implies, “mayroon lakad” connotes “a task to perform,” a “pilgrimage,” a “mission.” Lakaran becomes more than a sightseeing but a journey with a purpose. He adds, that as an evangelization tool, the method is effective since it is based on powerful symbolisms that attract deep faith among Filipinos (suffering Christ, child Jesus, iconography, etc.). Leonardo N. Mercado, “Lakaran: A Filipino Way of Proclaiming Christ,” in Studia Missionalia, 51 (2002), 301-332.
15 With this subjective approach, the meanings of the informants’ experiences are objectively gathered. Talisayon has it, “intersubjectivity is more fundamental than, and is, the basis for establishing, objectivity.” Serafin Talisayon, “Patotoo, An Indigenous Concept of Validity and Some Implications,” in Hiyang: Papers of the Colloquium on Research Methodologies in the Study of Spirituality in the Philippines (June 28-30, 2004) (Quezon City: Carmelite Center for Spirituality, 2005), 56.

Despite informal interactions with the devotees in the conduct of this study, the interviews are guided by the following questions: a. Bakit ka nandito sa Quiapo? (motive of devotion); b. Paano na namamamata? (mode of expressing faith); c. Ano ang ‘di mo malilimutan karanasan sa panamanata mo sa Señor? (religious experience, if any); d. Hanggang kailan mo ito gaganin? (passion/personal drive); and e. Sino si Señor para sa iyo, personally? (subjective and inward relation)

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The Religious Experience of the Black Nazarene Devotees

In this article, I will present three cases. First is “Glaiza” (refused to give her surname), a first-time devotee and a 28-year-old housewife from San Pedro, Laguna. She collapsed during her first “salang” (the gesture of touching the wooden figure and its garments) and who regained consciousness at the Mother and Child Hospital in Binondo, Manila. Upon waking up, she was advised by the physician to go home in order to recover. Instead, she went back to the frantic procession and touched the carroza for the second time. Her request is to have a child with the common law partner for three years. Based on her experience, one acts based on a certain trust that proceeds from within where one does not understand but can only experience. She said:

Mahirap ipaliwanag ang sarap na nararamdaman, iba ang emotion … kahet pa nga hinimatay ako kanina sa dami ng tao at ‘di na ko nakahinga … Sa loob ko, meron nagtutulak sa akin kahet ‘yung katawan ko pagod na pagod na, sa loob ko me nagsasabi na dapat ko gawin to.

(It’s hard to explain that delightful feeling, a different emotion … even if I collapsed earlier due to the excessive number of people when I wasn’t able to breathe … Within me, there is something that pushes me despite exhaustion, there is something inside me that tells me that I ought to do this).17

The second case is Apolinario “Tatay Boy” Maranan, a 74-year-old and 54 year-devotee. At his age, he attributes all the material and spiritual blessings he has received to the Black Nazarene and promises to keep the “panata” (sacred vow) in his remaining years. Tatay Boy is a native of Alitagtag, Batangas, and the current president of the Hijos-Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno (H.N.P.J.N.). During his grade school years, his family moved to Manila when his father became encargado (manager) of an ice cream factory in Sampaloc, Manila. One afternoon at the Quiapo church, he and his friend were playing around the Basilica when he saw the agonizing face of the image transformed into a smiling bright face. He rejected all media invitations for an exclusive interview to keep this secret (and asked me to do likewise). In

16 On 26 January 2015, the researcher was informed that she (Glaiza) gave birth to healthy girl named “Aryhan.”
17 An interview with “Glaiza” at Park and Ride, Lawton, Manila (9 January 2014, 6:32 PM).
his testimonies, subjectivity serves as a defining trait of his faith, particularly when asked whether to consider what happened in his early days, a form of miracle. He replies:

Para sa’kin, walang himala pero ang mga imposibleng mangyare, possibleng mangyare sa kalooban mo… walang katiyakan… sa lahat ng pangyayare sa buhay … sa paniniwala mo at sa paniniwala ng ibang tao, maaaring magkakaiba, pero isa lang ang pupuntahan, pananampalataya.

(For me, there is no miracle yet those impossible to happen, are possible to happen inside you… no certainty, whatever happens in life … in your belief at other people’s belief, possibly different, but they all lead to one, faith). 18

The third case is Raymond “Imon” Gappi. A “mamamasan” for 25 years and the Balangay head of the Antigong Mamamasan. Aside from the role of safeguarding the wooden statue of the Señor during processions, the group is also in charged of the Catechism and orientation of the neophyte devotees on the “koda” (method and jargons) of a “mamamasan” during Traslación. Imon is a licensed architect based in Jubail, Saudi Arabia for 10 years, and comes home to attend the annual procession and Holy Week celebrations at the Basilica. On January 9, 2015, Imon is one who of those who brought his fellow Hijos and devotee, Renato Gurion (44 y/o), to a nearby hospital. Gurion eventually died of cardiac arrest during the first hours of Traslación at the Quirino Grandstand. During the interview, Imon was asked whether he would continue his devotion after the incident; with great passion and vigor, he replies:


(To me it’s personal … the more that it will push through … whatever happens, we must accept. What happened to Brother Renato is part of his sacred vow. It’s all part of the devotees’ sacred vow. *It is not enough reason to stop … it is all part of fulfilling one’s sacred vow.*)

The religious experiences of the above mentioned devotees indicate the following key elements: *inwardness*, *subjectivity*, and *passion*. Furthermore, the devotion may be seen in a two-fold intention of “panata”: first, “hiling” (request), a personal appeal of both possible and impossible wish (cure of a terminal ailment, financial assistance, job request or promotion, or simply, the finding of a lost partner, etc.). Second, as an expression of “walang hanggang pasasalamat” (endless gratitude) which arises from a granted “hiling” (wish). The devotee pledges a lifetime exercise of “panata” (sacred vow) as a manifestation of “pagtanaw ng utang na loob” (debt within) where one continues to pay despite full awareness that he/she shall never be able to be compensated.

**Subjectivity, Passion, Inwardness, and the Leap of Faith**

The phrase “leap of faith” originates from an important passage in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* where Kierkegaard remarks:

> Faith is the *objective uncertainty* with the repulsion of the absurd, held fast in the *passion of inwardness*, which precisely is the relation of inwardness raised to the highest power.

The definition involves elements essential to achieving genuine faith: first, the “objective uncertainty,” or the *indeterminate nature* of one’s object of faith. In the case of a devotee, one aims to be saved while exposing oneself to risk. Here, one finds no rational calculation to conceive the possibilities one may receive out of faith. Second, the “passion of inwardness” signifies the *subjective nature* of experiencing faith. Since an act of faith involves no rational

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19 An interview with “Raymond Gappi” through *Soyke* Video Call (10:59 PM to 12:34 AM, 6-7 March 2015). In a local news interview, one devotee by the name of Josefino Quintero has stated that “I will keep doing this while I still have the strength, like my father did when he was still alive.” See DJ Yap, Marlon Ramos, and Jaymee T. Gamil, “Millions Escort Black Nazarene,” in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (10 January 2011), PA1.


consideration (but not necessarily antithetical to it), the individual engages with a personal appropriation which he alone is capable of understanding. The phrase also pertains to the source of the utmost dynamism moving a believer to perform an act of faith beyond human capacity and comprehension. In the Quiapo phenomenon, the sublime and deeply personal spirituality of the devotees appears absurd to observers. In a homily by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle during the 2012 Traslacion Eucharistic celebration, he describes these elements when he says, “to understand it, you need to be a devotee (because) outsiders do not understand.”

The Double-Movement of Faith and the Knight of Faith

One of the central themes of Fear and Trembling is the notion of the “double-movement of faith.” The movement involves two phases: the infinite resignation or the individual’s act of renouncing everything for the sake of a higher telos through an ordeal (suffering); and, a repulsion of the absurd where something is revealed to the one possessing faith. The first is explained by the tragic heroes Jephthah, Brutus, and Agamemnon who represent the “knights of infinite resignation.” All of them sacrificed their children for a reason (love for country, justice, and honor). In the second predicament, Kierkegaard enthroned Abraham as the “knight of faith” who sacrificed his only son, Isaac, for no reason understandable to the human logic but either as an act of murder or plain insanity. On one hand, the knights of resignation remain within the bounds of the ethical (Hegel’s Sittlichkeit, worldly understanding), while on the other hand, the knight of faith goes beyond and leaps into absurd faith. Here, the believer receives “something” provided by God.

The Double Movement of Faith and the Possibility of “Miracles”

A closer look at the double movement of faith provides a possible elucidation of what is revealed to the one who has faith. I wish to invoke here

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23 Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 35-37, 43, 48.

24 Agamemnon sacrificed daughter Iphigenia to secure travel for the Greeks and sail to Troy; the Biblical character Jephthah vowed to kill the first one he meets on his way back to his city after a battle for the sake of Israel, that one happens to be his daughter and last, the Roman consul Brutus who executed his two sons for conspiracy to kill the king. All the three sacrifices involve their own kin and each are acceptable to the telos accepted by the society as values. See ibid., 57-61.
the phrase “repulsion of the absurd” found in Kierkegaard’s definition “faith,” where the existential meaning is revealed to the individual. During one’s religious experience, one trusts the object of faith despite uncertainty via total surrender (e.g., offering of material wealth, time, honor, knowledge, morality, child, even one’s own life). In return, existential meaning is revealed. This existential meaning, however, may appear absurd to observers.

Another contention is that the same existential meaning refers to the experience of a “miracle.” In Kierkegaardian parlance, the meaning defies rationality in lieu of a higher truth. Faith is, thus, a violation of man’s rational nature. Paradoxically, it provides the individual the highest meaning in life. In the case of Abraham, he absurdly followed and miraculously received back Isaac, fathered all nations, inherited the Promised Land, continued his legacy, restored his honor, and became a blessing to many nations as the multitude of stars in the heaven; all by trusting the wisdom from the “divine insanity.” This process of making an impossible possible becomes possible only by means of the individual’s “leap of faith.” This is realized in one’s subjectivity, passion, and inward experience of meeting the paradoxicality of Christ. Kierkegaard further points out that a “miracle” of this sort may also happen in the present age: “for our generation does not stop with faith, does not stop with the miracle of faith, turning water into wine—it goes further and turns wine into water.”

The Panata of “Hiling” and “Pasasalamat” as the Double Movement of Faith

For the fifteen-year devotee, Erlinda Dizon, the 2015 Traslación became the most significant moment in her life. Her yearly sacred vow is intended for her 39-year-old son named Alexander who suffers difficulty in speaking and chronic memory loss. On July 11, 2014, Alexander got lost while having a meal at a fast food restaurant in a nearby city. After six months of failed searching, Erlinda joined the annual Traslación, but this time, with a very personal intention, i.e., to find her only son. As the slow paced procession headed towards the corner of Burgos Street and Roxas Boulevard in Manila, she witnessed a man being trodden and trampled upon near the jostling crowd. Out of pity, she pulled the man to safety, just in time, away

25 Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 514.
26 The paradoxicality of Christ pertains to “God in existence”; by His being divine yet human, finite and infinite, and eternal but temporal at the same time. See ibid., 133, 279. This truth is beyond logical demonstration but a paradox of existence which transcends rationality. For Kierkegaard, it is through “contradiction, that is the absurd which alone one can have faith.” Ibid., 184.
27 Ibid., 37. Emphasis, added.
from the approaching sea of devotees. Erlinda was surprised to notice the scar in right leg of the man, and despite the change in his physical appearance, Erlinda was sure it was her son, Alexander. Erlinda found her lost son amidst the sea of devotees on the feast of the Black Nazarene, which happened to be her 67th birthday. This account belongs to only one of the multitude claims of “himala” (miracle) among the devotees.

Through “faith by virtue of the absurd,” Erlinda surrendered her weakened and aged body to a “collective frenzy of masculine strength” in virtue of her a decision based not on “human calculation” but on a “leap of faith.” Enclosed with her faith is the special kind of wisdom only she and the Nazarene Christ understand. For Kierkegaard, this is the “new category of understanding” existential truths that are absurd to many but meaningful to the believer. In Erlinda’s worldview, her physically and mentally challenged son is her “everything,” thus, the loss of Alexander is the loss of her life’s meaning. Kierkegaard explains this: “the one who lost the beloved has in a sense lost sons and daughters... and along with it the vitality and meaning of life.”

I am suggesting that “himala” or “miracle” is the existential meaning behind the absurdity of faith. The wisdom unveiled when one leaps into the abyss of uncertainty. Since, for Kierkegaard, an individual “live(s) happily not to find rest in the pain of resignation but to find joy by virtue of the absurd.” The joyful sacrifice one does not understand but only live. It is here, the double-movement of faith in the context of devotion illustrates the “panata” metamorphosis from “panata ng hiling” (sacred vow as a form of request) towards a “panata ng pasasalamat” (sacred vow as a form of gratitude). In the first, the devotee sees no fear of death before the perilous ritual in the ardent belief that his/her wish shall be granted by the Señor. It is at this instance non-devotees find Quiapo popular devotion idolatrous, irrational, fanatic and superstitious. The second phase is the act of receiving God’s gift, manifested in one’s “utang na loob” performed as a “panata” of “walang hanggang pasasalamat” (perpetual gratitude). The devotee’s faith, therefore, is the existential situation where one resigs everything to the object of faith, and in return, God enacts a reward received by the believer by way of “himala.”

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29 Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 60.
30 Ibid., 198. Emphasis added.
31 Ibid., 50.

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What the devotees consider “himala” may not merit the recognition of mainstream religion and may appear entirely unusual to the logic of modern sciences, because the transformation is subjectively happening within the personal level. This “personal miracle,” hence, makes the true devotee a knight of faith who obtains the greatest blessings in life via an absurd act of worship. “Himala” is the existential meaning understood through faith by virtue of the absurd that uniquely explains the humanly impossible-made-possible during the Quiapo devotion. In a way, the first Traslación of 1787 will never reach its present magnitude and religious import without genuine narratives of received blessings in an extremely extraordinary way such as those of “himala.” These blessings comprise a “himala” that provides one his/her life’s meaning; a meaning that enables self-transcendence which transforms one’s manner of believing, thinking, and living in general.

Conclusion, Limits, and Implications

I wish to conclude that the religious experience during the Black Nazarene popular devotion may be understood in the context of Kierkegaardian existentialist faith for the following reasons:

First, the devotion contains elements essential to the Kierkegaardian faith: inwardness, subjectivity, and passion. The faith during devotion is subjectively appropriated in the performance of “panata” as one submits total self to the object of faith. The act is not understandable to many yet meaningful to the individual subject. The zealousness during “panata” proceeds from the devotee’s inwardness motivated by personal intentions communicated to God through the devotion. The ritual is passionately performed, appearing strange and oftentimes criticized as religious “fanaticism,” “irrationality,” “idolatry,” and “paganism” by observers.

Second, the two-fold intention of “panata”: as “hiling” (wish) and “pasasalamat” (gratitude), signifies the concrete experience of the Kierkegaardian “double movement of faith.” During Traslación, the devotee “infinitely resigns” everything, thereby, experiences suffering and, in return, receives God’s reward. What God provides the devoted-believer is the existential meaning wrapped in “absurdity” appropriated solely by faith.

Third, this existential meaning is what the devoted-believer claims as “himala” (miracle). Such is evident in the transition from a “panata of hiling” (vow as a wish) to the “panata” of “walang hanggang pasasalamat” (vow as perpetual gratitude). This devotion is a lifetime “panata” in the context of “utang na loob”; a perpetual debt one promises to recompense out of the extraordinary blessing or “himala” obtained in one’s performance of faith.
From these, the Quiapo popular devotion, therefore, may now be viewed through a philosophical lens in the light of Søren Kierkegaard’s philosophy, particularly, the existentialist notion of faith. Existential faith may not account for the validity and authenticity of all the religious experiences, as well as the “miracles” claimed, by the millions of devotees present in the annual Traslación. However, a careful reading of the Kierkegaardian “leap” and a keen observation of these rituals may shed light on the present understanding of popular devotions. To some extent, this contributes to the prevailing theories presented by the social scientists and religious experts on the phenomenon, and thus, this study suggests a multidisciplinary approach to uncovering the hidden layers of meaning of such unique Filipino religiosity.

This study also suggests that popular devotions, despite oddity in practices, may serve as meaning-seeking-opportunity and personal inspiration to pursue life among the common folks amidst the onslaught of the modern day living. Since, the majority of the devotees belong to the “masa,” whose ways are not always amiable to the lens of the educated few, the study of Quiapo popular devotion shall serve as a significant voice of those people belonging to the social margin.

Finally, the findings of this study are a noteworthy invitation among theologians and religious experts to further explore this kind of spirituality in order to develop more actual and effective means that will serve rightfully the Christian missionary aims of today’s Filipino faith.

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Sa Kanilang Naiibang Pag-iindak at Pamumukadkad: Performativity at Pagkalesbiyan sa mga Indie Film na Rome and Juliet at Ang Huling Cha-Cha ni Anita


Abstract: This paper features two Filipino independent films that discuss the relatively avoided topic of lesbianism in the Philippines. The “indie” films Rome and Juliet (2006) by Connie Macatuno and Ang Huling Cha-Cha ni Anita (2013) by Sigrid Andre Bernardo are comparatively studied to present the different images of the lesbian in the Filipino experience. This study relied upon the thoughts of the feminist philosopher Judith Butler and her idea of performativity. This idea broke the biological and naturalistic myths about sex which opened the assumption that sex is the cause of gender and it is that which serves as an implication for its being fluid. According to Butler, the terms “gender is performed” should be differentiated from “gender is performative.” The former concept is based on the matrixes that society dictates and imposes which then becomes a guideline on how to perform a gender; on the other hand, the second concept is shaped in view of the repeated performance of gender as a subversive break towards reconstruction coming from the imposed matrixes. This paper discovered how a variety of lesbian images were formed in the two abovementioned films, wherein due to the actions and decisions of the lesbian characters, they have proved that it was only the society’s matrix that control and create conflict to disrupt the free formation of these images. Although Butler is a western thinker, she was able to deepen the discourses of the Filipino scholars about gender which a number of them have endeavored to understand through gender studies and lesbian films in the country. By trying to find an alternative
analysis of the state of the lesbian in the Philippines that does not
detach itself from the narrative of the country’s patriarchal and third
world status, this paper may significantly contribute to gender
activism and advocating equal aspirations for a true, free society.

Keywords: Butler, lesbianism, gender performativity, independent films

Introduksyon

Sa konteksto ng pang-akademikong pananaliksik at pulitikal na usap-
usapan tungkol sa kasarian sa Pilipinas, mas malimit napagtutuunang
pansin ang mga pagsa ng pagkababae at pagkabakla kaysa
pagkalesbiyan. Kaya hangad ng papel na ito na makapag-ambag sa lokal na
literatura at diskusyon tungkol sa nasaking penomenon sa pamamagitan ng
pagsusuri sa dalawang Pilipinong “indie” film na tahasang
tumalakay sa parehong penomenon. Para maging sistematiko at organisado
ang pagsuri ng papel na ito ginamit nito ang kaisipan ng Amerikanong
pilosopo, feminista at aktibistang si Judith Butler (ipinanganak: 1956),
partikular na ang kanyang teorya tungkol sa gender bilang performativity.

Ang indie film sa Pilipinas ay umusbong sa ika-21 na daang taon sa
pagitan ng paghina ng industriya ng pelikula sa bansa, dulot ng dominasyon
at hegemonya ng Hollywood, at ng paglagahan ng digital na teknolohiya na
lubusang nagpababa sa halaga ng produksyon ng pelikula sa antas na abot-
kaya na ng maliliit at independyenteng filmmaker. Itinayo ang Experimental
Cinema of the Philippines (ECP) ng diktaduryang Marcos noong 1982 upang
hindi lubusang malantad ang panunupil nito. Nagpando ito ng mga
pelikulang de-kalidad, at mga obrang ibinunga ay gamit na pantapal sa mga
pilat ng panunupil sa industriya. Sa ganiton konteksto, ipinalalagay ng
nabuo ang formula ng independent cinema nang itayo ang nasaging ECP
dahil na rin sa posturang avant-garde na nalilikha sa mga pelikulang
produktong nito.

Pinasimulan ng ECP ang pagtatayo ng mga arkibong pampelikula
para sa lokal na industriya, naipakilala ang sensura sa forma ng “film rating”
at itinaguyod ang alternatibong pelikula. Binigyang-kahulugan ang

1 Sharon Anne Pangilinan. “Ang Pagdaloy sa Kasaysayan at Kasaysayan ng Pagdaloy
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2 Bienvenido Lumbera, “Ang Pelikula sa Lipunang Filipino, Ang Lipunang Filipino sa
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alternatibong pelikula bilang pagkawala sa estetikang komersiyal at malaong nagpanihugod din sa nilalaman tungo sa pagtalakay ng mga isyung panlipunan. Sa pagsasantabi sa mga higanteng prodyuser, naisantabi rin ang kanilang kapitalistang interes na dati ay humadlang sa masining at malikhaing imahinasyon ng mga Pilipinong filmmaker. Sa paglaya ng mga Pilipinong filmmaker sa pakikialam ng mga higanteng prodyuser, tinalakay nila ang mga paksang dati ay hindi maaaring talakayin o hindi masyadong natalakay sa pelikula. Kaya naman nagkaroon ng pagkakataon ang paksa ng pagkalesbiyan na mailagay sa harap ng kamera.3

Ngunit, kung babalikan ang pagsasakasaysayan ng pelikulang lesbiyan sa Pilipinas, nagsimulang magkaroon ng espasyo ng representasyon ang mga homoseksual na unang hapatay sa estetikang komersiyal at walang mayroong matutulungan sa mga unang nilalaman sa mga pelikulang pambansa. Tinalakay ni Libay Cantor, na isa sa unang nagdulot sa pelikulang lesbiyanismo sa Pilipinas, na bagaman ang mga hapatay ang sumusunod sa mga hapatay sa mga unang naituturing na gising pangkat na lumikha ng mga lesbiyanang karakter sa mga pelikulang Filipino ay “napakababaw at napakabulatot ng ideya ng lesbiyanismo ang ipinapakita sa karamihan sa mga pelikula”4. Para kay Cantor, ang diskurso sa mga naunang pelikulang homosekwal, na ang pagkalesbiyan bilang paggaya lamang sa kalakahan na unang salinap na pagpili, “pagkalito” o itinuturing na isang “phase” lamang ng pagiging babae. Sa obserbasyon naman ni Guieb tungkol sa pelikulang lesbiyan sa nakalikha ng mga pelikulang komersiyal sa mga unang panahon nito, ipinalalagay niyang walang maihahanay na matinong pelikulang lesbiyan at kung mayroon man ay kamed na naging dulo dito.5. Sa pagpasok ng indie film at tradisyong alternatibo sa paglalakay sa mga lesbiyan sa mas realistikong imahe at karakter nito.

Sa dinami-rami ng indie film na nagawa mula noong bungad ng ika-21 daang taon, susuriin lamang ng papel na ito ang dalawang indie film na tahasan tumalakay sa nasabi nang paksa ukol sa pagkalesbiyan: ang Rome and Juliet ng 2006 at Ang Huling Cha-Cha ni Anita ng 2013 na binigyang-hugis ang pagtatanghal sa mga lesbiyan sa mas realistikong imahe at karakter nito.


pelikula bilang diskurso sa pangkasarian karanasan at paglikha ng representatibong imahe sa sinusuring fenomena at panlipunang kalagayan.

**Dalawang Piling Indie Film**


*Ang Huling Cha- Cha ni Anita:* Nilikha ang pelikulang ito ni Sigrid Andrea Bernardo, sa ilalim ng CineFilipino, Pixeleyes Multimedia at Ekwéytorcm at batay sa kwento at screenplay na siya rin ang gumawa. Ginampanan itong mga artista na pinangunahan sina Angel Aquino, Teri Malvar, Jay Bordon, Marcus Madrigal at Lui Manansala. Si Anita (Bordon) ay isang opisyal ng Hukbong Sandatahan ng Pilipinas na nagbabakasyon sa kanilang baryo sa Obando, Bulakan. Sa kanya paghahandang buralik sa lugar ng kanyang kabataan, nanumbali rin ang mga alaala nang nakalipas. Ang batang Anita (Malvar) ay napalapit noon sa kababalik lamang na si Pilar.
Gender bilang Performativity: Mga Imahe at Panlipunang Paghubog ng Pagkalesbiyan sa Dalawang Pelikula

Si Judith Butler ay kilalang teorista sa larangan ng feminismo at pag-aaral tungkol sa kasarian. Kaugnay sa interes at adbokasiya ng kanyang mga pag-aaral, mahalagang malaman ng mga mambabasa na si Butler ay isang lesbiyan, na may kinakasamang babaeng partner, at mayroon silang anak na lalaki.


diskursibong bagay na may malayang katangiang hindi maikakahon sa mga pamantayang inidikta ng lipunan. Maiuugnay ang substansya ng teoryang ito ni Butler ukol sa gender sa palagay ni Nietzsche sa On the Genealogy of Morals na nagsasabing “there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming, 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything”8 Masusuri ang diwa ng teoryang ito sa mga imaheng nabuo naman sa karakter ni Anita, ang hayagang pagpapakita ng kawalang-hilig sa pananamit, kagamitan, at mga aktibidad na pambabae ay may malay na pagpapasya sa paulit-ulit na paggampan. Kitang-kita sa praktika ng pagkalesbiyan ni Anita na mayroon na siyang nabubuo na sarili niyang identidad na taliwas sa isteryotipong konstruksyon ng isang babae sa lipunan Pilipino. Sa unang bahagi ng pelikula, nakadamit pang-sundalo si Anita at naglalaro ng kasal-kasalan kasama ang dalawa ninyo kalaro na sina Carmen at Goying. Sa larong ito, si Anita ang groom, si Carmen ang bride at si Goying ang pari. Makikita sa ganitong pagpoposisyong ang pagkiling ng karakter na si Anita sa gampaning lalaki. May pagkakataon na pinagsusuot ng bestida si Anita ng ina at dali-dali niyang pinalitan ng t-shirt na nagpapakita ng kanyang pagtanggi sa hinuhubog na katauhan ng kanyang ina sa kanyang pagkatao. Ang pagkainis na mga mga kostumong gown at paglabok sa Santa Cruzan ay manipestasyon din ng pagbasag sa kinokondisyon na tradisyong pambabae na hinuhubog sa lipunan. Kumikiling din sa karakter na si Anita sa pagbibisekleta at paglalaro ng trolly sa lalaki. Sa mga ipinapakitang pagbalikwed ng karakter sa isteryotipong panglalaki, gampanin at kaayusan, tumitingkad ang pagpapahalagahan sa gender bilang performative, na nabubuo batay sa pagbasag sa kinokondisyon na tradisyong pambabae na hinuhubog sa lipunan. Kung lalagumin ang kaibahan ng performance at performativity sa pag-aaral kay Butler, importanteng alamin ang pagkakaiba ng katanggang “gender is performed” sa “gender is performative.” Kapag sinabing “gender is performed,” ibig sabihin nito ay nadidiktahan na ang kasarian bago pa man positibong gampanan ng isang tao. Mayroon nang tiyak na kaugalian na ginagawa para masabi na ang isang tao ay isang lalaki, babae, bakla o lesbian. Sa kabilang panig, kapag sinabing “gender is performative,” nangangahulugang ang kaugalian ay maaaring magdika kung ano ang gender ng isang tao. Kung tutuusin, parang pareho lang ang dalawang kataga, ngunit sa “gender is performative”, ang gender ng isang tao ay epekto lang ng mga kaugalian niya.

8 Ibid., 24-25.

Batay naman sa mga ideyang binanggit ni Butler sa kanyang Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, lalong mauunawaan ang malalim na kahulugan ng performativity na nakasalig sa malalim na lebel ng panlipunang konsepto ukol sa pagiging lesbiyan. Taliwas sa karaniwang ideya ng sex at gender na ang “sex ay sanhi ng gender,” ipinaglalaban ni Butler na hindi ito totoo. Sa halip ay “gender ang nananaiag, at hindi sex.” Kung isasakontekstiko ito sa karanasang ipinapamalas sa pelikula, ang pagkakaroon ng relasyon nina Rome at Juliet na hindi naglalimaw ng takdang posisyon o gampanin sa relasyon ay nagpapakita pa rin ng imaheng “femme” sa mga karakter o pagpapanatili ng pisikal na posturang babae habang nagaganap ang transpormasyong panloob. Nangyari ito matapos sa umamin si Juliet ng kanyang nararamdaman para kay Rome at pamamagitan ng pagbabasa ng isang tula na nagpapahayag ng matinding damdamin ng karakter. Dahil dito, natuklasan nila sa kanilang sarili ang nais nilang mangingisip si Juliet ng kanyang nararamdaman para kay Rome at pamamagitan ng pagbabasa ng isang tula na nagpapahayag ng matinding damdamin ng karakter. Dahil dito, natuklasan nila sa kanilang sarili ang nais nilang mangingisip si Juliet ng kanyang nararamdaman para kay Rome at pamamagitan ng pagbabasa ng isang tula na nagpapahayag ng matinding damdamin ng karakter. Dahil dito, natuklasan nila sa kanilang sarili ang nais nilang mangingisip si Juliet ng kanyang nararamdaman para kay Rome at pamamagitan ng pagbabasa ng isang tula na nagpapahayag ng matinding damdamin ng karakter. Dahil dito, natuklasan nila sa kanilang sarili ang nais nilang mangingisip.
panlalaki lamang. Gayundin, maaaring isakonteksto ang mga pahayag na ito sa pagpili ng isang tao ng katulad o kasalungat na gender para sa isang romantikong relasyon.

Mapatatunayan din ang diwa ng ganitong mga pananaw sa pelikula sa panamagitan ng pagiging malapit ni Anita kay Pilar. Kung tutuusin, wala namang masama kung maging malapit ang dalawang babae sa isa’t isa lalo pa’t may malaking agwat ang kanilang edad at walang anumang itinatakdang pamamahan sa pagkakaibigan. Ngunit sa kasong ito, ang dahilan ng pagiging malapit ni Anita kay Pilar ay dahil sa pagkabighani nito sa dalaga sa unang pagkakataon; sinabi pa niya sa kanyang mga kaibigan na si Pilar ang nais nitong makasama, kung kaya’t ang pagiging malapit niya ay hindi lamang isang simpleng pagtutumbas sa “kaibigan” dahil ang isa sa kanila ay may sikretong pagtingin at malayong pagtanaw pa sa pagiging “asawa” balang araw. Mapatatunayan din ito sa matinding pagkakasama ng Anita na mapahilot kay Pilar at pag-tipon ng sapat na pera upang matamo ang inaasam na kaganapan ng nararamdaman. Malinaw na binabasag niya ang kumbensiyon naglilimita lamang sa heterosekswal na uri ng pagkakapagparesyon at tumatawid sa homosekswal at iba pang kombinasyon ng ugnayan, dahil ang pamantayang ginagamit ay ang malayang pagpili at pakiramdam.

Masusuri din ang ganitong pananaw ng gender sa mga tagpos ng hindi minsanang pagtatalik ng dalawang bidang babae sa pelikulang Rome and Juliet, matapos ang pag-amin sa kanilang nararamdaman. Ang pagtatalik ng dalawang karakter bilang isang gawain ay pagpapamalas ng malalim na ugnayan at pagpapahayag ng gender na hindi malilimitahan pa ng kumbensiyon kakabit ng sex. Maibabahagi rin kaugnay sa mga tagpos at sa diin ni Butler tungkol sa performativity, na ang gender ay hindi dahil sa sex, kung hindi isang produkto lamang ng mga tungkulin o mga bagay na ginagampanan ng bawat isa sa ating lipunan o buhay.

Ang imahe naman ng pakikipagparesyon ng dalawang bidang babae sa lalaki, si Rome na iniwang ng boyfriend para magpakasal sa iba samantalang si Juliet naman na nakatatandang ikasal subalit nakadama pa rin ng pagmamahal sa parehong kasarian. Sa ganitong pagkakabuo, maaring ipalagay ang nosyon hindi maikakahon ang gender sa mga kategoryang ipinapataw ng lipunan gaya ng lesbiyan na maaaring bisekswal at/o babae. Muling mapagnilalayan sa mga karanasang ito ang diwa ng pagiging “fluid” ng gender. Ang pagbaksas ni Butler sa bayolohikal at naturalistikong mito tungkol sa sex ay nagbukas sa posibilidad na maaaring hindi lamang dadalawa ang sex, at ang kanyang pagtanggi na sanhi ang sex sa gender ay nagbigay implikasyon na hindi rin dadalawa o aapat lamang ang gender. Sa


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Tinalakay din ni Butler ang naturalistiko at daynamikong praktika ng gender na: “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through stylized repetition of acts.”

Sa pahayag na ito, ang kahulugan ng time ay hindi tumutukoy sa panahong nangyayari makalipas ang isang gabi lamang. Ang konsepto ng oras sa puntong ito ay ang paulit-ulit na kilos na nagpapahiwatig din na hindi maikukulong sa panahon ang pagsasakilos ng gender. Gayundin, sa exterior space, na importante ang alalahanin na pupwedeng mag-iba ang konsepto ng gender depende kung saan naninirahan ang isang tao. Sa pagkakabuo ng imaheng ni Anita halimbawa, makikita ang manifestasyon ng pagkalesbiyan sa palagi ang pagmamahal sa kabila ng magkatulad na gender, ang paulit-ulit na praktika ng kanilang nariyan ang paglagian ang kanilang kaugnayan sa kalakaran. Ang ilusyon na kasabay si Pilar sa trolley, pagtabi sa kanyang higaan, paghalik sa
kanya sa pamamagitan ng silindro, pagguhit ng mukha ng isang babae sa unan, pagputol sa kanyang mahabang buhok ni Pilar, at pakikipagsayaw ng Cha-Cha sa dalaga ay likha ng lahat ng kanyang hindi maipahayag na damdamin at praktis ng gender. Mula sa simpleng pamamantayan nalinang ang pagnanasa tungong realizikong pagsasagawa ng gender gaya ng paniligaw sa pamamagitan ng paghahatid sa palengke kay Pilar at pagdalaw sa bahay pagkatapos ng oras ng panghihilot ni Pilar. Mapatutunayan sa ganitong mga tagpo ng paulit-ultit na pamamantaysa ang paglamps sa limitadong oras at espasyo na pinagsimulan din ng aktwalisasyon at kaganapan ng gender.

Ang paulit-ulit na pagsasagawa ng gender labas sa de-kahong pananaw at hindi pakikipagkompromiso sa mga nilikhang pamantayan ay politikal na pagpapasyang pagmumulang ng paglaban, subersyon at paglaya. Kailangang hamunin ang kultural na matrix na may sinusunod na kaayusang nagdidiktang katanggap-tanggap na identidad ng gender dahil sa pagtugon nito sa umiiral na mga kultural na pamantayan at kaayusan. Sa dalawang pelikula, makikita ang magkakaibang pamamaraan ng mga lesbiyan sa pagtatanghal ng kanilang pagkatao at paglaban sa ipinapataw na kaayusan ng mga umiiral na mga umiiral na social matrix. Ang pagsasabi ni Anita ng kanyang nararamdaman para kay Pilar. Sa isang bahagi ng pelikula, makikita ang Paula sa dahilan ng kanyang pagkagusto kay Pilar lalong-lalo na ang pisikal na katangian nito. Gayundin, makikita ito sa matapang na pagtatagap sa kanyang pamilya sa pamamagitan ng kanyang pinsan na si Oscar at ng kanyang ina. Patunay ito ng transpormasyon ng nararamdaman ni Anita na desidido sa kanyang pagpili at pagpapasya, isang politikal na praktika ng kanyang gender at deklarasyon ng identidad. Sa kabilang banda naman, ang mga nabanggit nang pakikipagtunggali niya Rome at Juliet para ipahayag ang kanilang nararamdaman sa kabila ng mga panlipunang kontrol na banta ay malinaw na nagpapamalas naman ng pagsasakapangyarihan na kanila

Paglaban, Pagbalikwas at Paglaya: Muling Pagbubuo ng Pagkalesbiyan at Tunggaliang Panlipunan

Sa kabila ng pag-iral ng mga panlipunang pwersa na nagdidiktang at naglilimita sa unipormidad ng gender na nakatali sa kategoryang heteroseksual bilang batayan ng pag-iral, nalilikha ang kahulugan ng gender bilang isang kontra-diskurso at kontra-kulturang pagtatanghal sa isang patriyarkal na lipunan. Sa dalawang pelikula, masasalamin ang mga namamayaning tunggaliang ito sa panig ng nagpapataw ng matrix ng
lipunan at panig ng isinasantabi at humahamon sa umiiral na kaayusan. Masasalamin din ang mga tunggaliang ito na maikakategorya sa mahahalagang institusyon/pwersang panlipunan na nagtatagda ng panlipunang matrix gaya ng estado, simbahan at akademya. Gayundin, matutunghayan sa pelikula ang iba’t ibang pamamaraan ng paglaban ng mga karakter na lesbiyan upang itanghal ang isinasantabing pag-iral.

estrukturang pyudal kung paano dapat kumilos ang isang babae sa isang konserbatibo at patriyarkal lipunan.

Sa pelikulang Ang Huling Cha-Cha ni Anita, ang pagtatakda ng kultural na pamantayang kumbensyunal ay nagtatakda ng mga inaasahang gawi at pagkilos na pilit ipinapataw ng ina sa batang Anita. Bilang subsibong tugon ng batang Anita sa pamantayang ito, taliwas ang kanyang inaasal at ikinikilos sa ipinapataw na pamantayan ng ina, ni hindi nagkaroon ng alinlangan ang batang Anita sa kanyang gender na lalong napagtibay sa pagdating ni Pilar. Ang pagiging isang relihiyoso at panatiko ng ina ng batang Anita ang ipinapalagay na isa sa malakas na pwersang humuhubog ng kanyang sarado at isteryotipong pananaw sa gender. Itinatanghal sa pelikula ang kapangyarihang taglay ng simbahan sa pagpapalaganap ng ritwalistikong paniniwala na lumilikha ng mga kultural na pamantayan sa gawi at pagkilos ng mga sakop nito. Matingkad na kontra-dikursong argumento ng pelikula ang pagiging lesbiyan ng batang Anita sa kabila ng ipinapalagay na produkto ng pamamanata kay Santa Clara. Nais iigiit ng ganiyong naratibo ang paglalagay ng espasyo sa mga homosekswal at pag-angkin sa kanila bilang mga nilikha rin ng Diyos. Masasabing ang paulit-ulit na pagtanggi ng batang Anita sa unipormidad na ipinapataw sa pananakit at gawi ay malinaw na isang anyo ng subsyeron sa pagbalikwas sa hegemonikong tradisyong konserbatibo sa pagbibihis at pagpapakahulugan sa kanyang gender na hindi maikakahon o maididikta ninuman. Ang paghuhugis ng kamalaya ni Anita batay sa tinatanaw ng pakikipagrelasyon ay masasalamin naman sa deklarasyon ng kanyang katauhan sa mga kalaro na nagpapakita rin ng pagigiiit at malayang pagpili. Dahil nasa hukbong sandatahan naman ang matandang Anita (Bordon). Hindi naging balikid ang kanyang napiling gender sa kanyang napiling propesyong lalo pa't magingd Fa t naman ang machismong oryentasyon sa larangang militar. Maliiit lang din ang naging bagahi sa pelikula ng matandang Anita subalit nagisisibing balidasay ito ng kanyang kaganapan na tinahi ng kanyang musmos na gunita at nakaraan.

Kongklusyon

Mula sa pagsusuring ginawa sa dalawang pelikula, nagkakaroon ng matibay na pundasyon ang kataga ni Butler na “Gender is performative.” Bagaman siya ay hindi isang Pilipinong pilosopo, naging akma ang kanyang pananaw ukol sa pagpapakahulugan sa gender maging dito sa Pilipinas na may matinding karanasang patriyarkal, isang dominanteng diskursong pangkasarian na mahigpit ding tinututunggali ni Butler sa kanyang mga teorya.
at maaaring maging sa praktikang panlipunan bilang lesbiyan. Kung palalalimina pa ang argumentong ito sa isyung pangkasariang kaugat sa hustisyaang panlipunan, maaaring pagnilayan ang mga pahayag ni Guieb na: “...ang patriyarka sa kabuuan ay tungkol sa pagsusumikap ng kapwa babae at lalaki tungo sa isang uri ng katarungang panlipunan (social justice) na magpapalawak sa kani-kanilang opsiyon sa lipunan nang walang kasangkot na pang-aapi sa kap[u]jwa lalaki at babae.”

11 Ang teorya ni Butler ukol sa pagbubuo ng gender batay sa mga itinatakdaang panlipunang matrix at pagwasak nito sa pamamagitan ng paghamon at paglaban gamit ang paulit- ulit na pagtatanghal bilang proseso ng subersiyon ay maituturing na malingkad na karanasan ng pakikibakang pangkasarian saanmang panig ng daigdig. Bagaman, hindi isinasabtikan ng ganitong obserbasyon ang katotohanang tungkol sa pagsusumikap ng kapwa babae at lalaki tungo sa isang uri ng katarungang panlipunan (social justice) na magpapalawak sa kani-kanilang opsiyon sa lipunan nang walang kasangkot na pang-aapi sa kapwa babae at babae.

12 Napalalim ni Butler ang diskursong Pilipino ukol sa gender, sa pamamagitan ng paghahapag ng alternatibong pagsusuri sa kalagayan ng lesbiyan sa Pilipinas na iba’t ibang bansa sa masasabing relatibo namang magkaugnay ang mga lipunan sa daigdig. Bagaman, hindi isinasabtikan ng ganitong obserbasyon ang katotohanang magkakaiba ang anyo ng pagkontrol at paglaban ng mga lipunan sa daigdig. Kung isasakonteksto ang pag-una ng mga gender na kabuolan ng mga bansa partikular sa ikatlong daigdig, mahalagang mailapat bilang kaugnay ang napunun ni Tolentino ukol sa isyu feminisasyon ng mga paakitakalakal at paghubog ng mga panlipunang entidad na kabuhod ng mga entidya nga proyektong service economy sa Pilipinas sa edad ng globalisasyon.

13 Ibid., 63.

dalawang pelikula ay may magkaibang pagtatanghal ng gender. Sa Rome and Juliet, hindi binibigyan ng tiyak na leybel ang ginagampanan ng mga lesbiana karakter kung sinong gumaganap sa babae at lalaki samantalah malinaw ang posisyon ng ikalawang pelikula sa pagtatanghal kay Anita bilang nagdadalagang lesbiyana na umibig sa nakatatandang babae. Natuklasan sa papel na ito na ang pagkakabuo sa mga imahen sa dalawang pelikula ay ibinunga ng kanilang paulit-ulit na pagkatala kagamiting ng pananamit, kagamitan at aktibidad, at (4) mapangahas na pakikipaglaban at deklarasyon ng pag-ibig. Samantala, may mga natuklasang maibang praktikang pagkakabuo sa mga lesbiana bilang gender: (1) pagkagusto sa parehong sex at (2) pagpapantasya o pag-ilusyon sa malayang sarili. Kung susuriin, hindi naman mailalayo ang praktikang gender maging heterosekswal ang (1) pangkalahatan ng mga lesbiana sa dalawang pelikula: 1) ang pagpapahalagahan ng mga lesbiana sa dalawang pelikula: 1) ang pagpapahalagahan ng mga lesbiana sa dalawang pelikula: 1) ang pagkontrol ng pamilya na may konserbatibong pananaw na hinuhubog ng mahalagaan ng relasyon at relihiyosong; 2) isteryotipong konstruksyon sa larangan ng propesyon; 3) matinding homopobikong kamalayan lalo sa pook-rural; at (4) namamayan sa isang lipunan.

Napatunayang ang matrix ng lipunan din ang nagtatagka ng kawalan ng patas na pakikitungo sa mga lesbiyan na madalas na nakakaranas ng diskriminasyon dahil itinuturing na naibahang sa normalong kaayusan. Bagaman, matinding dilhat na masusuri kaya pa sa iba pang tipo ng homosekswal, ipinapakita sa dalawang pelikula na madaling tanggapin ang mga lesbiyan sa ating makapamila at machismong kulturan Pilipino sa pinatunayan sa parehong pelikula. Natanggap ng ina ni Juliet ang kanyang pagkalesbiyan gayundin ang ina ni Anita sa murang gulang pa lamang nito.

Sa kabila ng pagtanghal sa mga lesbiyan bilang marhinalisadong sektor ng lipunan, nagbubukas na politikal na potensyal ang dalawang pelikula na iigiit ang diskurso ng humanisasyon sa mga lesbiyan sa lipunan Pilipino. Bagaman, marapat nga na lampas pa sa ganitong makitid na discurso ay marapat na maitanghal nang ganap ang mga homosekswal
bilang kabuuan at hindi laging kabalangkas sa daynamiks ng mga heterosekswal. Pinagtnagaan din ng pelikula na magbukas ng pagninilay ukol sa saradong pagtingin sa rehiyon sa mga praktika ng homosekswalidad at humihingi ng pagkilala ang bahagi sila ng sambayanang Kristiano. Mahihinuha rin na hindi mahalaga ang kategorisasyon, leybeling at pagpapangalan sa paghubog ng mahalagang identidad ng gender. Ang pagpapakahulugan sa gender ay nakabatay sa politikal at malay na pagpapasang paulit-ulit na isinasagawa at inaangkin sa pagkalesbiyahan, hinuhubog sa patuloy na paglaban sa ipinapataw na kaayusan hanggang sa maitanghal ang lesbiana na hindi bukod o kaiba, kundi isang karaniwang indak at pamumukadkad na mahalagang tulong at hamon sa tunay na malayang lipunan.

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Phenomenologizing Filipino Organic Thought: Florentino H. Hornedo’s Philosophical Anthropology

Fleurdeliz R. Altez-Albela

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to show how Florentino H. Hornedo’s intellectual life is a consistent articulation of a philosophy of man and human existence bolstered by interdisciplinarity. The approach of this study will be hermeneutic, as it will present a reading of the book The Power to Be: A Phenomenology of Freedom and selected essays in the anthologies Pagpapakatao, Christian Education: Becoming Person-for-Others and Pagmamahal at Pagmumura and Other Essays. These texts are read in the context of his story, which shall eventually give what he precisely means by phenomenology, thereby justifying the use of what he calls “organic thinking” as a method in doing philosophy of the human person.

Keywords: Hornedo, Filipino philosophy, philosophical anthropology, human person

Hornedo’s Humanism

The passing of Florentino H. Hornedo last 9 December 2015 was a tremendous loss to the Filipino academe. In these times when Philippine education is facing a great leap because of the interdisciplinary and dialogic demands of the K12 program, the academia could not truly afford the cost of being left by intellectuals who are capable of articulating knowledges in different fields while not losing in touch with
the idea that the fundamental goal of learning is to humanize. In such critical
times, we could not lose a Filipino who is known to be a pioneer in cultural
and Ivatan studies, more so a sturdy pillar in education, history, philosophy
and literature. We are in dire need of seasoned teachers who are by
themselves Renaissance people and can blaringly remind us that focused and
intense study is nothing if it would make us forget that we are humans; and
how teaching becomes parroting if the student would not be dared to venture
into new horizons, even if it would mean going beyond his field of
concentration.

Deep interest in biology and animals might have brought the young
Florentino to natural science. But because of poverty, “fear of breaking
laboratory equipment,” and his love for learning, he decided to pursue a
college degree in Education. After which was a life-story of an engagement
with the different human sciences, or as how Pada describes, “an
entanglement with a caboodle of disciplines in humanities,” that is oftentimes
locally contextualized – “traversing all walks of life towards the
understanding of humanity and its persistence to live life in the most
meaningful sense.”¹ The first fundamental reference to Hornedo’s
philosophical insight is the Master’s thesis he wrote and almost circulated in
1972. The work, which he said was pretentiously entitled by its editor as The
Philosophy of Freedom, was withdrawn from circulation as it has “disturbed
people seriously enough.”² In 2000, the UST Press picked up and republished
the book with the title The Power to Be: A Phenomenology of Freedom.

In this work, he claimed to have entertained the basic human
questions that he discovered after years of teaching many subjects in the
Humanities. More particularly, he invited his readers to reflect on the “main
stuff” of freedom given its logical and metaphysical premises. After going
through numerous classical and contemporary literary and philosophical
theories on being and human becoming, Hornedo argued that freedom is a
power, strength or a kind of “autonomous energy” which makes action
possible and thereby fostering development and justice. But as Hornedo also
claimed to have done a sort of “phenomenology,” the method of the book

¹ Roland Theuas DS. Pada, “The Humanity of Florentino Hornedo in the Humanities,”
² Florentino Horned, Preface to the New Edition of The Power to Be: A Phenomenology of
baffled some readers. With the demand for a more intense demonstration of Hornedo’s familiarity with phenomenology as a “theoretical framework,” his forceful concentration in keeping phenomenology as a “method” and his novel take on human nature as free and powerful remained at the helm.

**The Weaving of a Corporeal and Localized Philosophical Anthropology**

What followed after *The Power to Be* are publications that are more straightforward in doing phenomenology (still as a method) and in speaking about human nature. Noticeable are his more straightforward expositions of phenomenological theories, while not losing his habit of citing examples coming from his different fields of studies.

Most notable of which is his essay *Pagpapakatao*, where he used the concepts of Edmund Husserl in demonstrating how modernist dualisms are connected in the field of human, corporeal experience. In this essay, he echoed in the vernacular about how Husserl thinks of consciousness (*kamalayan bilang kaalaman, paglalaman*) as “consciousness of,” and have shown how a local articulation of such noetic act can best depict the relation between noesis which he described *malay-tao* and its content which he translated into *laman ng malay-tao*. With the use of Filipino, he regarded consciousness as *malay-tao* to be able to link the mind to the world through experience with the agency of the body (*katawan*). And so, this renders an immediate connection to the self-exclamation, *Ako ang aking katawan!* (“I am my body!”)

The phenomenological claim above, most likely, is not just derived from Husserl. It is something that he has been declaring in some of his earlier works, specifically in *Catholic Education: Growing to Become Men/Women for Others* (1988). In this work, he writes:

> As embodied being, he is as well and has a body. He identifies with his body, but at the same time regards his identity as not co-terminus with his body. He is at once a body and more than a body. He is able to transcend

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being merely body, or merely being product of physical forces. He is temporal, and therefore subject to time. He is born and grows old and wears away. But in the time of his passage, he creates manifestation of his passage through time. He builds ideas and institutions. He embodies his ideas, that is he gives them concrete reality, and in so doing he creates history.4

From this point, Hornedo departs from Husserl and shifts to a more embodied elaboration of how it is to be human. With a consciousness that is corporeally connected to the world, he proceeds to explain how man weaves his own story in time through creative acts, work, freedom, love and justice. These are the ways by which we thrive in time – leave our historical imprints. Creativity testifies how the Self is a decisive and meaningful product – a beautiful work of existence. In work, we proclaim our value (pinapahayag ang sariling pakinabang), through what we do and what we can offer. Through creativity and work, one’s interiority or subjectivity is revealed, which Hornedo called kalooban. He elaborated on this by using Cuvar’s anthropological metaphor of the palayok. For Hornedo, such self-making is an expression of strength that is freedom, and further strength does not only yield change within the Self but also the capacity to pass on to others such power. Ang pagpapalaya ay pagbibigay lakas, pagbibigay kakayahan (“To set free is to empower, to grant capabilities”).

Man spreads his freedom, his human-ness, by being a man for others. “The inquiry into the wholeness of himself changes the meaning of the world around him by relating them to him not as things or objects but as meaning. He discovers that meaning is not objectivity but relatedness. And that relatedness does not happen simply as a given, but that it is a project of his freedom.”5 Inasmuch as one is born, or better yet, thrown into a society, Hornedo upholds that human freedom poses the challenge to respond and participate with the projects of Others. Such “ethical” or “social” demand is best seen by understanding that rights which mirror our human worth can only be granted in the presence of others who would dutifully recognize our value as persons and address what we deserve.

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4 Ibid., 31.
5 Ibid., 32.
Higit sa regalo, karapatan ay kaloob ng lipunan – malayang ibinibigay ng ayon sa halaga ng tao, para sa kanyang pagtubo. Samantala, tao ring tumatanggap ang siyang nagbibigay ng kairalan ng pag-unlad.\(^6\)

(More than a gift, rights are offered by the society, as freely bestowed in accordance to human worth and progress. Meanwhile, it is also humane to grant opportunities for, and participate in projects of becoming)

The above quotation highlights the anthropological basis of society and progress. For Hornedo, society and even the force of freedom demands each Self to be responsible, to participate, and to share: ang managot, makisangkot, ang gamitin ang lakas ng pandama para tumugon sa masidhing pangangailangan iba (“to respond, be involved and use one’s sensibilities to address difficult needs”).

For Hornedo, the pinnacle of sociality is love, an act that advances in the field of human values. He regarded this utmost expression of the utmost human value as pagmamahal, coming from the root mahal (which means either “valuable” or “expensive”) and of which one pays for the highest price. The opposite of which is pagmumura, which is the Filipino term for defamation. Now, this love is offered in the midst of justice, through the arbitration of laws and institutions. But despite the seeming stifles, Hornedo quips that the highest of laws is granted by God’s commandment to love.

What seals the phenomenological deal is with Hornedo’s echoing of the existential (Heideggerian) claim that man is a Being-toward-death. This speaks not just of man’s final stamp of meaning, but also how the body concedes to the passing of time which gears one to find the Infinite, God.

This accents the experience of man of the seeking after that which cannot be dissolved either by the passage of time or of death, the concern for the Absolute.\(^7\)

\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid.
For Hornedo, death is a corporeal closure that conditions man to anxiously value his freedom. But more importantly, it orients man toward a necessary dimension he has to look forward to, and that is the dwelling in the Absolute.

By Way of Conclusion: Phenomenology as Freedom from Intellectual Necrophilia

In his preface to The Power to Be, Hornedo mentions that man is bound to engaged with two conflicting schools of thought: fundamentalism and postmodernism. For him, both positions evade personal decision and commitment to a rational and critical engagement with the search for a ground for being and action. Fundamentalism and postmodernism deprive man of his self-governance and the power to be-for-others. For Hornedo, there is a need to redirect the inquiry of freedom, from the dialectics of theories towards the most authentic and self-scrutinizing ways.

Hornedo’s turn to phenomenology could be described as a shift to organic thought, articulating the relationship between thought and the act of living. He can be remembered in many lectures complaining about philosophy’s obsession with death – a training in necrophilia that leads to mummification and parroting of concepts that will only be repeated by the next batch of scholars. All of these, we celebrate while in truth, we have not truly escaped from that same old shell.

Consistent with his inquiry on human freedom, Hornedo’s intellectual excursus, regardless of what his critics say, have clearly liberated the local philosophical inquiry from just flipping through pages. His courageous employment of phenomenology as a method have prompted his students and followers to put philosophies in dialogue with other human sciences, both in writing and in deeds. Doing so will always be a difficult task because venturing in other fields would mean a demand to refocus and to courageously leap out of our theoretical and textual comfort zones. For some, it would even require immersion in the archives or fieldwork. But for all that it is worth, we all believe nothing shall be wasted. Because as we were taught how to have thoughts that reflect our ways, our lives; we experience freedom and we empower previously cloistered thoughts.
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The Overcoming of Violence: 
Paulo Freire on the Use of Violence for 
Social Transformation 

Franz Giuseppe F. Cortez

Abstract: This paper explores the thoughts of Paulo Freire regarding the use of violence to attain social transformation. Contrary to some commentators, I argue that Freire’s take on the role of armed struggle has taken a developmental mode. He has moved from a reformist to a revolutionary to a more critical stance. In other words, there is a movement of the overcoming of violence. The starting point of this evolution of his educational and political thinking is mainly reflected in his first book *Education as the Practice of Freedom* where he was convinced that social transformation follows smoothly from a “conscientized” populace. The next turning point is expressed in the pages of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where he was radical in saying that reality is not changed by changing the consciousness but by deliberately acting to change that reality. It implies further that the use of violence cannot be discarded as a remote possibility. Finally, the overcoming of violence is lucidly manifested in *Learning to Question*, where Freire contends that social transformation is not only gained by taking of power of the state because power permeates in the diverse elements of the state itself. In other words, power is located in small and probably, unexpected spaces. The critical educator must be sensitive enough to locate, recognize, communicate, and grab those cracks and openings.

Keywords: Freire, violent revolution, education, power
Introduction

The critical educators who want to bring Freirean liberating pedagogy inside the classroom is confronted with the crucial question: “By adapting and adopting Paulo Freire, are we instigating our students to advocate as well a violent means to attain social transformation?” The question is pertinent because Freire is usually associated with revolutionary Marxism along with the revolutionary activities of Latin America. Moreover, Marxism in its entirety is also commonly (but wrongly) associated with totalitarian and authoritarian governments. Thus, the sound of a Freirean drum inside a classroom may increase what Peter McLaren, a North American activist educator, would call as “knee-jerk Marxophobia.”

Stephen Brookfield, an authority in critical adult education, explains this Marxophobia as fear of even mentioning Marx as if by talking about the bearded man, one engages in a blasphemous and unpatriotic behavior while simultaneously advocating genocidal, repressive, totalitarian, and authoritarian regimes.

The main aim of this paper is directed to the question and the concern mentioned above. Hence, it specifically asks: What is the stance of Freire on the use of violence to attain societal transformation? The answer to this question appears to be easy and categorical if one will consult at least three Freirean disciples. Donaldo Macedo, Freire’s close friend and Ana “Nita” Araujo-Freire, Freire’s second wife, declare in one essay that Freire,

... never spoke, nor was he ever an advocate, of violence or of the taking of power through the force of arms. He was always, from a young age, reflecting on education and engaging in political action mediated by an educational practice that can be transformative. He fought and had been fighting for a more just and less perverse society, a truly democratic one, one where there

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2 For some discussions on the differences between Marx and Marxism, see the following: Tom Rockmore, Marx after Marxism: The Philosophy of Karl Marx (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002); Peter Worsley, Marx and Marxism (London: Routledge, 2002).


are no repressors against the oppressed, where all can have a voice and a chance.\(^5\)

Furthermore, Peter McLaren, believing that Freire personally abhors violence, accepts the explanation of Macedo and Araujo-Freire. Seeing an affinity of Freire’s position on violence to that of Martin Luther King’s and Cezar Chavez’s, McLaren says that “a serious difference between Freire and Che (Guevarra) was their perspective on violence.”\(^6\)

However, I will argue that Freire’s take on the role of armed struggle has taken a developmental mode. He has moved from a reformist to a revolutionary to a more critical stance. In other words, there is a movement of the overcoming of violence. To defend this claim, I will consult both his texts and the various commentaries that have risen out of engagement with his works.

This paper is significant on at least three grounds. On the theoretical level, I join the Freirean scholars who insist on Freire being more of a humanist Marxist and less of a scientific Marxist.\(^7\) On the practical level, I see these explanatory insights about Freire as an opportunity for educators and students not to shy away from Freirean pedagogy but rather to re-consider its main tenets especially in an admittedly post-revolutionary society yet paradoxically, oppression has remained more ubiquitous. Indeed, there should be less rational justification to fear the bearded men: Marx and Freire. Finally, it is contributory for the sustained attempt of Freirean scholars to argue that the Brazilian philosopher’s thoughts cannot be reduced to the pages of Pedagogy of the Oppressed. To put in another way, it would be misleading for Freirean scholars to be fixated with his magnum opus while the gems of his other works are simply relegated to the background.

This paper has three main sections. The first discusses Freire’s reformist stance which is basically reflected in his first main work, Education


\(^7\) For a thorough discussion on the difference between scientific Marxism and humanist/Western Marxism, see the following: Alvin Gouldner, The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980); Ronald Aronson, After Marxism (London: Guilford Press, 1995); Virgilio Abad Ojoy, Marxism and Religion: A Fusion of Horizons: A Discourse on Gustavo Gutiérrez’s Theology of Liberation and the Philippines’ Church of the Poor (Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House, 2001).
as the Practice of Freedom (1965). The second section explores his ready approval of violent revolution that can be deduced from his works during exile, most especially in his famous book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). The third section unearths his critical stance through his thoughts on the rediscovery of power best represented by his comments in the book Learning to Question (1989). I end with some concluding remarks.

**Education as the Practice of Freedom: Freire’s Reformist Stance**

It is unknown to many that Freire’s first major work is not Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Rather, it is Education as the Practice of Freedom. On this text, he observes that the Brazilian society is in a crucial transition from a closed to an open society, terms that he borrowed from Karl Popper. The historical moment was an exciting one for Brazil which became independent and democratic. Yet, most of the people were illiterate and voiceless. Worse, they are submerged in what Freire would call as magical or naïve consciousness. His aim is that through literacy education, these people who were the main victims of colonialism and exploitation will have active participation in the new society. The task of the people in this type of society is not just to adapt but to integrate themselves to it. The integrated person is a subject, living a truly human existence while the adapted person is an object, living an animal life. Literacy efforts through dialogical education must be a tool for the demise of a naïve consciousness and for the emergence of a critical consciousness. Through education, the victimized majority would become active participants in the new democratic society. Education is a tool for the democratization of culture. Through educational reforms, there would be manifest improvement in the miserable lot of the Brazilian populace. Thus, on this text, Freire contends that changing the consciousness of the oppressed people would somewhat be adequate to have meaningful changes in their socio-economic condition.

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8 This was written while Freire was jailed in Brazil after the military coup of 1964. It was first published in Chile in 1967. Later, in 1973, Freire published this in English as one of the two essays of the book Education for Critical Consciousness.


10 Ibid., 4.


12 A few years later, Freire would admit that this was a naïveté on his part. In fact, he admits that his main aim for publishing Education as the Practice of Freedom is so that his readers would know his formerly naïve stance. See Denis Goulet, Introduction to Freire, EPF, vii.
Paulo Freire is famously and correctly labeled as a disciple of Karl Marx. Yet, the pages of *Education as the Practice of Freedom* would reveal that he was not a Marxist from the start. He was just eventually converted to Marxism. The said text does not contain any citation or mention of Marx. Rather, this text is replete of quotations from and references to the tradition of liberal education and politics. Names such as Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred Whitehead, and Jacques Maritain were very prominent in the said work.

The young Freire was more of a liberal and reformist educator rather than a radical and Marxist one. There was no manifest reference to the intrinsic link between politics and education. This was also noticed by John Elias in his attempt to explain the liberal democratic politics of the young Freire. Elias notes that Freire’s liberal reformist stance was due to his “involvement with a liberal reformist government, his connection with liberal Brazilian scholars, and his reading of European and North American liberal academics.” The same conclusion is reached by John Holst who later described *Education as the Practice of Freedom* as “informed by liberal developmentalist outlook.” Daniel Schugurensky, in another book, affirmed the position of Elias and Holst.

Some commentators even suggested that during his stint as an education official for the Brazilian government, Freire would deliberately evade Marxist jargon. Elias comments that as far as Freire’s first book is concerned, he “shows an awareness of the existence of classes but does not speak of class struggles.” In his unpublished dissertation, Peter Lownds quoted Vanilda Paiva who suggested that Freire would even change a Marxist term into a Jaspersian jargon—a proof that the young Freire was more of an existentialist humanist in the mold of Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel rather than a Marxist one. It is noteworthy to quote in length Vanilda Paiva.

Freire intended to extract people’s truth; at the same time, he oriented the debates to specific objectives. An example of this is his belief that [the Marxist term] ‘mass’ should be changed to ‘the people,’ according to the definitions of [Karl] Jaspers. If we peruse the material available from the pre-1964 [Freire-] method literacy

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13 This was also observed by John Elias. See John Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation* (Florida: Krieger, 1994), 33.
14 Ibid., 33.
courses, we observe that the *alfabetizandos* frequently refer to the fact that they are no longer a mass (*massa*), but rather a *povo* (people). A graduate of the Angicos classes said exactly this in a speech to the President of the Republic [João Goulart]. Such an idea does not come spontaneously from the people. It has to be imported from outside, brought in by the coordinators, and coincides exactly with Freire’s thought.18

Taking into consideration *Education as the Practice of Freedom* and the subsequent commentaries regarding it, we can deduce that Freire was never entertaining the use of violence to attain much needed societal transformation. He was very confident (and as he would say, naïve) that proper intervention in the educational realm would be more than significant to improve the lot of the illiterate, the poor and the marginalized. What is needed is not revolutionary transformation but meaningful reforms in various social institutions particularly in the academic institution.

**Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Freire’s Revolutionary Stance**

After his first major work and during the first years of Freire’s exile, there was a radical development in Freire’s thoughts. Holst describes it as “a relatively rapid change in Freire’s educational philosophy.”19 Significantly influenced by his experiences in Chile, the place of his exile, Freire is now at home in using Marxian paradigms. Daniel Schugurensky says that “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* reflected more clearly Freire’s transition from a liberal, developmentalist approach to a more radical one that applied Marxist categories to the analysis of social and educational realities.”20 Elias declares categorically that the “politics of Freire in *Pedagogy* and later writings is very different from the liberal democratic politics of *Education for Critical Consciousness*.”21

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19 Holst, “Paulo Freire in Chile,” 243.


From this pivotal change, various Freirean commentators do not fail to see Freire’s ready approval on the use of violent and armed struggles to achieve a more egalitarian societal structure. Stanley Grabowski, one of the early commentators of Freire, sees him to be proposing a pedagogy of revolution, understood as violent uprising. However, for Grabowski, more than a revolutionary, Freire is a prophet as he shakes up “the established way of doing things.”

For William Griffith, an education professor at The University of Chicago, Freire’s pedagogy is planned towards a political revolution and that Pedagogy of the Oppressed is committed to warrant a violent revolution. Griffith explains that in Freire’s educational model, “the justification for conducting literacy training programs is the preparation of the learners to participate in the revolution to overthrow the oppressive elites.”

For his part, Elias admits the humanist Marxism of Freire but he also sees Freire’s ready approval of the “harsh elements of Marxism such as the class struggle and revolutionary violence.” Collins already noted this when he said that “[Freire] was faulted by many readers for a too ready approval of revolutionary violence as the only solution to oppressive education.”

Reacting to Ivan Illich’s dubbing of Pedagogy of the Oppressed as a “truly revolutionary pedagogy,” another commentator, David Harmon, sees it rather as “pedagogy for revolution.” In another study, Rene Tadle of the University of Santo Tomas even argues for the possible reconciliation of violent revolution and Christian teaching about love, Freire’s position on armed revolution meeting the criteria of traditional ethics’ just war principle, and the importance of seeing revolution as a permanent process for social development and total human liberation.

Furthermore, Dale and Hyslop-Margison suggest that Freire’s notion of oppressor and oppressed are reflective of Marx’s tension between the two main classes in the society. “Freire adopted the concepts of oppressor and oppressed from The Manifest of the Communist Party, and employed them as concrete examples of capitalism’s tension between disparate economic

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22 Stanley Grabowski, Preface to Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator (Syracuse: ERIC, 1972), iii.
24 Elias, Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation, 43.
26 Ivan Illich’s cover endorsement for Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
classes.” There is a tinge of validity in this observation because Freire himself says that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* considers class tension as one of the important categories that should be considered in the educational process.

Thus, it is not that difficult or even problematic to contend that Freire is readily supportive of violence as a means for social transformation. To be sure, Freire did not engage directly with any revolutionary struggle or armed combat. But when one opens the pages of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the names of Marx, Fanon, Memmi, Guevarra, Lukacs, Kosik, Mao, and Luxembourg are quoted freely and prodigiously. The first mention of Karl Marx is in *Extension or Communication*, a long essay that Freire wrote when he was newly exiled in Chile. After which, almost all his writings are already replete with references from Marx and the Marxists. From *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to *Cultural Action for Freedom*, from *Letters to Guinea-Bissau* to *The Politics of Education*, from the talking books of the late 1980s to the final works of the mid-1990s, Karl Marx and some prominent Marxists are always referred.

As early as *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Freire already criticizes the ideology behind the oppressor’s use of violence accompanied with a seemingly God-given privilege to define it to the advantage of the oppressor class. He says:

Every relationship of domination, of exploitation, of oppression, is by definition violent, whether or not the violence is expressed by drastic means. In such a relationship, dominator and dominated alike are reduced to things—the former dehumanized by an excess of power, the latter by lack of it ....When the oppressed legitimately rise up against their oppressor, however, it is they who are usually labeled “violent,” “barbaric,” “inhuman,” and “cold.” Among the innumerable rights claimed by the dominating consciousness is the right to define violence, and to locate it. Oppressors never see themselves as violent.

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31 Freire, *EPF*, 10-11. However, since this passage is just in the footnote, most probably Freire only included this for the 1973 English publication where his educational politics was already obviously Marxist.
Then, we find Freire declaring in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that the revolutionary violence of the oppressed class is an act of love while that of the oppressor class is an act of dehumanization.

Yet it is—paradoxical though it may seem—precisely in the response of the oppressed to the violence of their oppressors that a gesture of love may be found. Consciously or unconsciously, the act of rebellion by the oppressed (an act which is always, or nearly always, as violent as the initial violence of the oppressors) can initiate love. Whereas the violence of the oppressors prevents the oppressed from being fully human, the response of the latter to this violence is grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human. As the oppressors dehumanize others and violate their rights, they themselves also become dehumanized. As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors’ power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression.33

This is further reiterated in *Pedagogy in Process* when Freire concretely observes how the African revolutionaries of Guinea-Bissau dealt with utmost respect the apprehended enemies even if the latter showed harshness and cruelty. Freire concludes:

And this is a radical difference between the violence of the oppressor and the violence of the oppressed. That of the former is exercised in order to express the violence implicit in exploitation and domination. That of the latter is used to eliminate violence through the revolutionary transformation of the reality that makes it possible.34

Whether it is done with love, respect and full consideration of the humanity of the enemy, Freire seems to justify in specific circumstances the use of violence to attain genuine human liberation. This act of justification can easily be interpreted as ready approval of the said act.

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In *Education for Liberation*, Freire sees the revolutionary action as the last remaining way of stopping exploitation, oppression and domination.

I am not an idealist. I think dialectically, historically. I have no illusion of going to the Wall Street and converting them to stop their exploitation of dependent societies because they must love people. Reality cannot be changed in our consciousness. It can only be changed historically through political action, through revolutionary action.35

The same tone of permissiveness to armed struggle can be deduced from his words in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. “They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. And this fight, because of the purpose given it by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressor’s violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity.”36

For Freire, it is justifiable if the oppressed act violently against the oppressors because it is a response to the violence of the oppressor, it is in defense of the fundamental rights of the oppressed and it is motivated by love for humanity in general. The act of violence is never initiated by the oppressed. If ever they become violent, it is in reaction to the obvious or subtle violence by the oppressor. “Force is used not by those who have become weak under the preponderance of the strong, but by the strong who have emasculated them.”37

Even in his reflections on the role of the Church in the midst of an oppressive society, Freire does not refrain from airing his position regarding the validity of revolutionary action. “In truth, there is no humanization without liberation, just as there is no liberation without a revolutionary transformation of the class society, for in the class society all humanization is impossible. Liberation becomes concrete only when society is changed, not when its structures are simply modernized.”38

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36 Freire, *POO*, 45.
Indeed, these citations render the mentioned commentators’ observation that Freire, being a Marxist, is readily permissive of the use of armed struggles to attain meaningful changes in the society.

But Freire’s thoughts especially on the issue of a violent power grab cannot be pinned down to his works during the 1960s and 1970s. Freire himself says that he is not Pedagogy of the Oppressed emphasizing that after this monumental book, his thoughts continue to evolve, and that he never stops doing an autocriticism. 39 Schugurensky says that sometimes “it is assumed that Freire’s ideas and those in Pedagogy of the Oppressed are one and the same, overlooking that in later works he criticized and revised some aspects of his earlier ones.” 40 I contend, therefore, that one of the major modifications of Freire is regarding his idea of a violent power grab.

The Rediscovery of Power: Freire’s Critical Stance

As early as Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire already manifests his non-absolutizing tendency in endorsing an end-all and be-all form of action. He says:

Action and reflection occur simultaneously. A critical analysis of reality, may, however, reveal that a particular form of action is impossible or inappropriate at the present time. Those who through reflection perceive the infeasibility or inappropriateness of one or another form of action (which should accordingly be postponed or substituted) cannot thereby be accused of inaction. Critical reflection is also action.41

Here, we get a clue to Freire’s openness to various forms of political action and struggle. His stress on the notion of praxis as the proper stance to avoid the extremes of blind activism and futile verbalism gives him the space not to consecrate armed revolution as the only effective means of transforming the oppressive societal arrangement.

Furthermore, in a 1975 essay, Freire reminds the progressive educators to become conscious of their limitations in order to avoid the extremes of pessimism and opportunism. “Throughout history one does what is historically possible and not what one would want to do.” 42 Freire’s

40 Schugurensky, Paulo Freire, 50.
41 Freire, POO, 123.
continual critical stance manifests his stress on actions that are motivated by critical reflection and not by merely blind emotivism.

The more telling sign of this important development in his thought can be found in an interview he had with Macedo, published as part of the 1985 book, *The Politics of Education*. Here, Freire starts to entertain the idea of the incomprehensibility of the taking of power from the dominant group and the State and the possibility of reinventing power itself through the various social movements. He explains to Macedo: “Because I am extremely concerned with and see a vital role for subjectivity and consciousness in the making of history, I now feel that in transforming society, the important task is not to take power but to reinvent power.”

Some three years later in *Learning to Question*, his conversational book with Antonio Faundez, the same theme of the reinvention of power is brought to the fore. Here, Freire had more opportunity to elaborate what he means by this reinvention. He observes:

I am convinced that we are experiencing and being confronted with certain challenges which in the closing years of this century are coming over very strongly .... One of these issues is power: the question of power. I am quite sure that the basic problem facing us today in the struggle to change society is not that of simply gaining power, but a gaining of power which is prolonged creatively in a rediscovery of power; creating a new power which does not fear to be called in question and does not become rigid for the sake of defending the freedom already achieved which, basically, should be a freedom constantly being achieved.

As a response to this, Faundez sees the significance of raising the important questions of the meaning, location and possessor of power. He argues that the State or any single institution is not the sole locus of power. Faundez explains:

I regard the state—its administration, its coercive power, and its ideological apparatus—as the point from which power is distributed. Thus teachers, educationalists and politicians possess a portion of power because they


receive it from the state. There is a hierarchy of power. Beginning from the state, power becomes diluted, and the state entrusts a portion of power to each one, while the classes at the top of the state hierarchy maintain their position as those who possess the greatest power of all: the power to confer power. However, to identify power with the state, and so lay down that in order to change society you must begin by taking over the power of the state (since state and power are identical) is a mistake—epistemologically, politically and even psychologically.45

Freire agrees with Faundez and in the practical level, he sees the important role of social movements and organizations united for specific social causes such as ecology, women’s rights and others.

Hence, in subsequent books, Freire is freer to express openly that his pedagogy is not meant to instigate violent revolution and to effect earth-shaking and grand societal changes. In Pedagogy of Freedom, he explains this clearly.

... it is not a question of inciting the exploited poor to rebellion, to mobilization, to organization, to shaking up the world. In truth, it’s a question of working in some given area, be it literacy, health, or evangelization, and doing so as to awake the conscience of each group, in a constructive, critical manner, about the violence and extreme injustice of this concrete situation. Even further, to make it clear that this situation is not the immutable will of God.46

Thus, with regard to a violent class struggle in the attainment of a transformed society, Freire reconsiders his position because of his firm conviction to respect human agency and subjectivity. It is probably on this line of thinking that Macedo and Araujo-Freire categorically say that Freire does not endorse violence as a way of attaining human liberation and social transformation.

45 Ibid., 63.
Concluding Remarks

Does Paulo Freire advocate violence as a means to attain meaningful social transformation? Even if there are statements such as those of Macedo, Araujo-Freire and McLaren, I believe that this question cannot be answered accurately by a simple “yes” or “no.” Rather, inasmuch as reality is always in flux, Freire must also be read as a thinker whose ideas cannot be frozen in time, who was an active participant of history, and who is ever sensitive to the fluidity of history. He once said in a response to some essays written about him: “My thinking has been evolving, and I have been constantly learning from others throughout the world.” 47

The starting point of this evolution of his educational and political thinking is mainly reflected in his first book Education as the Practice of Freedom where he is convinced that social transformation follows smoothly from a conscientized populace. 48 He later admits of the naïveté of this position. 49 The next turning point is expressed lucidly in the pages of Pedagogy of the Oppressed where he is radical in saying that reality is not changed by changing the consciousness but by deliberately acting to change that reality. The use of violence cannot be discarded as a remote possibility. Finally, in Learning to Question, social transformation is not only gained by taking of power of the state because power permeates in the diverse elements of the state itself. In other words, power is located in small and probably, unexpected spaces. The critical educator must be sensitive enough to locate, recognize, communicate and grab those cracks and openings.

The development of Freire’s thought reaches a point which I would call as “a progressive return.” There is a kind of return because the “later Freire” talks again of the priority of the development of human consciousness. It is progressive because it represents the overcoming of double naïveté: that society can never be changed by simply changing the consciousness through the school and that society today can never be assured to change by and through a violent power-grab. Rather, what is necessary is

48 “It so happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once man perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognizes the possibilities of response, he acts. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of his understanding.” Freire, EPF, 44.
49 “I feel I should make a few more points. One would be a self-criticism, based on my Education as Practice of Liberation, for thinking that in the process of conscientization the moment of revealing a social reality is a kind of psychological motivation for its transformation... It was as though to unveil reality guaranteed that it was already being transformed.” Freire, “An Invitation to Conscientization and Deschooling,” in The Politics of Education, 169.
a persistent rediscovery of the location of power in small spaces and its intensification and recognition through renewed critical pedagogy.

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John Dewey’s Democracy and Education and the Problem of Education in the Philippines

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Abstract: In this paper, I will discuss how John Dewey’s philosophy of education, specifically the relationship between education and democracy, and its possible contribution to the Philippine educational system. The paper will go through the following steps: 1) discuss Dewey’s critique of the traditional pedagogy, 2) discuss the role of education in the development of students, 3) discuss the role of democracy in education and lastly, discuss education in the Philippine Context.

Keywords: Dewey, democracy, education, Philippine educational system

It seems puzzling that while Dewey’s book mentions democracy in its title, the book does not offer a thorough discussion of the concept of democracy. Perhaps because, as Peters claimed, “Dewey viewed democracy mainly as a way of life; he was not particularly interested in the institutional arrangements necessary to support it.”1 Alongside communication, democracy is characterized by shared interests and concerns. Meanwhile, education, which Dewey describes as growth that is not to be equated with age, has to do with conditions which “ensure growth or adequacy of life.”2 In Philosophy of Education, Dewey claims that “the foundation of democracy is faith in the capacities of human nature; faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and cooperative experience.”3

2 Ibid., 67.
For him, democracy entails developing knowledge among the people until they are able to utilize it as a guide to a collective action.\(^4\)

Loomis and Rodriguez\(^5\) pointed out that democracy is the final object of all curricula, from which we can understand the importance of experience in education. Dewey also discusses the idea of co-operative problem-solving. Another thing that we must take from Dewey is his belief that each student must be addressed differently. We must understand that we are not to plan a generalized method of instruction because each class consists of diverse students.

**Dewey’s Critique of the Traditional Pedagogy**

Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* shows how education can be used as a tool to transform not just the self but also the society. Here, Dewey outlines the importance of education in how we deal with the world in general. He suggests that each discipline must realize that there should be no separation between theory and experience and that the discipline must be reconstructed as an “enterprise aimed at personal and collective well-being.”\(^6\) Dewey criticizes the traditional method of teaching as he suggests better ways of educating students, that is, by teaching them how to think and making both the teachers and students realize that learning is not a mere repetition of what are written in the textbooks. Traditional method of teaching can be understood as a method of handling down knowledge from the teacher to the students. The teacher discusses the topics leaving little room for students to think and verbalize their thoughts. Education, he says, “is a fostering, a nurturing, and a cultivating process.”\(^7\) Therefore, we have to be cautious in dealing with the young, as it can be inferred that our failure to mold them well destroys not only the child but also the society. With the ills of the educational system and the society, and with rulers whose interests benefit only their own intentions, he asks, “Who, then, shall conduct education so that humanity may improve?”\(^8\)

Dewey has a strong take on the reform of education. In his essay, “Education as Engineering,” he notes that we have thought of education long enough, but not long enough to build steel bridges. He likens education to engineering in that it serves as a process of forming the individual. He

\(^{4}\) Ibid.


\(^{8}\) Ibid., 53.
criticizes the system, saying that it “represents not thinking but the domination of thought by the inertia of immemorial customs.” He adds that although there are certainly new methods being introduced into the system, only a few receptive minds are benefitting from them. Those belonging to the old system and habits are critical of the new methods, which often end up unrecognized if not unfunctional. He strongly points out, “There is at present no art of educational engineering. There will not be any such art until considerable progress has been made in creating new modes of education in the home and school.” One of the reasons why such is the case is because teachers lack the imagination and courage to design and adopt new methods. Dewey emphasizes that there is a need for educators to be scientific in their teaching. He insists, “Teachers who are to develop a new type of education need more exacting and comprehensive training in science, philosophy and history than teachers who follow conventionally safe lines.”

Dewey emphasized that “unless our schools take science in its full relation to the understanding of forces which are now shaping society and still more, how the resources of the organized intelligence that is science might be used in organized school action, and the outlook for democracy is insecure.” During his time, he has already discussed how the narrow mindedness of teachers has destroyed the progress of education. Unless teachers become pioneers of learning, imaginative enough to place together what is known and what is to be experienced, we cannot say that our institutions of learning have advanced. He notes that what really exists in schools are “habits and customs rather than . . . any deliberate autocracy.” Dewey has time and again emphasized the important role of educators in honing of the minds of the society; they play a delicate role in “developing the character and good judgment in the young.”

The Role of Education in the Development of Students

According to Dewey, “the business of education is rather to liberate the young from reviving and retraversing the past that could lead them to a recapitulation of it.” He does not disregard the past; however, he wishes to show that our education should not be limited by it and by our biological heredity. Heredity for him limits education. It anchors the student to
something that is long gone and hinders the student from facing what is already present. Dewey suggests that we must keep the learning process alive as it is only through this that we can keep it alive in the future. The past is only significant if it intertwines with the present and the future and not the other way around. We must concern ourselves with present circumstances to be able to address the present predicaments, instead of just clinging on to the past which may no longer be significant. In education, in particular, we must be able to adapt to the present needs of the students. If educators claim that students have changed over the years, then the system must move to address the change in the attitude of the students. Another way of looking at it is that, we may be presenting the habits of the past to the children, thereby hindering them from discovering things by themselves. Teachers may be imposing many habits and values on the children that children are no longer able to build on their own.

Dewey suggests several purposes of education. First, to have a foresight of the results which stimulate the person to think and look ahead. We cannot speak of an aim unless there is an ordered process to achieve it. Dewey notes that the goal in education must be based on the present experience and conditions of the students; from there we can draw activities and theories to be used. Readymade theories and activities that seek anticipated results are not helpful because they limit learning possibilities. We must note that every aim is experimental and that there is a need to modify it whenever the situation calls for a revision. Dewey emphasizes that if it gets in the way of human common sense, then the situation does harm. “It is well to remind ourselves that education as such has no aims; only persons, parents and teachers, etc., have aims, not an abstract idea like education.”

Dewey is critical of the manner in which aims in education are formulated by authorities and then made to fit into the system. Children may not necessarily be capable of accomplishing such aims for the very reason that their experiences and background do not match the very generic and universal aim that is being posited by the system. Dewey notes, “In education, the currency of these externally imposed aims is responsible for the emphasis put upon the notion of preparation for a remote future and for rendering the work of both teacher and pupil mechanical and slavish.”

Gregory and Granger argue that “modern education has aimed to move children immediately away from their perceived irrationality.”

The second purpose that Dewey suggests is social efficiency, indicating “the importance of industrial competency.” Education should

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16 Ibid., 60
17 Ibid., 61.
19 Dewey, Democracy and Education, 66.
translate to employment. A man who is not able to contribute economically to the society is a drag or parasite to others.\textsuperscript{20} One should be able to make way “economically in the world and manage economic resources usefully” instead of reducing education to a mere display or luxury.\textsuperscript{21} Nevertheless, Dewey warns us of the danger of learning very specific skills because when the ways of occupation change, the individual might be left behind by progress. He also predicted that industries might eventually dictate the content of curricula. —Today institutions of higher learning have re-configured their curricula in order to meet the demands of the industries. Industries, in some cases, have dictated to the institutions which courses to offer and which courses to close down. In a lecture given by Jonathan Kozol during the 2015 Plato conference at the University of Washington, he noted that the curriculum has been demanded by business and economics, schools actually answer to the demands of the business industry.\textsuperscript{22}

Dewey notes the importance of fostering good habits of thinking. He is critical of the practice of spoon-feeding children. He emphasizes that children must learn how to think independently. The problem with the current system is that students are more concerned about meeting a particular standard or grade. They are troubled by how they are to please their teachers through their exams and deportment. As opposed to standard and grade oriented learning, Dewey proposes that students should take advantage of their various practical experiences because they are more capable of helping them during difficult life situations. Knowledge, according to Dewey, is the “working capital, the indispensable resources of further inquiry, of finding out, or learning more things.”\textsuperscript{23} Dewey, however, suggests that ordinary experiences should be mediated by the school in order to them to be translated into knowledge.\textsuperscript{24} As such, he urges institutions to create an environment that is more conducive to practical learning. The creation of laboratories, shops and gardens are a means to enrich the experience and understanding of students. It must be understood that “thinking is a method of educative experience.” We must provide our students with a genuine situation of experience, genuine problems developed within this situation, information to make needed observations, suggested solutions and, lastly, opportunity and occasion to test these ideas.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Jonathan Kozol, “The Big Questions are Already in the Hearts of Children, The Role of Philosophy in the Classroom of our Public Schools in an Age when Standardized Instruction is Crowding out the Domain of Inquiry,” paper presented during the PLATO Conference, University of Washington, Seattle, 29 June 2015.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Dewey, Democracy and Education, 87.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 88.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 87.
\end{itemize}
Dewey notes that the individual thrives in a society; the growth of the individual and the sustenance of the society are highly dependent on the transmission of habits, thinking and feeling through communication.26 “Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common. What they must have in common is the way in which they come to possess things in common.27 To live in a community means that one must be able to communicate with the rest of its members and be secured that what has been communicated is understood. As pointed out above, for Dewey, experience plays an integral part in education. “The experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated. To formulate means to go out of it, seeing it as another so that it may be go into such form that he can appreciate its meaning.”28 There is a need to communicate our experiences, this way we are able to evaluate them. Dewey holds that all communication is educative; one enlarges one’s experiences through communicating with the other. Students must be able to share their experiences until they become a common possession of the community.29

Dewey also looked into the significance of habits in educating the young. He considers habits as expressions of growth and the ability to use natural conditions as means to an end.30 The habits of language are nurtured through exposure to vocabulary and the mother tongue. Speech habits may be corrected. “Yet in times of excitement, intentionally acquired modes of speech often fall away.”31 Language plays an important tool in relating with the community; however, Dewey cautions us of the common notion that knowledge may be directly passed on through language.32 We must understand that the mere transmission of facts from one person to another is not enough; these persons should at least have a shared experience to be understood. Dewey makes use of the work “hat” as an example. The child who is learning how to read will not comprehend what the word means unless “the child and the adult use the object hat in a common experience.”33

Another form of habit relates to one’s manners, which Dewey claims to have come from good breeding. Manners are perfected through constant conscious correction and instruction. He considers manners as minor morals. Lastly, he considers good taste and aesthetic appreciation as a habit that must be formed among the young. “If the eye is constantly greeted by harmonious objects, having elegance of form and color, a standard of taste naturally grows

26 Ibid., 5.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 6.
29 Ibid., 8.
30 Ibid., 27.
31 Ibid., 13.
32 Ibid., 11.
33 Ibid.
up. The effect of a tawdry, unarranged, and over-decorated environment works for the deterioration of taste." 34 All these three habits must come together, they must be reflected upon to say that the student has arrived at a conscious thinking and apt conclusion. Dewey notes that “there may be training, but no education. Repeated responses to recurrent stimuli may fix a habit of acting in a certain way.” 35 The student should be able to understand the reason behind every action, more so the reason behind the responses to each stimulus, to be able to claim that he has learned and that he is not merely imitating their models. “Idiots are especially apt at this kind of imitation; it affects outward acts but not the meaning of their performance.” In another circumstance, he noted that, “savage is merely habituated, whereas a civilized man has habits to transform his environment.” 36

The Role of Democracy in Education

A more society-centered aim is civic efficiency or good citizenship. This aims to make students more mindful of their society. “It makes an individual a more agreeable companion to citizenship in the political sense.” 37 It involves teaching students how to relate to others. It encourages persons to make intelligent choices which will be beneficial not just to the self but also to the society.

Dewey emphasized that aims should not be externally imposed or ready-made. They must spring from the needs of the students. 38 Dewey’s work is concentrated on producing a high-quality teacher exchange with the individual children, productive students who will later on engage themselves with the collective and will have the ingenuity to provide technical skills to enable students to be a part of the collective. 39

However, Peters criticized Dewey for being idealistic. He notes that Dewey’s Democracy and Education has failed to create a balance between personal preoccupations and public policies. 40 It may be true that the dualism between the private and the public spheres appears in Dewey’s work; however, I believe that the balance between these two spheres can only be created once the individual is able to master the self and is ready to commune with the public. It is for this reason that Dewey stresses the idea of personal experience and space; it is only by recognizing the experiences and spaces of

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34 Ibid., 13.
35 Ibid., 19.
36 Ibid., 28.
37 Ibid.
38 Peters, John Dewey Reconfigured, 68.
40 Peters, John Dewey Reconfigured, 77.
each member of the community that we can provide a balanced relationship between the two spheres.

Dewey also proposes that we should include culture as a part of our aim. This involves the cultivation of respect and appreciation for ideas, the arts and the broad human interests. Appreciation of the art and the humanities could help people become more humane. The danger is when culture is associated with social division, when the experience of culture is equated with an inner personality, refinement, or polish. These are signs of social divisions that result in cloistered packs.

Dewey is aware of the fact that the society is composed of varied social groups; it is for this reason that he suggests a variety of quality approaches to education to meet the demands of a life that prevails in a particular group. We cannot visualize an ideal society or an ideal educational system – both should be addressed as they exist for us to be assured that “our ideal is a practicable one.” He underscores the essential role of the family in society, stating that we find in each family “material, intellectual and aesthetic interest in which all participate.” The progress of every member affects the others. In time, each family member relates to the society where they eventually commune; it is for this reason that our society is varied. This diversity, however, is necessary in the education of the youth. The separation of the privileged and unprivileged in the school system results in the lack of intellectual balance in the system. The privileged ones become unaware of the experiences of the unprivileged and vice versa, but each experience is just as real as the other. This is why Dewey proposes democracy in education. Democracy for him must not be understood only in the political sense. “It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience,” where individuals recognize the action of the community. One takes into account the actions of the others to affect one’s own—this shall break the “barriers of class, race and national territory which kept men from perceiving the import of their society.” Dewey acknowledges social stratification in the society and warns us that there should be enough and equal intellectual opportunities for all; otherwise, the development of the society will be solely dependent on the members of the ruling class who have access to education. Loomis and Rodriguez support this claim, affirming that education has affected human capital. This “competition in the labor market does not commence with employment,” they say, “It begins in school.”

42 Ibid. 47.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid. 49.
45 Ibid.
higher the educational attainment of the individual, the higher his chances are of getting a better employment. This situation now degrades disadvantaged individuals as their chances of making their lives better become tighter. Loomis and Rodriguez are concerned with students having lower income backgrounds—these students have a lesser chance of being a part of the learning institution. They have less opportunity to pursue higher studies, and so they acquire fewer skills and less knowledge; hence, they have a smaller chance at meeting a certain standard set by the labor industry. 47

In the previous discussions, it was shown that Dewey is somehow critical of the division of classes which also manifests itself in education, particularly in the way members of the different classes are educated. He is very much aware of the fact that education is necessary for the conduct of life. It prepares students to be a part of the society; particularly, it prepares students to be a part of the work force—the work force being a tool for them to sustain their lives economically. Dewey made a distinction between labor and leisure stating that education prepares students for useful labor and education for leisure. Labor is qualified by work that is perfected or learned though habit; while leisure is qualified by work that utilizes the intellect. 48

Dewey is arguing that the educational system itself has created the division between classes. The masses are educated for utility while the upper class is educated for the culture of leisure. What the system fails to do is to extend higher forms of education to a wider public, regardless of class, so that opportunities are democratized. For Dewey, the democratization of education results in the wider appropriation of critical thinking.

The democratization of education, therefore, result in the training of a critical mass that will the what is good for the society over personal good. We might have citizens who put others into consideration before themselves. For Dewey, a good society is an “efficient” society and efficiency must characterize the experience of the members of society. Dewey highlights that education must be a reconstruction of experiences. “Infancy, youth, adult life, all stands on the same educative level in the sense that what is really learned at any and every stage of experience constitutes the value of that experience.” 49 Each experience can contribute to the understanding of future experiences. Someone doing a laboratory experiment, for example, commits mistakes along the way, but he eventually perfects his craft.

Dewey hopes that through the educational system we can somehow change society. According to him, reconstruction of experience may be social as well as personal. He uses progressive communities as an example where the experiences of children are shaped so that instead of “reproducing current

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47 Ibid., 517.
49 Ibid., 77-83.
habits, better habits shall be formed.” In this way, when the youth become adults they will become an improvement of the previous generation and may consciously act to eliminate the ills of the society.

How then do we address the problem of education using Dewey’s thoughts on education? The above discussion points to the view that, for Dewey, the ultimate purpose of education is the democratization of the worldview of the members of a community, that is to say, the development of a sense of valuing others. The dualism between self-sacrifice and self-perfection must be addressed. Hence, it is the task of the educational system to inculcate among the students that social efficiency and culture must work together. It is the task of the institution of learning to teach that society is as important as the self. Institutions of learning must usher the development of the nature of each student without hampering their growth. They must teach the value of man’s relatedness with the society as a whole. Students in turn must realize the essence and value of being able to contribute to the development of the society and not be a burden to the state. Students’ appreciation of their own culture and arts will keep them close to their origin. The achievement of all these signals that we have fulfilled the primary aims of education which is to develop a citizenry who are willing enough to help in the development of their society.

**Education in the Philippine Context**

Despite the evolution of basic and secondary education in the Philippines, there has not been a clear philosophical grounding for the changes in the curriculum. Several texts show a number of reasons why the curriculum has failed to address the needs of the students. Some claim that it is because of the inadequacy of training for teachers; others would claim that it is caused by economic and political priorities of the government officials. The most convincing account, for me, is Leonardo Estioko’s observation that the deficiencies in the country’s educational system is profoundly tied to the pathological nature of Philippine bureaucracy. Estioko, moreover, notes that the lack of enthusiasm among educators to change the system is due to this pathological bureaucracy. Furthermore, the Philippine curriculum suffers from its undecidability to focus on either technical skills or higher education. “There is hardly any socio-political awareness in the minds of graduates. The first thing they have in mind is to seek employment.”

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50 Ibid., 45.
51 Ibid., 67.
53 Ibid., 207.
solution that he proposes is the determination of an appropriate philosophy of education, “only after then can an educational system devise a responsive curriculum.”\textsuperscript{54} He notes that a “Filipino philosophy of education must be borne out of the common reflection and effort of the majority.”\textsuperscript{55}

Adelaida Bago, in her book \textit{Curriculum Development, The Philippine Experience},\textsuperscript{56} notes that there is a need to identify a philosophy of education before the formulation of a curriculum, but one can notice, that she presented a general theory with an encompassing definition for each theory. She enumerated philosophies such as perennialism, essentialism, progressivism and reconstructionism without thoroughly discussing each and without qualifying how these philosophies could help in shaping the educational system. Bago is proposing a convoluted philosophy that may eventually backfire. We cannot locate, in Bago’s proposal, any of the goals that lead to the transformation of the individual student to being more critical or more rational. This is because the present system understands education as a “mere handling down of traditions, beliefs, values, customs behavioral patterns through oral means and immersion.”\textsuperscript{57}

Isagani Cruz in his book \textit{The Basic Education Curriculum in 17 Easy Lessons}, discussed the objective of the elementary education curriculum that is “develop the spiritual, moral, mental and physical capabilities of the child, provide him/her with experiences in the democratic way of life, and inculcate ideas and attitudes necessary for enlightened, patriotic, upright, and useful citizenship.”\textsuperscript{58} This supports my earlier claim that the curriculum does not prepare our students to think critically, it prepares our students to be productive members of the society.

One of the reasons why reforms in the Philippine educational system does not reform at all is because each president eyes on a different program focus, and when one’s term ends, the department’s program objective changes as well. It could be understood that there is no continuity in the program. During the time of Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., the department’s education agenda was in support of the New Society Vision. He wanted the Filipinization of curricula from primary to tertiary level. During the 1970s-1980s, the Department of Education’s goal was one with Marcos’ views- that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 96.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Adelaida Bago, \textit{Curriculum Development, The Philippine Experience} (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2001), 110.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 114.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Isagani Cruz, \textit{The Basic Education Curriculum in 17 Easy Lessons} (Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2003), 93.
\end{itemize}

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is “to utilize education as an instrument to achieve national development.”59 The president wanted to boost agriculture and countryside development, so the “policies and training for the tertiary is focused on agriculture as well as technical and vocational courses.”60 The government wanted to use education as a tool for social transformation- but this transformation did not speak of educating students to become better thinkers, they trained the students to look at education as a tool for future employment that would translate to better man-power and better economy.

During the time of Corazon C. Aquino, the free secondary education was instituted, the Republic Act 6728 on the Government Assistance to students and teachers in private education and the promotion of continuing education was passed.61 She allotted funds to help finance the education of under-privileged students and continuing education of teachers.

The Aquino administration also introduced values education in the new elementary and secondary curriculum. The reason for its inclusion is for the improvement of human resource with a balanced intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual well-being.

The term of Fidel V. Ramos was a period of computerization- he wanted school systems to be technologically at par with that of other countries. He believed that education is the key to improving the society- but by this he meant strengthening the country’s economy through education. He institutionalized the trifocalization of the education agency, namely: Department of Education Culture and Sports, Commission of Higher Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. When he ordered for the enhancement of the curriculum, the department moved to improve the quality of teaching science and mathematics. When he said he wanted to improve the quality of teachers, the department established Teacher Education Council which “worked at raising the dignity of teachers as professionals and improving the prospects of continuous professional development in a rapidly changing environment.”62

Joseph Estrada was not able to put forward much changes to the educational system, given the fact that his term lasted only for two years and six months. However, it was during his term that the department adapted UNESCO’s four pillars of education: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.63

59 Mona Valisno Dumiao, The Nation’s Journey to Greatness: Looking Beyond Five Decades of Philippine Education, (Makati City, Philippines: Fund for Assistance to Private Education, 2010), 18
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 35.
62 Ibid., 55.
63 Ibid., 58.
Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo continued the reform agenda of the previous administration. To add to that, she started the 4Ps program which intends to support the health and education needs of children from extremely poor households. She also established Presidential Task Force for Education which then produced the Philippine Main Education Highway which aims to come up with a seamless education for students, to increase the competitiveness of Philippine Education and the industries by reasserting the aspirations of universal school participation.\(^\text{64}\) It improved linkages between “post-secondary education and training, technical and academic needs of the industries.”\(^\text{65}\) From here, we understand that the Philippine Educational System was once again used as an investment capital to help boost the economy of the country by supplying graduates whose skills are matched with the dictates and demands of the industry.

Benigno Aquino Jr.’s term ushered in a complete turn in the educational system as it introduced the 12-yr basic education cycle which mandated that children at the age of 5 should already start with formal schooling that is kindergarten, this is then followed by a six-year primary education, four-year junior high school and two-year senior high school. This cycle aims to “provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.”\(^\text{66}\)

His ten-point agenda appears to be a continuation of the previous administration’s educational goals, what makes revolutionary is the 12-year basic education cycle that is spiral progression from kindergarten to senior high school; with the inclusion of the academic track (1. Accountancy, Business and Management Strand, 2. Humanities and Social Sciences Strand, 3. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Strand); Technical-Vocational Livelihood track, Sports track, Arts and Design Track. Its outcome is yet to be realized as its implementation has just started during the school year 2012-2013. “Grade 1 entrants of S.Y. 2012-2013 are the first batch to fully undergo the program, and current 1st year Junior High School students (or Grade 7) are the first to undergo the enhanced secondary education program.”\(^\text{67}\) It would be necessary to note though, that the Aquino administration was able to address the ten-point agenda as evidenced in UNESCO’s report.\(^\text{68}\) According to Ecclesiastes Papong, John Dewey have

\(^\text{64}\) Ibid., 72.
\(^\text{65}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{67}\) Ibid.
influenced the curriculum of the 12-year basic education cycle, in such a way that it is now learner-centered and it utilizes inquiry-based approach, however, there might be a need to check on schools whether teachers are really utilizing these methods in their respective classes.69

Emerita Quito notes that we must first locate the Filipino identity before we can come up with a valid Philosophy of Education that could be applicable for Filipinos. She notes that there is a need to understand our history. The educational system must teach its students not to despise their own, she proposes decolonization of the system.70

Conclusion

As argued by Estioko and Quito, the Philippine Educational system is not anchored on any concrete philosophy, this fact already strips the system of any direction. Dewey has already emphasized the role of teachers in revolutionizing the educational system- he holds that progress will remain elusive until teachers become more open to genuine change in the system; or until teachers are well-trained in science, philosophy and history.

As mentioned by Dewey, an education system must have an aim- to have a foresight of results which stimulate the person to think and look ahead, to realize the importance of industrial competence and to produce good citizens. The creation of a universal pedagogy may be the least helpful in achieving these aims, because according to Dewey, the pedagogy used should answer to the uniqueness of the traditions and culture of a particular community. As discussed by Bautista, Bernardo and Ocampo, in 1925, one of the reasons why students are not able to meet the standard of learning is because they were using a curriculum that was borrowed from the Americans, aside from the fact that there was an insistence in the use of English as the medium of instruction, students were probably not able to relate to the curriculum that was culturally different from theirs.71

There have been several criticisms of the Philippine educational system, and all these criticisms talk about almost the same things: drop-out rate, students’ inability to meet standards of learning, untrained teachers,

69 Ayala Foundation’s Centex Manilla and Centex Batangas are two schools in the country which utilizes inquiry-based approach in the classroom as influenced by Matthew Lipman’s community of inquiry. Lipman’s community of inquiry was heavily influenced by Dewey’s take on inquiry-based approach in learning.
unreliable textbooks to name a few. The problem lies in the fact that there has been no continuity in the government’s education agenda from 1965-1998 and its bureaucratic practices as discussed earlier. The thrust of education in the Philippines is dependent on the goals set by the president for the state. These must have addressed Dewey’s aim- that is to realize the importance of industrial competence, however, if we are only to teach our students to supply man-power to the state, then we have failed to teach them how to think. As Dewey argued, there is education for leisure which makes use of one’s intellect and education for labor which utilizes habit formed through repetition. If the state continues to teach students the importance of their economic contribution to the society- then, they are only teaching them an aspect of how it is like to be a good citizen of the state.

We can continuously enumerate the problems of the educational system-lack of funding, lack of facilities and so on without pinning down a concrete solution to solve the problem of the quality of education and quality of citizens it is producing. It might then be timely for institutions responsible for drafting the curriculum and institutions of learning responsible for the training of future teachers to once again consider re-learning Dewey’s thoughts on education and how it could work alongside philosophy, as Dewey mentioned “If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education.”

Unless we have a concrete philosophy of education as a basis for all the education agenda, the same problems on the quality of education would continue to exist.

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By this I mean, having a concrete Philosophy of Education that could have been taken from the works of Philosophers and theorists.


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The Butterfly Dream and Zhuangzi’s Perspectivism: An Exploration of the Differing Interpretations of the Butterfly Dream against the Backdrop of Dao as Pluralistic Monism

Christine Abigail L. Tan

Abstract: The Butterfly Dream is probably one of the most well-known anecdotes in philosophical literature, and as such, it has both enjoyed and suffered from several interpretations and misinterpretations. There are much more interpretations of the Butterfly Dream than this study can gloss over, but for the sake of brevity: I divide the two approaches according to how they view the characters in the plot. Specifically speaking, the first group, which for convenience I will call the egoistic thesis, views the plot in such a way that Zhuangzi is Chuang Chou, and that the butterfly is an imagined representation of the mind, while the second group, which for convenience I will call the monistic thesis, holds that Zhuangzi is different from Chuang Chou as well as the butterfly, hence supposing that the butterfly dream is an entirely distinct reality. Albeit seemingly crude, this provides a simple yet insightful view of the premises that prevent one approach from compromising with the other, as well as the crossing over of one interpretation into another which belong to the same approach. Moreover, this approach will allow me to better fulfill the overarching aim of this study, which is to contextualize a specific rendition of the monistic thesis against the backdrop of the philosophy of the Inner Chapters and its notion of Dao as a whole such that the Zhuangzi will emerge more aptly as a perspectivist. In other words, the Butterfly Dream points to what Hans-Georg Moeller terms as “a structure of presence” which, if viewed against the context of Zhuangzi’s philosophy, shows the paradox of the absolute unity but also the absolute singularity of all things.

Keywords: Zhuangzi, Daoism, pluralistic monism, butterfly dream,
In what were earlier times,
Chuang Chou dreamed, making a butterfly.
So flitted, flitted, he was a butterfly.
Indeed, he showed what he himself was, going as he pleasantly intended!
He did not understand Chou.
So suddenly, he awoke.
Then so thoroughly, thoroughly, it was Chou.
(But then he did) not understand
did the dream of Chou make the butterfly?
Did the dream of the butterfly make Chou?
Chou with the butterfly
there must-be, then, a division.
This it is which men call 'things changing'.

The Butterfly Dream is probably one of the most well-known anecdotes
in philosophical literature, and as such, it has both enjoyed and
suffered from several interpretations and misinterpretations. There are
much more interpretations of the Butterfly Dream than this study can gloss
over, but though each interpretation is different in its own regard, much of
the dialogue surrounding the anecdote can be divided into two schools.
Although many interpretations divide the schools into several groups
according to claim, I find this strategy not only untenable with regard to the
nuances in detail, but also highly confusing and complex; as such, my
division is simple: I divide the two approaches according to how they view
the characters in the plot. Specifically speaking, the first group, which for
convenience I will call the egoistic thesis, views the plot in such a way that
Zhuangzi is Chuang Chou, and that the butterfly is an imagined
representation of the mind; while the second group, which for convenience I
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which is to contextualize a specific rendition of the monistic thesis against the
backdrop of the philosophy of the Inner Chapters and its notion of Dao as a
whole such that the Zhuangzi will emerge more aptly as a perspectivist.

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2 Perspectivism here is to be distinguished from the notion that truth is relative, as in relativism, but rather that the relative is true, and is an angle of the bigger picture.
In order to do this, I will first discuss the contention of the egoistic thesis, championed by Robert Allinson among others, and show why this interpretation is problematic in such a way that it gives more importance to one reality, whether the dream or waking reality, over the other, and as such, undermines the position of Zhuangzi as a perspectivist. In contrast then, I will discuss the contention of the monistic thesis, specifically picking out that of Hans-Georg Moeller’s as well as Kuang-Ming Wu’s as two sides of the same coin that is pluralistic monism, and show that these two are the most apt interpretations of the Butterfly Dream when placed against the backdrop of Zhuangzi’s philosophy as seen in Inner Chapters and his perspectivism. Finally, I support the latter thesis further by looking at the different angles of Zhuangzi’s philosophy which show him as a perspectivist, from which we can conclude that the Butterfly Dream points to a structure of presence which, if viewed against the context of Zhuangzi’s philosophy, shows the paradox of the absolute unity but also the absolute singularity of all things. That is to say, that both the butterfly and Chou are singular in their very existence, but both are, essentially, united in Zhaungzi the narrator, in the same way that the Dao, though unknowable in its totality, is manifested in singularities as a never-ending process of becoming which Zhuangzi calls the “transformation of things.”

I. The Egoistic Thesis

There are several renditions of the egoistic thesis but the common denominator, as previously mentioned, is that it views the dream as a representation, and the butterfly as an image of that representation. There are basically two kinds of this thesis, and one views the butterfly dream as more important, while the other views waking reality as more important. The former variant has renditions that regard the butterfly as a symbol of Dao as in Jung H. Lee, as a mere image which provides the opportunity to doubt one’s waking reality, radicalizing the Cartesian doubt, as in Xiaoqiang Han, or as the Cartesian cogito itself as discovered in the Jungian unconscious as

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Zhihua Yao, among other specific interpretations. The former variant of the egoistic thesis, which seems to be fashioned in a more sophisticated and logical manner is that which regard the enlightenment of waking reality as more important; this variant is the one championed by Robert E. Allinson, who argues that the generally accepted ordering of events in the Qiwen is illogical, leading to incoherent interpretations. That is, Allinson thinks that the Great Sage/Great Awakening story should come after the Butterfly Dream instead of preceding it, in order to present the progress in the plot of the chapter.

Nevertheless, the contention of this study is that, looking at it from the view of the egoistic thesis can be problematic when placed against the backdrop of Zhuangzi’s perspectivism. It should be noted, however, that although an objection can be made by claiming that I am trying to set up a strawman for these philosophers as they never said that Zhuangzi is a perspectivist nor tried to prove it, it is worthwhile to understand that this study is merely providing insight on the plethora of interpretations if we are to consider Zhuangzi as a perspectivist, which we will also later try to discuss in the third section of this paper, with the Butterfly Dream itself as the vehicle.

In order to better show this, we will take a look at the several renditions of the egoistic thesis.

The Butterfly as a Symbol of the Dao

Jung H. Lee, in his article “What is it Like to be a Butterfly? A Philosophical Interpretation of Zhuangzi’s Butterfly Dream,” maintains that the butterfly is nothing more than a symbol of the Dao, over and above the message that nothing is absolute in this world—guided by his choice of translation, which is that of A.C. Graham:

Last night Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, spirits soaring he was a butterfly (is it that in showing what he was he suited his own fancy?), and did not know about Zhou. When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Zhou with all his wits about him. He does not know whether he is Zhou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Zhou. Between Zhou and the

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butterfly there was necessarily a dividing; just this is what is meant by the transformation of things.⁸

The third-person perspective is used here to denote the distanced uncertainty present in the voice, leading Lee to a kind of withdrawn relativistic approach to the text. Lee says that in the same way that the views of philosophers such as the Mohists and the Confucians come and go, to regard himself as the Butterfly is the same thing that Mohists and Confucians do when they insist, and hence absolutize, on what they think is true or right.⁹ Lee notes that:

Thus, at one level, Zhuangzi is recommending a stance of epistemic humility and an acceptance of the plurality of perspectives that populate the state of Nature. Our aspirations for global comprehensiveness must be tempered as we try to appreciate competing perspectives. This would be what I would call the epistemic imperative of the passage.

At a second level, I think we must look at the butterfly as a normative ideal that embodies many of the qualities and virtues of the Way itself. This use of a natural metaphor should come as no surprise since most ancient Chinese philosophers assume that common principles inform both the natural and human worlds and that it is by reflecting the patterns and processes of the cosmos that we realize the Good.¹⁰

On one level, however, it seems to reduce philosophy into wisdom, that is, life advice, and then, on another, undermines the butterfly dream as a mere symbol—a signifier; a tool, which does not possess its entirely distinct, and own, reality, and yet leads us to doubt the reality which we are in. In other words, the butterfly dream is treated for what it is, a dream, à la Thomas Nagel’s “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”¹¹ wherein one retains the human

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¹⁰ Ibid., 198.

¹¹ Nagel argues that for us to imagine what it is like to be a bat, we may try to do the things a bat normally does as per our studies of the composition of the bat, but never what it is like to for an actual bat to be a bat. In other words, one consciousness is entirely unique from the other, and when one tries to analyze or to imagine being in another’s shoes, the personal self
faculties despite trying to imagine what it would be like to be a bat, or a butterfly for that matter.

**The Butterfly Dream as an Image for Radical Skepticism**

In contrast, though in the same vein, Xiaoqiang Han, in his article “Interpreting the Butterfly Dream,” takes the butterfly dream to be a kind of meditation, à la Descartes’ *Cogito Ergo Sum*, which radicalizes the Cartesian doubt, allowing Zhuangzi to doubt that which for Descartes was indubitable, that “I exist.” Han’s interpretation allows him to formulate his own interpretation, which is largely guided by that of Herbert Giles, with the exception of omitting “a man” (replacing it with Zhuangzi) as well as the term Metempsychosis, but more importantly, the italicized in the following:

> Once upon a time, I, Zhuangzi, dreamed I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awaked, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then Zhuangzi dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether a butterfly is now dreaming it is me. Between Zhuangzi and a butterfly there is necessarily a barrier. This is called transformation of things.

The italicized text is, in Giles translation: “or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man.” Although Han retains the first-person perspective, for the reason that even though the word “I” is absent in the original text, classical Chinese authors referred to themselves in their own names as a style of modesty making the inclusion of “I” permissible, Giles’ translation still nevertheless presupposes a dreamer, the “I” as the real and substantial man, and the dream where the butterfly is an image which leads regardless of any claim to objectivity necessarily and subjectively biases it. See Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” in *The Philosophical Review*, 83:4 (1974), 435-450.

12 “Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi], dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awaked, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man. Between a man and a butterfly there is necessarily a barrier. The transition is called Metempsychosis.” See Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic*, trans. by Herbert A. Giles (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1926), 47. Cf. Han, “Interpreting the Butterfly Dream.”

13 Han, “Interpreting the Butterfly Dream,” S. Emphasis mine.
to the “I” doubting the reality where “I” am in, posing no challenge to the cogito ergo sum proof. Thus, he radicalizes this, and concludes that: “The role of the butterfly in the episode, it may be thought, is nothing more than describing a situation in which I can doubt the existence of myself.”

This implies that for Han, Zhuangzi’s butterfly may just as well be an image, dreaming of the image of Zhuangzi, that is, images within images. I wonder whether we are all just dreams within dreams with no dreamer, shifting the question of which reality is true, to whether there even is a reality in there to begin with.

Although this may be a fruitful contribution to Cartesian discourse, it is an unfair treatment of Zhuangzi, reducing him to a radical skeptic, a flat-out relativist, which is not Daoist at all, as we will later elaborate more on.

The Butterfly as the Symbol of the Human Soul in the Two-tiered Self

Zhihua Yao takes a more interdisciplinary approach in his article “‘I Have Lost Me:’ Zhuangzi’s Butterfly Dream,” and calls his interpretation the self-alienation hypothesis. Basically, Yao finds the Cartesian cogito in the Jungian unconscious, and looks at the world of the butterfly as an enlightening grain of truth about one’s self, as shaped by the collective unconscious of Jung. As such, and like Lee, Yao maintains that the butterfly is a very important symbol in Zhuangzi’s dream, which can lead to a better understanding of ourselves, although he takes into consideration not only the philosophical heritage of Daoism but also its religious angle and goes on to consult psychology in his pursuit of understanding as well.

Yao takes “transformation of things” or “things changing” at the last sentence of the dream of the butterfly to mean alienation, that is, rather than external things, Yao focuses on Zhou and the butterfly other an object or a thing. Yao uses the psychology of Jung to explain this:

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14 Ibid., 7.

15 On the collective unconscious, Jung says that “the existence of the collective unconscious means that individual consciousness is anything but a tabula rasa and is not immune to predetermining influences. On the contrary, it is in the highest degree influenced by inherited presuppositions, quite apart from the unavoidable influences exerted upon it by the environment. The collective unconscious comprises in itself the psychic life of our ancestors right back to the earliest beginnings. It is the matrix of all conscious psychic occurrences, and hence it exerts an influence that compromises the freedom of consciousness in the highest degree, since it is continually striving to lead all conscious processes back into the old paths.” See C.G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, vol. 8 of The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), ¶320. In other words, in this sense, the butterfly is nothing more than a culturally-shaped view of what it would symbolize – a metaphor just as with mythologies and legends.
In a Jungian view, the butterfly would be the self that manifests in the dreaming state and Zhou the ego of the waking state. Butterfly and Zhou, being two selves, seem to have their own territories, and this is what Zhuangzi means by fen or division. It is not a division among things, but between selves. Meanwhile, each self tries to expand its territory by projecting or objectifying its counterpart. This is what I call “self-alienation.”

In other words, Yao views the butterfly as a symbol of another tier of the self which we could look at to help us explore more about the dim passageways of our inner selves. Although this seems to be a plausible interpretation, it should be noted that Zhuangzi’s point was never simply about the self, although he was of course, concerned with man’s rational psychology as well. Daoism in general, especially Zhuangzi, however, dealt mostly with problems in metaphysics. Indeed in the very same chapter as the butterfly dream that is the Qiwulun, we find the problem raised to a more metaphysical level, encompassing a wider horizon than the self, in the Great Sage dream anecdote:

He who dreams of drinking wine may weep when morning comes; he who dreams of weeping may in the morning go off to hunt. While he is dreaming he does not know it is a dream, and in his dream he may even try to interpret a dream. Only after he wakes does he know it was a dream. And someday there will be a great awakening when we know that this is all a great dream. Yet the stupid believe they are awake, busily and brightly assuming they understand things, calling this man ruler, that one herdsman—how dense! Confucius and you are both dreaming! And when I say you are dreaming, I am dreaming, too. Words like these will be labeled the Supreme Swindle. Yet, after ten thousand generations, a great sage may appear who will know their meaning, and it will still be as though he appeared with astonishing speed.

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16 Yao, “Zhuangzi’s Butterfly Dream,” 520.
17 One simply need not look further from the Inner Chapters to see that the central themes revolve around the notion of truth, of the nature of things and of the world, and man’s limited epistemological capabilities.
18 Chuang Tzu, “Discussion on Making All Things Equal.”
More on this passage, however, will be discussed in the latter part of this section as well as the next section.

Thus far, we have seen three of the same variant of the egoistic hypothesis that hold the butterfly dream as more important or favors the butterfly dream over waking reality. But there is another variant of the egoistic thesis, which seems to be of Buddhist influence, placing great importance to the notion of awakening or enlightenment. The most well-known for this, and perhaps the only one who holds this idiosyncratic interpretation boldly enough to suggest a re-arrangement of the events in the original text, is Robert E. Allinson.

The Butterfly Dream as an Illusion from which The Sage is Awakened

Allinson, like many others, take the butterfly to be a symbol as well, but rather than zeroing in on the virtues that the butterfly seems to espouse with regard to the Dao, he chooses to focus on its capability for change towards something beautiful, that is, metamorphosis.

Indeed, for Allinson, when Zhuangzi talks about change or transformation, it should necessarily be towards something higher, not a regression as in what he calls the confusion hypothesis, where Zhou is led from certainty to uncertainty, or an existential relativism as in the endless transformation hypothesis, where the butterfly dream is made to signify the endless transformation of all things, and how one things necessarily becomes another in a never-ending process. Allinson, however, believes that, like the butterfly’s transformation from a mere cocoon to a beautiful butterfly, the self in the butterfly’s dream state can also progress to transform into the awakened sage. He explains:

As I have indicated in the previous chapter, I take the butterfly dream story to be an analogy of the enlightenment experience. The enlightenment experience, or the experience of illumination, is the phenomenological correlate of what I take to be the central objective of the Chuang-Tzu, that of self-transformation. It is not only the phenomenological correlate; it is the essential precondition for self-transformation.19

Allinson thus suggests that the translation and arrangement of the text should be as follows, if we are to follow his logical interpretation:

Once upon a time, Chuang Chou dreamed he was a butterfly; flitting and fluttering he darted wherever he wanted; he did not know he was Chuang Chou.

In fact, he didn’t know if he were Chuang Chou dreaming that he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou.

Suddenly he awakens.

He sees that he is Chuang Chou.

So, there must be a distinction between Chuang Chou and a butterfly; this is transformation!  

According to Allinson, the only reason why we fail to understand the butterfly dream for what it truly is, is because of the Gio Xiang redacted text where Guo Xiang, one of (if not the) foremost commentators of the Zhuangzi, adds his own philosophy into what we now know as the Zhuangzi. Thus, Allinson suggests such re-arrangement of the events in the story; but he proposes another alternative: to take another parable in the chapter that is the Great Sage dream and place it after the butterfly dream such that it becomes the precursor to the Great Sage dream which is capable of completing and explaining the butterfly dream more coherently.

If we take the Great Sage dream anecdote as the later argument logically speaking, it has the power of explaining the butterfly dream; but the reverse is not the case. Once fully awakened, one may distinguish between what is a dream and what is reality. Before one has fully awakened, such a distinction is not even possible to draw empirically.

Allinson explains this re-arrangement of anecdotes in the chapter further:

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20 Ibid., 82.
21 Ibid., 104-105.
If one is forced to choose between an interpretation of the butterfly dream anecdote as betokening an inescapable unknowingness and the Great Sage dream anecdote as being a harbinger of potential explicable, then I would choose the Great Sage dream anecdote. Under these interpretations of the dream anecdotes, both of the dream anecdotes cannot be true at the same time. If the butterfly dream anecdote is true, then the Great Sage dream anecdote is false. If the Great Sage dream anecdote is true, then the butterfly dream anecdote is false. However, we need not make such a choice. If we take the interpretation that the butterfly dream anecdote is a foreshadowing and a premature version which is better rendered in the Great Sage dream anecdote, then both dream anecdotes can be seen as consistent with each other and both can be taken as true.\(^2\)

Although Allinson’s logic seems to be well and good, and thoroughly argued, he nevertheless seems to be informed by the traditional western metaphysics of old, guided by the principle of non-contradiction, rather than Zhuangzi’s Daoist logic, where being and non-being, knowing and not knowing can both be at the same time.

Indeed, this is where the egoistic hypothesis fails, in that it presupposes the falsity of the other, or at the very least, that the other is less true because one is affirmed. Awakening or doubting, the egoistic hypothesis pre-supposes an affirmed “I” within the picture, which the original text lacks.

So, what, after all, is a more plausible way to approach the butterfly dream if we are to consider the Daoist logic of the Inner Chapters? Let us now look at what I call the monistic hypothesis.

II. The Monistic Hypothesis

There are two prevalent commentators of the monistic hypothesis whom I wish to discuss in this section: Hans-Georg Moeller and Kuang-Ming Wu. Although these two interpretation don’t seem to resemble each other at face value, we will later on see that they arrive at the same conclusion, as they both draw from the Guo Xiang commentaries, as well as Daoist thought, to guide their interpretation of the butterfly dream.

Moreover, I call this the monistic hypothesis because considering Zhuangzi as different from the proper name and character Chuang Chou in the story as well as the butterfly, and finding in each one an existence of their own, kept in balance by a central void, necessarily implies a kind pluralistic monism which can actually be seen in the Guo Xiang commentaries.

In this section, I chose to discuss Moeller first, who claims that his interpretation is simply a rehearsal of Guo Xiang’s, because his take on the Butterfly Dream provides for us a good transitioning ground from which we can take off to Kuang-Ming Wu’s more comprehensive and in-depth approach to the butterfly dream.

**Hans-Georg Moeller’s Structure of Presence**

In “Zhuangzi’s ‘Dream of the Butterfly’: A Daoist Interpretation,” Moeller’s maintains that, instead of the butterfly dream teaching the vanity and uselessness of distinctions, it is actually more the case that the butterfly dream teaches the importance of distinctions. This take is based on the classical commentary by the Daoist Guo Xiang, who thought that just as the butterfly did not know anything about Zhou, Zhou as well did not know anything about the butterfly.\(^{23}\) For Guo Xiang, Moeller notes:

> There is no continuous substance underlying the different stages of dreaming and being awake. He points out, rather, referring to the original text, that “at its time, everything is completely in accord with its intentions. That is to say that during the time of the butterfly is no one else but the butterfly without any qualities of some “Zhuang Zhou” or even some “I,” just as when awake Zhuang Zhou—whether before or after the dream—is nothing but Zhuang Zhou himself and does not have anything to do with a butterfly or with some strange “I” connecting him with butterflies.\(^{24}\)

Rather, Moeller maintains that both stages, both the dream and the waking reality of Zhou, are real to the same degree. Thus, there is no “transformation” in the strict sense here, where a certain substance persists. The story, for Guo Xiang, ends in perfect certainty or doubtlessness.

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\(^{23}\) In the translations of Giles, Legge, or Graham, this does not seem to be the case. But notice how Kuang-Ming Wu’s word per word translation in the beginning of this paper encloses the critical words in parenthesis. Moeller offers his own translation which basically replaces the words “but then he did” in the parenthesis to “one does.”

\(^{24}\) Moeller, “Zhuangzi’s ‘Dream of the Butterfly’,” 440-441.
Moreover, he likens the relation between being awake and dreaming to life and death, in such a way that each has its own realm, for what belongs to life is alive and what belongs to death is dead—certainly, there is a distinction between the two, which is precisely why it is wrong to worry about death when we are alive, for what is present is in complete accord with its intentions. Further, Guo Xiang reminds us that since this is said from Zhou’s perspective, awakening does not, by any means, falsify the dream. Zhou’s awakening therefore, does not have the quality which Allinson imposes on it, being that of awakening from illusion to reality, and is different from the “great awakening” in the Great Sage dream which is an awakening from both reality and dreaming.25

That said, Moeller concludes that the interpretations and understanding of the butterfly dream following Giles’ translation where the “I,” and hence remembering and doubt, is central “contradict the notions of forgetfulness and doubtlessness that are central to Guo Xiang’s,”26 which is the Daoist approach to the butterfly dream. Moeller explains:

The Daoist idea is not that of a bridge constituting a process of change, and constituted by something that would continuously accompany all segments. It is rather the idea that a sharp “distinction” (fen 分) between the segments of a process is the basis for the equal authenticity of each segment.27

In other words, what makes each segment completely in accord with its intentions is not that there are no distinctions, but that they have sharp distinctions, unique to themselves. Moeller continues:

What is Daoistic is not the blurring of the borderlines between the segments, between (the two) Zhuang Zhou(s) and the butterfly, between being awake and dreaming, between life and death, nor the doubts about one’s real “I,” but rather the belief that the authenticity are not connected to each other by any continuous bridge between them. It is un-Daoistic to believe that life and death are about the same and not clearly divided from each other: rather, life and death are as different, from the Daoist point of view, as they can possibly be.28

25 Ibid., 442.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 443.
28 Ibid.
What is for Guo Xiang to be completely in accord with its intentions, Moeller calls as the pattern which is “the structure of presence,” expressed in the butterfly dream when the butterfly in the dream is in complete accord with itself. “Presence” here is to be understood as meaning that whatever is at the moment, is just what it is, and nothing else; a process, therefore, is constituted by present segments which are what they simply are without the slightest split, and yet are part of continuous and ongoing processes. In this way, Moeller notes:

It is of crucial importance for the whole process that no segment violates the distinctions between segments. To overstep one’s borderline is to violate one’s presence. If we start to remember or to doubt, if we start to split out “identity” by pondering on what “we” “are,” and if, while being alive, we start to worry about death, we leave our total “presence”—we violate our present “identity.” If, while awake, we ponder our dreams, as soon as we start to “reflect,” we are no longer perfectly present. When one oversteps the limits of one’s momentary segment, when one does something at the wrong or at the wrong place, one not only does harm to oneself but also brings disorder to the sequence of segments and thereby endangers the order of the whole process. In short, one acts in disaccord with Dao.29

Again, none of the parts or segments is thus inauthentic for they are all singular in their very presence, and this singularity is what keeps them in unity as a process, just as ziran30 or spontaneity is kept in balance by weiwuwei31 or creative non-action, Moeller maintains that “the realm of presence is held together non-presence,”32 and that this empty non-present is what is holding together all the present segments, wholly distinct from each

29 Ibid., 444.
31 Complementary to the concept of ziran, weiwuwei is also a central concept to Daoism which means that in order to be in accord with the Dao, one must act by not acting, that is, to not go beyond one’s own nature, and to simply let the flow of nature guide one’s acts. See Laozi, Tao Te Ching.
other, from the center. Thus, “the continuous process of the segments revolves around non-presence.”

In the butterfly dream, this non-presence in the midst of present segments is manifested by Zhuagzi, the narrator, who does not identify with any of the characters in the story, and who has forgotten himself, but remains equally close in radius to all the segments in its position as the central point. In other words, Zhuangzi, the narrator is not attached to any definite present, losing himself in the midst of the present. In contrast to Allinson, Moeller suggests that:

The sage has no sort of “higher knowledge”; he is not entitled in that sense of the word: he has rather achieved the “no-knowledge” of the “great awakening.” The “great awakening” awakens from both dreaming and being awake and enters non-presence in the midst of presence.

In other words, the Daoist structure of presence as illustrated in the butterfly dream is a well-ordered process constituted by present, and entirely distinct, segments kept in balance by a non-present center. Giles’ version, therefore, as well as the previous interpretations we have discussed, leave the realm of presence and starts to enter the realm of re-present-ation by reflecting on one’s self, and “having left presence he is even further separated from the realm of forgetfulness, from the non-present realm Zhuangzi, the narrator. Giles’ Zhuang Zhou, it seems, has in fact ‘never heard of the changing of things.’

Kuang-Ming Wu’s Participatory Knowledge

Kuang-Ming Wu’s take on the first three books of the Inner Chapters is perhaps the most comprehensive and in-depth one, guided by the Guo Xiang commentaries, his language becomes a little confusing at face-value because it is very directly Eastern, but the point stands the same in the monistic hypothesis. Wu highlights the truths found in ironies and paradox, focusing on the central non-presence which lack any distinction (such differing explanation may look seemingly different in interpretation from Moeller, but conveys the same hypothesis), but continuously reminds us of the singularities of each experience. Regarding the butterfly dream he notes that:

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 445.
35 Ibid., 446.
In this story we see not one but two dreams, which are produced by reflecting on one dream after having been awakened from it. These two dreams are Chuang Tzu dreaming and the butterfly dreaming, and they are found to be interconnected though mutually exclusive. We usually suppose dream to be something unreal, but we seldom note that dream is also a distinct world in itself made by the dreaming subject. And the verdict on this constructed world to be “dream” is made not from inside that world (while we are dreaming) but from outside of it, realizing that we have now been “awakened” from that particular dream. And then we find that each dream is a world in itself, each different from all others. The world of the butterfly differs from that of Chuang Tzu, each with its own integrity, and he/it cannot have both at once.36

Initially, we see the difference with Moeller and Wu, being that for Moeller, Zhuangzi is entirely out of the picture, Zhou is the same Zhou who dreams and wakes up, while Zhuangzi is a non-presence, while with Wu, the Zhou who dreamt is different from the Zhou who woke up rather than a narrator. With Wu, a shift in characters occur, making two dreams. Zhou, entirely distinct from the butterfly, the butterfly, entirely distinct from Zhou, but the Zhou who wakes up is the empty middle who does not identify with either. Wu goes on:

Here the distinct identities of the butterfly and the Chuang Chou have to hold. These two dreams are distinct; one cannot dream both at once. Besides, dreaming implies a dreamer, and two non-consecutive dreams imply two dreamers. They are real and distinct, and cannot be a matter of relativistic indifference. At the same time, there is an endless change-over of the status and identity of the dreamer, having nothing to do with Stoic quietude. And finally there is an inevitable involvement of the dreamer, the subject, who is anything but an ideal observer severed from the world.37

36 Wu, The Butterfly as Companion, 176.
37 Ibid., 177.
It is important to note, however, that when Wu says that the subject is anything but an ideal observer, it does not mean that he no longer fulfills the notion of non-presence. This is simply to say that he becomes the unifier of all the segments of the whole. To clarify:

“Chuang Chou” (the knowing, indentifiable, nameable, phenomenal self) dreamed, then awoke, then wondered. In such dreaming, awakening, wondering, there is the real subject-self (wu) that understands the mutual interchanges and distinctions of things. It is when I participate in these experiences that I come to understand: this is participatory knowledge. It is here that the things-in-themselves appear together (ch’i wu) and are known through being unknown. 38

Though from a scholastic perspective this would seem to be highly contradictory, it is perfectly logical from a Daoist perspective in that one can be and not be at the very same time. One present segment can be occurring while it is kept in balance by the non-presence which allows it to exist, or as Wu says, “known through being unknown.” This middle point for Wu is, if at all, an empty kind of substance which is able to shift and change accordingly to what the situation calls for, to radical interchanges in radial identity.

The self changes in wonderment over three changes, in which it obtains itself. First, there is change in knowledge, as described above. And then such uncertainty of knowledge empties right and wrong (yes and no) of content, because the criteria of yes and no change, and we do not have the unchanging universal right. Thirdly, this shift of perspectives culminates in an awakening. It is not an awakening that settles in true knowledge and certainty, but an awakening that wonders, an awakening to uncertainty. It is an awakening to the interchanges of things, including my identifiable self (wo). And it is precisely within this puzzlement over radical “interchanges” (of identities) “among things” (including my self), this awakening and

38 Wu, The Butterfly as Companion, 185. Wu, like many other scholars of Zhuangzi, draws a distinction between the 諸 wu-self and 我 wo-self. For our convenience, it is worthwhile to look at 諸 wu-self as the central non-presence, while the 我 wo-self is a proper character that is Zhou.

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recognition of the vicissitudes of actuality, that the
continuity of the authentic self is obtained. The I
continues as such precisely in its recognition of its own
discontinuities as it participates in the interchanges
among things. The original authentic self (wu) is the yet-
to-begin-to-be my identifiable phenomenal self (wo), the
primal subject that stops and stays at its not knowing,
and knows such not-knowing.39

Thus, the dream in the butterfly does not, by any means, imply a sort
of illusion nor delusion, but rather, “radical interchanges of identities among
things including myself,” and this very roaming and soaring of the subject,
the wu-self, is what makes the radical equalizing of things possible, and what
unites them, in their very singularity. The metaphysical implication thus
noted by Wu, is that:

This is to say that many tools have nothing to do with
simple coherence. Each new situation imposes its own
unity on our many concepts. Each situation uniquely
regulates our many notions into a unity. Each situation
differs from others, and can be construed from many
perspectives (of many notions); our many notions grow
into many kinds of them.

Thus the word “unique” is a plural; the one is many. The
“one” is not idealistic, nor is the “many” simply
conceptual; they are concrete situational “one” and
“many.” The more our notions are the richer will be our
perception of many unique situations, whose unity life
is, a concrete pluralistic monism.

Though Zhuangzi has a position of no position, it is from Wu that we
understand non-presence not to mean as withdrawn relativism, but rather, a
participatory kind of knowledge and of being, wherein one lives and acts in
accordance to the unique nature of the situation, that is, in accordance with
the Dao.

39 Ibid., 206.
III. Zhuangzi’s Perspectivism

From what we can glean of Moeller’s *structure of presence* as well as Wu’s *participatory knowledge* and pluralistic monism as seen in the butterfly dream, Zhuangzi’s perspectivism comes to light. To isolate this anecdote from the rest of Zhuangzi’s philosophy, however, does not do the anecdote justice, for what exactly does this anecdote manifest when seen against the backdrop of his philosophy? In order to claim that Zhuangzi’s Butterfly Dream is an instance of his perspectivism, manifesting Dao as a kind of pluralistic monism present within the entirety of his writings, we need to, at least, take a brief look into two themes that pervade Zhuangzi’s philosophy: The unity and singularity of all things, as well as the process of becoming.

The Unity and Singularity of Things

Just as we have seen in the butterfly dream, what is singular is united, what is distinct is the same. The space beneath heaven or the sky is the unity of all things individual, where all things are in; and when one is at the center of a circle, one only sees what his radial perspective can grasp, but being at the center of the circle, one also necessarily understands that a different radius will lead to the same circumference, and is therefore just as valid. Indeed, Zhuangzi says:

> When there is separation, there is coming together.  
> When there is coming together, there is dissolution. All things may become one, whatever their state of being. Only he who has transcended sees this oneness. He has no use for differences and dwells in the constant. To be constant is to be useful. To be useful is to realize one’s true nature. Realization of one’s true nature is happiness. When one reaches happiness, one is close to perfection. So one stops, yet does not know that one stops. This is Tao.  

Thus, only the foolish worry about what is beyond his perspective, and only the foolish will push for others to see things the way he sees it. What Zhuangzi advocates thus, is in a sense, a holy stupidity, a sacred ignorance, where one does what nature calls for, what the situation calls for, and ultimately what *Dao* calls for. In the same way that the Guo Xiang

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commentary insists on the singularity of each of the butterfly dream’s character, we find in the Qiwulun, the same principle of ziran which Zhuangzi explains:

We are caught in the current and cannot return. We are tied up in knots like an old clogged drain; we are getting closer to death with no way to regain our youth. Joy and anger, sorrow and happiness, hope and fear, indecision and strength, humility and willfulness, enthusiasm and insolence, like music sounding from an empty reed or mushrooms rising from the warm dark earth, continually appear before us day and night. No one knows whence they come. Don’t worry about it! Let them be! How can we understand it all in one day?  

How can we understand it all in one lifetime, even? For what we see and what we understand is always only a limited view, shaped by the circumstance we are caught in, but this limit, this singularity, is precisely how we are aware of the multiplicity of perspectives, where the One is many, and where many is One. Zhuangzi notes:

Every thing can be a “that;” every thing can be a “this.” One man cannot see things as another sees them. One can only know things through knowing oneself. Therefore it is said, “That’ comes from ‘this,’ and ‘this’ comes from ‘that’”—which means “that” and “this” give birth to one another.

The Process of Becoming

The Singularity and Unity of all things thus, pre-supposes that every process has segments which is unique in their very own state. Just as in the process of water becoming ice, the same water will have different state of “iceness” at a specific time, and yet, as in a single thread, there is also a time when it is both water and ice at the same time, and so we find being and non-being to intertwine—as becoming. In the same way:

Life arises from death and death from life. What is inappropriate is seen by virtue of what is appropriate.

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
There is right because of wrong, and wrong because of right. Thus, the sage does not bother with these distinctions but seeks enlightenment from heaven. So he sees “this,” but “this” is also “that,” and “that” is also “this.” “That” has elements of right and wrong, and “this” has elements of right and wrong. Does he still distinguish between “this” and “that,” or doesn’t he? When there is no more separation between “this” and “that,” it is called the still-point of Tao. At the still-point in the center of the circle one can see the infinite in all things. Right is infinite; wrong is also infinite. Therefore it is said, “Behold the light beyond right and wrong.”

The very processes of the universe, of nature, is what unifies all things, but at the same, are also the same stages or phases which give them their individuality. Thus, now we find ourselves in full circle, and are reminded of a passage in the *Dao De Jing*, which goes:

Tao engenders One, One engenders Two, Two engenders Three, Three engenders the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry shade and embrace sunlight. Shade and sunlight, yin and yang, Breath blending into harmony.

In other words, it is in the very uniqueness of each of the “ten thousand things” that harmony and indeed, the very existence of a coherent reality, is made possible. We understand, therefore, that the phenomenal reality is kept orderly and in harmony though always in flux, by the non-changing emptiness, that is, non-being at the still-point middle. Indeed, it is only by virtue of this still-point that the distinct coordinates come to be, and that the particular moments of phenomenal reality are made possible in dynamic but very distinctly divided members in a state of flux.

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43 Ibid.

44 Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Verse 42.
References


Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean and the Circularity of Human Nature

Nahum Brown

Abstract: Aristotle’s famous claim that human beings are animals with rationality has a subtle and complicated articulation in his doctrine of the mean. This paper offers textual analysis of Aristotle’s discussion of the mean as a resource for coming to terms with the thesis that humans naturally deliberate over the essence of their nature. Unlike other animals who tend to act without deliberation and without mediation, human beings are the animals who are capable of giving an account of themselves. However, this also means that human beings are the animals whose nature it is to give an account. This paper proposes that Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, as it is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, helps to explain this circular, and in some ways puzzling, tension between having a nature and giving an account of one’s nature.

Keywords: Aristotle, the mean, human nature, logos

Aristotle’s famous claim that human beings are animals with rationality has a subtle and complicated articulation in his discussion of the mean. To be the kind of animal that has rationality is to express a tension between *phusis* (φύσις), which is usually translated as “nature,” and *logos* (λόγος), which is usually translated as “reason” or “account.” Unlike other animals who tend to act without deliberation and without mediation, human beings are animals capable of giving an account of their nature. However, this also means that human beings are the animals whose nature it is to give an account. I propose in this paper that Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, as it is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, offers a number

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1 This claim appears in a number of places throughout Aristotle’s corpus, including in book 1.13 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle distinguishes between rational and irrational elements of the soul (1102a5-1103a13). In this article, I will use the abbreviation CWA followed by the Bekker numbering system for Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 volumes, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

2 Aristotle also discusses the mean in the *Eudemian Ethics*. For analysis of the relation between the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* in terms of the mean, see Ioannis D.
of resources for explaining this circular, and in some ways puzzling, tension between having a nature and giving an account of one’s nature.

Before I explore how the mean expresses itself in the tension between physis and logos, I will begin by giving some background by explaining Aristotle’s point about the mean generally. In book 2.6 of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle says that the one who is virtuous knows how to find the mean between the extremes of vice. The one who is virtuous knows how to feel and act just right in accordance with this mean, that is, how to be at the right time, act with the right force, give not too much and not too little, as each situation requires. To emphasize Aristotle’s conclusions, first, I will define the mean, as Aristotle does, as an intermediary between deficiency and excess. Second, I will show that excellence is prior to the extremes and that being excellent is about doing what one naturally does well. Third, I will explain why Aristotle calls virtue a state of character. Fourth, I will contrast moral and intellectual virtues in order to expose why it is the moral virtues that are characterized by a mean. And fifth, I will clear up a certain misconception about what a mean really is, by showing that Aristotle does not necessarily think that we should act temperately in every situation, but rather that we should act in just the right way. This analysis should help us to establish the argument for why measuring what is just right is an expression of logos. My aim, then, is to expose a connection between place, choice, and the mean in order to articulate the thesis about why finding and choosing our nature is so complicated. Throughout this analysis, I comment on why moral virtues are characterized by a mean, and I situate Aristotle’s point within a larger discussion about how we are the animals who take account. By proceeding in this way, my aim is to explain that when we attempt to act in accordance with the mean, we also attempt to express a productive, circular tension between physis and logos.

“Excellence,” Aristotle says, “is a kind of mean.” 3 And a mean is a disposition set between two other extreme dispositions. Both extremes are vices. Excellence acts as the medium position equidistant between the two vices. 4 So if a person exhibits

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4 Joe Mintoff entertains an objection about multiple vices. Why should the mean always only generate two vices? Why can there not be many vices instead of just two? While this objection is interesting and could lead to fresh interpretations about Aristotle’s claim that virtue is singular and vice is multiple (Aristotle, CWA 1106b29- b34), my sense is that this objection does not take seriously enough that with the mean Aristotle has presented us with a philosophy of being between, and that being between requires the contrary poles of excess and deficiency, not a multiplicity, but a duality of vices. For Mintoff’s discussion of this objection, see Joe Mintoff, “On the Quantitative doctrine of the Mean,” in The Southern Journal of Philosophy, 51: 4 (2013), 449.
courage in a given situation, this is excellent because courage acts as the mean between the two vices of fear, on the one hand, which is the deficiency of courage, and rashness, on the other, which is its excess.

Anything that can be divided in this way generates all three dispositions, and yet the mean is really prior to the vices, since it is the mean by which we gauge the identity of a thing, and since the vices are really just extremes or mistakes of this identity. The mean is really the measure because when we say that a thing does what it does excellently, this is also a way to describe that a thing is what it is by fulfilling its nature. Aristotle gives an example of a horse. If a horse is excellent, this means that it is both excellent at being a horse, at exhibiting its nature, and that it is also excellent at what it does, at running, carrying, etc. Excellence acts as the measure of what the horse is. If we do not know the details of what makes a horse excellent, then we do not really have a sufficient sense of what a horse is about. So, what is important about Aristotle’s example of the horse is that we can infer two interrelated points: (1) When something is excellent, this means that it satisfies its nature, that it is good at what it is and at the work it does. It is the mean by which we measure both the thing’s functions and its identity. And (2) just as the identity of a thing is prior to the accidents and immaturities of its identity, likewise, the mean is prior to the extremes.

Since excellence is a precise disposition set between the two extremes, we have to develop enough sensitivity to exhibit the mean and fulfill our nature. Aristotle says that we are not automatically endowed with this sensitivity, but rather that excellence is a state of character that we can develop over time by forming good habits. A person who feels and acts well begins, as he or she grows mature, to form an excellent state of character. Now, Aristotle clarifies that of the three parts of the soul, excellence is a state and not a passion or a faculty. This is the case because a person who is excellent must choose to be excellent, whereas a person driven by appetite or someone who makes use of a faculty does not exercise choice. Aristotle also explains that not all states of character are excellent. Not all people can find and choose the mean. Some miss the mark or lack control or simply want to be vicious. And some do not even know what is right from wrong. Aristotle gives an extensive list of six states of character later in book 7.1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* when he contrasts a person of super-human excellence with one who is brutish, a person of human excellence with one who is vicious, and a person of continence with one who is indulgent and lacks

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5 For an expanded discussion of the concept of the good in Aristotle and how this relates not only to the mean but also to self-sufficiency, order, and determinateness, see Christopher V. Mirus, “Order and the Determinate: The Good as a Metaphysical Concept in Aristotle,” in *The Review of Metaphysics*, 65:3 (2012), 499-523.

6 Aristotle, CWA 1106b2- b4.
control. I will leave the details of these six states of character for another discussion, but I do want us to notice a few points. One is that a person who has an excellent state of character both wants to do what is right and, indeed, does what is right. This is the case because an excellent person can find the mean, measure the mean, and act in accordance with it, whereas every other state of character, with the exception of God-like excellence, fails in one way or another either to want it or to act it out. It is important to notice that both the truly virtuous and the truly vicious share a certain commonality in that they both do what they want, whereas those who either have or lack control feel conflicted and suffer from the urges of what they do not want. Although the virtuous and the self-controlled both act well, the latter’s state of character is marred by not entirely wanting to act well. But then, since the vicious person really wants to act badly, in other respects this person is as far from excellence as one can be, with the exception of the brute, who is sub-human and cannot even distinguish between right and wrong.

Although a person may know what is right, this person may still not feel compelled to do what is right, or may suffer from contrary urges, which oppose the person’s rationality and cause him or her to act inappropriately. This happens because the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues work differently and are not always aligned. Even though a person may be well educated and may know how to act just right, this person may have developed poor habits and may do what is wrong. Aristotle claims that knowing what is right is not enough. A person also needs to feel compelled to do what is right; moreover, this person needs to want to feel this compulsion. Only the truly virtuous really follows the mean and is excellent, since it is only the virtuous who wants to feel compelled to act well. So, whereas the intellectual virtues are about knowing what is excellent in principle and in itself, the moral virtues are about developing good habits that prompt us, not only to act well, but to want to act well. Thus, it is the moral virtues that are characterized by the mean, because it is the moral side that deals with how to make the irrational parts of our lives correspond with what we know is right. It is not enough to know what excellence is. We need to practice excellence as well. To act in accordance with the mean is to have

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7 Aristotle, CWA 1145a14-b21.
8 That the intellectual and the moral virtues are not always aligned becomes even more pronounced in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle claims that the intellectual virtues lead to a higher form of happiness than the moral (practical) virtues. For an examination of the division of different levels of happiness in Aristotle, see Nathan Colaner, “Aristotle on Human Lives and Human Natures,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2012. For a contrast with Colaner’s examination of the happiness that comes from intellectual verses moral virtues, also see Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
developed habits that allow us to be sensitive to what is right, not just in a
general way, but in a practical way.9

Now I would like to clear up a misconception that might otherwise
obscure Aristotle’s point about the relationship between the mean and
human nature. When Aristotle says that excellence is the medium position
between two extreme vices, this should not be understood as to always act in
a mediocre or temperate way. Part of this confusion comes about because
temperance itself is one of the most prominent expressions of the mean.
Furthermore, the word “mean” suggests moderation as part of its definition,
which contributes to the misconception that to act in accordance with the
mean is to act in a mediocre way. But Aristotle’s point is different. What
Aristotle has in mind is that we should act in just the right way, just as the
situation requires of us. If courage is what is right in a given circumstance,
then acting with gentle moderation would be out-of-place, since strong
decisiveness is what the situation requires. Thus, we should be careful not to
assume that the mean between two extreme vices is always a form of
moderation.

Aristotle says that excellence is a mean that is relative to us, one
which is not true for everyone at all times, but is rather true in a very precise
way.10 We should be careful not to conflate the mean that is relative to us and
the mathematical version of the mean. A mathematical mean is true for
everyone at all times. For example, the mathematical mean between the
numbers 2 and 6 is always 4. But a mean that is relative to us is only true
insofar as it fits the exact specificities of the situation. There is no universal
rule or principle, which one could apply throughout in any given
circumstance, that would always make something excellent. In book 2.6 of
the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives the example of the gigantic Milo and
the slim athlete.11 The portion of food that is just right for Milo would be
significantly larger than the portion of food that is just right for the athlete.
Both can eat too much or too little, but the point is that what is too much or
too little is different for each. If we confuse acting in accordance with a mean
and acting in a mediocre way, we might think that both the giant Milo and
the slim athlete should eat the same mediocre amount. But Aristotle’s point
is that they should both eat what is appropriate. If the athlete is on a special
diet and needs to eat a limited portion of food, then this is what is just right.

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9 Mariska Leunissen outlines how physiology also plays an important role in
Aristotle’s theory of moral character. See Mariska Leunissen, “Aristotle on the Natural Character
and Its Implications for Moral Development,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 50:4 (2012),
507-530.

10 Howard J. Curzer outlines and criticizes two major interpretations of Aristotle’s
claim that the mean is relative to us: “Character Relativity” and “Role Relativity.” See Howard J.

11 Aristotle, CWA 1106b1-b7.
Milo’s huge portion of food, on the other hand, is still a medium amount equidistant between the extremes, and yet it is not a medium portion of food in the sense of moderation, and certainly not in contrast to the slim athlete’s portion.

All of this shows that it is a virtuous person who knows how to go to the right place relative to the situation. So, another way to talk about how to measure what is just right relative to us is in terms of Aristotle’s notion of place, what he refers to in the *Physics* book 4 as topos. Place is both what contains us, what surrounds us, what gives us our points of reference, and yet place is also where we tend to go of our nature. In other words, place has at least two connotations, both of which are important to Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean: (1) As a container, place acts as the boundary or limit of each situation, giving us the space and relationality with which to pivot and to measure what is just right. Yet, (2) place is also a way to express whether we are acting in accordance with the mean, since it would be appropriate to go to the place where we naturally belong, and inappropriate to fall out-of-place. Since a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between these two connotations of place and Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean would be beyond the scope of this analysis, I will make just one point, which is, that a virtuous person is the one who goes to the appropriate place. A virtuous person both knows how to find the mean and tends of his or her own nature to choose the mean. Or, in other words, excellence is what both contains us and draws us towards it as what is the most natural place for us—as the fulfillment of our nature.

And yet Aristotle says that this place of excellence is difficult and singular, whereas vice is easy and multiple. This is the case because there is only one way to be virtuous; all other actions are out-of-place, either to a lesser or greater extent; they are either excessive or deficient, either too much or too little. To find the mean and to choose it is the most particular task. Although it contains us, and although we tend towards it in order to fulfill our nature, still it is precisely excellence that is the most difficult thing to give an account of. This is why Aristotle says that “it is possible to fail in many ways ..., while to succeed is possible only in one way, for which reason one is easy and the other difficult—to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult.” Since it is very hard to find the one out of the many, the excellent is something
that we must choose to find, whereas to miss what is excellent is more easy
to produce since it is almost everywhere, and since we do not need to choose
it in order to exhibit it. When I say that acting in accordance with the mean
is how we fulfill our nature, I do not want to suggest that excellence is
something that appears easily or without effort. Rather, excellence is
something that we labor to find and choose in each case. We should also
notice, however, that although Aristotle explains that virtue is singular and
vice is multiple, this does not necessarily mean that to miss the mark is always
to be vicious. Sometimes, as Aristotle notes in book 2.9, it is better to aim at
the lesser extreme, rather than to miss the mark altogether. Moreover,
sometimes we can only gauge what the mean is about by experiencing the
lesser extreme and then turning towards the mean as an amendment.

What our analysis shows is that because our nature is mixed up with
being virtuous, this labor to find the mean is simply what we do as what is
most natural for us. We are the ones who must choose what is most difficult.
But what is most difficult is just what we naturally are. To choose what is
most difficult is to choose to be what we naturally are. We are the ones who
must choose to go to the place where we naturally go. We are the ones whose
place it is to choose. We are the animals who have logos, who give an account.
We are the ones who are anxious about what it means to be. We are the ones
who deliberate over how to act well. Such deliberation is a deliberation of
choice, of whether we will be excellent or fall short of this. Such deliberation
is an expression of the constitutive tension between phusis and logos. There
are at least two registers of this tension: (1) we are the ones who give an
account of our nature, and at the same time (2) we are the ones whose nature
it is to give an account. Notice the subtle difference here: we are ones who
are anxious about our own nature, yet it is our nature that makes us anxious.
There is an important circularity that marks this tension. I say that it is
important because it is this circularity that allows us to critique ourselves and
to become excellent, and it is this circularity that allows us to do this naturally
simply as what we are. Expressing this circularity is what the mean is all
about.

If we were not of this sort, we would not need to worry about how to
act. We would not need to have an ethics. We would simply do what it is
that we do. But since we are the ones who take account, our nature is not as
simple as it is for other forms of life. Whereas other forms of life immediately
act in accordance with their nature, we complicate this by mediating what it
means to be ourselves. This mediation comes as a question, an anxiety, a
deliberation. In one sense, the mediation is a sort of weakness, since we are
the ones who must work hard just to satisfy what it means to be. For other

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14 Aristotle, CWA 1109b1- b2 (approximately).
forms of life, there is no question about whether they will be what they are. They simply act, and by acting, they simply satisfy their natures. But in another sense, the mediation is a sort of strength, since we are the ones who can choose to build our lives in just the right way, who have the chance to find what is excellent. The tension between phusis and logos makes our lives so risky, since we are the ones who can fail at being what we are, and yet, at the same time, we are the ones who can succeed and flourish. Paradoxically, it is only in the sense of risking whether we will fulfill our nature that we actually do fulfill our nature.

Another way to show this tension and circularity between our nature and our account of our nature is in terms of potentiality (dunamis) and actuality (energia). For other forms of life, there is no margin between the potentialities of their nature and the actualization of these possibilities. This is the case because there is no mediation between doing and being. Whenever they act, this is in accordance with their nature, since there is a certain explicit necessity, which, on the one hand, lets them actualize their potentialities with ease, but, on the other hand, gives them no choice but to be what they are. We are different because there is a great margin of risk between the potentialities of who we are and the successful actualization of these potentialities. Yet, in another sense, we are not different. We are just what we are. By deliberating over what it means to actualize the extent of our potentialities, we are just naturally doing what we do. The risk that we will not be what we are is really an expression of what we are. In other words, this tension and circularity shows us that our nature is various, that there are many ways to miss the mark of what our nature can do, but that if we try to become sensitive to what is just right in each situation of our lives, we can learn to act virtuously; in other words, we can satisfy our nature, we can actualize our potential, which is just what we are.

This paradox of having a nature and of giving an account of one’s nature reveals itself most explicitly in the character of the virtuous person. The virtuous person comes to habituate acting well and finding the mean in such an automatic and routine way that the complex deliberations over our nature become, for this rare and exemplary person, the most natural, fluid disposition possible. By forming excellent habits, the truly virtuous person turns the anxieties at the root of human deliberation into the unflinching courage of the heroic perfection of human nature. The virtuous character is exemplary of the circular tension between logos and phusis, since what becomes automatic and natural does not exactly render us without further mediation or deliberation, but rather naturalizes the simple desire toward

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deliberation over what is best in accordance with the mean in a given situation. It is, in effect, the urge and act of deliberation that becomes effortless for the truly virtuous person. This does not exactly mean that the virtuous person resembles those character types from book 7.1 who feel conflicted and suffer from the urges of what they know they should not do, who either have or lack control. That deliberation comes naturally to the virtuous person is an effect, instead, of acting in accordance with the mean. This sort of deliberation over our nature is not the same kind of deliberation that the one who has or lacks control embodies, but is of an altogether different kind, since the virtuous person has learned to habitualize the precision that comes from the anxiety of human nature. The kind of deliberation that the virtuous person encounters, then, is the theme for ethics itself, not an indecisiveness about whether to do what is right or not, which would conflate the virtuous with the personalities that have or lack control, but rather a recognition of human complexity. This is also not to say that the virtuous character corrects or releases us from the circular tension between phusis and logos. While people who have or lack control exhibit deliberation overtly in the internal conflicts that they embody within themselves, the virtuous person exhibits this deliberation from a significantly different standpoint—from the unhesitating certainty of one who engages with deliberation head-on, fearlessly but steadily, in accordance with the mean.

Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean is that by which we attempt to express the tension of our nature. However, since this tension is really in itself just the expression of our nature, what the mean exposes is the productive circularity of this nature. On the one hand, there is the tendency to judge what is just right. On the other hand, this same tendency to judge is simply what we do. But since the mean is something difficult that we have to choose in each case, we cannot simply apply the mean in an automatic or general way, as if by applying a rule that would be true for everyone at all times, we would resolve the tension of our nature and become excellent throughout. The mean involves judgment that is relative to each situation. The one who is excellent is the one who does not separate virtue and judgment, but has rather developed a sensitivity to what is just right. Therefore, the one who is excellent is the one who can express in the best way that our nature is about deliberation. The one who is excellent is the one who can expose this circularity, who both naturally deliberates, and at the same time deliberates over what is natural. What this analysis has shown is that the mean itself is the productivity of this circularity. It is that by which we inquire into the nature of being human, which is, at the same time, the fulfillment of this nature.

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The Roots of Existentialism in the Augustinian Person

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Abstract: This paper is an exposition of the existential concepts of subjectivity, despair, and passion within the theoretical framework of the philosophy of Augustine of Hippo or more commonly known as St. Augustine. I will be focusing on Augustine’s central works which are the *Confessions*, *On the Trinity* and *On the Free Choice of Will*. This paper will be divided into two parts. The first part will discuss the basic ideas of the existential approach, centering on the concepts of subjectivity, despair and passion as conceptualized by the early existentialists such as Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. The second part of this paper will expose the different concepts of Augustine that express the fundamental notions of subjectivity, despair, and passion. For this part I will focus on Augustine’s concepts of human dignity, original sin, and the inward journey of the self, which all constitute Augustine’s notion of the human person as a whole. The entire article will also provide deep connections among the mentioned figures of philosophy that center on man and his identity as a subject.

Keywords: human dignity, identity, inward journey, existentialism

The Development of Existentialism

Philosophy in its entire course has dealt with the very aspect of humanity. Its focus, shifting from a curiosity for the cosmos to the creatures living within it, has laid before itself an interest for man himself. It is in the subject of man that will complete his knowledge. With this in mind, the human individual is constantly searching for his own self-worth: the viability and authenticity of his existence. It is true that man naturally desires the truth, even the truth for himself. Yet this truth is not only the truth of the world around him, but his own truth.
Human individuals are capable of establishing relationships in two ways: (1) the ability to relate to *external reality* and (2) the ability to relate to *oneself*. A number of epistemological and metaphysical theories have taught us that to relate to the external reality is to *know* reality itself.\(^1\) As James Collins puts it: “Metaphysics is grounded, however, not in a pretended comprehensive insight into reality as a whole but in the human mind’s ability to recognize that the existent thing is indeed an insistence of being.”\(^2\) The human mind is capable of relating to his outside existence, and the relation built by this awareness provides an *experience* of reality itself not necessarily in its fullness but in a single concrete horizon. It becomes the source of knowledge for the human individual who relates himself with his world. Hence this constitutes the human individual’s first mode of relationship. This form of relationship shall be referred to as the *outward journey*.

Yet there is a mode of relationship deeper than what the outward journey provides. Human individuals are not simply objects in a myriad of existents that constitute reality. A human individual is self-aware, attuned to his internal senses, and is able to grasp the truth that he *exists*. He is aware of the world and its objectivity, yet he is also capable of knowing himself as a subject. Maurice Merleau-Ponty reflects this truth when he says that “the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world.”\(^3\) The human individual is not simply an object. He is, therefore, a self-aware subject. This is the *inward journey*.

The human individual as a subject is the primary concern of existentialism. Focusing on topics such as the subject and his experience, existentialism centers on the uniqueness of the subject, as something that “exists in a way that is different from other things—such as trees, cultural artifacts and animals.”\(^4\) The subject’s manner of existing is different as well as his relating to existence itself. Existentialism is grounded upon the existing, single individual, who is capable of both *knowing* and *experiencing* external

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\(^1\) However, we must make the fundamental distinction that to *know* reality does not necessarily mean reality in its entirety. Epistemological theories mainly present our acquisition of knowledge, and not the constitution of external reality itself. This problem, therefore, is more grounded upon metaphysics.


\(^3\) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 2003), 475. Merleau-Ponty recognizes the fundamental truth of the subject as within a “world.” This world is not to be confused with external reality itself in its entirety. World in this context refers to the immediate, conscious environment of the subject, of which is the agent of experience for the human individual.

Existentialism traces back its roots to the thinkers of ancient and medieval thought, the most famous of which is Socrates who is known for his saying “know thyself” (gnōthi seauton). It is important to note that during the rise of Greek philosophy the main focus was the identification of the archē of the universe, or the first sustaining principle of matter. Socrates shifted his focus from the cosmological to the anthropological, speaking of the depth of the individual himself and not merely the immediacy of the cosmos. This trend faded for some time and found itself in the beginnings of medieval thought with the philosophy of Augustine of Hippo whose relevance to existentialism, which is the primary objective of this essay, will be discussed in detail after a brief account of the development of existentialism starting from French mathematician and philosopher René Descartes to the Absolute Idealism of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

The development of existential thought continued with the emergence of Cartesian philosophy. He begins with the premise of philosophy as having been “studied for many centuries by the most outstanding minds without having produced anything which is not in dispute and consequently doubtful and uncertain.” Descartes' time was marked by the decline of Scholastic thought and the open opposition to the established teachings of the intellectual authorities (i.e., the clergymen). The fall of medieval supremacy has left everyone in question, and Descartes was acutely aware of this predicament. Thinking is doubtful. The age itself demanded an attitude of doubt. Descartes supported this call for doubt, and radically claimed that to achieve a ‘new science,’ we should apply the method of universal doubt.

From this fundamental theory, Descartes posits his most important contribution to philosophy which is the presence of the Cartesian ego. In his work, the Meditations on First Philosophy, he states that in applying the method of doubt “I too undoubtedly exist,” and remarks that “after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.” It is from this vantage point that the I has been created by

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5 The very famous “subject-object” schema was discussed profusely by several existentialists such as Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The main presupposition of existentialism is that “there is no separation between ‘inner’ and ‘outer,’ between self and the world.” See Aho, Existentialism: An Introduction, 36. Hence, the “subject-object” schema is an essential unity.


7 René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, ed. and trans. by John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17. The famous dictum cogito ergo sum embodies
Descartes. It is an I that takes as its reference point his capacity for thought. From Descartes’ thinking, two philosophical traditions have been formed: the materialist approach of the empirical tradition, and the idealist attitude of the rationalist tradition.

The development of existentialism through Descartes is focused on the rationalist tradition, tracing its lineage from, aside from Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz. The influence of these philosophers has created an attitude known as ‘dogmatism.’ This attitude is primarily linked with the dominance of the rationalist approach, that treats knowledge as something purely of intellectual supremacy. This was the kind of dogmatism that Immanuel Kant possessed in his early years before he became the known thinker he is today. This shift from dogmatism to the transcendental idealism we know of Kant today marks a turning point in the progression of existentialism. The Kantian system, as followed and opposed by its successors, led to the development of yet another important philosophical system: the Hegelian System.

Hegel views the subject-object relationship as the perennial problem in western philosophy; and he theorizes that the history of philosophy is really the history of sometimes discordant, sometimes concerted, efforts to arrive at a solution of this problem. Thus in Hegel’s view there is in the strict sense only one philosophical system, historically evolving as it progresses towards this goal.8

It is with this system that the entire existential approach began. Tracing its development from the Cartesian cogito, to the development of rationalism, and later on, to the systems of Kant and Hegel, existentialism as a philosophical approach began to make itself known. Existentialism begins with a fundamental premise:

...existentialist philosophers typically deny that the age-old philosophical ambition of articulating a rational

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the personification of Descartes universal doubt. This is also how Cartesian philosophy has characterized the subject, as made evident by his capacity of thinking and acknowledging the usefulness of such a method of universal doubt.

systematic account of the world and the human beings inhabiting it is anything but a misguided project.9

This passage clearly reflects the prominent trait of existential thought as repellant to the idea of a philosophical system. Such prevailing systems during early existentialist thought were seen as something ‘dominating’ and leaves nothing for the spontaneity of the individual. One such example is the relation of the Hegelian system to the existing individual. Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, regarded as the father of modern existentialism, developed a philosophy which is the very outcry against a domineering force such as the Hegelian System. Kierkegaard’s basic premise is that the Hegelian dialectic of history, that focuses on nothing more than an unfolding of historical events towards Spirit (Geist), renders superfluous the identity of the individual within history itself. 10 In this essay we will be focusing only three important existential concepts: subjectivity, despair, and passion. These concepts will be discussed within the framework of the philosophy of Kierkegaard which will then be used to determine the existential elements found within the philosophy of Augustine of Hippo.

Kierkegaard is known for his vast discussion of the notion of subjectivity. His aversion to the totalizing objectivity of Hegelian philosophy has created a philosophy of subjectivity that searches “back and inward into inwardness.”11 This subjectivity is embodied in what Kierkegaard calls the ‘self’:

The human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is self? The self is a relation which relates to itself, or that in the relation which is its relating to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity. In short a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two terms.12

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10 It becomes a primary contention that the entire Hegelian System, together with the dialectic it has within it, is the supposed death of the individual himself who is nothing more than a mere spec of the majority of the ‘they.’ Existentialism’s antipathy towards philosophical systems is grounded upon the fact that the individual himself has no capacity whatsoever to build upon his own subjectivity, and leaves him disabled to remove himself from mass conformity to the system.
Subjectivity emphasizes a ‘return to self’ similar to the earlier mentioned inward journey. It is a perspective whose object is oneself. However, it is not only through this self-awareness that Kierkegaard defines subjectivity. It is also through the presence of choice and intersubjective communication. He mentions an ethical task of becoming a self, which consists in an acute awareness of choosing for oneself. The self as explained by Kierkegaard thus argues “that it is its own end and purpose and comes into existence as a result of the choice.” He also mentions the need for intersubjective communication or, in Kierkegaardian terms, indirect communication:

Double-reflection is already implicit in the idea of communication itself: that the subjective individual, existing in the isolation of inwardness, wants to communicate himself, consequently that he simultaneously wants to keep his thinking in the inwardness of his subjective existence and yet wants to communicate himself. It is not possible for this contradiction to become manifest in a direct form.

Through communication, the subject builds relationships with other subjects. It is evident that Kierkegaard gives emphasis on the subject, but also mentions the subject’s ability to communicate himself, yet remains in the inwardness of his subjectivity. In his communicating, he does not alienate himself from the subjectivity that he possesses.

The second important existential concept is called despair. Kierkegaard puts it simply in three forms: “not being conscious of having a self, not willing to be oneself, but also despair at willing to be oneself. Despair is ‘sickness unto death.’” The basic message of despair is the failure to be a subject, meaning that subjectivity as consisting of a self-aware, free, and intersubjective existence, lacks in one or two aspects. Despair is discussed in length by Kierkegaard when he speaks of the spheres of existence: the

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13 Domingos Sousa, “Kierkegaard’s Anthropology of the Self: Ethico-Religious and Social Dimensions of Selfhood,” in The Heythrop Journal, 53:1 (2012), 38. This enables choice to become a primary requirement for the attainment of selfhood. With the inclusion of choice, freedom also becomes an element that must be present for the full realization of subjectivity.

14 Kierkegaard, Postscript, 159. Kierkegaard speaks here of the faculty of the self to communicate. This brings to mind several arguments against Kierkegaard’s subjectivity, branding it a ‘solipsistic’ and ‘individualistic’ philosophy. Communication is necessary because it is an inherent ability of the subject himself. And that his subjectivity also rests on the capacity for communication.

15 Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death, 2.
aesthetic, ethical, and religious spheres. The shift from one sphere to another lies in the presence of despair. Therefore, despair is necessary for the actualization of the self. This brings us to the last important existential concept to be discussed: passion.

What unites all human beings is passion. So religious passion, faith, hope and love are everything—the great thing is to live one’s life in what is essential for all human beings, and in that to have a difference of degree. Being a philosopher is just about as good a difference as being a poet.16

Kierkegaard continually focuses upon the need for passion—a passion that is the unifying factor and catalyst. This passion then is the infinite passion of inwardness.17 By this passion the individual is empowered to live, and to live authentically and genuinely. Therefore, subjectivity lies not only in self-awareness, choice, and inter-subjectivity, nor on the recognition of despair, but on the inner workings of the spirit.18 Hence, one can see that existentialism as a whole centers on the inner journey of the individual, and how the individual relates not only to external reality but also to his inner workings.

**Augustinian Thought as Existentialist Precursor**

The previous part of this essay discussed the development of existentialism from René Descartes up to Søren Kierkegaard, whose philosophy we are using as the context of our discussion on existentialism. It was also mentioned that existentialism does not precisely begin with Cartesian philosophy, but can also be found in the ancient (e.g. Socratic philosophy) and the medieval times. The most pertinent form of medieval thought that expresses the earliest traces of existentialism is found in the philosophy of Augustine of Hippo (354-430CE). The following discussion will be an exposition of the three concepts of existentialism: subjectivity, despair, and passion within the philosophy of Augustine of Hippo, giving greater attention to the notion of subjectivity, which is the very heart of existentialism. This exposition will be based on Augustine’s own writings.

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18 This refers to the passions and drives of the individual.
and will present Augustinian philosophy as a precursor to the existentialist thought known in the present time.

Still he desires to praise thee, this man who is only a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.¹⁹

The opening chapter of Book I of the Confessions gives us a preview of the entirety of Augustine’s philosophy. It was a struggle, and this truth is known by Augustine. The entire duration of the Confessions give an account of how Augustine dealt with this struggle—a struggle to which he has devoted his whole life to. He was in constant search for the truth, and this truth has led him to nothing more than an awareness of his own incapacity and wretchedness:

The house of my soul is too narrow for thee to come in to me; let it be enlarged by thee. It is in ruins; do thou restore it. There is much about it which must offend thy eyes; I confess and know it.²⁰

Augustine’s entire philosophical work is characterized not only as a struggle but also an identification of oneself.²¹ It is primarily seen as a Christian philosophy, meaning that its assertions are more or less aimed at a ‘philosophizing’ of the truths of Christianity. His primary philosophical predilection is the Neo-Platonist tradition:

By having thus read the books of the Platonists, and having been taught by them to search for the incorporeal Truth, I saw how thy invisible things are understood through the things that are made. And, even when I was thrown back, I still sensed what it was that the dullness of my soul would not allow me to contemplate.²²

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²⁰ Augustine, Confessions, 4. This passage in itself echoes an understanding of the modern concept of subjectivity. Italics added.

²¹ Some key features of Augustinian philosophy also touch other important philosophical topics such as the problem of evil, time and even the cosmological existence of the world in relation to the supremacy of God. These features, however, will not be discussed in order to focus on some of Augustine’s concepts that are pertinent to the aim of this essay.

²² Ibid., 124.
Thus, Augustinian philosophy can be characterized by an *inner struggle* not only with the truths of the world but also with the truths of God, and how these truths can satisfy an ‘innate desire’ for it. Such an introduction, however, would not suffice in speaking for the breadth of Augustine’s philosophical thought. Having laid down the fundamental characteristics of Augustinian philosophy, we now turn to the three existential concepts and how they can be found within Augustinian philosophy.

**The Augustinian Notion of Subjectivity**

The concept of subject is one of the fundamental concepts of existentialism as stated in the previous discussion. The individual, who possesses his subjectivity, is unique, unified, and authentic. To be a subject in the existentialist point of view is to uphold an identity that distinguishes yourself from other beings. In Augustine’s philosophy, the concept of subjectivity can be seen in his concepts of (1) human dignity and (2) free will. These are the two themes that are of great import in presenting the earliest traces of existentialism within Augustinian thought, specifically in his notion of subjectivity.

**On Human Dignity**

Augustine in his writings mentions an ‘inner self’ that most scholars believe is the term designated for *person* or *subject*. This inner self is known by man’s capacity for thought and the possession of an intellect. Augustine classifies this as ‘mind’ or ‘reason.’ In his work *On the Trinity*, he mentions the role of the mind or reason in knowing the essence of the person:

> Then what shall we say? That the mind knows itself in part, and in part does not know itself? But it is absurd to claim that it does not know as a whole what it knows. I do not say that it knows wholly, but that what it knows, it knows as a whole. When it, therefore, knows something of itself which it cannot know except as a whole, it knows itself as a whole. But it knows itself as knowing something, nor can it, except as a whole, know anything. Therefore, it knows itself as a whole. 23

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This passage acknowledges the presence of the perceiver himself who, capable of observing external reality, knows that it is not only what is outside that exists but what is inside. This recognition of ‘inwardness’ is a classic expression of the person. Augustine continues:

Finally, when the mind seeks to know itself, it already knows that it is a mind, otherwise, it would not know whether it seeks itself and perhaps would seek one thing for another. For it might possibly be that it is not a mind, and so while it seeks to know a mind, it does not seek itself. Wherefore, since the mind, in seeking what the mind is, knows that it seeks itself, it certainly knows that itself is a mind.

The person, who seeks his own identity, knows from the very beginning that he is a person. His aspiration for self-awareness is perfected at the outset of his search. Thus, we can see that personhood in Augustine is closely linked with the role of reason. But it is also noteworthy to point out how reason is not the sole essence of being a person, but in the resemblance or image of the Divine when Augustine says that “the most exalted Trinity itself, the most omnipotent God the Creator, in whose image man has been made.” For Augustine, our knowing is precisely an image of the Divine.

And so there is a certain image of the Trinity: the mind itself, its knowledge, which is its offspring, and love as a third; these three are one and one substance. The offspring is not less, while the mind knows itself as much as it is; nor is the love less, while the mind loves itself as much as it knows and as much as it is.

Thus, the person in Augustine is one who possesses an awareness of himself through his reason. Yet this reason is not his alone but is sourced from the Divine. It is through his reason that he is an image. The very essence of being a human person for Augustine is the possession of rationality.

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24 Yet we must not confuse the term ‘inwardness’ as a kind of self-enclosure. The person in Augustine is not contained in an isolated realm.
25 Ibid. Italics added.
26 Augustine, On the Trinity, 38.
27 Ibid., 40.
28 “So, when we know God, although we become better than we were before we knew Him, and especially when this knowledge being liked and loved worthily, is a word, and thereby produces some similarity to God. Yet that knowledge is less than He is, because it is in a lower nature; for the mind is creature, but God is Creator.” See Augustine, On the Trinity, 37. Mind, for
dignity, then, is composed of an interplay between the ‘inner self’ and the nature of man as ‘imago Dei.’ This is the source of human dignity for Augustine.

On Free Will

Central to the discussion of subjectivity in existentialism is the concept of free will or freedom. Jean-Paul Sartre, a known French existentialist philosopher, gave us a glimpse of this necessity in his work *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre argues that freedom in itself is a necessary precondition for the subjectivity of man.29

For Augustine, subjectivity does not only include the presence of self-awareness manifested by the ‘inner self’ and the nature of man as *imago Dei*. Augustine also mentions the importance of free will to know the nature of the person. In his work *On the Free Choice of the Will*, he mentions that “if human beings lacked free choice of the will, how could there be the good in accordance with which justice itself is praised in condemning sins and honoring right deeds?”30 The necessity of free will lies on the fact that without it, man cannot properly exercise his subjectivity. Augustine continues:

If a person is something good and could act rightly only because he willed to, then he ought to have free will, without which he could not act rightly. We should not believe that, because a person also sins through it, god gave it to him for this purpose. The fact that a person cannot live rightly without it is therefore a sufficient reason why it should have been given to him.31

Augustine, is an essential part of being a person. Man’s subjectivity is linked to the possession of mind, and how this mind is a vestige of God’s own, albeit having a lower nature than its source. In Book IX of *De Trinitate*, he also speaks of love as an essential part of being in *imago Dei*. However, this would go beyond the concern of this essay but is also of great import to Augustine’s argument.

29 “When I constitute myself as the comprehension of a possible as my possible, I must recognize its existence at the end of my project and apprehend it as myself, awaiting me down there in the future and separated from me by a nothingness. In this sense, I apprehend myself as the original source of my possibility, and it is this which ordinarily we call the consciousness of freedom.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), 41. Italics added.

30 Augustine of Hippo, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, *On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, trans. by Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 32. This passage seems to give us a moral undertone, saying that free will is necessary because of the emergence of goodness from the actions of man. However, it can also be argued that this potentiality for action, which emanates from the mind of man, can also be seen as a source of subjectivity for the free will.

31 Ibid., 31.
Augustine clearly states the importance of free will in the accomplishment of good actions. He argues that God gave free will to men in order for them to be able to do good things. Man, created in his image, is endowed not only with self-awareness but with freedom through the bestowal of free will. The essential characteristic of the person in Augustine is not only an awareness of himself, but a possession of free will given by God. This freedom is in itself coming directly from God, as Augustine mentions in his *On the Free Choice of the Will*. Augustine mentions that freedom “is genuine only if it belongs to happy people who adhere to the eternal law.”32 Thus personhood for Augustine necessarily requires the presence of freedom and not merely self-awareness. Free will, in this sense, can be seen as having two characteristics: (1) innate and (2) creative. Innate for the reason that free will is an internal part of the person, and that the exercise of subjectivity is largely based on the functioning of his free will. (2) It is creative in a sense that man creates himself out of his free will. Augustine argues:

Instead, it is because they willed to live rightly, which evil people are unwilling to do. For this reason, it is no wonder that unhappy people do not attain what they will, namely the happy life. They do not likewise will what goes along with it, namely living rightly, and without willing this no one is worthy of the happy life or attains it.33

Here Augustine explains how the person, endowed with free will, is the only agent capable of shaping his own experience of life. The happy life is willed (i.e., rooted in free will), and that the only true source of this life is the direct volition of the person. It becomes creative because free will as possessed by the person is his own creation.

We have seen how the existentialist Søren Kierkegaard has defined the essence of being a subject as possessing inwardness or self-awareness, and the capacity for communication. Self-awareness in Kierkegaard includes not only an affirmation of one’s subjectivity, but also the capacity to perform actions through choices. Communication involves the intersubjective element, concretely showing how subjectivity is not a solipsistic ideology, but a communal, yet inward one.

Augustine’s view of the person contains several elements that express this fundamental concept of subjectivity. The subject or self, as both

experiencing and self-aware, is seen in the Augustinian Person. The person in Augustine does not live a passive existence. He is attuned to the workings of his mind and is aware of the development of his intellect. Human Dignity expresses an awareness of oneself as imago Dei, and not merely a shady part of general existence. Augustinian free will highlights the self’s ability to choose, and the innate capability to make a choice. The existential concept of subjectivity, as having self-awareness and the capacity for choice, can be concretely seen in the self-affirming person of Augustine, who possesses free will as a necessary faculty from the Divine. Existentialism can trace its understanding of the subject to the very essence of the Augustinian person as imago Dei and having free will.

**Original Sin and the Earthly City**

The previous part of this essay presented how the Augustinian person expresses the very meaning of subjectivity in today’s existentialist understanding. The second concept, which is despair, can be found in two important points of Augustine’s philosophy: original sin and the earthly city. From this moment, then, the flesh began to lust against the spirit. With this rebellion, we are born, just as we are doomed to die and, because of the first sin, to bear, in our members and vitiated nature, either the battle with or defeat by the flesh.34

The very source of our defeat as human creatures lies in the concept of original sin. Augustine, in his work *De Civitate Dei*, outlines the development of man as an individual possessing original sin to his membership in a society or civitas. This explains how human beings have a tendency to commit evil deeds.35 The presence of original sin also lessens the dignity of his person, and renders him incapable of controlling his very base desires. The nature of men, as defined by Augustine, does not merit a high degree of perfection due to the presence of original sin. Hence, the person loses ‘mastery’ over his body:

> The fact is that the soul, which had taken perverse delight in its own liberty and disdained the service of God, was now deprived of its original mastery over the

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35 This has been called by other thinkers, most notably Thomas Aquinas, as concupiscence or a ‘tendency to sinful nature.’
body; because it had deliberately deserted the Lord who was over it …36

One comes to the understanding that original sin, as something inherent in the nature of man, is an individual element. Augustine does not stop at the individual element. The rest of the De Civitate talks about man with original sin progressing towards the establishment of a society and social order. This brings the discussion to the concept of the earthly city which can also be found in the other parts of the De Civitate.

The city of man, for all the width of its expansion throughout the world and for all the depth of its differences in this place and that, is a single community. The simple truth is that the bond of a common nature makes all human beings one.37

Augustine recognizes two things in this passage: (1) the city of men is a unified community, meaning that the state of affairs within this particular group is in harmony because of the cooperation of each member. However, he also points us to a different truth. (2) Augustine mentions ‘the bond of a common nature.’ This implies the human condition of original sin, wherein the unity that is present in the city of men is not out of an emphatic nature. It comes from the commonality of each member, as being immersed in the state of original sin. The city of men or the earthly city is a community precisely of the earth. It concerns itself with mundane affairs that will not help man in his self-fulfillment. Augustine continues:

Nevertheless, each individual in this community is driven by his passions to pursue his private purposes. Unfortunately, the objects of these purposes are such that no one person (let alone, the world community) can ever be wholly satisfied.38

The very aim of the earthly city and its constituents is precisely earthly happiness. This comes to a point where Augustine says that “Man indeed desires happiness even when he does so live as to make happiness impossible.”39 Man is unaware of the futility of his actions. Individually, man is tainted by original sin. He then lives in a society of individuals who share

36 Augustine, The City of God, 278.
37 Ibid., 392.
38 Augustine, The City of God, 392.
39 Ibid., 300.
the same nature, and are fated to aspire for happiness that cannot be achieved from a sinful nature and an earthly city.

Despair, as discussed previously, is the inability to be self-aware and to adhere to one’s own subjectivity. His identity is blurred, and the ability for self-reflection becomes clouded. Augustine’s philosophy expresses these points in original sin and the earthly city. The Augustinian person is exposed to despair and suffering, upon learning (1) the human condition as subject to Original Sin, and (2) the imperfection of his society as nothing more than an earthly city incapable of attaining true happiness and justice. With these presented, the Person is plunged into despair and imperfection. His true nature is hidden from him, and the perfection for which he aspires for becomes an impossibility. Held by original sin and forced to dwell within the city of men, man is subject to the effects of original sin and the futility of his society in aspiring for happiness. In light of this truth, man plunges into despair, and becomes acutely aware of his wretchedness and deceit. Augustine’s person is no different from the single individual whose existence is rattled by an awareness of the ‘ordinary-ness’ of his existence. The subject’s true nature is exposed to him, and leads him to despair.

**Inward Journey of the Self to God**

“Hear me, O God! Woe to the sins of men!” When a man cries thus, thou shewest him mercy, for thou didst create the man but not the sin in him.”

The person in Augustine is not entirely separated from the Divine due to his condition. It is true that original sin and the influence of the earthly city are antipathetic to the true nature of man. Augustine recognizes this truth, but also speaks of a ‘redemption’ for man. This initiates the journey of man to this redemption; a journey of the subject or the self back to his source, who is the Divine.

Let us see where the boundary line, so to speak, between the outer and the inner man is to be placed. For it is correctly said that whatever we have in our soul in common with the beasts pertains to the outer man, since by “outer man” we mean not the body alone, but also its own peculiar kind of life, from which the structure of the body and all the senses derive their vigor and by which they are equipped to perceive external things.

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41 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 82.
In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine mentions the difference between the ‘outer man’ and the ‘inner man.’ This distinction is not the same with modern ‘subjective-objective’ pair. The outer man also involves human faculties that join us to the world like imagination and memory.  

No one doubts that, as the inner man is endowed with understanding, so the outer man is endowed with bodily sense … For the teaching of the Apostle is clear, where he says that the inner man is being *renewed in the knowledge of God* according to the image of Him who created him [cf. Colossians 3:10]; and when he also says in another place: “Even though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” [2 Corinthians 4:16].

This clearly indicates the precedence of the ‘inner man’ over the ‘outer man’ in the context of Augustine’s philosophy. The emphasis on the *inward journey* characterizes Augustinian philosophy itself. It is a going back to God, who is the source of all things. In his *Confessions*, Augustine writes:

> But thou, O Lord, whose life is forever and in whom nothing dies—since before the world was, indeed, before all that can be called “before,” thou wast … and with thee abide all the stable causes of all unstable things, the unchanging sources of all changeable things, and the eternal reasons of all non-rational and temporal things.

Augustine acknowledges that God is indubitably the *source* of all things. Hence the argument follows that what comes from God as his creation must necessarily come back to him. From this line of thinking we may call this as the *telos* of man. The person, who is culled from the *imago Dei*, has as its natural destination his Creator—the very culmination of the inner man’s journey.

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42 Istvan Siklosi, “The Self-Awareness and the Formal Concept of Person by Augustine and Boethius,” in *International Relations Quarterly*, 4:1 (2013), 8. Hence epistemological functions are also classified under the ‘outer man’ even if they are natural qualities.


44 Augustine, *Confessions*, 5.

45 I have qualified the term ‘telos’ to mean (1) destination or the end of the person and (2) how Augustine describes the return to the ‘stability’ of God in Book IV of the *Confessions* as a culmination of life.
Let us now, O Lord, return that we be not overturned, because with thee our good lives without blemish—for our good is thee thyself. And we need not fear that we shall find no place to return to because we fell away from it. For, in our absence, our home—which is thy eternity—does not fall away.46

Passion as an existential concept was described in a previous discussion as an empowerment to live, and to live authentically and genuinely. To have passion for something or someone is to be actively engaged in it, and to be fully interested in this or that particular person or object. However, Sartre gives us another interpretation of passion in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, stating that:

Existentialists do not believe in the power of passion. They will never regard a great passion as a devastating torrent that inevitably compels man to commit certain acts and which, therefore, is an excuse. They think that man is responsible for his own passion.47

Yet passion is not simply restricted to emotions. Passions have both a teleological and rational aspect, as evident in the philosophy of Augustine. His concept of the inward journey and God as the ultimate telos of man, expresses the fundamental notion of passion as teleological. While the earlier mentioned rationality of man keeps passion within an objective realm that does not restrict itself to the purely emotional. Passion, then, still has an objective aspect.

The Augustinian Person, after having searched for his true meaning externally, begins his journey toward himself. His telos is none other than God, who is the Supreme fount of Wisdom. This telos drives the person, and creates in him an intense passion and desire that creates a will-to-live in itself. The source of this will-to-live does not come from an awareness of death and decay, nor of the seemingly pointless effort to know the meaning of our lives. It comes from the awareness that the Divine is the destination, and the journey toward the Divine is a crucial one. Passion blooms from this inner-awareness of the Divine, and the journey itself is fueled by this truth.

46 Augustine, *Confessions*, 64.
Conclusion

Existentialism is, in essence, an approach to life and the different nuances that it presents to us. This approach is characterized by a centering on the subject, who experiences reality as an existing subject. The subject and his existence are the cornerstones of an existentialist theory. This truth, however, does not limit itself to the thinkers of modern and post-modern thought as we have seen in the course of this essay. Existentialism owes its foundations to thinkers of ancient and medieval thought most notably Augustine of Hippo, whose thought and relation to existentialism is the main argument of this paper.

The Augustinian Person, having human dignity and free will, is able to recognize his own subjectivity. However, his awareness of his person also reminds him of his temporality and imperfection, made known by the human condition of original sin and the social condition of living in an earthly city. Yet in spite of this, the person is led toward himself in a journey for the *telos*, who is God Himself, to whom the self aspires for in the journey of existence and ultimately, life. Gordon Lewis gives us a gist of this truth when he said that “Augustine has an existentialist standpoint of human fallenness, an emphasis on the existing individual, and an existential attitude of involvement.”48 His philosophy is marked by this precise focus on the existence of the individual, and how this existence is conditioned by the effects of original sin, as well as the journey of the individual, toward God who is his ultimate *telos*.

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Deleuze’s Bergsonism: Multiplicity, Intuition, and the Virtual

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Abstract: This paper aims to explicate Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of Bergsonism. Specifically, I expound on Deleuze’s reconstruction of Bergson’s concepts of intuition, the virtual, and duration. Bergson’s formulation of these concepts is critically informed by traditional science and metaphysics’ insular obsession with quantitative differences, succession, homogeneity etc. In the eyes of Deleuze, this preoccupation redounds to the failure in perceiving real differences—the realm of qualitative difference, duration, intuition etc. Accordingly, real difference and the creative differentiation of its corollary concepts form part of Deleuze’s Transcendental or Virtual Empiricism. Ultimately, tracing Deleuze’s intellectual indebtedness to Bergson’s differential philosophy does not only disclose his own way of overcoming or antagonizing traditional science and metaphysics, but more importantly, it opens us to a life of self-reflexivity, pure becoming, and infinite durations.

Keywords: Deleuze, intuition, virtual, transcendental empiricism

I. Introduction

Deleuze’s intellectual project is first and foremost a philosophy of immanence. This philosophy according to Jeffrey Bell is “an attempt to understand the emergence of identities, whether social, political, individual, ontological etc. in a manner that does not entail a condition that transcends the conditioned.”

1 Cf. Jeffrey Bell, “Between Individualism and Socialism: Deleuze’s Micropolitics of Desire,” in Jeffrey Bell’s Selected Writings – Southern Louisiana University Faculty Links (17 October 2003), <https://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/jbell/micropolitics.pdf>, p. 2.
the philosophy of immanence such as difference, becoming, and history are all related to and are dynamic conduits of life. It is likewise observable in the whole the Deleuzian literary oeuvre how Deleuze critically elucidates, engages, and contrasts these concepts (forming part of his philosophy of immanence) with the philosophy of transcendence.

Deleuze is among the contemporary French philosophers who attempts to liberate philosophical thinking from its subjection to ‘transcendence.’ He grapples with this concept by contrasting it with ‘immanence.’ In advancing this complex task, he goes back to previous maverick philosophers, such as, David Hume, Henri Bergson, Baruch Spinoza, and Friedrich Nietzsche. However, instead of simply being the mouthpiece of these thinkers’ theories of immanence, Deleuze engages in a “mutual exchange” with these philosophers, as François Zourabichvili describes. In other words, in Deleuze’s unabridged engagement with these scholars, there is a process of borrowing and giving—a friendship and dissension altogether.

Deleuze uses the term “immanence” interchangeably with “empiricism”—although he himself only admits his empiricist stance in the English Language Edition of Dialogues with Claire Parnet. In relation to this, Vincent Descombes, in his book Modern French Philosophy, describes the project of Deleuze as a search for a transcendental empiricism. French poststructuralist thinkers like Jacques Derrida, join Deleuze in his quest for a new foundation that contrasts the transcendent field characterized by immanent dynamics and rhizomic dislocations. For Constantine Boundas, Deleuze’s philosophy is the war-machine par excellence. This radical machinery consists of a philosophical assemblage of Hume, Bergson, Spinoza and Nietzsche who share “a secret bond formed by the critique of the negative, the culture of joy, the hatred of interiority, the externality of forces and relations, and the denunciation of power.” Deleuze’s immanent philosophy criticizes transcendental idealism and phenomenology. For

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6 Constantin Boundas, Translator’s Introduction to Deleuze, Empiricism and Subjectivity, 4.
example, his critical diagnosis of Husserlian phenomenology is due to its fixation with the evidence provided by pure consciousness. Deleuze undermines phenomenology in pursuit of an ontology of nomadically intensive forces and protean folds.

II. Bergsonism and the Theory of Multiplicity

Aside from the different articles published by Deleuze about Bergson’s philosophy, Deleuze published his book on Bergson entitled, *Bergsonism* in 1966. In this book, Deleuze invites a return to Bergson through a reconstruction and problematization of the latter’s important concepts, such as, the philosophical method of intuition and the concepts of duration and the virtual. “Bergsonism” is used by Deleuze not only as a philosophical device to emancipate Bergson’s philosophy from its dogmatic or bigoted appropriation (limited to vitalism or irrationalism), but rather, it is presented as a creative effort to revitalize the question of life itself—in contrast to Heideggerian *Being*, Kantian *noumenon*, as well as a response to fixed and purely quantitative scientific theories.

Generally, Bergsonism offers a radical counter-history of philosophy. It is a philosophizing against what Deleuze calls as State philosophy or the French-style history of philosophy that is predominantly inhabited by ‘bureaucrats of pure reason who speak in the despot’s shadow and are in complicity with the State.’ In *Dialogues*, Deleuze claims that there is something in Bergson that escapes the coalescing net of State philosophy.

Deleuze further explains:

> My way of getting out of it at that time, was I really think, to conceive of the history of philosophy as a kind of buggery or, what comes to the same thing, immaculate conception. I imagined myself getting onto the back of an author, and giving him a child, which

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8 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988). Albeit as early as *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze already identifies his interest in the Bergsonian philosophy. Aside from these two books, *Bergsonism* is also influential in *Difference and Repetition* where he articulates the concepts of difference, memory, and repetition, as well as in the twin literatures, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, where the terms such as duration, memory, and movement are discussed. In addition, it is in Deleuze’s writings on cinema which signals his ‘anti-Bergsonian Bergsonian’ stance, in the same vein that the critical theorist Theodor Adorno is an ‘anti-Hegelian Hegelian.’


would be his and which would at the same time be a
monster. It is very important that it should be his child,
because the author had to say everything that I made
him say. But it also had to be a monster because it was
necessary to go through all kinds of de-centerings, slips,
break ins, secret emissions, which I really enjoyed. My
book on Bergson seems to me a classic case of this.11

Specifically, the primary goal of Bergsonian philosophy is to
overcome the metaphysics of transcendence, invoking a novel kind of
philosophy of immanence or virtual or transcendental empiricism. In
“Introduction to Metaphysics,” Bergson defines this novel kind of empiricism
as “one which purposes to keep as close to the original as possible, to probe
more deeply into its life, and by a kind of spiritual auscultation, to feel its soul
palpitate; and this true empiricism is the real metaphysics. 12 Bergsonism is
similar to the Hegelian project of overcoming Cartesian metaphysics.
Likewise, Hegelian philosophy argues that the nature of reality can already
be accessed thinly through a series of dialectical struggles, unlike the Kantian
demarcation of the phenomenal and noumenal world.13 But instead of an
outright extermination of the distinction between the phenomenal and the
noumenal world, and radicalization of the privilege of the ideal over the
material, Bergson reorients the fundamental pillars of metaphysics. In Matter
and Memory, for example, we can see how he advocates a creative
undermining of the traditional dualisms between body/matter and the
mind/spirit, to name a few. Via a brief excursus to Hume’s theory of
immanence, we may be able to understand this Bergsonian position better.

According to Hume’s theory of immanence, traditional philosophy’s
extensive adherence to dualism can be surmounted by searching the in-
between of binaries that will turn the set into a multiplicity that is irreducible
to the number of its parts.14 In Dialogues, Deleuze and Parnet characterize
Hume’s empiricist philosophy as a practical philosophy of “becoming-

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13 A significant import derivable from the Hegelian philosophy is that Kant’s noumenon
can already be known (indirectly) in the arena of historical configurations. When things are
viewed in the ambit of the immanence, all epistemological binaries and ideas can be mediated.
Thus, the nature of reality is fathomable through a series of struggles because in the first place,
nature and reality are rational. See G.W.F. Hegel, Science of Logic, trans. by A. V. Miller (London:
Logic: Preliminary Conception,” in The Hegel Reader, ed. by Stephen (Malden, MA: Blackwell
14 Deleuze and Parnet, Dialogues, 132.
multiple, instead of being-one, a being-whole or being as subject.”  

Hence, concepts and impressions are not deemed as individuated givens or as either-or identities. Rather, they are seen as multiplicities found in between identifiable terms. Deleuze calls this as the AND between identities—a thinking with AND and not with IS. In other words, this thinking is about the machinic dynamisms between identities pertaining to life itself and not thinking about life or about the IS of life, since thinking about life individuates it from thinking. In short, thinking with a Deleuzian AND is yet another thinking with IS. Thinking of this sort, however, includes paratactic conjunctions and principles. This brand of double-thinking for Deleuze is an empiricism that seeks to determine and think the real conditions under which something wholly new is produced, and not simply a repetition of the same. Therefore, the Humean formulation of difference and repetition is Deleuze’s alternative to the logic of dialectics, which is a subsidiary of transcendental philosophy. Writ large, the differential philosophy that can be unearthed from Hume’s materialist philosophy contains the affirmative power to escape the totalizing hand of dialectical sublation or transcendental thinking.

The Bergsonian version of overcoming traditional metaphysics manifestly runs parallel to the aforementioned Humean project. It does not aspire for the abolition of the distinction between different conceptual binaries, rather, it aims for the reformulation of the mind-body or ideal-material world problem in a manner that the two binaries achieve a creative interpenetration or differentiation. In Bergson’s view, even though Kant’s Copernican Revolution has undoubtedly contributed to the architecture and course of contemporary philosophizing, it remains unsuccessful in liberating thought from the yoke of transcendentalism. He opines that as long as traditional philosophy (or science and metaphysics anchored on a unitarian or identitarian principle) lives under the delusion of entirely appropriating the real by critical analysis and logical deduction, and locates the conditions of experience outside experience, it will always suffer a miscarriage. To borrow Bergson’s words in Introduction to Metaphysics, “metaphysics has nothing in common with the generalization of experience, and nevertheless it

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 57.
17 Jeffrey Bell, Deleuze’s Hume: Philosophy, Culture, and the Scottish Enlightenment (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3. This is likewise present in Nietzsche’s concept of the Eternal Return. In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze reformulates the Nietzschean conceptualization of the Eternal Return not as the recurrence of the Same, but of the different—the ritornello of becoming. See Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 41.
could be defined as integral experience.” Thus, Bergson’s critical diagnosis of Kantian metaphysics in particular and traditional philosophy in general, is informed by the affirmative goal of transvaluating transcendental philosophy.

Further, Deleuze expounds in Bergsonism that when we philosophize from the vantage point of traditional dualism or thinking in terms of gradation (degree): “Conceiving everything in terms of more or less, seeing nothing but difference in degree or differences in intensity … is perhaps the most general error of thought, the error common to science and metaphysics.” Deleuze’s aforesaid argument is two-fold: firstly, it accentuates a philosophical blunder or ‘false problem’ authored by transcendental philosophy in privileging a metaphysical thinking in terms of difference in degree (which presupposes the two theories of tendencies, namely, difference in degree and difference in kind); and, secondly, it introduces the two kinds of multiplicity. Regarding the first point, this error of thought Deleuze refers to as the crime of traditional western scholarship (science and metaphysics) because it differentiates knowledge, concepts, and relations in terms of quantitative configurations.

In relation to this, Bergson opines that, “Metaphysics dates from the day when Zeno of Elea pointed out the inherent contradiction of movement and change, as our intellect represents them.” See Bergson, Creative Mind, 17. This entails that even before Plato defined reality or truth as that which is immutable, the pre-Socratic thinker Zeno already considered movement and change as absurd.

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states … things and concepts.” 23 In relation to Kantian metaphysics, Moulard-Leonard further claims:

According to Bergson … transcendental philosophers, who beyond experience seek the conditions for experience have simply defined the truth or falsity of a problem by the possibility or impossibility of its receiving a solution …. In accordance with this view, the conditioned (experience) would have to precede and condition its very conditions (the forms of time and space). This means that by defining the transcendental in terms of ‘condition of experience,’ Kant could not escape the psychological illusions that his critique sought to dispel. 24

Metaphysics of this sort discards any type of creative production and a future philosophy. Bergson repudiates transcendental metaphysics and asserts that our mind is capacitated to intuitively re-orient itself to produce protean and machinic constellations of concepts that are from the conservative logic of the One and the Multiple. In Bergson’s language, “To philosophize means to reverse the habitual direction of the workings of thought.” 25

With the dominance of science and metaphysics, a unitarian/absolute idea of the One is conceived and is combined with its opposite, the Multiple, “to reconstruct all things from the standpoint of the forced opposed to the multiple or to the deterioration of the One.” 26 In order to overcome this problem, Bergson formulates the concept of multiplicity, which Deleuze describes as Bergson’s greatest invention. In Time and Free Will, multiplicity is no longer used as a mere description of things, since it transforms into an independent or substantive term. 27 This metamorphosis allows us to operate on a radically new plane of philosophizing or image of thought. Gone are the days where philosophical questions revolve around the problem, “Is it one or multiple?” According to Bergson, the problem posed by traditional scholarship is not already a question of the One-Multiple opposition, but rather on the type of multiplicity, i.e., whether it is quantitative or qualitative?

23 Moulard-Leonard, Bergson-Deleuze Encounters, 96.
24 Ibid., 97.
26 Deleuze, Bergsonism, 47.
The new characterization of multiplicity is inspired by the physician-mathematician G.B.R. Riemann. He creates a typology of multiplicities that can provide a distinction between space and duration, matter and memory, objectivity and subjectivity, as well as the possible and the virtual. The two kinds of multiplicities are ‘quantitative multiplicities’ and ‘qualitative multiplicities.’ The former is constitutive of the principle of its own metrics by which the measure of one of its parts being given by the number of elements it contains. It belongs to the realm of science and metaphysics (or space). On the other hand, the latter belongs to the sphere of duration.

The intellectual tendencies of difference in degree and kind, parallel to the multiplicities of space and duration. In Bergson’s eyes, all other divisions and dualities are derived from the aforementioned multiplicities. In his view:

The first implies going all around it, the second entering into it. The first depends on the viewpoint chosen and the symbols employed, while the second is taken from no viewpoint and rests on no symbol. Of the first kind of knowledge [analysis] we shall say that it stops at the relative; of the second [intuition] that, wherever possible, it attains the absolute.

Bergson claims that the multiplicity of space is a kind of subjective perception that empowers us to see all calculable, categorizable, and indifferent quantitative changes. Space, as a kind of multiplicity and perception, is merely a home to difference in degree because of its attribute of quantitative homogeneity. Things’ variations with all other things are true in space but only in the ambit of difference in degree. At this juncture, it can be claimed that difference in kind does not exist between duration and space, since it can only be found in the plane of duration where qualitative difference exists. Conversely, the multiplicity of duration is an objective kind of perception which can bear all the expressions and aspects of difference in kind through its aptitude of qualitative self-variation. Deleuze describes duration as the invisible, non-measurable, and more importantly, “that which

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28 Bergson inverts the way we might normally think this distinction, with the ‘subjective’ denoting anything that is held to be completely and adequately known and the ‘objective’ being applied to what is known in a way that recognizes new impressions could be substituted and added to our idea of a thing. Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 47.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 31.


32 Moulard-Leonard, Bergson-Deleuze Encounters, 92.
divided only by changing in kind, that which was susceptible to measurement only by varying its metrical principles at each stage of the division."33 Thus, it is in the plane of duration where things vary in kind from all the rest, and from itself. It is here that we experience an affirmative differentiation of our respective states or conditions. Moreover, the multiplicity of duration refers to a pure interiority with perpetual succession; while space is pure exteriority devoid of succession. Whereas the role of space is to provide exteriorized, homogenous, and discontinuous frames, the function of duration is to render interiorized, heterogeneous, and continuous successions. For Deleuze, a dialectical relationship must be established between auxiliary space and homogenous time. He accentuates that the project of philosophizing from the standpoint of duration rather than of space is the heart of Bergsonism. It is because the direction of duration is constitutive of purity, in the sense that this kind of philosophizing can disclose real difference—the perennial task of philosophy.34

III. The Philosophy of Intuition and the Virtual

A profound understanding of duration can only be done justice via the philosophical method of intuition. Although the description “philosopher of difference” is usually associated with Nietzsche, Derrida, and Lyotard, to name a few, Bergson’s philosophy of intuition is, for Deleuze, the most convincing response to traditional science and metaphysics. The intellectual tendency of difference located in duration can only be produced and activated through Bergson’s notion of integral experience or intuition. Primarily, intuition presupposes duration. It is a movement that spawns the emergence of our own respective durations, where different durations interact; durations that are “both inferior and superior to us, though nevertheless, in a certain sense, interior to us.”35 Intuition evokes us to de-center our myopic subjective durations that thereby opens us to the durations of other entities (be it humans or other world entities) and temporalities. In other words, intuition is a principle of alterity that educates us about our contingent and partial involvement in the sea of differences.36 Of course, this aforesaid view parallels with Hume and Nietzsche’s definitions of subjectivity. For Hume, the self is merely an assemblage of impressions or memories; and calling the self as such is just a matter of habitual practice. For Nietzsche, subjectivity is understood as the body being

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33 Ibid., 40.
35 Bergson, Creative Mind, 217; Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 33.
36 Cf. Bergson, Matter and Memory, 193, 204; Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 75.
the conduit of the different life-forces (active and reactive); and the manner on how we capitalize these forces determine whether we exhibit the ascending or descending life-typology. ³⁷

It is in What is Philosophy? where Deleuze (along with Guattari) characterizes intuition as a line of thinking or as one of the elements of a plane of immanence; he refers to intuition as a philosophical method derived from Bergson's philosophy. ³⁸ According to Deleuze, “Intuition is neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy, but a fully developed method ... in philosophy.” ³⁹ Contrary to the common assumption, intuition is not categorically contradictory to science. In fact, Deleuze explains that in the Bergsonian context, this principle is a rigorous and precise discipline bearing the capacity to be prolonged and transmitted like science. ⁴⁰ However, unlike science and metaphysics, intuition does not perceive binaries in terms of binary opposition, like between being and non-being, and order and disorder. It does not succumb to conventional science and metaphysics' adherence to the principle of negation, which is a 'false problem' in Deleuze’s view, like the problem involving Kantian metaphysics. This is the reason why Deleuze proposes for the re-activation of the differences in kind. Intuition can exhume this self-critical tendency within the difference in degree and can engender the intellect to turn against itself towards the articulation of the real. ⁴¹

Deleuze thinks that since experience only affords us composites, intuition must divide them in terms of quantitative and qualitative propensities “according to the way in which it combines duration and extensity as they are defined as movements, directions of movements.” ⁴² He

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³⁷ The Will to Power is the genealogical element of forces that configures and delimits variations of forces and relation of bodies. It serves as a genealogical determining principle for the relation of forces and bodies. This activity only becomes possible since the will to power is immanent to the relation of forces it defines and delimits. Cf. Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 50. A corollary principle of the will to power is the concept of the Eternal Return. Nietzsche devises this principle to test what kind of life do we want to recur—whether an ascending or descending life in a world of divine accidents. In a nutshell, the will to power is the synthesis and determining principle both of the differential element of forces, and the eternal return (the affirmation of difference and chance).


³⁹ Deleuze, Bergsonism, 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 14. Interestingly, it appears that Deleuze gives more trust to the precision and general applicability of the philosophical method of intuition than Bergson. For Bergson, in utilizing intuition as an instrument of communication, symbols or metaphors must be used to comprehend what goes beyond the frontiers of traditional perception and language.

⁴¹ Cf. Ibid., 11.

⁴² Ibid., 22. The ontology of Reality or the Absolute is constitutive of two composites or intellectual tendencies—difference in degree (space) and difference in kind (duration). Science, for instance, can claim that in revealing to us the difference in degree or quantitative
further asserts that scientific and metaphysical thinking are incapacitated in perceiving differences in kind. In the case of metaphysics, it only sees quantitative difference between a spatialized time and an eternity that it presupposes to be primary.\(^{43}\) Whereas in the case of science, there is no definition of mechanism beyond spatialized time, according to which beings no longer present anything but difference of position, dimension, and proportion.\(^{44}\) Because science and metaphysics only enable us to perceive things according to difference in degree, we are prevented from transcending our experiences. Kantian metaphysics seamlessly epitomizes this failure for it has attempted to convey the possibility of the existence of noumenal realities, despite denying the possibility of experiencing them as such.

In attempting to make sense of the condition of experience, Bergson turns into a philosopher of immanence a la Spinoza, Hume, or Nietzsche, in utilizing the body as a subjectivity and creative fiction—a process of going beyond experience in order to reveal the condition of experience. In Bergsonism, the body is regarded as a protean site for affectivity and memory. Because of memory, the body transfigures into a ‘duration in time,’ and not simply a pure instantaneity and succession. In other words, representation from a general viewpoint is composite of two directions that differ in pure presences and elusive from any kind of representation. These two directions that Deleuze talks about are perception and memory (recollection). Although each direction surmounts the borders of scientific and metaphysical representations, they interpenetrate each other and constantly involve “exchanging something of their substance as by process of endosmosis.”\(^{45}\) Intuition allows us to transcend our experiences which are the by-products of the incessant interweaving of perception and memory. Rising above our experiences involves a movement characterized by broadening, tightening, and narrowing that leads to the conditions of experience—the focal point of differences in kind. Consequently, intuition enables us to push further into the boundaries of experience—to the state of pure perception (matter/nature) and memory (past).\(^{46}\) This becomes possible because of memory.

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43 Cf. Ibid., 23.
44 Cf. Ibid.
45 Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 26.
46 Ibid., 27.
The philosophy of intuition links duration to memory in terms of the conservation and preservation of the past in the present. For Deleuze, they are not only linked, but are coextensive with each other. As a caveat, both multiplicities are not aperiodic or intermittent series of moments that repeat identically because they are characterized by continuous heterogeneity: “On the one hand, the following moment always contains, over and above the preceding one, the memory the latter has left it; on the other hand, the two moments contract or condense into each other since one has not yet disappeared when another appears.” Accordingly, the ‘present’ which endures divides at each instant traverses two directions. Deleuze terms these directions as the two kinds or movements of memory: recollection-memory and contraction-memory. Whereas the former is a movement that is oriented and expanded toward the past, the latter is contracted, and contracting towards the future.

Going beyond the human condition likewise opens us to the horizon of the nonhuman. This inspires Bergson to develop a differential philosophy which capacitates thought to transcend the human condition. In Deleuze’s opinion, Bergson fashions the possibility for the investigation of the nonhuman by questioning the privilege of natural perception and the subordination of movement to poses. This new world is an estuary where images move and collide in a state of universal variation and undulation. To make it more Deleuzian, this is a realm of pure rhizomic becomings and virtualities—devoid of any constancy, center, axis, and gradations. On the one hand, this event revolutionizes conventional philosophizing because philosophy’s anthropomorphic orientation is ruptured by intuition; we are opened to a parallel relationship with nonhuman objects. On the other hand, it poses us a challenge on how to engage with durations that are inferior and superior to our own. Consequently, philosophy is re-defined as the quest for the nonhuman, and not anymore the search for the Absolute—the orthodox preoccupation of philosophical scholarship responsible for

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47 For Deleuze, duration and memory are identical in terms of principle and not in fact. In *Bergsonism*, he argues that the special problem of memory is: “How, by what mechanism, does duration become memory in fact? How does that which exists in principle actualize itself?” Ibid., 52.


49 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 52.

50 Boundas, Translator’s Introduction to Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 5.

51 Ibid.

52 This Bergsonian horizon has indisputably contributed to Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the rhizome. They describe it as the non-arboREAL connections and proximities existing between diverse and similar things, forces, and individuals. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

actuating various predicaments in the history of western philosophy theoretical or otherwise.

However, it must be made clear that this so-called Bergsonian revolution is divergent from Kantian epistemology’s privileging of concepts. Bergsonism does not aspire to vanquish the boundaries of the human in pursuit of the realm of concepts. Rather, it attempts to overcome everything that is pondered as human experience towards the conditions of experience or real experience in all its contingencies. The realm of the nonhuman, according to Moulard-Leonard, pertains to the realm of the unconscious. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari describe the realm of the non-human as an ontological and virtual state, and not simply psychological and actual: “For the unconscious itself is no more structural than personal, it does not symbolize any more than it imagines or represents; it engineers, it is machinic. Neither imaginary nor symbolic, it is the Real in itself, the ‘impossible real’ and its production.” This characterizes the philosophy of virtual or transcendental empiricism. Its “virtuality” or “transcendentality” is shaped by its overarching project of seeking for the necessary conditions of the real (reality). For Deleuze, this radical initiative is informed by the significant quest for the various articulations that pre-condition these contingencies. Deleuze further argues that these conditions are not “Kant-like” or conditions of all possible experience in general derived from the real’s immanent in commensurabilities which they attempt to mediate or mimic what they are supposed to condition and then projected back retrospectively. Instead, they are generic conditions of real experience, which are qualitatively diverse from the conditioned. According to Deleuze:

For when we have followed each of the ‘lines’ beyond the turn in experience, we must also rediscover the point at which they intersect again, where the directions cross and where the tendencies that differ in kind link together again to give rise to the thing as we know it …. After we have followed the lines of divergence … these lines must intersect again, not at the point from which we started, but rather at a virtual point, at a virtual image of the

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54 In other words, it revolutionizes even the Copernican revolution of Kant. In Deleuze’s observation, the radicalization of Kantian metaphysics opens the gate for the discursive expansion of the plane of immanence. See Moulard-Leonard, *Deleuze-Bergson Encounters*, 3.

55 Cf. Ibid., 102


57 Ibid., 100.
point of departure, which is itself located beyond the turn in experience.\textsuperscript{58}

Bergson describes this virtual point or the virtual as the harmony existing between mind and matter, the privileging of duration over space, as well as the protean creativity of difference.\textsuperscript{59}

The rupture of our anthropocentric and subjective durations is parallel to the kind of memory (recollection-memory) elusive to our present duration. In \textit{Matter and Memory}, Bergson asserts that “We become conscious of an act \textit{sui generis} by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past—a work of adjustment … But our recollection still remains virtual; we simply prepare ourselves to receive it by adopting the appropriate attitude.”\textsuperscript{60} Additionally, what must be made clear here is that in the planes of intuition, duration, and memory, the past and the present are viewed as coextensive moments, and not successive instances. One is the eternal past, by which all presents pass; and the other is the eternal present, or that which is always present. The “eternity” of the past or what Bergson and Deleuze call as pure past or past in general, does not follow the present, but is “presupposed by it as the pure condition without which it would not pass.”\textsuperscript{61} And because each instance of the present returns to itself as past, as Deleuze elucidates, “not only does the past coexist with the present that has been, but as it preserves itself in itself (while the present passes), it is the whole, integral past; it is all our past, which coexists with each present.”\textsuperscript{62} Hence, Bergson’s notion of duration refers to virtual coexistence—the coexistence with itself of all the levels, all the tensions, all the degrees of contraction.\textsuperscript{63} Albeit I mentioned earlier that duration is constitutive of continuous succession (an overarching claim in Bergson’s \textit{Time and Free Will}), this claim is only true in so far as it is interpreted as virtual coexistence.

\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism}, 28.
\textsuperscript{60} Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}, 133-134.
\textsuperscript{62} Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism}, 59.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.}, 60. To further explain the idea of coexistence, Deleuze, in \textit{Bergsonism}, uses the metaphor of the cone. For Deleuze, the past ‘\textit{AB}’ coexists with the present ‘\textit{S}’ in the sense that it includes in itself all the sections (\textit{A'B'}, \textit{A"B"}, etc.) which measure the degree of a purely ideal distance in relation to ‘\textit{S}’. All these sections are virtual that belongs to the totality of the past. See \textit{Ibid.}, 59-60.
Duration as virtual coexistence resembles Deleuze’s characterization of the virtual. It is because the virtual subtends all beings like a rhizome as it undermines all a priori notions or segmented planes of representation. Given this aptitude, the virtual resides in variegated singularities and potentialities where the thought of pure immanence can be fashioned. Philosophical production of this kind necessitates an experimentation with our integral experience. Furthermore, the reality of the virtual is contrary to the Kantian and Husserlian understanding of experience. It goes beyond the quantitative variations and homogenous frames of scientific and metaphysical knowledge.

To probe deeper into the philosophical context of the virtual, it is significant to accentuate that for Bergson, an object can be separated into a thousand of ways. But before they are divided, the mind (thought) has already grasped them as conceptual possibilities. These objects, Deleuze expounds, already become perceivable in the object’s image. And although they are not realized (only possible), they are actually perceivable in principle.64 This form of actuality (possible), the realm of matter, is what Bergson refers to as objectivity or the objective. And since objectivity only transforms quantitatively and remains immutable qualitatively during the division process, it is bereft of virtuality. This elucidation alludes to Deleuze’s relative abhorrence to the Hegelian dialectics: “We are told that the Self is one (thesis) and it is multiple (antithesis), then it is the unity of the multiple (synthesis). Or else we are told that the One is already multiple, that being passes into nonbeing and produces becoming …. The concrete will never be attained by combining the inadequacy of one concept with the inadequacy of its opposite.”65 Therefore, the dialectical method is dismissed by Bergson as an inauthentic movement whereby the abstract concept travelling from one opposite to the other is only by virtue of inexactitude. Meanwhile, subjectivity or the subjective is pondered by Deleuze as qualitative multiplicity. In the process of division, it transforms in kind and traverses heterogeneous planes. Subjectivity, Deleuze writes, “moves from the virtual to its actualization, it actualizes itself by creating lines of differentiation that correspond to its differences in kind.”66 In other words, qualitative multiplicity surfaces the creative marriage between heterogeneity and continuity which engenders the virtual.67

It is likewise very important to contrast the virtual with the concept of the possible. The idea of the possible merely pertains to an uncovering of
what already exists, i.e., it is already assured of what will happen in the future. Its occurrence is shaped through its conformity with the logic of identity where its entirety depends on a pre-formed element or eidos. The possible is the brother of the actual. Both of them are descendants of the multiplicity of space. Being mired by the logic of exteriority, homogeneity, and discontinuity, the possible is not hospitable to the existence of totally new or unthinkable events. Science and metaphysics can only bestow us the actual and the possible. Their incapability to surmount the quantitative differentiation existing between things, and their incapacity of qualitative self-differentiation alienates the possibility of philosophizing about the virtual. As Deleuze avers, whereas the possible “has no reality (although it may have an actuality); conversely, the virtual is not actual, but as such possesses a reality.” In Proust and Signs, he defines the virtual as the “real without being actual, ideal, without being abstract.” This means that the virtual is a state of existence actualized by virtue of undergoing differentiation, in the same vein that it is compelled to differentiate itself by formulating its own lines of differentiation as a necessary condition of its actualization.

It is only the multiplicity of duration that is hospitable to the virtual. Duration’s ability of continuous and qualitative self-differentiation spawns the overcoming of the quantitative, the scientific, metaphysical, and the human, thereby opening to the horizon of the virtual. Although Deleuze perceives that the multiplicity of duration is the pure side, it does not necessarily convert duration into something beyond divisibility and measurement. In other words, instead of restricting himself with the antagonism between duration and space, or with the pedigree of the former over the latter, he reformulated this negative relation by formulating the two kinds of multiplicity. As Keith Ansell Pearson explains, Deleuze’s critical appropriation of the virtual presents an ontological challenge to our traditional understanding of the one and the many, substance and subject, and more importantly, duration and space.

Aside from Deleuze’s thematic reconstruction of the Bergsonian philosophy of intuition, Deleuze radicalizes the concept of the virtual in order
to expand its theoretical scope, especially in relation to contemporary scholarship and social criticism. He uses the philosophy of the virtual as the underlying theme of his philosophy of difference, non-philosophy, micropolitics etc., that profoundly backbones his overarching definition of philosophy as the creation of new concepts capable of radicalizing the grain towards a people, earth, and revolution-to-come.

IV. Conclusion: Multiple Durations and the Monism of Time

While it seems that Bergson’s distinct way of overcoming the predicament of transcendental philosophy is laden with binary opposites, like difference in degree and difference in kind, recollection-memory and contraction-memory, past and present etc., in the final analysis, he views all of these concepts within the yardsticks of virtual coexistence or concurrence (instead of dualism and succession). This is very evident, for example, in the last chapter of Bergsonism, “Elan Vital as Movement of Duration,” where Deleuze raises the problem and concern on how these concepts can be harmonized. Although some may still dismiss it as a mere reformulated version of dualism, Deleuze explains that this “radical dualism” is self-critical, protean, and non-teleological. Take the case of the relationship between the past and the present. Not only does the past coexist with the present. It also coexists differentially with itself on various planes of contraction. Meanwhile, the present itself must be identified as simply the most contracted plane of the past. This means that a profounder contraction-memory is discoverable within the core of recollection-memory. All in all, understanding all of these so-called binaries using the lens of virtual coexistence, would lead pure present and pure past, pure perception, pure memory, pure matter and pure memory, into a state of ontological unity. This state of differential coherence is termed by Deleuze as the difference in kind between things, or the differences of expansion and contraction.

Speaking of Deleuze’s rediscovered monism earlier, it seems that Bergson’s philosophy has subtly succumbed to the logic of transcendental philosophy. However, in Deleuze’s view, monism in this context should only

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72 Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 91
73 Cf. Ibid., 74.
74 To further explain the concept of unity, Deleuze writes in Bergsonism, “What is a sensation? It is the operation of contracting trillions of vibrations onto a receptive surface. Quality emerges from this that is nothing other than contracted quantity. This is how the notion of contraction allows us to go beyond the duality of homogenous quantity and heterogeneous quality, and to pass from one to the other in a continuous movement. But, conversely, if our present, through which we place ourselves inside matter, is the most contracted degree of our past, matter itself will be like an infinitely dilated or relaxed past so relaxed that the preceding moment has disappeared when the following appears.” Ibid.
be understood along the premise that ‘everything is duration.’ What Deleuze infers at this juncture is that duration is dissolved in all the differences in degree between things, intensity, relaxation, and contraction that affect it, that thereby metamorphose into a kind of quantitative pluralism (from dualism to pluralism). But he interrogates whether this transformation entails a generalized pluralism or a limited one. Based on his examination, Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* and *Time and Free Will*, he affirms the radical plurality of durations: “The universe is made up of modifications, disturbances, changes of tension and of energy, and nothing else.” A more developed description of the possibility of manifold durations can be gleaned from Bergson’s later book *Creative Mind* where he claims that our duration is only part of an infinity of durations.

Furthermore, Deleuze utilizes Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, among others, as a catalyst in the characterization of his metaphysics, i.e., of Being as characterized by a plurality of durations, including our very own, caught at the middle of more dispersed and concentrated durations. This causes Deleuze to think that the virtual coexistence of all the planes of the past, of all the levels of tension, is extended to the entire universe. In his words, “This idea no longer signifies my relationship with being, but the relationship of all things with being. Everything happens as if the universe were a tremendous Memory.” And by virtue of intuition, idealism and realism are overcome, and more importantly, all things exterior, inferior, and superior to us, coexist without intricacy.

At this point, it appears that duration is characterized by a generalized or a multiplicity of durations. On the contrary, in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson underlines the idea that if things that endure, they are less in themselves or “absolutely than in relation to the Whole of the universe in which they participate.” In short, the answer to the previously raised query is that there is a limited pluralism encompassing reality (human and the nonhuman). I think it is more expedient to confront this problem constructively. It would be better to problematize the relationship of limited duration in generalized pluralism, than completely eradicating the possibility of an infinity of durations, i.e., generalized pluralism. When we consult Deleuze for a possible escape or lucidity from this quandary, he would nevertheless assert that the true problem that must be answered is not the problematization that I have previously stated, but the identification of the multiplicity of time. In order to possibly reconcile the seeming divergence

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75 Ibid., 76.
76 Ibid.
78 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 77.
between my idea and Deleuze’s, I would capitalize on his answer to the aforementioned question regarding the multiplicity of time. For him, the answer to this question must primarily address the discourse cultivated by its presupposition. Deleuze thinks that the multiplicity of time presupposes that Bergson believes in the monism of Time—single, universal, and impersonal Time. In this kind of universe, duration bears the capacity to apportion without dividing, to become simultaneously one and several, and to encompass itself (triplicity of durations). Our durations, Deleuze thinks, bear the deep-seated capability to reveal other durations, to integrate theirs, and encompass ourselves interminably.

With the creative power of duration, time becomes a virtual multiplicity constitutive of unremitting qualitative self-heterogeneity or virtual simultaneity of fluxes. The divided elements or fluxes that differ in kind and are crafted by duration can only be lived or efficiently rendered in the domain of a single Time. Put differently, whether the division spawned by duration leads to rendition (actual) or not (virtual), both can only be lived in a monism of Time. To reconcile the quandaries raised earlier, Deleuze explains:

There is only one time (monism), although there is an infinite of actual fluxes (generalized pluralism) that necessarily participate in the same virtual whole (limited pluralism). Bergson in no way gives up the idea of difference in kind between actual fluxes; any more than he gives up the idea of differences in relaxation or contraction in the virtuality that encompasses them and is actualized in them …. Not only virtual multiplicities imply a single time, but duration as virtual multiplicity is the single and same Time.

Affirming that there is a difference in kind existing between two tendencies or directions, like between duration and space, is insufficient for Deleuze. It is because one of the tendencies does not merely take all the

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80 Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 80. The idea of a monism of Time remains a hypothesis for Bergson. But it is a hypothesis that can account for the nature of virtual multiplicities (duration). In Bergsonism, Deleuze explicates that in Duration and Simultaneity, Bergson formulates three hypotheses in relation to the kind of pluralism that can be attributed to duration, namely, generalized pluralism, limited pluralism, and monism. See Deleuze, Bergsonism, 78; See Henri Bergson, Duration and Simultaneity, trans. by Leon Jacobson (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1965), 45-46.

81 Cf. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 80.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 83.
differences in kind on itself. Similarly, the differences in degree proceed to the other tendencies. In the case of duration, it involves all qualitative differences to others and to itself. In the case of space, on the other hand, all that vary quantitatively are involved. Therefore, there is “no longer any difference in kind between two tendencies, but a difference between the differences in kind that correspond to one tendency and the differences in degree that refer back to the other tendency.”  

This moment entails virtual concurrence. Between duration and matter are all degrees of difference or the whole nature of difference. Differences in degree are the lowest, while differences in kind, are the highest nature of Difference for Deleuze. Under the principle of Difference, all degrees exist concomitantly in a ‘single Nature that is expressed in the one hand, in differences in kind, and on the other, in differences in degree.’ But it should be underscored that the coexistence of all the degrees of Difference is virtual in the same vein that the concept of differential unity bears a similar quality.

Ultimately, all the levels of contraction and expansion simultaneously exist in a monism of Time that thereby forms a Whole (pure virtuality). However, the ‘Whole’ is not a pre-determined or default reality. The Whole is always enmeshed in a creative movement of differentiation—of “virtuality in the process of being actualized, a simplicity in the process of differentiating, a totality in the process of dividing up.”

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84 Ibid., 93.
85 Cf. Ibid., 93.
86 Ibid.
87 Cf. Ibid.
88 Ibid., 94.
________, *Duration and Simultaneity*, trans. by Leon Jacobson (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1965).

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‘Objectification’ and Obfuscation

Danny Frederick

Abstract: Martha Nussbaum attempts to improve the clarity of the obscure talk of feminists and conservatives about objectification in connection with sexual matters. Her discussion is a substantial improvement. However, it is inconsistent and opaque, and she continues to apply the pejorative term “objectification” to activities which she herself admits are morally unproblematic and which may even be a joyous part of life. I explain the deficiencies in Nussbaum’s discussion, including the fact that she does not notice the one way of objectification that seems inherently problematic, and I show that casual sex, prostitution and pornography are normally not morally problematic even while they exhibit some of Nussbaum’s ways of objectification. The term “objectification” should be eschewed because it is a barrier to clear thinking.

Keywords: Nussbaum, objectification, prostitution, pornography

1. Introduction

The term “objectification” is a pejorative one used by feminists and conservatives to denounce various kinds of sexual activities, most notably prostitution, pornography, and some kinds of advertising, but also casual sex, numerous forms of speech, and even heterosexual marriage under contemporary social conditions. The main problems with talk of objectification are that it is often unclear what it means and it is often unclear whether there is anything wrong with the kinds of objectification denounced. In short, talk of objectification often appears to be a hubbub of confusion and indeterminate meaning.

Martha Nussbaum says that the obscurity of discussions on objectification, in particular by the feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, results from failure to distinguish the different ways in which a person can be objectified.¹ She tries to improve the clarity of the debate by

distinguishing seven kinds of objectification and by maintaining that some forms of objectification, in some contexts, can be life-enhancing rather than morally problematic.

In section 2, I discuss Nussbaum’s seven ways of objectification and conclude that there is only one clear sense in which any of those forms of objectification is, by its nature, morally problematic. However, that genuine moral issue is one that Nussbaum overlooks. In section 3, I consider Kant’s and Nussbaum’s notions of treating a person as an end in himself and I suggest that Nussbaum’s subliminal divergence from Kant indicates that she has in mind the sort of treatment that is appropriate to the special relationships that exist between friends and loved-ones rather than interpersonal relationships in general. I also suggest that some of the confused condemnation of objectification results from a failure to distinguish those two types of relationships. In section 4, I consider objectification in connection with casual sex, prostitution, and pornography and I show that there is no reason to regard any of those activities as inherently morally problematic, though any kind of activity may be impermissible if conducted in ways which violate people’s moral rights. In section 5, I conclude.

2. Ways of Objectification

Martha Nussbaum says that objectification means treating a human being as an object, and thus as non-human, and that there are at least seven ways in which that may be done:

1. *Instrumentality:* The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes.
2. *Denial of autonomy:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
3. *Inertness:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.
4. *Fungibility:* The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a. with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. *Violability:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. *Ownership:* The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.²

Nussbaum thinks that there need be nothing morally problematic in using a ballpoint pen in any of those seven ways, with the possible exception of way five; but that it would be morally problematic to treat some non-humans, such as a Monet painting, in some of these ways, particularly ways one, four and five. She refuses to say whether treating a person in any one of ways one to seven would be sufficient to be morally problematic or whether a combination is required. Her reason is that the notion of objectification is too unclear.³ One might have supposed that offering a clear notion of objectification would be a central part of her purpose. She says that none of the seven ways implies any of the others.⁴ She then, inconsistently, suggests that there are some logical relations, including entailment, between the seven modes of treatment.

First, she suggests⁵ that (1) instrumentality, implies (2) denial of autonomy; but that seems to be false. Peter wants to say something to Petra, but she is in another room. At his feet is her small child. Peter kicks the child, assuming correctly that the child will cry and call to her mother and that Petra will then come into the room. When Petra arrives, Peter says his piece. Here Peter uses the child as a tool, but he does not deny the child’s autonomy; indeed, he makes use of the child’s autonomy in achieving his purpose.

A problem here is that Nussbaum does not explain what she means by “autonomy” despite the facts that the term is used in a multiplicity of senses in the philosophical literature⁶ and that she says that “autonomy is in a certain sense the most exigent of the notions on our list.”⁷ She might, for example, say that children are not autonomous because of their undeveloped capacities, either because autonomy is a matter of natural capacity or because it is a matter of moral rights which are grounded in such capacities. Of course, children have agency; but so do animals.

I here draw attention to two important senses of “autonomy” that seem essential for this discussion and I distinguish them from agency. The first sense of “autonomy,” in which it connotes a natural capacity, has been

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³ Ibid., 258.
⁴ Ibid., 251.
⁵ Ibid., 259-60.
articulated by Karl Popper. An agent is autonomous if she has the capacity to subject to critical appraisal, including empirical testing where possible, her biologically or culturally inherited theories and thereby to free herself from them by means of a rational choice of better theories. Non-human animals have agency in that they act, and often act intentionally to achieve an end; but lacking the argumentative use of language, they lack the capacity to formulate their inherited theories (or expectations) as a set of propositions and subject them to critical arguments. They thus lack natural autonomy. The second sense of “autonomy” is a moral one: an agent is autonomous to the extent that she has the moral right to direct her own actions. The small child, though an agent, lacks full autonomy in both senses, because her critical capacity is not fully developed and because, in consequence, there are adults who have moral rights to direct her actions. In light of this, we can provide a better example to show that (1), instrumentality, does not entail (2), denial of autonomy.

Joanna hires Joe, a plumber, to fix her leaking pipe by means of a contract which states what Joe will achieve, by when, and how much Joanna will pay him provided he does what the contract states. Joanna uses Joe as a tool for her purposes: she wants her leak fixed and she uses Joe as a means to that end. However, Joanna does not treat Joe as if he lacks autonomy in either of the two important senses we have distinguished. She treats him as if he has the capacity for critical appraisal and rational choice between rival theories, for she discusses with him what she wants done, leaving him to consider how it may be done and to decide whether he wants to do it. So, Joanna does not treat Joe as though he lacks the natural capacity for critical appraisal; rather, she relies upon him having that capacity both in her negotiations and in leaving him free to decide how to accomplish his task. Further, Joanna does not treat Joe as though he lacks the moral right to direct his own actions. Rather, she depends upon his consent to do the job for the agreed-upon fee, thereby respecting his moral right to “self-determination.” That marks an important difference between this example and the earlier one, in that Peter acted impermissibly in kicking the child, because he was thereby violating another person’s moral rights (either the child’s or her mother’s); but Joanna acts permissibly in hiring Joe to fix her pipe.

Thus, Nussbaum’s suggestion, that instrumentality entails denial of autonomy, is false. Further, since using someone as a tool is compatible with treating her as possessing both natural and moral autonomy, it does not involve treating her as being non-human. Of course, it would normally be

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impermissible to use a person as a tool where doing so involves a violation of her moral rights.

Second, Nussbaum thinks that (6) ownership, entails or is “conceptually linked to” (2) denial of autonomy. Again, the claim depends upon what she means by autonomy; and she does not tell us. But we can evaluate the claim using the two notions of autonomy we recently distinguished. It seems that ownership of a person (slavery) entails denial of autonomy in the moral sense: the slave-owner denies the slave the moral right to direct her own actions. But it also seems clear that ownership of a person does not imply denial of the capacity of autonomy: the slave-owner may give the slave tasks which require her to utilise her powers of critical appraisal in thinking up and testing new ways of doing things, and will probably take precautions against her attempting to get free of the slave-owner’s control. Thus, ownership does not entail denial of natural autonomy; though it does involve denial of moral autonomy.

Such denial of moral autonomy is normally impermissible where it violates the moral right of the slave to direct her own actions. It might, however, be permissible where the slave has consented to it. If the slave has given up her moral right to direct her own actions, it seems that her moral rights have not been violated. Nussbaum seems to overlook the possibility of voluntary slavery despite the fact that it has been common in human history. In consequence, owning someone does not involve treating her as being non-human: the slave-owner may acknowledge that the slave has the capacity for critical rationality; and, if the slave is a voluntary one, the slave-owner’s denial of the slave’s moral autonomy issues from the slave-owner’s respect for that person’s earlier moral autonomy, in that the person used her autonomy, in a self-abrogating way, to give up her autonomy.

Third, Nussbaum suggests that (7) denial of subjectivity, entails (2) denial of autonomy. However, given that by “denial of subjectivity” she means treating a person as if her experience and feelings need not be taken into account, her suggestion seems plainly false. Joanna was not obliged to take into account the experience and feelings of Joe with regard to the contract between them. What was important to her was that he was willing and able to do the job for the agreed price. His feelings about the deal, and whatever he experienced in negotiating the deal or in doing the job, need not have troubled her. Yet, while ignoring Joe’s feelings and experiences, Joanna was

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10 Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 130-31.
treating Joe as being both naturally and morally autonomous, as someone who retained his capacity for critical appraisal and his moral right to direct his own actions. Thus, Nussbaum’s suggestion that denial of subjectivity entails denial of autonomy is false. In consequence, disregarding a person’s experience and feelings need not involve treating her as being non-human.

Fourth, Nussbaum suggests that (3), inertness, entails (2), denial of autonomy. That suggestion is difficult to evaluate. Natural and moral autonomy apply only to agents, whereas an inert thing, Nussbaum says, is one that lacks agency or activity. If something lacks agency, it is not autonomous. But an agent may temporarily lack activity (for instance, while sleeping) yet still be naturally and morally autonomous. So, one can consistently affirm that an inert thing possesses autonomy. Perhaps Nussbaum intends that an inert thing is one that is permanently devoid of activity or permanently devoid of agency. In that case, inertness would seem to imply lack of autonomy, since some activity is presupposed in the acquisition of the capacity for critical appraisal (the natural autonomy upon which moral autonomy rests); but it is then unclear how one could treat a person as being inert. What could count as treating a person in such a way?

Nussbaum offers an example:

W, a woman, is going out of town for an important interview. M, an acquaintance, says to her, “You don’t really need to go. You can just send them some pictures.” If M is not a close friend of W, this is almost certain to be an offensively objectifying remark. It reduces W to her bodily (and facial) parts, suggesting, in the process, that her professional accomplishments and other personal attributes do not count … it treats her as an inert object, appropriately represented by a photograph. Nussbaum makes at least three points here about M’s remark:

A. it suggests that W’s looks are all that matter for the interview;
B. it reduces W to her bodily parts;
C. it treats W as an inert object, appropriately represented by a photograph.

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 271-72.
Point A seems true, though we may want to re-phrase it as: M suggests, via the remark, that W’s looks are all that matter for the interview. However, point B is both obscure and absurd. It is obscure because it is unclear what it means to be reduced to one’s bodily parts. Presumably, it means being dismembered. It is absurd because M’s remark does nothing like that. At best, point B is just a metaphorical way of repeating point A; that is, its literal content is obviously false, but Nussbaum uses it as a picturesque way of conveying the content of point A. There is a similar problem with point C: how can a remark treat W as an inert object? Perhaps Nussbaum means that M, by making the remark, treats W as an inert object. But that seems ridiculous. By addressing the remark to W, M is treating her as a person who can understand and respond to remarks, something which an inert object could not do. The remark itself is inconsistent with the claim that W is an inert object because it says that W can perform the activity of sending some pictures. Perhaps Nussbaum means that M suggests that W is appropriately represented by a photograph and therefore suggests that W is an inert object. But it is plain false that only inert objects can be appropriately represented by a photograph: anything visible, whether it is inert, living, human, or something else, can be appropriately represented by a photograph in some contexts. It seems that the best that we can do with point C is to regard it as a metaphorical way of stating point A along with the caveat that the suggestion made by point A is inappropriate in its context. No literal sense has been given to the phrase “treating a person as an inert object.”

Nussbaum leaves the discussion of her seven ways of objectification hanging in the air and moves on to consider Dworkin and MacKinnon, Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx. However, I will complete the discussion by further considering fungibility, violability, and denial of autonomy.

It should already be clear that (4) fungibility, involves no denial of autonomy. Joanna might not only have been using Joe as a tool; she might also have treated him as fungible, as replaceable by any other plumber who had the competence to do the job. Indeed, she might have made that explicit by inviting several plumbers to quote a price for the job and then choosing the cheapest. That would have been permissible, it would not have involved a denial of Joe’s natural or moral autonomy, and it would not have been treating Joe as being non-human. Similarly, when I come to the check-out at the supermarket, I normally regard all the check-out persons as fungible with each other, choosing whichever one seems likely to deal with me most quickly. I may even regard the check-out people as fungible with the

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15 This point is made by Axel Honneth in criticism of Georg Lukács. See Axel Honneth, “Reification and Recognition,” in Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea, with commentaries by Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss, and Jonathan Lear, ed. by Martin Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76.
automated check-out, if there is one, as there usually is nowadays. But I do not thereby treat the check-out people as if they lack natural or moral autonomy; and I recognise that the check-out people are human in contrast to the automated check-out (if I use a check-out person I will speak to her, at least to say “thank you,” which I will not do if I use the automated check-out).

Denial of autonomy is not implied by (5) violability. There is no inconsistency in treating a person both as something that it is permissible to break up or break into and as having natural autonomy. Soldiers in combat do that regularly. It is not even inconsistent to treat a person as something that is physically violable and also as a being with the moral right to direct her own actions. Surgeons do it legitimately where the patient has consented and has thus waived her moral right not to be physically violated. It is often said that some surgeons find it easier to perform surgery if they think of the patient as a machine to be repaired, or in some other way as an object rather than as a person; but thinking of someone in a particular way does not imply treating her in that way. For example, it is possible to treat a person with great courtesy while thinking her to be a scumbug. In whatever way a surgeon thinks of her patient while operating, if she is doing her job properly she still treats the patient as a person, with natural and moral autonomy. Thus, physical violability does not entail denial of autonomy and it does not involve treating a person as non-human, even if, in some cases, thinking of the person as non-human is helpful in accomplishing a task which involves violating that person’s body.

Nussbaum’s (2) denial of autonomy, may be morally problematic. Natural autonomy, the capacity for critical appraisal, is what grounds moral autonomy, the moral right to direct one’s own actions. Both are lacking, to a greater or lesser degree, in children and in some adults with neurological or psychological impairments. It is permissible, even obligatory, to treat such people as if they lack autonomy, because they do. It is normally permissible to treat a normal adult as lacking moral autonomy only if she has voluntarily given up her moral right to direct her own actions. In all other cases, treating a normal adult as lacking moral autonomy is a violation of her moral rights and thus normally impermissible. It is also morally problematic to treat a normal adult as lacking natural autonomy. For instance, one might continually offer mundane advice which might be helpful to a child but which any normal adult could be taken to know; or one might take precautions on her behalf, or provide practical assistance, which only a child would find helpful. None of that would amount to treating her as non-human; but it would amount to treating her as a child. The recipient of these

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offered helps might be, not only irritated, but insulted, by them; but even if she is only amused, they are still morally problematic. For, such repeated interventions may sap confidence or foster dependency, thereby undermining a person’s ability or inclination to utilise her moral right to direct her own life as fully as she should. It is disappointing that this genuine moral issue is not even mentioned in Nussbaum’s discussion.

In summary, we have distinguished

(2) denial of autonomy

into denial of natural autonomy, that is, a person’s capacity for critical appraisal, and denial of moral autonomy, that is, a person’s moral right to direct her own life. It is not the case that

(1) instrumentality,  
(4) fungibility,  
(5) violability,  
(6) ownership, or  
(7) ignoring a person’s feelings and experiences

is incompatible with acknowledging a person’s natural autonomy. Ownership is incompatible with acknowledging a person’s moral autonomy; but instrumentality, fungibility, violability, and ignoring a person’s feelings and experiences are not. Even ownership will involve a prior acknowledgement of moral autonomy if the person has decided voluntarily to relinquish her moral autonomy. Treating a normal adult as if she lacks moral autonomy is normally impermissible unless she has consented to be so treated. Treating a normal adult as if she lacks natural autonomy is morally problematic under some circumstances. Thus, none of the abovementioned (nos. 1-7, except no. 3) is inherently impermissible; though each will be impermissible in a context in which it involves a violation of moral rights which is impermissible (as violations of moral rights normally are). None (again, with the exception to no. 3) inherently involves treating a person as a non-human. With regard to

(3) inertness

it is true that treating a person as either permanently a non-agent or as permanently inactive is incompatible with treating her as autonomous. But it is not clear how one could treat a person in such ways, and Nussbaum does not enlighten us. Accordingly, I say nothing further about inertness, except in the Conclusion. We therefore, so far, have only one clear sense in which any form of objectification is by its nature morally problematic, namely,
repeated and varied denial of the (full) natural autonomy of a normal adult; but that is an issue that Nussbaum fails to discuss.

3. Ends in Themselves

Nussbaum includes in her discussion the Kantian topic of treating people as ends in themselves. She seems to equate such treatment with treating a person non-instrumentally. Although she does not say so, that is a significant departure from Kant. For Kant, it is permissible to treat a person instrumentally, as a tool, so long as we treat the person at the same time as an end in himself. The notion of treating a person as an end in himself is obscure, and Kant does little to clarify it. He does say that a person is used merely as a means if his moral rights are thereby violated; and that a person used instrumentally is treated also as an end provided he shares the end of the action. Those two points together suggest that a person’s consent to be used as a means because doing so serves his own ends is what makes an instrumental use of that person a treatment of him which is not merely as a means but also as an end in himself. That seems to cover two kinds of case.

The first is that in which the two people have the same end but in which only one of them is used as a means. This can be illustrated by Nussbaum’s example of using her lover’s stomach as a pillow. She says that this is unproblematic because she is not using him primarily or merely as a means, provided that: she has or can presume his consent, she is not causing him pain, and she generally treats him as more than a pillow. In this example, Nussbaum’s lover is allowing himself to be used as a means to her comfort because her comfort is also an end of his. He is not using Nussbaum as a means. The second kind of case is that of mutual instrumentality, in which the ends of the two people differ but can both be achieved through cooperation. In hiring Joe to do her plumbing, Joanna is using him as a means but, since Joe consents to such use for the sake of the payment from Joanna that he can employ for his own ends, Joanna is also treating Joe as an end in himself. Similarly, Joe is using Joanna as a means to finance the achievement of some of his ends, but he is treating her as an end in herself as well because she consents to pay him for the sake of getting her pipe fixed. It seems that Nussbaum would not want to say that Joanna’s use of Joe, or Joe’s use of Joanna, is impermissible. I therefore take her departure from Kant, when

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19 Ibid., 92 [4: 429-430].
21 Ibid., 267, note 30.
she takes treatment as a means to exclude treatment as an end, to be unintended, a slip.

Nussbaum suggests that a non-instrumental treatment of adult humans entail treating those humans as autonomous. Assuming here that by a “non-instrumental treatment” she means treating someone not merely as a means, then what she says is false, as we have seen. A slave-owner of a voluntary slave treats his slave as an end as well as a means, given that the slave has consented to such treatment to achieve his own ends. However, the slave-owner no longer treats his slave as morally autonomous but, rather, as someone whose actions he (the slave-owner) now has a moral right to direct. The same point can be made using the example of employment. The relationship between Joanna and Joe is one between independent contractors, rather than one of employment: Joanna says what result she wants but she leaves it to Joe to work out how to do it, so Joe retains his moral autonomy. In contrast, a relationship of employment is one in which the employee gives up part of his moral right to direct his own actions by giving the employer the moral right to direct the employee with regard to a range of loosely specified tasks within working hours. Thus, employer and employee have a mutually instrumental arrangement in which each treats the other as an end in himself as well as a means, but the arrangement also entails that the employer treats the employee, once the contract has begun, as not fully morally autonomous.

Nussbaum also looks favourably on the claim that treating an adult human as an end in himself entails taking his experience and feelings into account. The example of Joanna and Joe shows that to be false. Further, we might in some cases see that a person’s experiences and feelings are inappropriate to his situation and thus pointedly ignore them in our dealings with him to try to bring him to his senses for his own sake.

I think that what lies behind this mistake, and also behind Nussbaum’s apparently unintended departure from Kant, is that she has a tendency to think that treating someone as an end in himself means treating him as a friend or as a loved-one. Some behaviour that is permissible with regard to people who are not friends or loved-ones would be at least inappropriate ways of treating someone who is a friend or a loved-one. Some of the seven ways of objectification would be so. Thus, if Joanna and Joe are friends or lovers, Joanna might still ask Joe to fix her leaking pipe, but it would be inappropriate for her to treat him as fungible by asking him to compete for a contract against other plumbers; it would be inappropriate for

22 Ibid., 261.
her to “deny his subjectivity” by ignoring Joe’s experience and feelings about undertaking the job; Joe may feel obliged to help Joanna as a favour, thereby sharing her end, rather than using her instrumentally by accepting a fee; and both might think that payment is out of place because it is redolent of ownership, rather than a relationship between friends, even though it is only a temporary kind of ownership of time and skills until the job is completed rather than slavery.25

It may also be that other people, too, who denounce objectification are confusing relationships of love and friendship with other kinds of relationships, or perhaps making the mistake of thinking that all human relationships should be ones of love or friendship (which is impossible in any large society). While some, though not all, of the seven ways of objectification are inappropriate in close relationships, all of them are permissible in at least some other relationships, and some (instrumentality, fungibility and denial of subjectivity) are indispensable in the majority of relationships in which people in large societies engage. Thus, the fact that the term “objectification” is pejorative makes it an inappropriate and misleading word to apply to all cases which exemplify some of Nussbaum’s “ways of objectification,” even though a pejorative word may be appropriate to describe some of Nussbaum’s “ways of objectification” when exemplified in close relationships.

A somewhat similar conclusion is reached by Nussbaum in her discussion of objectification in literature.26 She affirms that not all types of objectification are equally objectionable, that one and the same kind of objectification may be evaluated differently in different contexts, and that some forms of objectification may be not only morally unproblematic but even wonderful parts of sexual life.27 I will not, however, recount and evaluate Nussbaum’s discussion of literature since, in addition to inheriting the confusions and obscurities of her discussion of ways of objectification, it is literary rather than philosophical, being vague, ambiguous, metaphorical and poetic, which makes it difficult to discuss critically. Indeed, it seems more like an invitation to share particular feelings than a rational argument.


27 Ibid., 256.
4. Casual Sex, Prostitution, Pornography

Casual sex, prostitution, and pornography involve several of Nussbaum’s seven ways of objectification. However, none of those activities need involve objectification in any objectionable sense. That follows directly from our previous discussion, so we can be brief.

All sex with another person involves instrumentality since it involves a person using another for sexual pleasure. However, the user will at the same time treat the other person as an end in herself provided that the other person consents to the sex with a view to her own ends, either because the instrumentality is mutual or because her goal in the activity is to provide the other person sexual pleasure. The consent normally ensures that there is no violation of moral autonomy; and there need be no denial of natural autonomy. I take ‘casual sex’ to mean sex with a person who is neither a friend nor a loved-one, so it need not involve a concern for the other person’s experience or feelings; but since, I assume, it is usually conducted in a friendly way, it will usually involve some such concern. All penetrative sex plainly involves violability and I assume that casual sex normally involves penetrative sex of some kinds. However, so long as consent is given to the penetration, there need be no violation of moral autonomy. Being permitted the use of another’s body, within some loosely understood scope, does appear to involve some kind of property-claim over that body; but it does not seem to be ownership in Nussbaum’s sense, because it is only a temporary claim and there is no payment. Casual sex also involves fungibility. Consider the following examples.

Fred is in a bar looking around for a potential sex partner for the night. He sees several women any one of whom will suit his purpose. Which one he settles on, if any, will depend upon circumstances, such as how approachable she is, whether she is interested in having casual sex with him that night, whether she is accompanied by a boyfriend, and so on. Similarly, Freda may be in the same bar looking around for a potential sex partner and seeing several men, any one of whom will suit her purpose; and which one she settles on, if any, will depend upon circumstances. For both of them, the sex partner they end up with, if any, is fungible. Still, the casual sex that they have, assuming that they are successful, need involve no treatment of a person merely as a means, no denial of autonomy and no payment; and each may engage in the activities with a concern for the other person’s ease and enjoyment. In this, there seems to be nothing impermissible or morally problematic.

The only essential difference between casual sex and prostitution is that the latter involves a payment, usually a man paying a woman, but sometimes a woman paying a man, sometimes a man paying a man, and
sometimes a woman paying a woman. That means that prostitution involves a claim of property more explicitly than does casual sex in general: the buyer owns some of the sexual skills of the seller, for a delimited period, by means of a contract. However, such ownership does not amount to slavery, any more than Joanna enslaves Joe when she hires him to fix her leak, or any more than an employer enslaves an employee. Further, the business transaction, being of a personal nature, would normally be conducted in a friendly manner on both sides, as it normally is when one gets a haircut or receives dental treatment or physiotherapy. Thus, there is nothing inherently impermissible or morally dubious about prostitution. Of course, in some circumstances, in which coercion or fraud is involved, there is a violation of moral rights which makes prostitution impermissible; but the same applies to any other activity in which coercion or fraud is involved (forced physiotherapy, forced dental treatment and forced barbering are also normally impermissible). It is sometimes claimed that in contemporary Western societies, prostitution standardly involves coercion, perhaps in subtle forms; but such claims often depend upon mistaken assumptions, or social theories, such as Marxism, that have been discredited. In any case, even if correct, such claims would oppugn only particular forms of prostitution.

Pornography is the depiction of sexual activities, either in words or, perhaps more usually, in images. Written pornography is a form of speech, so it can be defended effectively by at least some of the arguments that are used to defend freedom of speech. That is an issue that I will leave on one side. Here, I focus on visual pornography, either photographs, films, or videos of people engaged in sexual activity. The sex depicted in such images will often be casual; indeed, the participants will often be paid to do it, so it may be a kind of prostitution. But we have seen that there is nothing inherently morally problematic about casual sex or prostitution. Further, if those engaged in the sexual activities have consented to have images of those activities made and distributed, and if the viewers of the images have consented to see them, there is no denial of autonomy and there need be no violations of moral rights. Of course, some of Nussbaum’s forms of objectification are involved: (mutual) instrumentality, fungibility, violability and (limited) ownership; and it seems highly likely that “denial of subjectivity” will be involved, at least to some extent, though there is no necessity for that to be so. But none of those things has been found by its nature to be morally objectionable. As for the content of pornography, provided the people depicted have not been coerced or deceived into

participation, they are only doing what they want, and are entitled, to do, so it is difficult to see why that should be problematic. If it encourages some viewers to do similar things, then, so long as no coercion or fraud is involved, they will again be doing only what they want and are entitled to do. Whether there is any message conveyed by a piece of visual pornography is always open to dispute, and different people may well take very different messages from the same piece of pornography, if they take any messages away from it at all; but any messages should be protected by freedom of speech in any case. In short, barring special circumstances, visual pornography appears to be permissible and morally unproblematic.

It might be objected that forms of casual sex, prostitution, and pornography that are morally unproblematic according to the above are nevertheless illegal in many countries. For example, prostitution is illegal in Slovenia, the Philippines, and the United States (except for some parts of Nevada), and buying sex is illegal in Canada, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden;30 casual sex is illegal in seventy-four countries if it takes place between people of the same sex;31 and in Britain sadomasochistic pornography is illegal if it is “grossly offensive.”32 The short way with that objection is to maintain that laws that criminalise activities that are morally unproblematic are unjust. A longer way would have to address the contested question of whether there is a general duty to obey the law; but that is an exercise that cannot be undertaken here.

5. Conclusion

There is a good deal of writing about objectification, particularly of women, and particularly in connection with sex, but it is generally obscure. Nussbaum’s discussion of the topic is clear as compared with Dworkin, MacKinnon and other activists, but it is marred by the following shortcomings:

- Nussbaum contradicts herself when discussing the logical relations between her seven ways of objectification;

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32 Criminal Justice and Immigration Act, 2008, c. 4 (United Kingdom), part 5, section 63.
many of her claims about the logical relations between those ways seem to be false;
• one of those ways, namely, inertness, does not seem to make sense;
• she relies heavily on the notion of autonomy (or self-determination), which she does not explain but which is used in a multiplicity of senses in the philosophical literature;
• only one of her ways of objectification, namely, denial of moral autonomy, seems to be normally impermissible, but even that seems permissible if moral autonomy is relinquished with consent;
• none of the ways of objectification necessarily involves treating a person as non-human, as she claims they do;
• she does not examine the one way of objectification that seems inherently morally problematic, namely, repeated and varied denial of the natural autonomy of a normal adult;
• she sometimes takes treating a person as an end in himself to exclude treating the person instrumentally;
• she seems to conflate treating a person as an end in himself with treating a person as a friend or loved-one;
• she seems incognisant of many relevant and quite ordinary facts about permissible, even indispensable, ways of treating people which count as one or more of her seven ways of objectification;
• much of her discussion is vague, ambiguous, metaphorical and poetic;
• she acknowledges that objectification can be permissible, morally unproblematic and even a wonderful part of life, yet she continues to employ the term “objectification” which she acknowledges to have a pejorative connotation.

Given the obscurity and confusions in which the term “objectification” is mired, and the apparently irresistible temptation to use it metaphorically, ambiguously, and pejoratively, it would be best to eschew the term entirely. We can describe actions that are forms of Nussbaum’s six meaningful “ways of objectification” without using the word
“objectification,” thereby avoiding its usually inappposite pejorative connotation; and we can talk of behaviours that are impermissible or morally problematic.

I have argued that casual sex, prostitution, and pornography are normally permissible and are not inherently problematic, despite involving most of Nussbaum’s ways of objectification, and that people who denounce them may often be confusing relationships of love and friendship with other kinds of relationships, or making the mistake of thinking that all human relationships should be ones of love or friendship (which is impossible in any large society).

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Re-thinking Catholic Philosophy: Alasdair MacIntyre and the Tension within Thomism

Jovito V. Cariño

Abstract: Through Leo XIII’s Aeterni Patris, Thomism became the staple Catholic response against the threats of modernity. Two things immediately ensued as a result of this papal intervention: the revival of Thomistic philosophy, and with this revival, the transformation of the same as a polemical tool. While it serves well the Catholic Church’s campaign for orthodoxy, it is arguable however whether such polemical shift has philosophical merit, or if it has, whether it is compatible with the tradition of doing philosophy championed by Thomas Aquinas himself. This tension within Thomism, I believe, warrants the necessity of Catholic philosophy represented by Thomism to be rethought. The goal of such rethinking, it should be emphasized, is not to undermine the gains of Thomism’s revival but to locate more precisely the critical potential of Aquinas’ philosophy against modernity’s philosophic claims. In this paper, I will adopt Alasdair MacIntyre’s hermeneutics of the aforementioned problematic, and towards the end, I will indicate the possibility of an alternative mode of reviving Thomism. First, I will rehearse the basic claims of modernity. In the ensuing part, I will show the hermeneutic conflicts that render it impossible to tell the story of modernity in a single narrative. This is followed by an account of Kant’s attempt to resolve the crisis of modernity by reinstating reason in its primacy. By employing MacIntyre’s tradition-constituted rationality, I will then show the divide between Kant’s and Aquinas’ philosophy and how the oversight of such divergence led modern Thomists to misconceive the possibility of compromise between the two. Towards the end, I will narrate the complicity, albeit the inadvertent nature, of the Kantian project with the revival of Thomism, thus posing the necessity of self-critique on the part Catholic philosophy.

Keywords: Thomism, enlightenment, modernity, reason

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Introduction

The term “enlightenment” as a philosophical tradition is as tricky as its kindred concept, “modern.” For one, historically speaking, there is not just one but multiple versions of Enlightenment from the seventeenth century up to the early part of the nineteenth century: there were the French Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment and the German Enlightenment to which Kant belonged.¹ In his book *After Virtue*, MacIntyre used the term in its inclusive sense, hence the reference to all the major players in all three traditions when discussing Enlightenment.²

The Enlightenment is generally characterized as an intellectual and cultural phenomenon that puts the primacy of human reason be it in the form of mathematics, science, ethics, or rational theology. It is true that reason has always been the preoccupation of European philosophy since the earliest Greek thinkers but as a distinct historical episode, Enlightenment marks itself off from the preceding epochs for its abiding confidence in reason that grounds itself on nothing but its own. The acknowledged father of modernity, René Descartes, had intimated this in his earlier attempt to refound philosophy anew on *cogito*, but his efforts, though innovative during his time, still lacked the radicality that one would find in later modern thinkers like Denis Diderot, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and G.W.F. Hegel.³ To put it another way, while in his time, Descartes and his contemporaries found the final arbiter of reality in reason, during the Enlightenment, it was precisely such function of reason that was put into question.⁴ In the hands of Kant however, reason reacquired its pole position, launching a philosophical heritage that run in conflict with the Catholic philosophic tradition which always considers reason as ancillary to faith or at least in conjunction with it. Catholic thinkers find in Kant’s transcendental philosophy a huge challenge given the extent of its impact on a wide range of intellectual disciplines. Leo XIII, through *Aeterni Patris* and its endorsement of Thomism, would have wanted to mitigate the deleterious effects of excessive confidence on reason that one finds in Kant. Before turning, however, to the engagement of modern Thomists in this undertaking, I wish to revisit the early precursors of critique of reason and their contributions to the modern philosophic debates.

³ For a perspective on Descartes’ relation with Enlightenment, see Peter A. Schouls, *Descartes and The Enlightenment* (United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 63-76.
The Critique of Reason: The Pioneers

Enlightenment thinkers made distinction between reason as a *faculty of criticism* and reason as a *power of explanation*. The prime representatives of the former were David Hume and Jean-Jacques Rousseau while for the latter, the best exponent was Isaac Newton. Hume was a Scot, and though one of the leading figures in the Scottish Enlightenment, he is nevertheless considered a subversive of his own tradition. His subversion consisted of his repudiation of the normative function of rationality, contrary to the belief of the Scottish philosophic tradition, and his turn towards a more liberal approach to ethical theory, an orientation that was more Anglicized rather than Scottish. Concerning reason, Hume was a thorough skeptic and this skepticism extends even to his philosophical anthropology and moral theory. Ideas were, for him, but faint imitation of sensations. Not only was he skeptical about reason, he was likewise fiercely opposed to any notion of theological or religious ethics notwithstanding his strong Calvinist background. He thought of human action as a composite of passions, sentiments and volitions and not as exercise of some rational nature. His famous dichotomy between is and ought as well as his rejection of an essentialist notion of human identity radically changed the grammar of ethical theory and definitively secured his legacy way beyond his own generation. MacIntyre traced to Hume the germination of theoretical

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13 Ibid., 469-470.
elements that would later find its way to G.E. Moore and Charles Stevenson in their respective versions of emotivist theory. The avant-garde philosopher Gilles Deleuze also turned to Hume for the framework of his own counter philosophical anthropology. And as one would read in Charles Taylor and Ruth Groff, even the alleged metaphysical neutrality professed by liberal theorists like John Rawls bore traces which harked back to the position introduced by Hume.

Another fierce critic of reason was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, himself an illustrious member of a group of intellectuals behind the French Enlightenment. Rousseau was a contributor to Diderot’s encyclopedia but it wouldn’t be until his essay, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* won the Académie de Dijon’s top prize, that he would gain larger public recognition. The contest’s theme was on the development of the arts and sciences and its impact on the society’s moral growth. Rousseau’s verdict did not speak well of the arts and sciences but the acclaim of his essay certainly put his career in a good light. In a much longer work, his didactic literary opus *Emile*, more pointedly advanced his devaluation of reason, including the established religion and in their place. Here, he commended his main character Emile to turn his attention to the cultivation of his conscience. Given the fact the society in general is degenerate, Emile had nowhere to turn to but himself à la Robinson Crusoe. Emile needed to arm himself with an education suitable enough to protect him from the worsening moral corruption. Rousseau dispensed his prescription for a new moral education via a story narrated to

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Emile by his tutor about a certain Savoyard Vicar. Emile may be comparable with Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics or Plato’s The Republic in its motif, though Rousseau would have none of the privileged role that either Plato or Aristotle assigned to reason. On its own however, it was widely considered as a philosophical milestone for its ability to argue for religion without appeal to divine revelation and to lay the foundation for what is considered today as a post-Christian civilization. If there is any revelation with which God had disclosed himself to humanity, it was none other than his own self-affirmation reposed in the heart of each human person. Such benign though romantic view of human nature can also be found in his other work, Discourse On The Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men. It was such romantic bent plus his critical stance on reason that put him at odds with his fellow French Enlightenment thinker and literary figure, Voltaire. Together with Maupertuis and d’Alembert, Voltaire pursued instead the scientific path of Enlightenment charted by Isaac Newton. French thinkers considered Newton as the premiere exponent of the new mode of thinking which allowed them to come to terms with the complexities of the physical world and at the same time explore ways of expanding further such knowledge.

These were the two poles, reason as a faculty of criticism and reason as power of explanation, which dominated the philosophical debates of the Enlightenment period, two epistemic positions which, ironically, when stretched to their limits could undermine the very integrity of human knowledge itself. Criticism when overdone could lead to skepticism; too much dependence on mathematical explanation could inadvertently end up with materialism. The two were the distant islands through which Immanuel Kant navigated his way when he decided to intervene in the contest which attracted the best minds of the 18th century Europe.

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25 Ibid., 262.
26 Ibid., 212; see also Ibid., 243-244; 268-269; 278-279.
28 Ibid., 295.
29 Rousseau, “Part I” of “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men,” in The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings, 151.
Re-stating the Supremacy of Reason: The Kantian Position

It was no coincidence that, in his subsequent writings, Kant would invoke the names of Hume32 and Rousseau33 as two of his biggest influences. The title of Kant’s first major work, Critique of Pure Reason, might suggest that he had already taken side, but a perusal of the text would tell us differently. Kant did not really wish to restore critique to the function of reason; on the contrary, he wanted to subject reason to a thorough critique for only then can reason presume to deconstruct or explain any aspect of reality.34 Unless this is done carefully and judiciously, all the critiquing and all the explaining will eventually exhaust reason itself until there will be nothing left worth knowing.35 Until this point, one might still suspect Kant as taking the cudgels for reason. In fact, most readers considered the Critique and Kant’s Copernican revolution as an epistemological tour de force. And yet one only needs to consult the prior and posterior parts of the Critique to see where Kant really stands as far reason is concerned.36 This is why I consider Kant as pivotal in the discussion of the modern rupture between faith and reason, due to the very important claims he made in this book concerning the matter. Between Hume and Rousseau, it is important to state that it was Rousseau’s side that Kant upheld when he asserted that the whole purpose of human reason is not really to know the world but to change and transcend it through ethical action and it was this ethical aspect of reason that would lead Kant to reason’s religious dimension.37 Bertrand Russell would say that for Kant, Hume was an adversary to be refuted whereas Rousseau was a sympathetic mind.38 Notwithstanding his reverence for Rousseau, however, who, incidentally, was the only author powerful enough to interrupt his afternoon promenades, Kant had misgivings on the role of sentiments in the former’s moral religion, and he knew, that left on their own, a moral vision grounded on sentiments could easily flounder.39 Convinced of how badly it needed a stronger foundation, Kant tried to re-instate Rousseau’s moral campaign in a

32 Immanuel Kant, Kant’s Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, ed. by Paul Carus (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1912), 7.
35 Ibid., 601.
36 Ibid., 25, 637.
37 Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov, eds., The Legacy of Rousseau (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 54.
38 Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 640.
39 Lilla, The Stillborn God, 133.

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more solid rational grounding, a portion of an account of which Kant had already intimated in his first *Critique*. Kant was aware of reason’s own inadequacies (case in point, the paralogisms and aporias as cited by Kant) and the *Critique* was meant to highlight what it could and could not do before reason begins a new task. Turning away from Hobbes and Locke, both of whom considered reason as a passive principle, Kant maintained that reason was by nature architectonic, that is, it had the capacity to devise a system to aid itself in the determination of knowledge. Hence, for Kant, reason must be distinguished from understanding, the faculty responsible for the unity of appearances under certain rules whose unity, reason in turn provides. It is reason that presides over the so-called regulative ideas, namely: self, world, and God. Not one of these three has objective reality for Kant; these are mere ideas posited “problematically” for the sake of the unity they provide in human perception. Kant’s position is of course a radical departure from the conjunction between man, nature and God perceived by the pre-modern thinking as objectively real. What we see here is a careful reconfiguration being done by Kant concerning the unity of reason and faith, a reconfiguration which also tries to go beyond the traditional physico-theological, cosmological, and ontological proofs of God’s existence. What then does it mean to consider God as a regulative idea? It means that the highest faculty of man, that is reason, considers the existence of God as the “purposive unity of things,” which means that the systematic unity of all things would not have been apprehensible were it not derived from God himself. Up to this point, it appears as if Kant is merely rehashing the Thomistic argument of design of creation. This is, however, farthest from Kant’s point, for as he explained, God as a regulative idea, while presupposed as a priori, is nonetheless not necessarily considered as the “the ground of all things,” hence the qualification is regulative rather than constitutive. Whereas Hobbes considered fear as the origin of religion and Rousseau thought of it as engendered by sentiments, Kant made it utterly inescapable and secure in its foundation by locating its source in reason itself. Once more, it appears as though one will find a stronger argument for the unity of faith and reason in Kant rather than its rupture. Yet, if this is true, then Hegel would have labored in vain trying to recover the unity between the two, not

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40 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 426.
46 Hegel did not think that God was part of the reason’s architectonic nor religion restricted to the exercise of reason. Religion was a shared experience embedded in a given a culture and the consciousness of God was part of the evolution of history. In such evolution,
to mention the efforts of such thinkers like Friedrich Schleiermacher and theologians like Karl Barth and Franz Rozenweig who until the twentieth century were trying to confront Kant’s transposition of religion into the architectonic of reason. In truth, the appearance of conjunction between faith and reason in Kant is only an appearance which resulted from Kant’s rigid confinement of everything within his self-contained system. As indicated above, reason for Kant is pure subjectivity. Unlike the pre-modern notion of reason which admitted of subject-object relation, such relation was nullified in Kant, having rejected the possibility of objectivity be it in the form of self, world, or God himself. With his rejection of objectivity, Kant likewise decided against the possibility of truth, much less truth that does not conform with the regulations of reason. It is on this account that Kant was able to assert that the only way for belief to bear on anything at all was for him to suspend the operation of reason. Faith has its dynamism, its own vitality, its origin, and telos which lay beyond the scope of reason. With only the transcendental forms of thought to deal with, reason as it was conceived by Kant, is ill-equipped to deal with anything so completely alien to it. Kant’s moral, that is, rational religion, might include religion in its name but it has none of the elements of faith the way it is traditionally understood. The only way for that kind of faith and reason to work together from the Kantian perspective is for them to stay apart. Reason cannot accommodate traditional faith; neither can the same faith engage reason. Reason, however, can motivate action and it is in that domain that Kant wishes to give religion its new foundation. It is true that Kant mentioned faith in his second Critique but he did so merely to emphasize its being a postulate of reason and how, by virtue of such


48 Both Rosenzweig and Barth, in their respective works, strived to restore religion to their distinct character, that is, outside its confinement within categories of reason. Rozenweig, a Jewish theologian, together with Barth, a Protestant theologian, were convinced that faith could only be revivified through the recovery of its roots in revelation. See Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, trans. by E.C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 35. See also Franz Rozenweig, The Star of Redemption, trans. by Barbara E. Galli (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 31.

postulation, it is accommodated merely to make the whole Kantian ethical system work.50

**Between Aquinas and Kant: An Illustration of Tradition-constituted Rationality**

Up to this point, one can find a certain degree of parallelism between Kant and Thomas’ views on the role of faith. Both of them believed that faith should be oriented to the good that must be attained by ethical agent and both affirmed the important function of the will in the exercise of such faith. The parallelism however automatically ceases when one begins to consider that for Thomas, will is a faculty directed towards an object beyond oneself and that good is an end that is desired likewise beyond oneself. Moreso, faith for Thomas is not just a postulate of reason but a virtue that exceeds reason itself.51 In contrast, will for Kant pertains to reason’s power to create and pursue its own objects52 and that the good he considers is an end which requires merely formal satisfaction and nothing else.53 His commitments to his critical philosophy prevented him from ever going beyond reason’s own forms and principles; Thomas’ adherence to metaphysical realism however made him more attentive to the inherent limitations of reason. This fundamental difference between Kant and Thomas Aquinas is important to bear in mind particularly in considering the relation between faith and reason which Kant negated and Thomas affirmed. It also provides a significant background against which one may read the variety of Thomistic responses to the problems posed by modernity concerning faith and reason. As shown in the preceding discussion, faith and reason for Thomas are not just two distinct domains; they are also two distinct traditions represented by Augustine (faith) on one hand and Aristotle (reason) on the other. In the context of Thomistic discourse, when one thinks of the unity of faith and reason, one situates the two in a fruitful dialogue. When two traditions confront each other, inevitably, an epistemological crisis will ensue.

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52 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 23.

53 See Kant, Preface to the First Edition of “Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason,” in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, 34.
According to MacIntyre, an epistemological crisis happens when an individual, an institution, or a community begins looking for a justification for what it has been doing or what it has always known in the face of a new development which presents itself as a challenge or an alternative to the current state of affairs. To illustrate his point, MacIntyre cites the experience of Shakespeare’s Hamlet who, upon return from Wittenberg, found himself at a loss as to which course of action he needed to take given his discovery of the events waiting for him at Elsinore. It was the same situation Maria Clara had found herself in, after reading her late mother’s old letters for which she exchanged the lone letter she received from Ibarra. The surprise and anxiety that came with the revelation of her true origins gravely unsettled Maria Clara thus rendering her old “schemata” practically useless. In a larger scale, MacIntyre also invoked the experience of Galileo. At the start of his career, Galileo found himself in the middle of conflicting scientific interpretations between Ptolemy and Copernicus. The theories of Ptolemy, the acknowledged authority of the science of antiquity, were being severely challenged by the studies and findings done by Copernicus, the emerging leading figure of modern science. Galileo’s situation was an example of an epistemological crisis at its thorniest. But rather than merely dumping one in favor of the other, what Galileo did was to draw a narrative which provided a context for both and allowed him to evaluate them using a set of standards applicable to either tradition. With such narrative, Galileo in effect restored both traditions in their proper places via his recourse to a single rendition, while at the same time, creating a space for further scientific inquiry. 54 In all his works, in particular, his Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas showed close affinity with the tact that Galileo had undertaken. One might read the Summa then as a narrative that integrated two competing traditions, Augustinianism and Aristotelianism. At the same time, they are evaluated using rubrics useful for both, and as long as the evaluation is maintained, the possibility of enhancement or refutation from future inquiry will always remain open. What was lost in most modern philosophies, said Macintyre, was such sense of narrative and such sense of integrative evaluation.55 An apt illustration of this is Descartes’ own description of his epistemological crisis. Such crisis, if one goes back to Descartes’ account in the Meditations, was homegrown or sui generis. It didn’t stem from any encounter with a rival system or shared


55 MacIntyre writes: "But the history of epistemology, like the history of ethics itself, is usually written as though it were not a moral narrative, that is, in fact as though, it were not a narrative. For a narrative requires an evaluative framework in which good or bad character helps to produce unfortunate or happy outcomes." See Ibid., 6.
practice but from his own cogitation. To borrow MacIntyre’s expression, it was a crisis without a tradition. The absence of such tradition however was neither accidental nor gratuitous. It was not taken into account simply because Descartes took it for granted—convinced that he would overcome his epistemological crisis if he starts from some presuppositionless first principle.56 Another illustrative example of the same point would be the project of Kant. It was clear from the start that Kant wanted to steer clear of the metaphysical tradition, in particular from Aristotle. With his debunking after debunking of all the traces of the philosophical tradition that bred him, Kant was left with nothing but the regulative principles of knowledge to which were known nothing but the regulative principles themselves. If ever Kant attempted to integrate Aristotle in his narrative of his own epistemological crisis, it was to ridicule him or downplay his contribution to philosophy. In the Preface to the First Edition of the first Critique, he ascribed the roots of the dogmatic tendency of rationalism to the sway of metaphysics.57 Then in the Preface to the Second Edition, he also declared that ditching the speculative reason would not make such a loss, for it was by “no means the interest of humanity.”58 Probably the clearest indication of Kant’s distanciation from Aristotle could be found in Section III, Book I of the Second Part of his discussion of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. It was here that Kant set aside the categories of Aristotle in favor of the superiority of his own, saying: “It was an enterprise worthy of an acute thinker like Aristotle to try to discover these fundamental concepts but as he had no guiding principle he merely picked them up as they occurred to him and at first gathered up ten of them which he called categories.”59 Kant maintained that his categories had the edge compared to their Aristotelian counterparts since his “classification has been generated systematically from a common principle, namely the faculty of judging (which is the same as our faculty of thinking). It has not arisen rhapsodically as the result of a search after pure concepts …”60 Another indirect though substantial attack on Aristotelian positions was undertaken by Kant in his discussion of Transcendental Dialectic where he deconstructed the faculty of reason as it was known from Aristotle and exposed the illusions generated by it.61 Kant says that, as far as pure reason is concerned, “we can have no knowledge of an object corresponding to an idea but only a problematic concept of it.”62 The most that one can say about the

56 Ibid., 8-10.
57 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 6.
58 Ibid., 26.
59 Ibid., 106.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 93-94.
62 Ibid., 314.
so-called highest syntheses about substance, world, and the self, namely God, freedom and immortality are but paralogisms, antinomies, and ideals of pure reason. Contrary to the Aristotelian positions, Kant would say we can never arrive at certainty regarding these matters. All we can ever hope are arguments that are mutually exclusive and directly antithetical in their truth claims. When MacIntyre described the Enlightenment as the repudiation of Aristotle, he had in mind not only the philosopher as individual but the entire tradition of rationality which he represented and from which modernity chose to distance itself. Enlightenment dismissed a rationality that was narrative, evaluative, tradition-constituted as well as tradition-constitutive. The directs heirs of the Enlightenment legacy were the two schools of inquiry dominant during the nineteenth century which MacIntyre described as the encyclopaedists and the genealogists. The encyclopaedists, best represented by Adam Gifford, the progenitor of the famous Gifford Lectures and the editors and contributors of the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica published in the late nineteenth century, believed that the history of philosophy followed a continuous evolution whose apex is reached with the development of reason into a universal claim, that is, free from any tradition. The genealogists, on the other hand, counting Nietzsche as its prime exponent, likewise believed in an uninterrupted flow of the history of philosophy except that it did not see it as culminating into the full development of reason into a universal claim the way the encyclopaedists thought it would. For the genealogists, the history of philosophy is indeed continuous but only as a showcase of a series of distortion or frustration of the will-to-power. It was in response to these two conflicting interpretations of history of philosophy that modern Thomism became a participant of the debate through the writings of the Jesuit priest Joseph Kleutgen, who as it turned out, would play a vital role in the modern revival of Thomism.

Reviving Thomism: The Tension Within

Born in Dortmund, Germany on April 10, 1811, Kleutgen later on attended the University of Munster and the University of Paderborn and consequently proved himself to be a formidable intellectual following his ordination as a Jesuit priest in 1837. He was a professor of philosophy and

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63 MacIntyre, After Virtue, 81.
65 Ibid., 65.
66 Ibid., 59.
67 Ibid., 58.
rhetoric in Freiburg and Brig, Switzerland respectively before he was appointed consultor of the Congregation of the Index in Rome, official at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus, and prefect of studies at the Gregorian University. Among Kleutgen’s significant credits included the voluminous *Appendices to the Works on the Old Theology and Philosophy* published in 1858 as well as the draft of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith which he co-authored with Johannes Baptist Franzelin and adopted by the First Vatican Council in 1870.68

It was at Freiburg that Kleutgen developed interest on pre-Enlightenment thinkers, chief among them Thomas Aquinas. He was convinced that the problem of the disjunction between faith and reason so prevalent among Enlightenment thinkers could be solved if modern philosophy were set aside and the philosophy of the earlier ages were revived.69 Kleutgen finally got the chance to realize his project with the publication of his first published work against the Enlightenment, *Über die alten und die neuen Schulen*.70 It was in this book that he concretized his call for the restoration of medieval philosophy and the utter repudiation of the modern system of thought. Among the scholastics, Kleutgen singled out Thomas Aquinas as the greatest of them all.71 It was on this account that, in MacIntyre’s reading, Kleutgen’s position presented itself as an alternative to the dominant views of the encyclopaedists and the genealogists. Unlike the two camps, Kleutgen found in the history of philosophy a radical break instead of continuity. He situated that break between the philosophy which evolved from Socrates to Thomas, and such philosophy which considered


69 In a letter to his former teacher, Kleutgen writes: “For you know that I most definitely think that one should be familiar with the philosophy of former centuries in order to oppose the bad direction of the philosophy in our century, and that one has to investigate very well the relation between contemporary philosophy, which has brought disbelief into almost science and art as well as into life, and the older philosophy, which for so long has happily defended the faith.” Kleutgen quoted in John Inglis, *Spheres of Philosophical Inquiry and the Historiography of Medieval Philosophy* (The Netherlands: Brill, 1998), 70.

70 Ibid., 72.

71Inglis writes: “The type of philosophy to which, Kleugen argues, we should return is the type taught for centuries by Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, and other religious orders in the institutions that had been lost through secularization. His point is that, if we are going to make any progress, we must rebuild these institutions, as well as the promote the work of Aquinas. Kleutgen argues that Aquinas is the greatest of the Scholastics because he offers a correct account of the relation between reason and revelation. But Kleutgen does not provide the justification for his claim that Aquinas solves the problem of reason and revelation. He does not explain Aquinas’ solution. Rather, he puts out a call for research into the study of medieval thought in order to oppose the influence of modern Protestant philosophy.” See Inglis, *Spheres of Philosophical Inquiry and the Historiography of Medieval Philosophy*, 73.
Descartes as its originator.\(^7\) Before Kleutgen, however, there have been other attempts by Catholic thinkers to combat the challenges to the Catholic thought posed by the Enlightenment. On top of the list would be the name of Antonio Rosmini who, together with other Catholic thinkers, made earnest efforts to reconcile Catholic faith with modern epistemology but ended up capitulating the Catholic realist position to modern epistemological categories.\(^7\) Kleutgen wanted to avoid his route by declaring a clean break between the old and the modern philosophies. What weakened his position however was his identification of where such break was located. For instead of putting the discontinuity between Thomas and his immediate successors, Kleutgen marked it off quite belatedly, that is, in the later Scholasticism, hence his failure to make the distinction between the positions of Thomas and those of his early modern followers like another Thomist Jesuit, Francisco Suarez. This intellectual lapse on the part of Kleutgen would bear a serious impact on the definition of Thomism in relation with modernism. Because Suarez did not have any inkling on the kind of inquiry which Thomas employed to overcome the limitations of both Augustinianism and Aristotelianism, he, and so did Kleutgen later on, thought that what he had presented in his works was his final statement on the inadequacies of a single rather than two contesting, limited traditions. MacIntyre cited as an example, the great disparity between Thomas’ handling of the articles of the first five questions of Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritatae and Kleutgen’s interpretation of the same. While Thomas’ account combined a series of descriptions, analyses, and clarifications that left the door open for further consideration, Kleutgen read it as tightly sealed justification for the existence of truth. In doing so, Kleutgen unknowingly mistook Thomas’ position for that of Suarez for whom apprehension of truth was dependent upon universal concepts which the mind itself fashions prior to such apprehension.\(^7\) With such dependence on epistemic concepts, the existence of entities outside the mind became an open question, and hence, bestowing to Thomas, in particular, to De Veritate, an epistemological concern that was nowhere in existence in his system. This was then the kind of interpretation of Thomas which would be

\(^7\) MacIntyre, Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, 59.

\(^7\) A discussion of Antonio Rosmini-Serbati may be found in Alasdair MacIntyre, God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophic Tradition (London: rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2009), 133.

\(^7\) Daniel D. Novotny, Beings of Reason: A Study in Scholasticism of the Baroque Era (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York: State University of New York, 2008), 69; see also, MacIntyre, Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, 74. For a more elaborate discussion see, Jan A. Aertsen, “The ‘Metaphysical Disputations’ of Francisco Suarez: Between Scholasticism and Modernity,” in Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip The Chancellor (ca 1225) to Francisco Suarez (The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 587-634; see also Jose Pereira, Suarez: Between Scholasticism and Modernity (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2006), 141-224.
brought to bear on *Aeterni Patris*\textsuperscript{75} whose formulation, according to experts, was greatly influenced by Kleutgen himself.\textsuperscript{76} The continuous epistemological conversion of Thomas’ philosophy would be further escalated by succeeding generations of thinkers, in particular, by another Jesuit priest, Joseph Marechal, who thought of Thomas as the court of appeal to the questions which Kant himself failed to resolve.\textsuperscript{77} Marechal was strongly opposed by Etienne Gilson\textsuperscript{78} although he found an ally in Jacques Maritain who likewise displayed transcendental readings in his rendition of Thomistic philosophy.\textsuperscript{79} 

**Conclusion**

The foregoing discussion was meant to illustrate my earlier claim that Thomism itself was implicated in modernism and neglect of this crucial fact somehow weakened the position of the Thomist campaign against the philosophical and cultural tendencies it wished to moderate. Without Thomas wanting it, the zeal of the succeeding Thomists to present him as the paragon of thinking where faith and reason find its distinct harmony prevented them from taking into consideration the tradition of inquiry he himself fostered in his engagement with rival traditions during his time. In MacIntyre’s account, it was this sort of inquiry that gave rationality, from the perspective of Thomas, the aspect of being tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive. Its appeal to both traditions so as to render both their strengths and weaknesses intelligible via a synthetic narrative that is reflective and evaluative of both made it tradition-constituted. Its ability however to point a new path along which new answers and new questions may be pursued made it tradition-constitutive. This was the aspect of Thomas’ philosophy that *Aeterni Patris* failed to acknowledge. The result, as MacIntyre lamented, was the emergence of many Thomisms trapped in the same epistemic quandary they were all trying to transcend. Even *Aeterni Patris*, with its espousal of Thomism as a concluded system against which all systems must justify themselves, failed to overcome the very problems for which it thought it had the answers. Rather than forging back the unity between faith and reason, such failure in fact contributed to the vanishing of


\textsuperscript{76} MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 73; see also McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism*, 167.

\textsuperscript{77} MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 76; see also MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities*, 154.

\textsuperscript{78} McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism*, 256

\textsuperscript{79} MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 76.
the unity of faith and reason as a human concern. It was Weber who used the word “disenchantment” to describe situation of the modern man who, suffused with the new discoveries of modern knowledge, got his sense of faith sidetracked in the process. Where then does it leave man and human flourishing? This is the kind of question that makes the rethinking of Catholic philosophy in the guise of Thomism a perennial undertaking.

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Violence in Alain Badiou’s Emancipatory Politics

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Abstract: This paper discusses the significance of violence in Alain Badiou’s concept of emancipatory politics. In literatures that affirm revolutionary ideas, violence is often justified as a legitimate form of resistance. This for example was explained by Fanon and Marx. There is a need to carefully study violence as a modality of resistance for two reasons. First, the discourse on violence as a modality of resistance must position itself away from the defensive side of the political spectrum. Its revolutionary and liberating possibility has been undermined as it is assumed, rather than argued, by dominant discourse as fundamentally unacceptable. A discourse on violence which is positive in nature must be articulated not only for the purpose of defending and rescuing such a revolutionary means from all the vilifying campaigns of contemporary reaction, but most of all to posit violence, borrowing from Badiou’s emancipatory politics, as a consequence of a positive or affirmative revolutionary creative act. Second, any affirmation of violence as a modality of resistance must not be confused with an absolution from political responsibility. Violence needs to recognize its own limits so as not to commit the grave historical error with finally identifying itself with terror and defeating its own emancipatory goals. Consciously minding violence’s restrictions renders such a modality of resistance not only effective but above all a powerful condition for the construction of the New.

Keywords: Event, violence, emancipatory politics, state
his paper discusses the significance of violence in Alain Badiou’s concept of emancipatory politics. In literatures that affirm revolutionary ideas, violence is often justified as a legitimate form of resistance. This, for example, was explained by Fanon when he stressed the role of revolutionary violence in the process of decolonization. Even Marx recognized the role of violence in the eventual seizure of political power by the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, albeit not suggesting the necessity of such violence for society to forward towards communism. In any case, there is a need to carefully study violence as a modality of resistance for two reasons.

First, the discourse on violence as a modality of resistance must position itself away from the defensive side of the political spectrum. Its revolutionary and liberating possibility has been undermined as it is assumed, rather than argued, by dominant discourses as fundamentally unacceptable. The campaign to render violence as an unacceptable form of resistance has painted a negative image of political violence oftentimes discredited as either irrational outbursts of the impulses of the weak, or if not mere banditry. A discourse on violence which is positive in nature must be

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1 What I mean by violence is the political violence that is contemporaneous with a massive popular resistance, oftentimes in a form of revolution or armed uprising. This violence is not just any form of physical harm against others, as this violence, according to Arendt, quoting Engels, systematically uses implements, i.e., arrows, spears, guns, canons, etc. See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 4, 42, 46. Further, this violence is conditioned by what Badiou calls as an Event. Hence, the violence that I am referring to excludes criminal violence like murder, genocide, and most especially, terroristic actions of fundamentalist groups which bear no relation to the New embodied by every Event.


3 Arendt explained that “Marx was aware of the role of violence in history, but this role was to him secondary; not violence but the contradictions inherent in the old society brought about its end. The emergence of a new society was preceded, but not caused, by violent outbreaks, which he likened to the labor pangs that precede, but of course do not cause, the event of organic birth.” Arendt, *On Violence*, 11.

San Juan clarified the dialectics between violent and peaceful means within Marxist discourse. He explained that “[w]here the state bureaucracy supporting the bourgeoisie and the standing army do not dominate the state apparatus completely (a rare case) or has been weakened, as in the case of monarchy and the Russian bourgeoisie at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the working class might attain their goal of class liberation by peaceful means; but in most cases, ‘the lever of the revolution will have to be force’ harnessed by the masses unified by class consciousness and popular solidarity.” See Epifanio San Juan Jr., “Nationalism, the Postcolonial State, and Violence,” in *Pングキアン: Journal for Emancipatory and Anti-Imperialist Education*, 4:1 (2015), 30.


5 Banditry was how Emilio Aguinaldo described the resistance movement after the Pact of Biak-na-Bato. See Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, vol. 1 (Quezon City: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1975), 198.
articulated not only for the purpose of defending and rescuing such a revolutionary means from all the vilifying campaigns of contemporary reaction, but most of all to posit violence, borrowing from Badiou, as a positive or affirmative revolutionary proposition\(^6\) feared by none except the oppressors and exploiters of history hostile to the construction of equality.

Second, any affirmation of violence as a modality of resistance must not be confused with an absolution from political responsibility. Violence needs to recognize its own limits so as not to commit the grave historical error with finally identifying itself with terror and defeating its own emancipatory goals. Tortures, concentration camps and purging campaigns are among the many living testaments to this great temptation. With these reasons presented, I shall argue that violence as a modality of resistance is dialectical: it is a category determined both by what it is and what it is not. Consciously minding violence’s dialecticity renders such a modality of resistance not only effective but above all a powerful condition for the construction of the New.

**The Illegal Subject of the Event**

A favorable discourse on violence as a modality of resistance can be achieved through a brief discussion of Alain Badiou’s notion of emancipatory politics. It is invariably the case that every genuine political sequence is one which affirms the thinking and construction of the New. This political sequence builds and nurtures itself under the principle of dialectics: progression over reaction, the New over the old. Political sequences of the past, from the slave rebellions up to the most recent uprisings testify to this projection of a collective body organizing a new possibility irreducible to the terms and logic of the old and the given. Only a politics which affirms the New, rather than the desperate maneuvering to salvage and project with a “human face” the old,\(^7\) deserves the name politics of emancipation. The latter is not a mere representation of the old or given situation since emancipatory

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\(^7\) This is what, from the language of Slavoj Žižek, cultural capitalism has been successfully maneuvering. Starbucks, Nike, and many other capitalist enterprises have humanized its project by incorporating into its business philanthropic practices that allegedly gives aid to the impoverished of the world. In this way, it presents capitalism as less brutal if not the only viable solution to poverty. See a brief elaboration of Žižek’s critique on the subject, Peter Suechting, “Global Capitalism with a Human Face?” in *AC Voice* (2 December 2012), <https://acvoice.com/2012/12/02/global-capitalism-with-a-human-face/> , 5 December 2015.
politics “draws itself from the void that an event brings forth as the latent inconsistency of the given world.”

In Badiouian ontology, an Event is a moment of the opening of a new possibility within a given situation. Badiou explained that it “is something that brings to light a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable .... It indicates that ... a possibility exists that has been ignored.” The Event, far from being a normal continuity of any logical routines (in science, art, politics, or love), “interrupts the law, the structure of the situation …” The Event is a moment which both defies given normality and stability—since all Events are abnormal, and that there are no natural or neutral Events—and serves as a harbinger of a possibility not anymore in the order of the old but that of the New.

The happening of an Event is a moment which is affirmative in its very nature. As opposed to Hegelian or even Marxist dialectics which prioritizes the category of the negative over the affirmative, the Event, despite being a point of defiance, is primarily an affirmation, i.e., the affirmation of the New opened up through the happening of an Event. We may take as an example the 1896 Philippine Revolution. Far from being a mere negative reaction against the excesses of Spanish Colonialism, it was above all the affirmation of “nationhood:” a category absent from the consciousness and language of pre-Revolutionary Filipinos. The new subjectivity—through the formal organization of the revolutionary KKK—tempered through time, thinks and organizes a new possibility—i.e., nationhood—which is far too radical to be envisioned from a colonial perspective. Even the intellectuals of that time, well-versed of the leading political philosophies, found it hard, if not impossible to think such a possibility—thereby ultimately surrendering to reformism—yet this paradox is one peculiar character of an Event: the thinking of the impossible. In this context, Constantino precisely described

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8 Alain Badiou, Conditions, trans. by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2008), 152.
9 For a discussion on Badiou’s concept of the Event, see Alain Badiou, Being and Event, trans. by Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2005), 173-183.
12 Badiou, Being and Event, 175, 178.
13 I mean the “natives” who were then properly called as Indios. Of course, the term Filipinos was reserved for the Insulares but I want to use it being the proper term for a nation under revolt.
14 I refer to the reformists whose actions and programs fall under the “preservation of being.”
15 “For Badiou, truths exempt themselves from what there is: they erupt in the form of what he names an “event” and initiate the new and the formerly impossible.” See Ronjaunee Chatterjee, “Alain Badiou in Southern California: A Politics of the Impossible,” in Los Angeles
the Revolution as an affirmation of an Event when he argued that “[t]he nation was born of the Revolution as much as the Revolution was the expression of the nation being born.”\textsuperscript{16} Hence, in relation to the 1896 Revolution, the \textit{Cry of Pugadlawin} was an Event.

For the Event to be, i.e., for a singular happening not to be lost in the myriad of the usual, ordinary, and routinary happenings, the Event must be affirmed.\textsuperscript{17} Without such second affirmation, the Event would just be lost in the infinity of what might be and “nothing would have taken place, but place.”\textsuperscript{18} From the contingency that it is, the Event is sealed and pursued thereby organizing a new way of living. Love is one concrete example for this affirmation of an Event. Being one of Badiou’s “truth procedures” (the others being science, art and of course politics), love is always conditioned by an Event—the event-encounter of the Two. But this contingency—a happening purely set by chance—has to be sealed through an affirmation, i.e., a declaration of love: \textit{I love you}. Badiou explained that “[o]nce the encounter is determined in the declaration, whatever form this may take, the amorous experience in the strict sense begins: that of a world ‘existed’ by two.”\textsuperscript{19} A new subjectivity of the Two finally begins. And with this new subjectivity conditioned by love, the paramours invent “a different way of lasting life.”\textsuperscript{20}

The affirmation of an Event produces the sudden emergence of a subject. This sudden emergence reveals the Event’s dialecticity: it is not pure affirmation but also a negation. Badiou acknowledged that the Event produces sequences that

\begin{quote}
are different forms of negation—struggle, revolt, a new possibility to be against something, destruction of some part of the law, and so on—but these forms of negation are consequences of the birth of the new subjectivity, and not the other way around; it is not the new subjectivity that is a consequence of the negation.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Renato Constantino, \textit{The Philippines: A Past Revisited}, 145.

\textsuperscript{17} Badiou explained that “[a]n event is, in general, almost nothing: it appears at the same time as it disappears; it’s not immediately evident that it has any future at all, and it can’t at first be deciphered as regards its consequences.” Badiou, \textit{Philosophy and the Event}, 42.

\textsuperscript{18} This is originally from the poet Mallarme adopted by Badiou in describing situations unaffected by an Event and its procedure.

\textsuperscript{19} Badiou, \textit{Philosophy and the Event}, 43.


In politics, this new subjectivity affirming the Event is the collective, the mass of militants faithful to the procedures dictated by an emancipatory politics. But the sudden emergence of a collective subject is not so much a natural consequence of the given situation as an illegal decision. Even the Event is not natural since what is natural is mere Being. And it should be noted that Being prohibits the Event. Meillassoux explained that “an event is an exception to being not insofar as it would not be a multiple, but insofar as its multiplicity is ontologically forbidden …” As against the Event, Being is in the order of the natural: it is the active preservation of normality and stability. From a political perspective, this preservation of being is a masterpiece and a necessary condition of the State: the state is not founded upon the social bond, which it would express, but rather upon un-binding, which it prohibits. Consequently, Being’s prohibition of the Event demands a radical if not illegal choice necessary for the procedure of the New. This choice is the intervention of a new subjectivity faithful to the consequences of the Event. The new subjectivity organizes in the old situation a new sequence of thought and existence, a possibility which could not have been if the Event had not happened and pursued faithfully by the collective. The Revolutionary KKK, the new subjectivity that intervened between the Event and the construction of the New (i.e., nationhood), is the living trace of the vanished Event. Thanks to the Event that was, the Revolution has incorporated within the old situation the possibility of an impossibility, thereby pushing Philippine society towards a new stage of development.

25 “The nomination is essentially illegal in that it cannot conform to any law of representation … But since the intervention extracts the supernumerary signifier from the void bordered on by the site, the state law is interrupted. The choice operated by the intervention is a non-choice to the state, and thus for the situation, because no existent rule can specify the unpresented term which is thereby chosen as name of the pure evental ‘there is.’” Ibid., 205.
26 Badiou explained this thoroughly using the case of Christianity. He said that “[i]n the case of Christianity, they affirm the resurrection. After that there are a lot of practical and symbolic consequences in all situations. But what is interesting in the example of Paul is that the very beginning of something new is always something like a pure affirmation of the new possibility as such. There is a resurrection; you have to affirm that! And when you affirm the resurrection, and you recognize that sort of affirmation—because affirmation is with others and in the direction of others—you create something absolutely new, not in the form of a negation of what exists, but in the form of newness inside what exists. And so, there is no longer negation on the one hand and affirmation on the other. There is rather affirmation and division, or the creation that grounds the independence of new subjects from within the situation of the old.” Badiou, “Affirmative Dialectics: From Logic to Anthropology,” 5.
27 *Kataastasang, Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan*, or KKK, is the revolutionary group that toppled Spanish Colonialism in the Philippines.
Subjective Violence against the State

The emergence of the political subject—i.e., the collective—reveals the dialecticity of an Evental rupture. Not only is the Event anymore an affirmation of the New, the Event, the immanent possibility of change in the structure of reality, now poses, through a collective subject, a negative character not to what is faithfully affirmed but to that which persistently if not ferociously prohibits the Event: The State.

Earlier it was mentioned how the Event is ontologically forbidden by Being—or politically, by the State. Tracing the development of the latter, it can be presumed that it is “a product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms.”

As these antagonistic struggles sharpen, the State enters into the field of contradiction not actually to reconcile—although reconciliation is one effective means to conceal the ever-sharpening social contradictions—but to suppress and tame the weaker force. In the past, the State reveals itself as the dominant force (e.g., Spanish Colonial Period). Without any pretense and mediation, the Spanish colonial masters unleashed brutality against the Indios in order to exact forced labor, tributes, and taxes among others. The absence of any mediating agent in the commission of violence is peculiar to any colonial space.

Today—what many conveniently describe as postcolonial era—the State identifies itself with (e.g., bourgeois representative government) the dominant force. In any case, the statement “the State is the state of the ruling class” holds true. This analysis reveals the deceptive character of any social contract theory as the latter, built on lies and fiction, glosses over the contradiction of classes and their respective relations toward the State and private property. Even Locke, although entertaining the possibility of a people’s rebellion, still worked within the conception of a political organization dependent on a State that primarily defends property.


30 Guerrero explained that “[w]ith US imperialism enlarging its interests at the expense of the broad masses of the people, the colonial bureaucrats have become bureaucrat capitalists. They are capitalists by keeping the entire government as a large private enterprise from which they draw enormous private profits. They act as the local managers of the US monopolies. They serve the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class which are their internal material basis.” See Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Aklat ng Bayan, 2006), 114.

31 As Badiou described the fundamental conception of Marxism of the State, “the State ‘is the State of the ruling class.’” Badiou, *Being and Event*, 105.

32 San Juan, “Nationalism, the Postcolonial State, and Violence,” 32.

This union of the state and the ruling class necessitates a structure of violent contradictions. Although Lenin in this case specifically referred to the bourgeois state, it could also be argued that this violent structure of the state is true not only of the bourgeois state but even in previous political organizations. Thus, even during the Spanish colonial and feudal period, violence was already resorted to by the friars who have absolute control of the frailocratic machinery.  

Weber has a point when he said that only the State has the monopoly of the use of legitimate violence or force. Quoting Trotsky, Weber reiterated that “[e]very state is based on force.” However, the context of this monopoly is within the State’s subtle paranoia: preservation from gradual disintegration as a result of sharpened contradictions. As Weber pointed out, “[i]f the state is to survive, those who are ruled over must always acquiesce in the authority that is claimed by the rulers of the day.” The state’s alleged guardianship of the sacred social bond is nothing more but the inverted expression of its fear against social disintegration and the gradual loss of the means of production from the hands of a private few. In other words, without the employment of (a means called) violence, the State is in danger of anarchy. This violence of the state, otherwise charged as state terror, is violence pure and simple.

The possibility of violence can only take place within the intersection of the collective subject and the State. Both intersect since they are guided by opposed maxims and trajectories: one aims at progression, the other reaction; one for equality, the other for unbridled liberty. Badiou explained that the maxim of the Western democratic world is liberty, i.e., the freedom to accumulate properties, capital, and wealth. On the other hand, an

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34 Constantino, The Philippines: A Past Revisited, 72, 80, 148.
36 Ibid., 34.
37 Ibid., 33.
39 As Badiou puts it in his hypertranslation of Plato’s Republic, “‘freedom’ reduced to the compulsory gratification of personal desires through the objects available on the market. The norm is in fact normless ‘freedom,’ meaning sheer animality.” See Alain Badiou, Plato’s Republic, trans. by Susan Spitzer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
emancipatory politics maintains equality as its axiom. Along with many egalitarian thinkers, Rousseau and Badiou affirmed that the collective, guided by the general will, recognizes that equality is far more important than liberty. In Marxist discourse, this is the communist principle.

The upward movement of political subjects is immediately prohibited by the State who is hell bent to preserve the nature of things. Today, as well as in the past, this nature of things not only includes the cultural and spiritual traits of the given situation but most of all the economic and property relations among classes. For over five centuries of relentless preservation against capitalist disintegration, the bourgeoisie has more than ever learned to be ruthless and violent just to maintain and never rock the state of things. This is true today as it was in the past. Despite the “democratization” of the bourgeois political space—a challenge posed against all espousing revolutionary ideas—violence has been an important character trait of the bourgeois ruler and state. Perfectly aware of this truth, Žižek confirmed the symbiotic relationship between violence and the state when he noted that “[t]he notion of objective violence needs to be thoroughly historicised: it took on a new shape with capitalism.” Mincing no words, we can conclude that the State is “the political institution with centralized authority and monopoly of coercive agencies coeval with the rise of global capitalism…”

In this way, the notion of State ceases to be an empty signifier when it is effectively historicised and placed vis-a-vis capitalist accumulation and expansion. The state cannot be anything more than the active defender of

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This cherished liberty has however resulted to monstrous inequalities both within and outside capitalist countries. See Alain Badiou, Philosophy for Militants, trans. by Bruno Bosteels (New York: Verso, 2012), 31. As a matter of fact, this inequality is confirmed by the Oxfam report that “[t]he combined wealth of the richest 1 percent will overtake that of the other 99 percent …” See “Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016,” in Oxfam International (19 January 2015), <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-01-19/richest-1-will-own-more-all-rest-2016>, 7 January 2016.


41 See the following: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Political Economy and the Social Contract, trans. by Christopher Betts (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 86-87; Badiou, Philosophy for Militants, 31; and Badiou, Metapolitics, 97.

42 We may refer to the International People’s Tribunal on Crimes Against the Filipino People convened in Washington which confirmed that big foreign mining industries are the interests behind the displacement and killings of the Lumad in Mindanao. See Vanessa Lucas and Azadeh Shahshahani, “The Philippine People Are Under Attack from Washington — and Their Own Government,” in The World Post (3 December 2016), <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/azadeh-shahshahani/the-philippine-people-are_b_8714174.html>, 4 January 2016.


44 Epifanio San Juan Jr., “Nationalism, the Postcolonial State, and Violence,” 24.
Capital\textsuperscript{45} whose existence, as what Marx long before clarified, necessitates the exploitation of the workers and the plunder of resources. Even without being obviously violent, the State-Capital combine has been silently violent against those who toil in order to survive. This is an example of violence, \textit{pure and simple}—a violence alien to any Event.

\textbf{Towards an Affirmative Discourse of Violence}

Violence, pure and simple, has nothing to do with change. The violent blow of a man to a woman doesn’t change anything, especially the subordinate role of the woman against the man. This kind of violence effectively preserves the natural structure of the given, i.e., subordination, patriarchy, misogyny, etc. In the political level, state violence does not and will never change the structure of society. The Martial Law years as well as the killing of the \textit{Lumad} are proofs to this proposition. In both cases and in all cases of state terror, a state’s ferocity is unleashed against helpless, recalcitrant people, with the aim of silencing the latter. But then again, in situations instigated by violence pure and simple, change is never achieved, at least in two respects. First, on the subjective level, the desired change evident on the aim of “silencing” the subversives only serve to further fuel the rage of a terrorized people, thereby defying silence itself. Notice how the \textit{Lumad} journeyed the archipelago, from the island of Mindanao up to the Capital (which they famously called the \textit{Manilakbayan}) to denounce all forms of state terrorism against their own.\textsuperscript{46} State terror never silenced them. In other words, they were never changed and converted to become silent and unquestioning subjects. This is also true in relation to the terror unleashed during the Martial Law years which only created a discontented and enraged people. Second, on the objective level, nothing of the material reality transformed. Further entrenched through state terror is an elite politics of oligarchs, colluding with foreign powers, and plundering the resources of the nation, both natural and human. In both historical instances, the same structure remains. Hence, violence, pure and simple, does not include change among its elements in the same way as oxygen does not include fire.

\textsuperscript{45}Interestingly, the same Oxfam report cited earlier revealed that finance and pharmaceutical interests spend $550 million and $500 million respectively for lobbying policy makers in Brussels and Washington, and the finance interests provided $571 million for campaign contributions. We could not help but speculate how the State (of course run by the beneficiaries of these interests) reciprocates the generosity of these big businesses. See “Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016,” in \textit{Oxfam International}.

But the converse of the first proposition is not true; i.e., change has nothing to do with violence. Here, the rules of logic fail. Change has something to do with violence. Change, is an Event which ruptures: the situation includes, among its elements, violence in the same way as fire includes oxygen. However, this does not suggest a structural relationship of the terms as similar to the structure of dialectics: thesis and antithesis (and of course the synthesis). In dialectics, the terms are mutually exclusive: exclusive as they are contradictions, mutual as their contradictions are necessary. One is not subordinated by the other, in fact the two dictates the unity of being, or if we use Badiou’s language, there is the structural precedence of the Two over the One. But in the category of change (which of course is dialectical), violence is a subordinate. Change is a regime not of violence but of dialectics: the contradiction and gradual abolition of classes. And under the command of this dialectics is a contingent force called violence. In practical terms, dialectics readily arms itself without necessarily harming the other. The political subjects under an emancipatory politics remain gentle while maintaining militant vigilance. Like Mao, the militant subjects openly admit that “[f]irst of all, we do not like war, and second of all, we do not fear it.” Emancipatory politics in this regard is like fire giving a comforting warmth without necessarily burning the comforted. Hence, while change is necessary, violence is not. Violence’s contingency takes two forms. On the one hand, it is contingent as it may not be the only form of struggle. In revolutionary sequences, the armed struggle does not have to be the only viable path for the attainment of revolutionary change, for if this is so, support (be it financial, moral, political or logistical) for such a cause would immediately be unhelpful to it as direct participation (in the armed struggle) is the sole demand. This is a reckless strategy that immediately rules out the possibility of rallying the broadest number of people towards a revolution.


48 See Badiou, Plato’s Republic, 139.


50 As quoted in Badiou, Plato’s Republic, 123.
This stupidity was never the practice of the Revolutionary KKK. For if it had been a strict policy then, Melchora Aquino, despite of her old age, would have been forced and dragged towards holding up arms. But she was not. However, she was an element of change, i.e., of the revolution. But there wasn’t anything violent in her being a part of change. Certainly, she contributed and in fact supported the revolutionary cause without necessarily becoming physically violent. Did she contribute to societal change? Of course, she did. She and her likes were a contribution to the revolution (and never to reformism) because, and this is now my presumption, genuine change is such a multiplicity which, first, ruptures the law and logic of the situation by way of a collective struggle; second, constructs an egalitarian/communist political space; and third, unhesitatingly includes among its elements violence, without however implying the necessary deployment of the latter.

The proposition raised above would be more relevant when viewed within the context of political struggles in contemporary democratic states. It is of course an accepted fact that today’s political configuration is one which is mainly dictated by bourgeois democracy, something which Badiou described as democratic materialism. And the power and influence of this ideology has seeped through almost all aspects of human existence, including culture, education, and most of all politics. The democratization of the political space, thanks to the proponents of liberal philosophies like Locke, has allowed the regime of representations. Not only that, bourgeois democracy has even been hailed (of course by the liberals) as the best possible rule, as it has become, unlike tyranny and oligarchy, the Rule by Nobody. A reference to this kind of rule has been the convenient description or defense of the ruling class. The latter has effectively camouflaged itself within modern democracy’s flexible dynamics of bureaus thereby blurring, first of all, responsibility and consequently effective political resistance. This political scenario and the consciousness that goes with it pose a difficult challenge against any form of emancipatory politics, especially the naive type which only praises a purely armed political intervention.

With this political situation entrenched, a popular movement committed to an Event could not just rule out forms of struggle that are within the rules and logic of democratic systems. Gopal raised “the larger question

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52 Tracing the development of forms of government, Arendt charged that “[t]oday we ought to add the latest and perhaps the most formidable form of such dominion: bureaucracy or the rule of such an intricate system of bureaus in which no men, neither one or the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible, and which could be properly called rule by Nobody.” Arendt, Violence, 36.
of how radical change ... might be achieved in the context of a capitalism that works through the appropriation of democratic structures ...”53 While maintaining political independence and firmness of principles, a politics of emancipation’s strategy must be as flexible as possible. Against Badiou who is quite pessimistic on parliamentary interventions,54 I argue that the latter, in the conduct of an emancipatory politics, plays a significant role although not as much as armed forms of struggle do. This does not suggest, however, a purely parliamentary struggle, for if such a struggle exists, i.e., one which does not include among its terms/elements, violence, it is not in the order of the Event and therefore fails to pass the requirement of a politics of emancipation. Furthermore, this purely parliamentarian resistance defeats the idea of an emancipatory politics as it is already accommodated inside the State rather than autonomously existing outside of it. To be inside the State is to be incorporated within the State machinery thereby betraying the Event since the State is, again, in the order of Being and not of the Event. However, building and maintaining a political strength primarily and independently from the outside while effectively penetrating the inside establishes the autonomy of a movement which limits if not rules out the possibility of a betrayal to the Event. As Badiou insisted, “we will have to create something that will be face to face with the State—not inside the State, but face to face with it.”55 From the perspective of a political Event, legal, and illegal (i.e., armed) forms of struggle complement each other: the former allows greater influence, flexibility, moral, and financial support, and greater space for critique, while the latter provides autonomy. Sison’s wisdom exactly explained this point: combination of legal and illegal forms of struggle.56

The possible deployment of violence within the parameters set by an emancipatory politics restricts violence itself. When Arendt raised the element of arbitrariness of violent political sequences, emphasizing the danger that “men’s actions are beyond the actors’ control,” and that “[t]here is no certainty in these matters, not even an ultimate certainty of mutual destruction ...”57 Arendt fell into what San Juan called as “an absolutist

54 Badiou explained that an emancipatory politics confronts the difficulty of having to deal with an existence which is outside of the State yet prescribing something that concerns the inside of the State. See for example Badiou “Affirmative Dialectics: From Logic to Anthropology,” 9.
55 Ibid., 9.
56 Jose Maria Sison, “On the Combination of Legal and Illegal forms of Struggle,” in For Democracy and Socialism Against Imperialist Globalization (Manila: Aklat ng Bayan, 2009), 34-38.
57 Arendt, On Violence, 4.
censure of violence bereft of intentionality ...”. Violence must be seen as a consequence of an initial affirmation. In this sense, violence in itself is not a creative act since only the Event is. But since the Event is pure affirmation (of the New), and since the Event itself must be affirmed (by political subjects), there needs a consequent negation, i.e., violence. This means that political violence, if it has to be deployed, must be within the construction, consolidation and defense of emancipatory politics’ maxim: equality. In particular terms, since inequality is the condition of the State-Capital combine, political violence is and should only be aimed at this combine. This means that equality directs violence: the communist Idea must command the gun.

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58 San Juan, “Nationalism, the Postcolonial State, and Violence,” 22.
59 Badiou explains that “we do not start with the creativity of negation as such, even if the site of negativity is included in the consequences of something affirmative. See Badiou, “Affirmative Dialectics: From Logic to Anthropology,” 4.
60 Alain Badiou, Plato’s Republic, 110.


__________, “On the Combination of Legal and Illegal forms of Struggle,” in For Democracy and Socialism Against Imperialist Globalization (Manila: Aklat ng Bayan, 2009).


The Dialectic of Life and Thought: The Significance of 20th Century Existentialism Today

Mario Garitta


French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel recounts the story of how in the late ‘40s once existentialism had assumed the status of a full-blown movement in France, he was often badgered on a daily basis with the question: “What is existentialism?” Marcel’s response would fluctuate between making a serious attempt to answer the question in a few short sentences and throwing up his hands in frustration. Many who still read the texts of existential philosophy as philosophical texts, who continue to be inspired by these texts and are committed to the project of communicating their meaning and significance to contemporary students are often revisited with Marcel’s dilemma. How do we do justice to the philosophical significance of a doctrine which at every turn resists and opposes the type of essentialist understanding which is built into the enterprise of philosophy itself? Indeed, for anyone who has read Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, or Marcel with any depth and understanding the use of the terms ‘existentialist’ and ‘doctrine’ in the same sentence, even the label ‘existentialist’ itself sounds a discordant note to the ear. Any respectable anthology, or a history of existential philosophy will contain a chapter on Heidegger. It would only be an impoverished attempt to treat Heidegger, who made no reference to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who in turn are indisputably acknowledged as the joint fathers of existential philosophy in the 19th century. Nevertheless, Heidegger forcefully rejected the existentialist label and did so for reasons which define the core identity of his philosophical project. Existentialism properly describes a methodology or an approach rather than a philosophical doctrine. There is perhaps nothing more intrinsic to this methodology than a rejection of the adequacy of philosophical systems for understanding issues of human meaning; yet Paul Tillich’s The Courage to
Be is a classic text of theistic existentialism, this, despite the fact that Tillich was a fully comprehensive and systematic philosophical theologian.

Husserlian phenomenology forms a primary ground out of which 20th century existential philosophy arose. The clear and unambiguous goal of phenomenology is to make philosophy in Husserl’s words into “a rigorous science.” Nevertheless, it is precisely those 20th century existentialist philosophers who were most powerfully impacted by Husserlian phenomenology, e.g., Heidegger, Sartre and Marcel who most deeply oppose the paradigm of science as adequate to issues of human meaning which lie at the center of philosophy. Heidegger’s methodology in Being and Time is not purely phenomenological, but also hermeneutical. The explicit starting point of the hermeneutical method is that the methodology of the empirical sciences simply cannot do justice to issues within the Geisteswissenschaften, or ‘human sciences.’ The latter Heidegger rejected systematic thinking entirely. Gabriel Marcel went so far as to say that philosophical problems are a chimera. The necessary circularity involved in human beings thinking about issues of human meaning makes an application of the paradigm of “the problematic” to philosophy impossible. While it was only Sartre who explicitly adopted the dialectical method of Hegel, Heidegger and Marcel are fully dialectical thinkers.

In chapter 12 Bakewell chronicles the unknown story of the discovery of existential philosophy in America and the UK in the late ‘50s. The texts of Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Simon de Beauvoir were translated into English. Articles, books and journals devoted to existential philosophy sprang up. The Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy was formed. A school of existential psychology began to develop. Writers and artists were inspired by the vibrancy of something which seemed to involve not simply a new perspective but a new way of being. The enigma of existentialist identity is compounded by the fact that the energy and excitement which propelled existentialism into a full blown cultural and intellectual movement has now wholly evaporated. While schools of philosophical thought once in demise often give rise to new and vibrant forms, it is difficult today to even imagine a new form of existentialism which could preserve its original meaning, a meaning which is inextricably comingled with the historical and cultural context of 19th and 20th century Europe. This is to say nothing either of the neglect on the part of professional philosophers to read and understand the primary texts of existential philosophy, or the fact that in the case of Sartre, Camus, and Marcel many of these texts that are literary and philosophical works at once. To those wholly unfamiliar with the primary texts of existential philosophy and the philosophical worlds out of which these texts arose, or to those whose singular access to the texts of existential philosophy has been through courses
in literature, the common misunderstanding of existentialism as nothing more than an expression in philosophical language of the *Zeitgeist* of Europe left devastated by two world wars might seem all too plausible. Sarah Bakewell’s *At the Existentialist Café* makes a substantial contribution to the effort of disabling this misunderstanding.

It is impossible to do justice to the striking originality of the book in terms of a single genre, or at least within the categories of a pre-existing genre. It is as if Bakewell decided to combine the intellectual biographies of every major, and some minor existentialist figures within the larger historical and cultural narrative of the 20th century into a single book. *At the Existentialist Café* is a history, a cultural history, a history of the formation and development of 20th century existentialism, and a general introduction to the meaning of existential philosophy simultaneously. As a cultural history, the book provides a much-needed introduction to 20th century existentialism within the cultural context of Europe from the early ‘30s through post World War II.

If there is always a complex dialectical relationship between modes of thought and the forms of life out of which these arise, the radical challenge posed by existentialist thinkers to the historical understanding of the relationship between life and thought in the West requires special attention to cultural context. Might the cultural context in which 20th century existentialist philosophy developed and unfolded provide us with an irreducibly unique mode of access to existentialist thought? This is indeed the route taken in *At the Existentialist Café* and the strategy is carried out masterfully for the way in which it mirrors the complex dialectic between thinking and life embodied in existentialist philosophy itself. Beginning with Nietzsche existentialist thinkers have challenged the adequacy of the understanding of the relation between thought and being implicit in Western philosophy. Here the charge is essentially one of solipsism. Paradoxically while maintaining an allegiance to truth as the highest ideal of life, in the dominant traditions of Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel the integrity of thought has been absurdly overestimated. Far from being an autonomous mode, existentialists remind us of how thought arises out of, and proceeds within historical, cultural and social contexts whose impact is especially significant when we think about issues of human meaning, even while thought by its character transcends the context toward universally valid and objective truth. Bakewell does not shrink from the task of making sense of the difficult texts of existential philosophy, but illuminates these texts in a unique and powerful way through a rich and vividly detailed reconstruction of the historical and cultural world of the early 20th century. The treatment of historical context in *At the Existentialist Café* is as unique as the book itself. With the artistry of a novelist historical context is not simply constructed but
reenacted in and through the life and experiences of the existentialist thinkers of the 20th century. Where this strategy is most successful as in the sections on French existentialism the result is gestalt like as the text toggles between historical context and meaning. In the sections on French existentialism which includes Sartre, Camus, Simon de Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty, Bakewell provides what might be read as a phenomenological description of what the experience might have been like for those who actually lived through the German occupation of France during the period of 1940-1944. The French people with their proud tradition of democracy and participation in the political process were suddenly surrounded and overwhelmed by an ominous alien power whose presence was ubiquitous. Now every word and gesture required caution. The section is amazing for the manner in which drawing on extensive background sources, Bakewell brings the experience of the occupation to life with a minimum of theorizing. With every channel of the free expression of meaning — art, theatre, ordinary everyday conversation, politics challenged, result was experienced as a shattering context of meaning itself and thus a pervasive sense of meaninglessness. The German occupation was real and undeniable; nevertheless, the ideals of the Nazi regime represented a profound challenge to civilized meaning and value integral to the consciousness of the average French citizen. The impact of the combination of what was unimpeachably real and yet rationally absurd ineluctably generated what might be called a kind of “Twilight Zone effect,” a perception of living in an alternate reality, in essence, dreamlike and surreal. Something like this should not be happening. Perhaps it is merely a dream. How long will this continue? What does it mean? Where will it end? What meaning does this life have? Chapters 6 and 7 of the book involves an attempt to reenact the context of French existentialism, and provides what is perhaps the most insightfully simple introduction to key concepts in Sartre and Camus simultaneously—once again the Gestalt effect. Through Bakewell’s artfully rich portrait, and without any obvious shift from context to meaning the reader is brought almost unaware to the insight that the sudden disruption of meaning, the pervasive mood of meaninglessness and surreality experienced by the French people during the occupation were a context but also a paradigm of Camus absurd and Sartre’s nausea as a response to the brute facticity of existence.

Commentators on existential philosophy struggle with how to explain what Camus meant by the sense of the absurd, or why Roquentin in Sartre’s novel Nausea suddenly gets physically sick while staring at the root of a Chestnut tree. Yet neither Sartre nor Camus understood their insights to presuppose and require refined metaphysical awareness. On the contrary meaninglessness and absurdity are basic human, albeit painful and disconcerting, experiences which are all too easily veiled in complex
philosophical systems. As the story, “Brain in a Vat” so wonderfully illustrates questions about the ultimate parameters of our experience can suddenly shock our calm, everyday presuppositions about what is real to the foundations. Neither are these questions the privileged prerogative of philosophers, even if philosophy provides us with uniquely powerful methodology in which ultimate questions can be systematically explored. If philosophical questions are questions about meaning, above all questions about the meaning of our human existence, if as Marcel held the effort to make sense of our human experience is an “inner, urgent need,” then meaninglessness and despair are the ever-present possibilities implicit in being human. In one of Marcel’s plays the heroine asks: “Don’t you feel that we are living … if you can call it living… in a broken world? Yes, broken like a broken watch. The mainspring has stopped working. Just to look at it, nothing has changed. Everything is in place ….” The concept of living in a broken world might be a powerful paradigm for understanding how the German occupation of France was experienced. It might also describe the alienation and estrangement of the individual in the modern world, or be a metaphor for the human situation itself. Ordinary human experiences of injustice, suffering death, or a disruption in ordinary channels of meaning can easily become transparent to questions of ultimate meaning. The experience of one person’s death might easily lead us to reflect on the possibility that consciousness might survive the death of the body and brain. The experience of injustice might lead us to consider whether life in a world without ultimate justice is meaningful at all; and as Camus so hyperbolically stated, in the final sense there is only one real, true philosophical question and this is the question of whether or not to commit suicide, which is to say the ultimate philosophical question is the question of whether or not life has meaning.

In his 1945 lecture Existentialism is a Humanism, Sartre famously provides an explanation and a defense of his own mode of existentialism. Sartre recounts how his foundational claims—existence precedes essence, the primacy of life over thought, the denial of objectively existing values was assailed both from the left and from the right as a dangerous form of nihilism. Critics on the philosophical right essentially in the form of Neo-Thomists as well as Marxists on the left were true to form. Philosophy provides a basis for praxis. The concept of values cut loose from enduring foundations is both incoherent and a formula for moral absurdity. How are values to retain their integrity apart from rational grounds? Are there no values which are intrinsically wrong or destructive? In the absence of intrinsic value on what basis do we condemn those who choose the values of conquest, hedonism, or unapologetic self-interest? Existentialist ethics, critics argued are also practically absurd. The moral life requires an ongoing commitment to and a defense of values which only a rational foundation can provide. Values
chosen with no assurance of their intrinsic rightness will yield in the face of
the slightest challenge. These are very serious charges. For generations of
students Existentialism is a Humanism has been read as a classic statement of
Sartre’s own brand of atheistic existentialism. Despite the fact that the lecture
was originally delivered, at least in part to answer some of the above charges,
it is all too easy to read Existentialism is a Humanism as a manifesto for ethics
without reason. The quest for a self-illuminating basis for ethics is a chimera.
Values can only be created by human choices and these choices are ultimately
those of an individual.

Based on an impressive mastery of sources Bakewell largely
succeeds in bringing the 20th century existentialists to life, both as thinkers
and as human beings. In the case of such a multifaceted, complex and ever
changing figure, one can forgive the fact that Bakewell’s portrait of Sartre of
the late ‘40s is missing some desired nuances. Noticeably lacking is the extent
to which Sartre seriously considered the major objections to his system while
remaining deeply persuaded that the early critique of existentialism was
remarkably weak and ineffectual. Such nuance might explain why although
Existentialism is a Humanism has for generations been read as a classic
introduction to existentialism, it was the one work which Sartre regretted
having published. Despite a lack of nuance in some respects, the broad lines
of Bakewell’s portrait are sharply detailed. With regard to the issue of ethical
grounds Blackwell rightly inscribes Sartre squarely within the Western
metaphysical tradition which as Heidegger so deeply understood is
altogether characterized by a quest for ultimate grounds. If for Sartre ethics
is groundless, this is not a presupposition but a conclusion which is achieved
through the ambitious ontological analysis, the exhaustive search for grounds
contained within Being and Nothingness. It is precisely at this point that we
might glimpse to quote Nietzsche, the “small abyss” between Sartre and
Heidegger. For Heidegger, the endeavor which lies at the center of Western
metaphysics to establish a self-authenticating ground of life and experience,
which must include ethics, is a massive philosophical error. The name of this
enterprise is metaphysics, and its legacy has been a series of philosophical
systems, each resting on a purportedly self-authenticating ground. Sartre
remains solidly within this metaphysical tradition which it was Heidegger’s
central project to deconstructualize or overcome. Accordingly, Sartre posits one
more ultimate ground—or rather two, a metaphysical dualism grounded
upon two ultimate principles—the pour soi and the en soi.

Notwithstanding the fact that Sartre’s ultimate referents appear
more like an abyss than a ground, Sartre is no less a metaphysician than Plato
or Aristotle. Another nuance lacking in Bakewell’s portrait concerns the
paradoxical manner in which Sartre was both a paradigmatic metaphysician
as well as a critic of metaphysics. Despite his fundamentally metaphysical
orientation Sartre’s insight into the limits of metaphysics could rival that of Wittgenstein. It is in terms of the limits of metaphysics that the ostensibly powerful critique against his existentialist ethics that emerged in the late ‘40s and is today still repeated emerges with problems of its own. Paradoxically for Sartre this critique fails because it is founded upon an ontologically inadequate understanding of the relationship of life to thought, and on this point Heidegger, Sartre, and Wittgenstein very powerfully converge. We struggle in life to find a basis in thought for our values, actions and choices. Nevertheless, this process takes place within life. There is simply no autonomous dimension of thought which might serve as a basis for life; in this sense existence precedes essence. If the question Was soll ich tun? actually describes the most fundamental question of ethics, if Kant was right in thinking that the exercise of establishing a ground for ethics cannot ultimately improve upon the ordinary moral consciousness then Kant was no less an existentialist than Sartre. Once again, the historical context of the German occupation and the French resistance illuminates the integral character and the enduring value of Sartre’s thought. In the face of enveloping darkness sides had to be taken, commitments made and battles fought. Were Kantians or utilitarians poised to make better and more courageous choices, natural law theorists or Marxists, Hegelians or Spinozians? Again, a paradigmatic instance of the over-estimation of thought.

To her enormous credit, Bakewell does not fail to discern at this point the shadow of Kierkegaard whose influence upon 20th century existentialism was subtle yet pervasive. With ferocious irony Kierkegaard reminds us of the enormous paradox that an ethical system by its nature must exclude the aspects of risk, commitment, ambiguity, courage, and particularity, precisely those factors which are most irreducible for real persons who strive to live a good life.

Despite some omissions, Bakewell’s account inspires renewed appreciation for the contributions of Sartre to discussion of ethics in our own time. In the past ten years, many ethicists have made what is now being called “the practical turn.” The presupposition of this movement is that notwithstanding the fact of genuine ethical dilemmas most ethicists regardless of their theoretical systematic commitment do in fact largely agree on matters of right and wrong. Proponents of practical ethics likewise stress the uniqueness and specificity of ethical situations. Sometimes—as in the case of human rights issues, ethics is a matter of principle. In other contexts—as in the case of the environment, the issue essentially turns upon consequences. Recall one of the early critiques of Sartre’s ethics: ‘In the absence of intrinsic value on what basis do we condemn those who chose the values of conquest, hedonism or unapologetic self-interest?’ Thinking within the context of his experience in the French resistance we come to understand how so much
beside the point this question must have appeared to Sartre. During the German occupation of France, many did choose the cowardly and contemptable path of collaboration. Without ultimate legitimation others chose the courageous and noble path of resistance. The latter choice did not require values in a heaven of ideas, but those which civilized people of genuine good will do in fact overwhelmingly agree on.

Ethical theorists regardless of their stripe must inevitably have recourse to the practical realm in order to test the rightness of their theories—a move which modern ethicists refer to as the ‘right results test.’ Sartre merely took this exercise a step further, or rather a step back. In the lights of Sartre and Camus as well the French resistance represented a paradigmatic context in which to reconsider the value of theory itself in relation to praxis.

Returning for a moment to Gabriel Marcel’s own existential dilemma with which we began, one might imagine how Marcel in an engaging mood may have actually attempted to answer the question: what is existentialism? Perhaps one day Marcel responded to a thoughtful inquirer with the suggestion that there is indeed a master key which will at once unveil the mystery of the essence of existential philosophy. This key simply involves understanding some of the principled objections held by existentialist thinkers both against major philosophical systems of the past as well as many of the current trends in philosophy today. It is difficult to read Bakewell’s remarkable book without obtaining a genuine understanding of what some of these principled objections are. I was disappointed with the fact that At the Existentialist Café largely neglects the rich domain of 20th century theistic existentialism on the grounds that this would require an entirely separate book. One hopes this is a book which Bakewell will seriously consider writing.

Independent Researcher, United States of America
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