

Editorial

In this Issue of KRITIKE: An Online Journal of Philosophy

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The three sections of this sixth edition of KRITIKE: An Online Journal of Philosophy delve into various issues that have emerged in the history of the Western philosophical tradition—philosophical issues that are relevant, not only to the more esoteric enterprise of intellectual historiography and critical exegesis, but also, in more practical terms, to our current socio-political global landscape. The Articles section offers nine essays that range from Frankfurt School Critical Theory, American Pragmatism, Deconstruction, German Idealism and Romanticism, and philosophical anthropology. Meanwhile, the *Denkbild* section features another short philosophical fiction that deals with the appropriation of Critical Theory in the Philippines. Finally, in our Book Review section, a 2010 reprint of George G. M. James’ classic work, *Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Philosophy*, is critically reviewed.

One may construe the first three essays as thematically completed in the sense that they deal, one way or the other, with societal realities. Rafael D. Pangilinan and Clancy Smith diagnose social pathologies from the vantage point of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. In “Against Alienation: The Emancipative Potential of Critical Pedagogy in Fromm,” Pangilinan offers a critique of modern alienation using the insights of the German social psychologist Erich Fromm on critical pedagogy. According to Pangilinan, critical pedagogy, as an offshoot of the critical theory of society developed at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main, is a “radical examination of existing ideologies and practices of education”—practices that are tethered to the ideology of consumer capitalism. Fromm’s critical pedagogy envisions a more free and democratic society wherein liberation from alienation is possible through the development of critical consciousness among its dwellers. Pangilinan reconstructs Fromm’s critical pedagogy by highlighting the latter’s radical humanism and Marxist orientation in order to bring out the political dimension of Fromm’s revisionist theory of education. Pangilinan argues that it is possible to overcome the social paralysis induced by the ideology of consumer capitalism when critical consciousness is positioned as a step towards collective political struggle that challenges the status quo. Smith’s “A Critical Pragmatism: Marcuse, Adorno, and Peirce on the Artificial Stagnation of Individual and Social Development in Advanced Societies” is a critical inquiry into how the commodified technological substructure of

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advanced industrial societies has become “invisible” and whose effects are often taken for granted, resulting in a paralysis of the collective critical consciousness of the populace. According to Smith, individual human autonomy is jeopardized by a society-wide heteronomy that numbs socio-political consciousness through the systemic increment in artificial needs proliferated by commercial institutions. Smith borrows Herbert Marcuse’s notion of a “one-dimensional” society to describe this societal paralysis—the paralysis of the capacity of individuals to develop freely. Smith then inquires into the moral implications of this paralysis by using Theodor Adorno’s *The Problems of Moral Philosophy* as hermeneutical tool. The latter part of the essay is an attempt by Smith to propose a rapprochement between Critical Theory and American Pragmatism by highlighting the “more *critical* manifestation of pragmatic human development,” one which advocates individual autonomy and an open-ended vision of human development that is compatible with the vision of critical theorists. Meanwhile, the essay “The Copernican Revolution in Pragmatism? Dewey on Philosophy and Science,” written by Tracy Ann P. Llanera, investigates American Pragmatism’s contribution to the debate as to whether philosophy and science are foes or allies. Following John Dewey, Llanera starts off by arguing that Kant’s proposed Copernican Revolution in philosophy widens the gap between science and philosophy instead of bringing them together. There is, therefore, a need to challenge, yet not necessarily dismissing, the claims of Kant in order to find out whether it is possible to reduce the gap between philosophy and science—a realignment of the relationship between the science of external reality (natural sciences) and the science of human action (philosophy). Llanera expounds on Dewey’s supposition that philosophy should be the maturation of the self-consciousness of man’s attempt to verify truths that surround him, thereby becoming the impetus for directing and amending human conduct, that is to say, the basis of the organization and improvement of life. Science, for its part, is the practical dramatization or material extension of the philosophical drive towards the self-realization of humankind. Llanera is, however, not yet fully convinced whether Dewey’s proposal deserves to be dubbed as a Copernican Revolution in philosophy that could match the legacy of the one introduced by Kant. She nonetheless acknowledges the importance of Dewey’s contribution that, she thinks, led to a renewed interest in the critical reflection on the theory-action relation.

The fourth piece of this issue, “Iterability and Différence: Re-tracing the Context of the Text” by Roland Theuas S. Pada, is a reconstruction of the debate between Jacques Derrida and John Searle on their respective critiques, and mis-understanding, of the Speech Act theory of J. L. Austin. Pada proceeds by arguing that both Derrida and Searle, and despite the former, are inevitably bound to the grammar of logocentrism. Pada demonstrates this by showing how the disputation ceases to be about Austin and, instead, turns into a battle of wits and words between Derrida and Searle on how one has mis-understood the other and vice-versa. One may say that Pada is offering a deconstructive reading of Derrida and Searle by outlining the function of

“contextual limitation” in our linguistic transactions, speech and writing, mundane or otherwise. As such, the essay is, more or less, an immanent critique of Derrida, inasmuch as Derridian conceptual tools are employed, as well as an extension of the polemic against Searle.

A couple of essays on German Idealism and Romanticism are included in this issue. “Kant and the Turn to Romanticism” is Vinod Lakshmipathy’s effort to articulate the shift from Kant to Romanticism. Lakshmipathy traces this shift by outlining the early Romantics’, like Schelling, break from Kantian dualisms (“noumena” and the “phenomena,” the “intellectual” and the “sensible,” the “regulative” and the “constitutive” uses of reason, etc); such dualisms are offset by the Romantics’ reintroduction of the organic concept of nature, which is basically a shift from the regulative use of Reason to the constitutive stance, that is to say, that Reason is constitutive of nature and not exclusive to the human faculty of cognition. The latter part of the essay revisits some passages from Schelling’s treatise on freedom to consider the implications of the turn to the organic concept of Reason in the Romanticist understanding of freedom. The second piece on German Idealism is Ronnie Mather’s “The Experience of Consciousness: The Architectonic of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*.” It is obvious from the title that Mather’s paper aims to present an architectonic, that is to say, a structural analysis of an early and quite opaque treatise of the German neo-Kantian philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (*Foundation of the Entire Doctrine of Science* or *The Science of Knowledge*). Mather notes that not enough attention is given to Fichte’s early text, perhaps because of the peculiarity of the text and its tendency to mislead the reader as to what exactly is the intention of Fichte. Moreover, Mather argues that the inattention to the structure of the work “has led to wholesale confusion about the early system and its philosophical intent.” The author then attempts to reevaluate the structure of the text by first examining the readings of two influential Fichtean scholars, Dieter Henrich and Frederick Neuhouser. Mather goes beyond the readings of Henrich and Neuhouser and concludes that, as opposed to the more popular interpretation that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is “a system derived from an intuited principle of self-consciousness,” it is already, rather, “a science of the experience of consciousness.” In other words, Mather proposes a more materialist, that is, a more anthropological reading of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

The next three essays could be broadly placed under philosophical anthropology, inasmuch as they are concerned with human, all too human realities, such as, finitude, death, and ethical subjectivity. In “The Open,” Saitya Brata Das offers us a profound exploration of the relation between human finitude and the event (a notion that emerges in the paper as having a futural tonality). Das’ point of reference is the mortal creature called man—“an open existence”—a being that exists and whose being is inextricably related to the questioning of his very own existence. Part of man’s mortality is the fact that he thinks; man thinks of the beyond and the not yet. Das writes: “Thinking must affirm this ‘Not yet,’ this messianic, redemptive fulfillment, if it has to affirm this open-ness of existence itself; otherwise thinking is not

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worth troubling about.” This very open-ness of human existence, Das points out, has ontologically laid down the possibility of politics and metaphysics, by which we could perhaps understand as ways of narrating our story of finitude—the affirmation and ineffectual subversion of finitude. Towards the end of the essay, Das highlights the role of creative freedom ontologically conditioned by the open-ness of existence: “It is on the basis of what is not his capacity, mastery, or possession that mortality grants the mortals the gift of future.” The connection between Das’ piece and Jonathan Ray Villacorta’s “From Brokenness of Death to Refigured Forgiveness: Reflections on Ricoeur’s Fault, Narrativity, and Capable Human Being” is apparent since Villacorta’s essay is an inscription of a personal experience of an “other’s” death. As if echoing the existentialists, Villacorta begins by saying that human brokenness paves the way for man to reflect on his own finitude—the painful realization that, as opposed to the myth of unity and security, human life is incomplete, unnarrated, unreflected. Using Paul Ricoeur’s notions of faultedness, narrativity, and capable human being as explanatory tools, Villacorta paints a picture of the possibility of overcoming the sudden and painful death of a love one. Villacorta presents his dialectics of “refigured forgiveness” in a three-step cathartic process: 1) from refusal to consent, 2) from brokenness to narrative refiguration, and 3) the acknowledgment of necessity and the revision of hope. In an almost Nietzschean, or even Camusian, twist, Villacorta suggests that, “Life . . . becomes a hopeful and joyful Yes in the sadness of our finitude.” Meanwhile, the last essay of the Articles section speaks of the ethical life in light of Michel Foucault’s proposal of an “aesthetics of existence.” Wendyl M. Luna’s “Foucault and Ethical Subjectivity” revisits Foucault’s excursion into Greek culture and thought in order to expose Foucault’s move of de-centering modernity’s over confidence on the moral man. According to Luna, the Greeks championed the aesthetic way of life, a way of life fashioned after one’s *decision* to live a “beautiful life,” as opposed to the modern (now very common) practice of conforming to a prescribed set of moral codes that are often considered to be inviolable. Luna’s concern is the qualification of the aesthetics of existence as a “moral” way of life. Elaborating on the example given by Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure*, Luna speaks of the “ethical subjectivity of a Greek boy” who leads a moral life by his conscious practice of “moderation” which translates into a young boy’s potential to ethically live with others and to contribute to societal affairs as a moral agent. Luna focuses on the erotic dimension of the aesthetics of existence, he writes: “To preserve his honor and worth, the boy should mind his own conduct and use his pleasures well. If a boy misuses his pleasures, if he misbehaves and dishonors himself during his youth, he is deemed unworthy of governing the affairs of society.”

The *Denkbild* section features F. P. A. Demeterio’s second philosophical fiction, “Time Traveler: On Critical Theory in the Philippines II,” which is a spinoff from “Dreaming with a Hammer” which appeared in this journal’s June 2009 issue. Like its predecessor, “Time Traveler” is also an effort by Demeterio to introduce Critical Theory as a potent philosophical

stance in the diagnosis of social ills in the Philippines. “Time Traveler” is a story of the struggles of Charles Mendoza III, a student of Peter Mirano (the main protagonist of “Dreaming with a Hammer”). Through the character of Charles, Demeterio is able to narrate the continuing domination of capitalist culture and how, willy-nilly, the life of an ordinary working student is shaped and circumscribed by such culture. Demeterio provides us a realistic description of the plight of a young man struggling with social injustices in a third world country. Charles is a character who lives against the backdrop of the tension between a critical receptivity to these social injustices and the necessity of earning a living. Once more, Demeterio is successful in describing the normative conditions at play in the socio-political life of the Philippines.

Under the Book Review section is Kristian Urstad’s critical review of the latest reprint of George G. M. James’ *Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Philosophy*. Urstad notes James’ original intention of establishing “improved race relations in the world by revealing an underlying truth concerning the contribution of the African continent to the rest of the world.” The different chapters of the book are then given concise descriptions, thereby providing us a comprehensive reconstruction of the book’s structure and argument. Urstad, however, criticizes James for over-stating his case, for contriving the specious argument that philosophy is only possible during times of peace, and for his historical negligence. Hence, while the book is a plea for justice and reformation, *Stolen Legacy*, the reviewer argues, has very little (if any) scholarly value.

The Editorial Board would like to thank three individuals who offered assistance in the course of preparing this sixth edition of KRITIKE: Fr. Raymun Festin, SVD, Jeffrey Ocay (Silliman University), and Marella Mancenido (University of Santo Tomas). My gratitude also goes to all the invited referees for their wholehearted support, wisdom, and perseverance.