



# KRITIKE

An Online Journal of Philosophy

VOL. 18, NO. 1

ISSN 1908-7330

# K R I T I K E

An Online Journal of Philosophy

Volume 18, Number 1

March 2024

ISSN 1908-7330



**KRITIKE** is a member of the Asian Journals Network and is supported by the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Letters, and the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation, University of Santo Tomas

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## ABOUT THE COVER

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### “Reflection”

The cover photo is a vista of the Binondo-Intramuros Bridge taken from the Jones Bridge in Manila, yet what seems to be a hazy perspective is in fact a reflection, an inverted image. What such a vista offers is the split between reality’s true weight and the lightness of its reflection. The clarity of the photo’s lower half pulls our eyes down, while the blur above raises them once again. And perhaps this is what a reflection entails, a tension between light and reflection, clarity and obscurity, actuality and chance. What is it in a reflection – both in what is reflected and the act of reflecting – that draws us to it: its vagueness, how everything seems to be unsure? or perhaps the freedom of thought it offers, a chance for an experience to be remembered differently, maybe better, maybe sweeter? A reflection perhaps presents a better perspective; a heart benumbed by an agonizing, cold experience is brought alive by this unclear vista—an absence suddenly filled, a silence ruptured by a song of love. While the lights below our current view are eventually shut with the clarity offered by dawn, the glimmer of this hazy reflection eternally shines in one’s mind, awaiting its eventual reunion with reality at the moment of the sun’s adieu. A reflection could make all the difference.

*KRITIKE: An Online Journal of Philosophy*  
18:1 (March 2024)

Photograph by Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland, 2023  
Layout and caption by Kritike Editorial Board

# About the Journal

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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.

The word "kritike" is Greek from the verb "krinein," which means to discern. Hence, kritike means the art of discerning or the art of critical analysis. Any form of philosophizing is, in one way or another, a "critique" of something. Being critical, therefore, is an attitude common to all philosophical traditions. Indeed, the meaning of philosophy is critique and to be philosophical is to be critical.

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# K R I T I K E

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## Sa Pagitan ng Dalawang Imperyo: Pilosopiya at Politika sa *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino* ni Apolinario Mabini

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*E. San Juan, Jr.*

**Abstract :** In Mabini's discourse *La Revolucion Filipina* (LFR), a brown race emerges in the field of modern geopolitics. The work of Mabini is known as a narrative of the dialectical struggle between wisdom and conscience of a protagonist in a revolution against two empires, Spain and America, and an analysis of the various characters involved. In the dialectics of change between the external and internal, Mabini tells a story of the consciousness of a nation. The classical Western conception of natural law is applied to the concrete situation of struggle of the colored slave. Mabini pioneers the critique of American racism and the contradiction of classes within the limits of the political economy of society. Mabini features the dignity and rights of the oppressed working class in the theater of warfare. Mabini's work can be considered a document of the Filipino nation that struggled in order to demonstrate its peculiar virtue: the spirit of freedom of a race that inspires human dignity and just honor.

**Keywords:** revolution, natural law, racism, colonialism

*"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."*

– Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte"

*"... Nuestro humilde entender, tiene por unico objeto y termino final de sus aspiraciones mantener viva y fulgurante, en la Oceania, la antorcha de la libertad y civilizacion, para que, iluminando la noche tenebrosa en que hoy yace, envilecida y degradada la raza malaya, muestra a esta el camino de su emancipacion social ... Nuestra revolucion ... que puede constituir en dia no muy lejano el dique insuperable contra sus ambiciones desbordadas." [Sa aming abang paghatol, ang singular na adhika ng himagsikan at ultimong pakay ng ating mithiin ay nakatutok sa pag-iral at pagpapatingkad sa Oceania, ng sulo ng kalayaan at sibilisasyon, at sa gayon ang apoy na lumiliwanag sa gabing madilim ng ating pagkaalipusta bilang lahing Malayo, ay siyang maghahawan ng landas tungo sa liberasyong*

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*panlipunan. Ang ating rebolusyon ay puwedeng magsilbing tambak o pilapil laban sa kanilang mapanirang ambisyon.]”*

– Apolinario Mabini, “Cual es la verdadera mision de la revolucion filipina”

*“The American people, who set the world an example in waging a revolutionary war against feudal slavery, now find themselves in the latest, capitalist stage of wage-slavery to a handful of multimillionaires, and find themselves playing the role of hired thugs who, for the benefit of wealthy scoundrels, throttled the Philippines in 1898 on the pretext of “liberating” them, and are throttling the Russian Socialist Republic in 1918 on the pretext of “protecting” it from the Germans.”*

– V. I. Lenin, “Letter to American Workers”

**P**alask na tawaging “Utak ng Rebolusyon” ang paralitikong bayani. Kilala si Apolinario Mabini na arkitekto ng Malolos Konstitusyon at taga-payo ni Heneral Emilio Aguinaldo simula Hunyo 12, 1898, nang siya’y dumating sa Kawit, Cavite, nakasakay sa duyan galing sa Los Baños, Laguna. Hiniling ni Aguinaldo ang kaniyang tulong sa pagtatag ng rebolusyonaryong pamahalaan noong Hunyo 23, 1898. Nilikha niya ang mga dekreto sa pagbuo ng gobyernong lokal sa probinsiya’t munisipyo. Ang unang borador ng Konstitusyon na pinag-usapan sa Kongreso sa Malolos ay nagbuhat sa kaniyang mga panukala sa *Programa constitucional de la republica filipina*<sup>1</sup> at *El verdadero decalogo*.<sup>2</sup>

Pangunahing protagonista si Mabini sa teatro ng rebolusyonaryong pamahalaan. Naglingkod siya bilang unang Ministro sa gabinete ni Aguinaldo at sekretaryo ng Kawanihang Panlabas hanggang Mayo 9, 1899. Sumingit ang hidwaan ng prinsipalya at anak-pawis; nagbitiw si Mabini sa gobyerno. Hinirang si Mabini na maging Punong Huwes ng Korte Suprema noong Agosto 23, 1899. Di naglaon, nadakip na siya ng mga Amerikano sa Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija noong Disyembre 10, 1899, isinuplong di umano ng mga kuhila.<sup>3</sup> Nabilanggo sila (kasama ni Mabini ang mga kapatid) sa Calle Anda, Intramuros. Bagamat nakalaya sila noong Setyembre 23, 1900, sanhi sa masibasib na polemika niya laban sa administrasyong Amerikano, ipinatapon si Mabini sa Guam noong Enero 7, 1901. Sa panahong nakapiit siya sa Guam hanggang Pebrero 26, 1902, sinulat ni Mabini ang mahistralyang akda, *La revolucion filipina* (LRF, sa susunod).

Samantala, umiinog ang mundo. Sa panahong nakapiit si Mabini sa Guam, kasagsagan ang giyera ng grupong Boer laban sa Inglatera sa Timog Aprika, away ng mga taga-Europa na sumupil sa mga tribung Aprikano. At

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<sup>1</sup> Apolinario Mabini, “Cual es la verdadera mision de la revolucion filipina?,” in *La revolucion filipina, con otros documentos de la epoca*, ed. by Teodoro Kalaw (Manila, 1931).

<sup>2</sup> Apolinario Mabini, “Mabini’s Decalogue for Filipinos” (Washington, DC: Philippines Press Bureau, 1922). Tingnan: Cesar A. Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1960), 126–136.

<sup>3</sup> Gregorio Zaide, “Apolinario Mabini,” in *Great Filipinos in History* (Manila: Verde Book Store, 1970), 284–287.



isang taong pagkapanaw niya, pumutok ang giyera ng Ruso at Hapon (1904–1905) na babala ng napipintong krisis ng lumang orden.

### Konstelasyong Internasyonal

Walang ordeng pampulitika di nagmamaliw. Nagsimulang magunaw ang kolonyalismo mula rebelyon ni Tupac Amaru sa Peru (1780) hanggang pagtiwalag ng Haiti mula sa Pransiya (1804). Kumalat na rin ang mga tagumpay laban sa Espanya nina Miguel Hidalgo, Simon Bolivar, at San Martin. Ipinanganak si Mabini isang taon bago magtapos ang giyera sibil sa Estados Unidos (1865). Naunang napalaya ang mga busabos sa Rusya noong 1861 at mga Aprikano noong 1868. Nabuksan ang Suez Canal noong 1869 at nabuo ang Proletaryong Komuna ng Paris noong 1871 nang siya’y tinuturuan ni Padre Valerio Malabanan sa Lipa, Batangas. Sa loob ng panahong nag-aaral si Mabini sa Maynila (1881–1895), naging bansang nagsasarili ang Italya at Alemanya, habang sinakop ng Inglatera ang Ehipto noong 1882. Kahindik-hindik na masaker ng mga Indiyan sa Wounded Knee noong 1890, sumunod ang segregasyon sa U.S. paglapat ng *Plessy v. Ferguson*, at tuluyang nabigo ang Rekonstruksiyon.<sup>4</sup> Tiyak na batid ito nina Mabini at ng mga Propagandista.

Maiging mauunawaan ang kaisipan ni Mabini kung sisiyasatin natin ang ugnayan ng tao at kapaligiran sa diskurso ng LRF. Sa panimula, nais kong ilahad ang ilang susubuking kuro-kuro. Pagmuniin natin ang tatlong pithaya ni Mabini: 1) Ibuod sa isang makabuluhang naratibo ang sapin-saping kapaligiran ng himagsikan laban sa kolonyalismong Espanyol; 2) Dulutan ng etiko-politikong dalumat ang naisakatuparan ng katutubong komunidad sa pakikibaka tungo sa liberasyon ng bagong bansa; at 3) Ipamukha sa bagong mananakop, ang Estados Unidos, na hindi masusugpo at malulupig ang diwa’t dignidad ng Filipinong lumaban sa dalawang puwersang nagtangkang patayin ang espiritu ng bayan.

Magkakaugnay ang mga balak o tangkang ito. Inalalayan ng isang pilosopiya ng kasaysayan na higit pang masaklaw at malalim kaysa sa kambal na komentaryo ni Rizal sa “Ang Katamaran ng mga Filipino” (1890) at “Filipinas sa Loob ng Isang Siglo” (1889–1890). Hindi natarok nina Rizal at Mabini ang pinakasentral na dinamiko ng ekonomyang industriyal: ang walang habas na akumulasyon ng kapital/tubo. Nagoyo sila sa pormalistikong padron ng “*laissez-faire*” komersiyo at karapatang bumili at ipagbili ang malayang lakas-paggawa. Umasa silang hindi magiging imperyalista ang Estados Unidos, bagamat tahasang imperyalista na ang

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<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 1–33.

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Inglatera noon pa mang lupigin ang Irlandia at sakupin ang kontinente ng Norte Amerika.

### **Ekstra-ordinaryong Pagkakataon ng Kaisipan**

Bago sa lahat, nais kong idiin ang sitwasyon ni Mabini nang kathain niya ang LRF na pinalalim ng ilang aspektong humubog sa balangkas ng diskurso.

Una, ang pagkatapon ni Mabini sa Guam ay parusa sa patuloy na pagtutol niya sa dahas ng Estados Unidos sa pagsugpo sa hangaring lumaya ng bayan, batay sa batas natural at *jus gentium* na laging batay sa dahas. Nailukob ang konsepto ng batas natural sa mas malawak na antas na naipaliwanag ng pilosopong si Jacques Maritain, kabilang ang ontolohikal, ideyal at gnoseolohikal aspekto, sa kaniyang librong *Man and the State*. Nadulutan ng kontekstong historikal ang metapisikong konsepto ng likas na esensiya ng tao—ang rason o kakayahang mangatuwiran, karapatang mabuhay at lumaya, obligasyon, atbp.—na unang natutuhan ni Mabini sa iskolastikong edukasyon sa San Juan de Letran at Unibersidad ng Santo Tomas.

Pangalawa, ang LRF ay bungang matagumpay ng pagkatalo. Bagamat sumuko na si Heneral Aguinaldo, patuloy pa rin ang digmaan. Samantala, nakaipit si Mabini sa puwersang rebolusyonaryo (si Heneral Malvar ay lumaban hanggang Abril 16, 1902) at puwersang mananakop, kaya mahihinuha na ang LRF ay testimonyo ng isang mandirigmang aktibo sa gitna ng kabatirang nagapi ang rebolusyonaryong pamahalaan. Paralitiko man ang katawan, masigla ang diwa at guniguni. Sinikap ipahayag ni Mabini ang bagong konsepto ng soberanya (na naisusog sa diskurso ng mga humanistikong pantas, nina Montesquieu, Locke at Rousseau) na umuusong sa pag-ibig sa kapuwa inaapi, hindi sa isang partido o pangkat. Inatasan si Mabini na bumuo ng gobyernong gagabay sa pag-aalsa, na naisakatuparan sa *La Ordenanzas de la Revolucion* at *Programa Constitucional e la Republica Filipina* na siyang lapat sa krisis, at wala pang tunay na representatibong lehislatura dahil sa imperatibong limitasyon ng giyera.

Pangatlo, masalimuot ang proyektong mapagpalaya sa ilalim ng ordeng merkantilista (Espanya) at monopolyo-kapitalista (U.S.). Sa konteksto ng tunggalian ng mga uring panlipunan, ang digmaang pang-maniobra ay katambal lagi ng digmaang pamposisyon, ayon kay Antonio Gramsci. Sa panig ni Mabini, nararapat nang gamitin ang posisyonal na estratehiya sanhi ng paglansag sa armadong lakas ng Republika, bukod pa sa taksil na oportunistang ng ilustrado at kamalian ng liderato. Ang kakayahang lagumin ang kasaysayan ng rebolusyon ay isang sandata ng politikang posisyonal o

ligal—hindi laging tuwid ang landas ng pakikibaka, paliku-liko at di-sinasadyang galaw at pihit. Naikintal ang penomenong iyon sa LFR.

Muli, nais kong itampok muli ang paunawang ito. Ang mapanganib na klima ng panahong mula madakip si Mabini (Disyembre 10, 1899) at mapalaya mula sa Guam at mamatay (Mayo 13, 1903)—kulang sa apat na taon ng komprontasyon at repleksiyon—ang panaklong ng kuwadro ng interpretasyon ng LFR. Walang kahawig ang sitwasyon ni Mabini at ng rebolusyonaryong hukbo ni Aguinaldo sa kasaysayang pandaigdigan sapagkat tayo ang unang kolonyang lumaban sa dalawang imperyo, na siya ring nagsudlong sa anti-imperyalistang pagpupunyagi ng Katipunan at ng demokratiko-sosyalistang proyektong nagsilbing inspirasyon sa henerasyon ng mga Sakdalista, Huk, at Bagong Hukbong Bayan.

### Sangandaan ng Pagbabanyuhay

Natuklasan ni Mabini na nakapuwesto siya sa pagitan ng dalawang epoka: sa isang panig, ang wakas ng imperyong Espanya sa Asya, at sa kabilang panig, ang umpisa ng imperyong U.S. sa Asya-Pasipikong rehiyon. Isang katangi-tanging pagkakataon. Si Mabini lamang—hindi si Rizal o iba pang *ilustrado*—ang nailagay ng tadhana sa puwang ng ito. Si Mabini ang naipit sa dalawang imperyong nagsalpuhan sa tapat ng lagusan na humahati sa kasaysayan. Si Mabini ang saksi sa pag-ikot ng bayan mula sa baytang ng tatlong daang taon ng kadiliman tungo sa baytang ng modernidad, mula sa kabihasnang mediyebal tungo sa yugto ng kapitalismong monopolyo-pampinansiya.

Samakatwid, maisusog ang tesis na ito. Sa perspektibang historikal, ang LRF ay testimonya sa pagkamulat ng kolektibong sensibilidad sa partikular na tungkuling itinakda ng kasaysayan sa lahing Malayo na umaklas laban sa kapangyarihan ng Kanluran at nagdeklara ng kasarinlan noong Hunyo 12, 1898. Ang sumusunod ay elaborasyon ng proposisyong naihain dito.

Totoo na maraming digmaang inilunsad ng mga katutubo sa Tsina, Indonesya, Indya, at Indo-Tsina laban sa Portugesa, Espanya, Ulandes, Pransiya. Ngunit ang Pilipinas lamang ang nagtagumpay sa pagpupunyaging maitatag ang isang republikang nakatindig sa demokratiko't mapagpalayang prinsipyo minana sa Kaliwanagan (*Enlightenment*) sa Europa. Hindi ito puro, hinaluan ng mga doktrina't praktika na hango sa katutubong kultura/kostumbre ng mga sinaunang bayani, tulad nina Lapu-Lapu, Soliman, Lakandula, Tamblot, Dagohoy, Diego Silang, atbp. Isang sintesis o pagsasanib ng tradisyong Kanluran at Silangan ang nagawa ni Mabini. Bago suriin ang LRF bilang namumukod na testamento ng ating pagluwal bilang isang makabagong bansa, nais kong

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salungguhitan ang makabuluhang repleksiyon na naisakatuparan ni Mabini: ang pagtampok sa rasismo bilang pangitain-pananaw, sistematikong praktika ng mga institusyon. Ito ang katangian ng bagong panginoong banyaga.

Ang Digmaang Filipino–Amerikano (1899–1913) ay isang rasistang pakikipagtagisan. Magugunita na sa huling hati ng ika-19 na siglo, nangyari ang gyera sibil sa Amerika (1861–1865). Bagamat nanalo ang kapitalistang Hilaga at napalaya ang dating esklabong Aprikano, nakuhang maipamalagi ng mga panginoong piyudal ang segregasyon sa buong lipunan. Panahon din iyon ng pagsupil sa mga katutubong Amerikano, ang mga Indiyos. Ang estrukturang rasismo batay sa dugo at kulay ay naging bahagi ng institusyon hanggang dekada 1960 kung saan napayagang bumuto ang dating mga alipin, mga lahing-may-kulay. Naging biktima tayo ng rasistang makinarya ng sistemang herarkiya-kapitalista.

Hindi katakataka na maraming upisyal ng tropang Amerikano ay beterano sa pagsugpo sa tribung Indiyos. Maraming sundalong puti ang nagturing sa Filipino na “*nigger*” o barbarikong Indyo. Pinagtanggol ang pagsalakay sa kapuluan bilang isang *mission civilizatrice* ni McKinley para sa mga di-sibilisadong bayan. Paliwanag ni McKinley sa pagsakop ng kapuluan: “... *we could not leave them [Filipino] to themselves—they were unfit for self-government ... there was nothing else to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.*”<sup>5</sup> Umaalingawngaw ang apolohiya ng “White Man’s Burden” ni Rudyard Kipling.<sup>6</sup>

Nang sumabog ang digmaan noong Pebrero 4, 1899, nagproklama si Presidente Aguinaldo ng mga damdamin at ideyang ipinasa ni Mabini bilang tagapayo. Tatlong tema ang maitatanghal natin na pundamental sa kaisipan ni Mabini. Una, ang pita ng bayan na itakwil ang pagka-alipin at ibandila ang dangal at pambansang integridad: Pangalawa, idiniin ang “*measureless pride of the American government,*” ang kawalan ng respeto sa kaaway na trinatong hayup. At pangatlo, ang tiwala sa Diyos/Kalikasan—ang magkatambal na konseptong hango kay Spinoza at mga turo ng mga pilosopo ng *Renaissance* at *Enlightenment* sa Europa—na siyang garantiya na hindi sayang ang sakripisyo ng taumbayan: “*Providence always has means and reserve and prompt help for the weak in order that they may not be annihilated by the strong, that justice*

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<sup>5</sup> D.B. Schirmer and Stephen Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* (Boston: South End Press, 1987). Tungol sa imperyalismo, tingnan: Henry Graff, “American Imperialism,” in *The Columbia History of the World*, ed. by John Garraty and Peter Gay (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 932–938.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2006), 11–12.

*may be done and humanity progress ... Nature has never despised generous sacrifices.”<sup>7</sup>*

Dagdag sa proposisyong nabanggit, iginiit ni Mabini na sa digmaan, kailangan laging sumunod sa katwiran, sa rason o intelihensiya, na sandigan ng pakikibaka: *“But remember that in order ... that our ends may be gained, it is indispensable that we adjust our actions to the rules of law and of right, learning to triumph over our enemies and to conquer our evil passions.”<sup>8</sup>* Taglay nito ang himig o tonong personal ni Mabini na masasalat din sa dalawang aksiyon o manipestasyon ng matalinong pagninilay sa mithiin at lunggati ng rebolusyon.

### **Pagbabangon ng Diwang Mapagpalaya**

Rasyonalismong humanistiko-sekular ang tumatanglaw sa diwa ni Mabini. Ang unang patibay sa lohika ng paralitiko ay maaaninaw sa sagot niya kay Heneral Franklin Bell, ang Amerikanong naglunsad ng taktikang “reconcentrado” o *hamletting* sa Batangas, isang bersiyon ng “Injun War” nina Heneral Arthur McArthur at Adna Chafee. Malupit ang tugon nila sa gerilyang estratehiyang ginamit upang makadaig sa modernong teknolohiya ng kalaban. Pahayag ni Bell na dapat sumuko na ang mga Filipino dahil hindi sila mananalo. Sagot ni Mabini na kung dahas lamang ang masusunod, dapat burahin na ang walang-kamatayang prinsipyo ng moralidad at hustisya, at ibalik ang primitibong gawi ng sangkatauhan. Hindi makatuwiran at makatao ang tropang dayuhan, giit ni Mabini.<sup>9</sup>

Sang-ayon dito ang maraming historyador, kabilang na sina Gabriel Kolko, Howard Zinn, Stuart Miller, Kramer, atbp., na kaipala’y elaborasyon lamang ng unang pansin ni Richard Sheridan noong 1900: ang kampanya ng U.S. ay *“war of extermination”* na sintomas ng *“blood madness.”* Sinipat ni Sheridan ang larangan: *“The Americans in forty-eight hours slaughtered more defenceless people than did the Spaniards in two centuries.”<sup>10</sup>*

Dugtong ni Mabini sa sagot niya kay Bell, ang mga batas ng digmaan:

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<sup>7</sup> Emilio Aguinaldo, “To the Filipino People,” in *The Philippine Reader*, ed. by D.B. Schirmer and Stephen Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 20–21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Tungkol sa barbarikong trato ng U.S. sa komunidad, konsutahin ang dokumentasyon ni Miller. Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines 1899–1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 196–252.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Filipino Martyrs* (Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1970/1990), 168–169. “Criminal aggression” ang tukoy ni Richard Hofstadter. Tingnan: Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 161.

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*persuade the weak people to make use of the guerilla and ambush system, especially when it comes to defending their homes and their freedoms against an invasion .... Those very laws implacably order the weak people to defend their threatened honor and natural rights under pain of being called uncivilized and incapable of understanding the responsibilities of a proper government ... Force as the only factor used in the solution of all kinds of questions among rational beings is not only criminal itself but it is also the cause of all the miseries and ruin that have afflicted humanity.*<sup>11</sup>

Tumanggi si Mabini na matututong makapamahala ng gobyerno ang Filipino kung susunod sa utos ng mananakop. Baligho ang pangako ng Amerikano na maipagtatanggol ng Filipino ang dangal at hustisya sa bisa ng dahas. Sumbat niya: *“The Filipinos would not have faith in the promises of the American authorities while the latter pin them down to the cruel alternative of dishonor or death.”*<sup>12</sup> Bakit matindi ang protesta ni Mabini?

Alalahanin natin na para kay Mabini, nagsimula ang digmaang mapagpalaya nang dumating ang kongkistador Legaspi-Urdaneta noong ika-16 na siglo. Walang patid ang rebelyon ng mga kolonisado hanggang 1898. Matatag na ang paninindigan ni Mabini na nagwagi na ang rebolusyon buhat nang ilunsad ang Republika noong Hunyo 1898. Ang maikli ngunit matimyas na danas ng kalayaan ay bahagi na ng kasaysayan, hindi na ito maikakatkat sa puso ng bawat Filipino sa harap ng buong daigdig. Ito ang pinakamatuturang mensahe ni Mabini hindi lamang sa tropang sumisikil kundi sa buong mundo. Nakapaghari ang Espanya sa loob ng tatlong dantaon dahil ang mga katutubo ay ignorante at namuhay sila ng walang *“consciousness of national solidarity.”* Subalit ngayon, deklara ni Mabini: *“Today it is different; today the Filipinos share in the life of other nations and they have tasted, even if only for a short time and in an incomplete manner, the joys of an independent life.”*<sup>13</sup> Timbangin nating maigi ang bigat ng apirmasyong ito, sentro ng grabidad na mananalaytay sa argumento ng LRF, senyas ng mapagpalayang espiritu ng bayaning kumakatawan sa komunidad.

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<sup>11</sup> Apolinario Mabini, “In Response to General Bell,” in *Philippine Literature: A History and an Anthology*, ed. by Bienvenido Lumbea and Cynthia Lumbea (Manila: National Bookstore, 1982), 98–99. Tungkol sa komprontasyon, tingnan: Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 134–136.

<sup>12</sup> Apolinario Mabini, “In Response to General Bell,” 10.

<sup>13</sup> Mabini, “Mabini’s Decalogue,” 99. Tingnan: E. San Juan, “Apolinario Mabini: Paghamon sa Tadhana,” in *Kontra-Modernidad* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2019).

## Pagpapasiyang Radikal

Ang pangalawang ebidensiya ng dinamikong perspetikba ni Mabini ay masusulyapan sa diskursong lumabas sa *The North American Review*, Enero 1900, sa wikang Ingles: “A Filipino Appeal to the People of the United States.” Unang nalathala ito sa *La Independencia* (Hulyo 21, 1899). Malagablab na ang putukan, walang habas ang “*war of extermination*” ng U.S. Nilikha ni Mabini ang madetalyeng naratibo kung paano ang pagkakaibigan nina Aguinaldo at Dewey, sa umpisa, ay natulak sa madugong patayan. Layon ni Mabini na sulsulan ang “*feelings of humanity*” ng madlang Amerikano upang wakasan ang “*mutual destruction of two peoples who ought to make common cause in contributing to the consolidation of civilization and the progress of the world.*”<sup>14</sup> Magiting at bukas-palad ang tikas-disposisyon ni Mabini.

Walang bisa iyon. Malapastangan ang trato ng tropang Amerikano sa mga Filipino, sundalo man o sibilyan, ulat ni Mabini. Sa likod ng napagkasunduan, sumuko ang mga Kastila sa Amerikanong hukbo—isang pagtataksil. Mimetikong prologo ito sa pagtalikod ng mga ilustrado sa kanilang inakong responsibilidad sa bayan, isang *peripeteia* (pagbaligdtad) sa trahedya ng rebolusyon, na sinundan ng *anagnorisis* (pagkilala) sa kakulangan ng liderato. Sa pagbagsak ng tabing sa teatro, ang *pathos* o pagdadalamhati at pagluluksa ay iniluhog ni Mabini sa “Kongklusyon” ng LFR: pakikiramay sa mga nasawi at panimdim sa pangakong matutubos ang lahat sa posibilidad ng pagbubukang-liwayway.

Katotohanan ang nakataya. Kabulaanan ang sakdal na ang mga katutubo ang may kasalanan sa pagsabog ng away, paninindigan ni Mabini. Sapagkat natuto na ang bayan sa ilalim ng Espanya, nagbanyuhay ang kalooban: “*The Filipino people, educated by long sufferings during the protracted dominion of Spain, have learned to reflect and to judge things calmly, even in the midst of great excitement.*”<sup>15</sup> Hindi lahat ng tao sa Amerika ay masama kaya hindi niya kinokondena ang lahat. Naniniwala ang mga Filipino, pagsusuma ni Mabini, na “*the popular Government of America will not sink to the level of the theocratic government of Spain, and that the spirit of justice, now obscured by ambition, will again shine in their firmament, as the civic virtues of their ancestors shine in their history and traditions.*”<sup>16</sup> Nasilip ni Mabini ang positibong aspekto sa negatibong lambong ng giyerang kakilakilabot—ang diyalektikang takbo ng mga kontradiksiyong nasakyan ng kaniyang intuwisyon at kabatiran.

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<sup>14</sup> Apolinario Mabini, “A Filipino Appeal to the People of the United States,” in *The North American Review*, 170 (January 1900), 54.

<sup>15</sup> Mabini, “A Filipino Appeal,” 60.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

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Tulad ni Rizal sa kaniyang puna na ang republikanong tradisyon sa U.S. ay hindi magiging imperyalista.<sup>17</sup> Magilas at maantig ang kumbiksyon ni Mabini na ang Bathala ay pumapatnubay sa katubusan ng bansa: “*The Filipino people are struggling in defense of their liberties and independence with the same tenacity and perseverance as they have shown in their sufferings. They are animated by an unalterable faith in the justice of their cause and they know that if the American people will not grant them justice, there is a Providence which punishes the crimes of nations as well as of individuals.*”<sup>18</sup> Nasa masang nagtitiwala ang kaligtasan, pahiwatig ni Mabini—optimistikong talino, pesimistikong saloobin?

### Pambungad sa Propetikong Naratibo

Mula’t sapul, bastos na ang trato sa Filipino ng mga Amerikanong upisyal. Obserbasyon ni Samuel Tan na nalason na ang relasyon ng dalawang pangkat dahil sa diskriminasyon at “*prejudice*” ng mga Amerikano tungo sa mga “*insurgents*”—hindi patas sapagkat panginooon na ang mga bagong salta.<sup>19</sup> Napuntirya ito ni Mabini sa bukana ng pakikihamok. Masisilip din ang rasistang disposisyon ng mga Anglosahong heneral sa pagbalewala ni Heneral Arthur McArthur sa ideya ni Mabini na prayoridad ang kasarinlan. Walang tigil ang kritisismo ni Mabini sa bagong mananakop kaya ipinatapon siya (at kapanalig tulad ni Hen. Artemio Ricarte) sa Guam—isang teroristang estratehiyang kasuklam-suklam. Tandisang kontra si Mabini sa mga ilustradong oportunistang (Paterno, Buencamino, Pardo de Tavera, Legarda, atbp.) na kagyat nagpaalipin sa kaaway sa gitna ng madugong labanan.<sup>20</sup>

Nagulat nga si Mabini sa walang hiyang panghihimasok ng mga bagong panginooon. Naglabas ng manifesto ang Schurman Commission na hinirang ni McKinley pagkaraang mairatipika ang Tratado ng Paris. Walang pakundangang ipinagbili ng Espanya ang soberanya ng kolonya (di na nila hawak) sa halagang 20 milyong piso.<sup>21</sup> Sinalungat ni Mabini ang lehitimasyon ng tratado: wala nang awtoridad ang Espanya sa teritoryong nabawi na ng mga katutubo. Liban sa Intramuros, wala nang kapangyarihan ang kolonisador upang lumagda sa tratado.

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<sup>17</sup> Tingnan sa huling bahagi ng “Filipinas Sa Loob ng Isang Siglo.” Jose Rizal, *Political and Historical Writings* (Manila: National Historical Commission of the Philippines, 2011), 161.

<sup>18</sup> Mabini, “A Filipino Appeal,” 60.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel K. Tan, *The Filipino–American War, 1899–1913* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2002), 33–34.

<sup>20</sup> W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), 51.

<sup>21</sup> Renato Constantino, *A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), 220–221.



Dapat tandaan na sa pagkilatis ni Mabini, mula't sapul sa pagdating nina Legaspi at Urdaneta, nasadlak na tayo sa walang patawad na digmaan—kongkistador laban sa mga indihenyo/katutubo. Saksi ang malimit na insureksiyon sa buong arkipelago. Tumingkad ito nang manghimasok ang U.S. Batas ng digmaan ang naghari sanhi sa paglabag ng mananakop sa sekularisadong batas-natural na nagtatakda ng pagkakapantay-pantay ng lahat ng nilalang.<sup>22</sup> Tiyak na malaki ang impluwensiya ng masoneria at pagsuob sa prinsipyo ng fraternidad at mapagkawanggawa sa kaisipan ni Mabini.<sup>23</sup> Susog na kwalipikasyon ito sa opinyon na kosmopolitan at transnasyonal si Mabini tulad ni Randolph Bourne.<sup>24</sup> Tulad ng mga kasamang propagandista, talastas nila ang kilusang liberasyon sa Mehiko at Haiti, sampu ng mga tagumpay nina Bolivar at San Martin sa Timog Amerika—ekstra-teritoryal na pakikiisa kontra sa imperyong Espanyol at U.S.

Pakutyang pinagalitan ni Mabini ang sakim na administrasyon ni McKinley:

*What a spectacle to see that at the end of the century called enlightened and civilized, a people who know how to love their sovereignty and proud of their sense of justice now would use their accumulated force to wrest from a weak people the very rights which in their case they believe to be inherent in natural law!*<sup>25</sup>

Alam ni Mabini ang motibong pangekonomiya ng kapitalismo: ang dominasyon sa pagmonopolyo ng industriya sa Filipinas at subordinasyon ng lahat; *“thus reduce us to the category of tenants and laborers and to make serfs of us.”*<sup>26</sup> Talikdan itong kapalarang bunsod ng tunggalian ng mga uri, panawagan ni Mabini.<sup>27</sup>

## Interbensiyon ng Budhi

Binabalaan ni Mabini ang komunidad na huwag magpatukso sa mga pangako ng bagong panginoon. Maalab niyang binigyan-pansin at idiniin

<sup>22</sup> Tingnan ang komentaryo ni Majul sa Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, 85–90.

<sup>23</sup> Reynaldo Fajardo, “A Masonic Regime in the Philippines,” in *Toward the First Asian Republic*, ed. by Elmer Ordonez (Manila: Philippine Centennial Commission, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Oscar Campomanes, “La Revolucion Filipina in the Age of Empire,” in *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, 18 (2007).

<sup>25</sup> Apolinario Mabini, “The Struggle for Freedom,” in *Filipino Nationalism 1872–1970* ed. by Teodoro Agoncillo (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974), 231.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Hinggil sa saray ng mga uri tulad ng prinsipalya, tingnan: Nicholas Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1971), 218–219.

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ang “*race prejudice*” ng U.S. na pinatunayan ng sistematikong paggamit ng “*water cure*” at kolektibong parusa sa “*hamletting*.” Masaklap ang mapasuko sa Amerikano:

*We were equal with the Spaniards before the laws of Spain, but we never obtained justice in any part without resorting first to savage ways and without an interminable series of humiliation, for wherever we turn we are being pursued by race prejudice, which is deep, cruel, and implacable in the North American Anglo-Saxon ... Annexation, whatever form it may take, will result in our eternal slavery by a people so different from us in manners and customs, a people who do not want to see a brown people beside them, and a people from whom we cannot separate without resorting to armed conflict.*<sup>28</sup>

Nais kong idako ang malay ng mambabasa sa napakaimportanteng mensahe ni Mabini. Matalab pa rin ang dating nito hanggang sa kasalukuyan, o lalo na sa gitna ng krisis ngayon. Sa bilang ng mga bayaning nakibaka, si Mabini lamang ang malinaw na nagpursiging itampok ang mabangis na ideolohiya ng “*white supremacy*” at mga institusyong kaakibat nito, halimbawa ang “*U.S. counterinsurgency strategy*” laban sa tinagurian nilang “*terorismo*.” Nagsilbing sandigan ito ng imperyalismong U.S. Naipataw at napalaganap ito sa “*anti-terrorism law*” ng mga rehimeng umiral sa atin at nagpapatuloy pa hanggang ngayon.

Walang humpay ang panawagan ni Mabini na ipagtanggol ang kalayaan at soberanya ng Filipinas—ang masidhing panata ng kaniyang buhay:

*If we lay down our arms, our children will be in bondage ...; they will inherit from us nothing but misery and struggle which they will be forced to suffer if we do not continue the present war. If you wallow in poverty, chained to slavery. And then you come to think of what your children will be, do you not think it is sweeter to die?*<sup>29</sup>

Alinsunod sa daloy ng kaniyang isip at damdamin, mahuhugot ang isang punto-de-bistang mapanuri sa mga kontradiksiyong pulitikal at

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<sup>28</sup> Mabini, “The Struggle for Freedom,” 233–234.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 231–232.

ideolohikal na sinuri at pinahalagahan sa kadluang utak ng “dakilang paralitiko.”

May saysay o signipikasyon ba ang kasaysayan? Historyador ba o taga-salansan lamang ng anekdota at karanasang personal ang tungkulin ni Mabini sa LRF? Anong papel ang ginanap ng iba’t ibang tauhan sa dulang inilatag niya? May kahulugan ba ang buong akda? Masusubaybayan natin ito sa paghimay sa estruktura at balangkas ng mga *leitmotif* sa kaniyang obra maestra. Ungkatin natin bakit kailangang magkaroon ng suri at pagtatasa sa mga pangyayaring sangkot sa buhay ni Mabini. Hindi ba sapat na umasa na lamang sa empirikal na paglikom ng mga pangyayari sa isang kronolohikang katalogo? Bakit kailangan pang bulatlatin at kilatesin ang bawat insidente at mga protagonistang kalahok doon? Sa madaling salita, ano ang pangunahing adhika ni Mabini sa paghubog ng akdang nabanggit?

### Balangkas ng Pagsisiyasat

Sa unang masid, sapantaha nating ito’y mga gunita o memorya ng isang dating upisyal sa gobyerno. Marahil, isang kronika ng mga pangyayari mula 1896 hanggang sumuko si Aguinaldo. Angkin ng awtor na karanasan niya ito, tala ng mga nangyari sa kaniyang buhay bilang protagonista sa naganap na himagsikan at isa sa natirang buhay. Sa panimulang pahayag, isiniwalat na ni Mabini ang lohika ng kaniyang testimonya bilang isa sa tinaguriang “*irreconcilable*” na tumangging sumumpa sa awtoridad ng Amerikano sa pakikisanib sa damdamin ng sambayanang lumalaban. Samakatwid, ang *physiognomy* ng karakter ni Mabini bilang makabayang intelektwal ay nakasandig sa malingap na pakikiisa sa kagustuhan ng bayan. Iyon ang bukal o batis ng talab ng kaniyang kaisipan bilang kinatawan ng bayang umaklas at tumindig sa sariling bait at konsiyensiya. Nang humupa ang digmaan at sumuko si Aguinaldo, umayon at umangkop din si Mabini sa daloy na pakikitalad ng sambayanan, sa paraang mapayapa.

Katotohanan, hindi personal na hangarin o hinuhang lunggati, ang primaryang gabay ng kaniyang budhi. Iginiit ni Mabini ang saligan ng kaniyang pulitikang programa: “... sa tingin ko hindi mga pansariling ambisyon kundi ang pagkabigo ng mga adhikain ng sambayanan ang sanhi kung bakit naganap ang Rebolusyon.”<sup>30</sup> Dangal ng pagkataong taglay ang integridad ang ipinagpugayan niya bilang basehan ng birtud. Nais niyang magsilbing batayan iyon ng pagtitiwala ng taumbayan. Pagtatapat niya: “Tulad ng sinumang kapuwa ko tao, may pinananaligan akong mga katotohanan na gumagabay sa aking budhi o nagsisilbing pamantayan ng

<sup>30</sup> Apolinario Mabini, *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino*, trans. by Michael Coroza (Manila: Aklat ng Bayan, 2015), xix.

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aking mga pagkilos ... Ang panananampalatayang ito ang nagtuturo sa akin na sa bisa ng likas na kalakaran ng mga bagay, nasa sambayanan mismo ang lahat ng kapangyarihang nakasasaklaw rito.”<sup>31</sup> Sa pakiwari ni Mabini, batay sa batas ng kalikasan (*natural law*), nasa sa masa/sambayanan ang awtoridad; sa orihinal, “*toda autoridad sobre el pueblo reside en el pueblo mismo por ley natural.*”<sup>32</sup> Napagpasiyahan niyang salungatin o talikdan ang anumang obligasyon na “*contraria a la ley natural*”<sup>33</sup>—labag sa batas ng kalikasan.

Hayag na alagad si Mabini ng mga simulain ng Kaliwanagan (*Enlightenment*) na nagmula sa *Batas* ni Cicero at mga pilosopong Stoiko. Tiwala siya na isinilang ang tao para sa katarungan, *recta ratio*, law as “the expression of right reason in action.”<sup>34</sup> Kasaliw ng karapatan at kalayaan ang obligasyon at tungkulin, paliwanag ni Mabini sa “A mis compatriotas”: “... Freedom itself demands that we conform our conduct to the guiding light of reason and the commanding voice of justice. What freedom does mean is that we ought to obey not anyone but only and always that person whom we ourselves have chosen and acknowledged as the most capable of leading us; for in this way we are obeying our reason.”<sup>35</sup> Kailangan ng tao ang dunong at makatwirang Diyalektikang dalumat ang ginawang kritika sa interaksyon ng malay/rason at kapaligiran, kalayaan at tadhana, ng teorya at praktika.

Sa paniwala ni Mabini, ang karapatan ng taumbayan ang mabisang lakas na magagamit sa pagsulong at pag-unlad ng komunidad, sa kapakanan ng buong bansa. Subalit kailangan ang kalayaan at kasarinlan upang maisabuhay at maisapraktika ang mga karapatang demokratiko at karapatang-pantao na nakatala sa United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Hindi pa naisasakatuparan ito hanggang ngayon. Lalo na sa panahon ng madugong pagtatagisang kinasangkutan ni Mabini at halos dalawang henerasyon.

### Haraya at Realistikong Dalumat

Bukod dito, inamin ni Mabini na may pedagogikal at etikal na layunin ang akda. Bunsod ito na dapat buklurin ang teorya (katwiran at agham) at praktika ng pamamahala, na “iniangkop sa likas at dinagbabagong kaayusan ng mga bagay at mga tiyak na pangangailangan ng mga pnamamahalaan”—ibig sabihin, mga kailangan sa buhay tulad ng pagkain, damit, pabahay, kalusugan, atbp. Karanasan, dunong, katwiran ang

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi.

<sup>34</sup> John Bowle, *Western Political Thought* (London, UK: Methuen, 1961), 88.

<sup>35</sup> Sinipi ni Horacio de la Costa, *Readings in Philippine History* (Manila: Bookmark, 1965), 243.

dapat buklurin at gamitin. Minungkahi ni Mabini na kailangang iwaksi ang “kamanmangan o simbuyo ng damdamin.”<sup>36</sup> Pinaliwanag niya ang halaga ng Deklarasyon ng Kalayaan at Mga Karapatang Pantao ng rebolusyong Pranses, na sa pakiwari niya ay sinunod ng Estados Unidos— isang opinyon na angkin din ni Rizal. Iyon, paniwala ni Mabini, ang mga prinsipyo ng likas na batas na ikinintal ng mga rebolusyonaryo’t siyentipikong pantas/guro (tulad nina Rousseau, Voltaire, at Diderot) sa larang ng politika. Palaala niya: “Kung nasa pagtutugma ng katwiran at karanasan ang katotohanan, nasa pagtutugma ng teorya at praktika ang birtud”—tatsulok ang birtud, katwiran, katotohanan.<sup>37</sup>

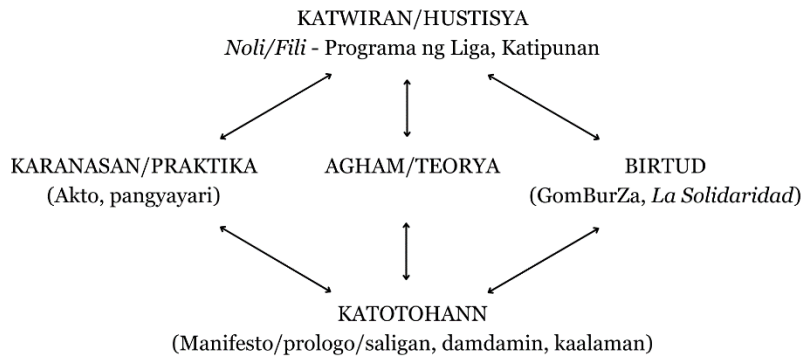
Pinakasentro ng akda ang mga susing konseptong ito: katotohanan, karanasan, katwiran, sampu ng birtud na bunga ng pagsalikop ng teorya (agham) at praktika (makatwirang aksiyon o gawain). Magkakaugnay iyon sa bawat paksang dinadalumat. Matutuklasan na ang disenyo ng LRF ay binubuo ng mga kabanata hinggil sa mga pangyayaring saklaw ng kategorya ng karanasan/praktika at mga kabanata na kaugnay ng mga ideya ng katwiran, siyensiya, at kaisipang naging *matrix* ng kapasiyahan at pagkilos. Hindi mekanikal na korespondensiya ng sangkalang materyal/pang-ekonomiya at ideolohiya/kamalayan ang iskema rito, kundi diyalektikal. Ibig sabihin, masalimuot at malikot na ugnayan ng mga palapag ng konjunktura, kapwa materyal at ideyal, ang nailatag ni Mabini.

Dobleng obligasyon ang hinarap ng masigasig na paralitiko. Sa pagsaliksik, matatarok na pinaglangkap ni Mabini ang mga ideyal ng *Renaissance* at *Enlightenment* sa Europa sa proseso ng paghamon sa piyudalistikong institusyon ng Simbahan at monarkiya, kaalinsabay sa paglaban sa imperyo ng kapitalismong pampinansiyal— ang imperyong U.S. Naturol na natin ito sa unahan: ang dalawang imperyong lumikha ng lagusan ng rebolusyong Filipino. Alegorya ito ng katawan ni Mabini, dalawang kondisyong magkakawing. Naisingkaw ng kasaysayan sa batok ni Mabini ang dalawang lunggati at pananagutan sa pagitan ng luma at bagong ordeng nagtutunggali sa ibabaw ng mundo, samantala mga halimaw ng libido/imahinasyon ang sintomas na umaaligid at sumisindak sa atin. Baka makatulong ang diyagramang itong hugot sa repleksiyong tinalakay at dinalumat natin:

<sup>36</sup> Mabini, *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino*, xxv.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

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Semiotikang burador ng tematikong kategorya sa LFR.

Sa paglilimi ko, ang krusyal na temang humahabi sa banghay ng LFR ay nakasilid sa Kabanata 7, ang isyu ng organisasyon. Magkatalik ang praktika at teorya sa plataporma't agenda ng samahan. Natalakay na ni Mabini ang transisyon mula sa ebolusyong pagsulong tungo sa aktibidad ng rebolusyon sa Kabanata 1. Nailatag ang mga pangyayari sa pagbitay sa mga paring sekular (Gomes, Burgos, Zamora) at sa pagkawalang-bisa ng repormistang *La Solidaridad*, karugtong ng mas dramatikong polemika ng *Noli* at *Fili*. Mula sa posisyonal na laban, binuhos na ang sigla sa maniobra o armadong pakikihamok, mula ebolusyon tungo sa rebolusyon.

Sa aktwalidad nagyakap ang maari at di-maari. Masinsing sinubaybayan ni Mabini ang napakaimportanteng resulta ng pagbubukas ng Suez Canal, sagisag ng tulay ng luma at bagong kabihasan. Kahalintulad ito sa pagkamulat ni Ibarra sa katotohanan ng kaniyang tinubuang lupa nang umuwi mula sa Europa. Ang Suez Canal ay nagsilbing talinghaga o simbolo ng paglalakbay ng kamalayan mula sa *inertia* ng kolonisadong antas hanggang sa krisis ng pagtuklas sa kilos at akto ng Katipunan. Sikaping ikintal ang proseso ng transisyon, isang sandali ng pagkaabala't pagpapatuloy, bilang imperatibong paksang nililintang sa diskurso ng LFR.

Masasabing ang sintesis ng simulaing nagbunsod sa rebolusyon ay masisinag sa Konstitusyon ng *Liga Filipina*. Narito ang limang layunin ng organisasyong sinubukang itatag ni Rizal bago siya ipinatapon: 1) Pag-isahin ang arkipelago sa isang matining at masiglang kabuuan; 2) Resiprokal na pangangalaga sa bawat okasyon ng pangangailangan at ligalig; 3) Pagtatanggol laban sa bawat dahas at paglapastangan; 4) Paglinang sa edukasyon, agrikultura, at komersyo; at 5) Pag-aaral at implemtasyon ng

reporma.<sup>38</sup> Nahulma sa plataporma ng *Liga* ang pinakamahalagang katungkulan ng isang pamahalaang kumakatawan sa buong bayan. Hindi lubusang nagampanan iyon ng Espanya, bagkus natulak pa sa primitibong antas ang dating maunlad na lipunan ng mga datu at rajah bago dumating sina Magellan at Legaspi, kung isasaisip ang testimonya ni Antonio Morga, magka bakas ng sinaunang sibilisasyong Malayo na tinalunton ni Rizal.<sup>39</sup>

### Sariwang Balita Mula sa Bundok

Ano ang pahiwatig ng birtud sa LFR? Hindi na nakagagambalang palaisipan ito. Naitala na ni Mabini ang kodigo ng mga elemento ng birtud sa kaniyang “*El verdadero decalogo*.” Marahil naisulat ito circa unang bahagi ng 1898 kasabay ng “*Ordenanzas de revolucion*” at sa burador ng konstitusyon inihanda sa Malolos.<sup>40</sup> Idinulog niya sa atin ang ideya na buhat pa nang masakop ang isla, nagsimula’t lumaganap na ang tunggalian ng Espanya at mga katutubo. Ibig sabihin, ang kondisyon ng giyera ay nag-umpisa sa paglukob sa mga komunidad ng mga katutubo. Dahil dito, hindi nagkaroon ng malawakang pagkakaisa ang madlang sinakop. Layon ng *Decalogo* na ipahayag ang moral-etikal na prinsipyong bumubuhay, sumusuhay, at nagpapasigasig sa pambansang komunidad.

Nag-umpisa ang *Dekalogo* sa proposisyong mala-relihiyoso: “Ibigin mo ang Diyos at iyong dangal sa ibabaw ng lahat ....” Dapat alamin na ang katagang “Diyos” ay mula sa Stoiko/deistang konsepto na halos katumbas ng espiritung umuugit sa kalikasan— isang laganap na paniniwala sa *Renaissance* ng ika-16 na siglo.<sup>41</sup> Sipiin natin ang ilang talata na nailathala sa Ingles noong 1922:

*Fourth. Thou shalt love thy country after God and thy honor and more than thyself: for she is the only Paradise which God has given thee in this life, the only patrimony of thy race. The only inheritance of thy ancestors and the only hope of thy posterity; because of her, thou hast life, love and interests, happiness, honor and God.*

*Fifth, Thou shalt strive for the happiness of thy country before thy own, making of her the kingdom of reason, of justice and of labor...*

<sup>38</sup> Aking salin mula sa Ingles. Tingnan: Rizal, *Political and Historical Writings*, 309.

<sup>39</sup> Ambeth Ocampo, *Meaning and History* (Quezon City: Anvil, 2011), 75–117.

<sup>40</sup> Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, 128.

<sup>41</sup> Herschel Baker, *The Image of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1947), 308–312.

*Sixth. Thou shalt strive for the independence of thy country: for only thou canst have any real interest in her advancement and exaltation, because her independence constitutes thy own liberty; her advancement, thy perfection; and her exaltation, thy own glory and immortality.*

*Eighth, Thou shalt strive for a Republic and never for a monarchy in thy country: for the latter exalts one or several families and founds a dynasty; the former makes a people noble and worthy through reason, great through liberty, and prosperous and brilliant through labor.*

*Tenth. Thou shalt consider thy countryman more than thy neighbor; thou shalt see him thy friend, thy brother or at least thy comrade, with whom thou art bound by one fate, by the same joys and sorrows and by common aspirations and interests.*

*Therefore, as long as national frontiers subsist, raised and maintained by the selfishness of race and of family, with thy countryman along shalt thou unite in a perfect solidarity of purpose and interest, in order to have force, not only to resist the common enemy but also to attain all the aims of human life.<sup>42</sup>*

Naipunla na ni Mabini ang kredo ng ating nasyonalismong nakatindig sa aksiyomang unibersal ng hustisya at katwiran. Klasikong metanaratibo ito na anatema sa mga relatibistiko't nominalistikong historyador. Tumulab ito sa mga intelektwal na sumibol sa panahon ng okupasyon—sina Lope K. Santos, Faustino Aguilar, Crisanto Evangelista, Rafael Palma, Claro Recto, Salvador Lopez, Renato Constantino, Amado V. Hernandez, Teodoro Agoncillo, atbp. Dahil neokolonyal pa rin ang oligarkong nakapangibabaw, at kolonisadong mentalidad ang umiiral, hindi pa laos ang LFR. Nasa pusod nito ang binhi ng kinabukasan. Wala halos memorya o pakialam ang maraming mamamayan ngayon sa mga naisakatuparan nina Rizal, Bonifacio, Mabini, sampu ng ilanlibong martir ng pambansang pakikibaka para sa dignidad at kasarinlan.

Nanaig pa rin ang imperyalistang dominasyon sa larang ng saliksik at pedagohiya. Ang karapatan ng bawa't bansang matamo ang pansariling determinasyon ay tanggap na sa buong daidig, liban na lamang sa mga

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<sup>42</sup> Mabini, "Decalogue for Filipinos."



akademikong neoliberal, kunwari’y pluralista ngunit sugo ng Kanluraning hegemonya. Halimbawa ang pontipikasyon nina Greg Bankoff at Kathleen Weekly na ang ating makabayang kilusan ay instrumento lamang ng mga sukabang pulitiko. Tinalikdan daw ng mga nasyonalistang historyador (Veneracion, Tan) ang “*normative conceit of objectivity and balance*” upang itaguyod ang elitistang negosasyon ng identidad sa isang “*post-national era*” kung saan “*redundant*” na ang “*nationalist project.*” Puna nina Bankoff at Weekly:

*... Most Pinoys find little in the past to identify with and care even less of their history ... Most Filipinos, however, think more about expanding their fictive and kinship ties in the present than about commemorating a past redolent with injustice and exploitation ... Perhaps the choice for this century is transnationalism or anarchy?<sup>43</sup>*

Sino ang nilalait ng dalawang puting eksperto sa kalagayan ng mga Filipino at mga subalternong kapatid sa laylayan?

Para sa Australyanong dalubhasa, hindi na kailangang intindihin o pahalagahan ang rebolusyonaryong arkibo nina Rizal, Mabini, atbp., pagkat laos na—natalo, “*Luzon-centered,*” at makauri. Baligho’t mapagkanulong predikamento ito. Ang historyograpiya nila ay salat sa kontekstwalisasyon. “*Post-colonial*” daw ang Pilipinas gayong kakutsaba ng Washington ang oligarkong gobyerno na payag sa dagdag na base militar (pinahintulot ng Visiting Forces Agreement at EDCA) ayon sa anti-Tsinang agenda ng Washington–Pentagon. Tangka nilang tumulong, ngunit may kalakip ng lasong presuposiyon ang kanilang ambag, lalong makamandag kaysa tuwirang agresyon o eksplotasyong madaya tulad ng patakaran ng *labor-export*. Inaaping migranteng proletaryo ng buong mundo ang identidad natin, hindi bihasa’t mapamaraang lahing dumadakila sa kalayaan at katarungan para sa lahat.

## **Bakit Tayo Bumalikwas**

Bumalik tayo sa interpretasyon ng kahulugan at halaga ng LFR. Sa bandang huli ng “*Prologo,*” inulit ni Mabini ang simulaing nag-udyok sa kaniya na sumapi sa rebolusyonaryong kilusan—pagsuob sa rason at hustisya—na ngayon ay yumuko sa mas nakalalamang na puwersa. Tinutukoy dito ang pagsumpa ni Aguinaldo sa soberanya ng U.S. Upang

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<sup>43</sup> Greg Bankoff at Kathleen Weekly, *Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 178, 183.

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manatiling buhay, hindi maiiwasang tanggapin ang nesesidad na utos ng makapangyarihang lakas. Hindi ito permanenteng sitwasyon. Gayunpaman, payo ni Mabini sa bayan “na huwag mawawalan ng pag-asa, at dapat siyang magtiwala sa kaniyang sarili, sa katagrungan, at sa hinaharap.”<sup>44</sup>

Sinipat niya ang masukal na landas ng kaniyang pakikipagsalapan. Tumulong siya kina Rizal at Del Pilar sa kilusang repormista—nabanggit na natin ang Cuerpo de Compromisarios na sinalihan ni Mabini—at nang walang bunga iyon, pumanig si Mabini sa Katipunan. Ito ang tinig ng bayan, saloob niya:

inihayag ko ang tungkulin kong tumalima rito at gabayan ang Rebolusyon upang sa pagkawasak ng matandang rehimen na sadyang bulok at inutil, makapagtatag ng bago at higit na makasapat sa tunay na pangangailangan ng mga Filipino at makaangkop sa mga pagbabago o repormang hinihingi ng progresibo nitong sibilisasyon. Lumahok ako sa digmaan sa pagtalima sa tinig ng bayan.<sup>45</sup>

Nakatalik pa rin ang kaluluwa ni Mabini sa simulain ng rebolusyon. Nag-iba lamang ang paraan sa pagtataguyod noon. Muling ipinandigan niya na mithiin ng bayan ang matamo’t makasangkapan ang kalayaan at mga karapatang kailangan upang mapagyaman ang kaban ng kultura at kapamuhayan. Inaasahan niyang maiintindihan ito ng mga taumbayan sa Amerika, na siya ngayong taga-hatol sa ating kapalaran. Yapos ng kahihyan at masaklap na pighati, nais ni Mabini na bumalik sa katahimikan upang masabi niya na tumupad siya sa kaniyang tungkulin, inako ang pananagutan, na tanging balsamo “sa kirot ng buhay na tigib ng hinanakit.”<sup>46</sup>

Nakumpisal ni Mabini sa “Pag-aalay” na panaginip ng ina niya na maging pari siya. Inihandog ang akda niya sa ina bilang “saserdote” ng rebolusyonaryong kilusan. Hindi lang “nakasuot ng abito ang tunay na alagad ng Diyos kundi ang lahat ng nagpapahayag ng kaniyang Kaluwalhatian sa mga gawaing mabuti at kapaki-pakinabang para sa lalong nakararaming nilikha niya.”<sup>47</sup> Bilang sakripisyo, ang LRF ay isang sandata sa pagmulat sa kamalayan ng nilupig at armas sa paglikha ng konsiyensiya ng lahi.

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<sup>44</sup> Mabini, *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino*, xxvii.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

## Trayektorya ng Salaysay: Trahedya o Komedyang?

Mahihinuha sa diyagramang naisingit sa itaas na tinanggal ni Mabini sa akda ang isyu ng personalidad. Ang mga pangyayaring naganap ay matatarok kung alam natin ang determinasyon nito, na matatagpuan sa mga prinsipyo at batayang motibo ng mga grupo o pangkat, hindi ng ilang piling indibidwal. Nabanggit na natin na para kay Mabini, ang kalayaan ay pagsunod sa utos ng rason at hustisya. Samakatuwid, dapat nating sundin ang grupo o partido na kinatawan ng katwiran at katarungan, alinsunod sa tambalang paghuhunos na masikhay niyang iginiit: *“Our revolution must be not only external but internal.”*<sup>48</sup>

Kay Mabini, magkahugpong ang kalayaan, obligasyon at katungkulan:

*Freedom does not mean that we are to obey no one, for itself demands that we conform our conduct to the guiding light of reason and the commanding voice of justice .... We must undertake a radical reform not only of our institutions but of our own ways of thinking and acting. Our revolution must be not only external but internal.*<sup>49</sup>

Singkronisado ang dalawang daluyan ng pagbabago, kapiling ang pagtatamasa ng dignidad at tungkuling magpasiya. Kailangan ang kalayaan upang mapalis ang di-pagkakapantay ng *“la casta dominante y la poblacion indigena,”* ang usaping tunggalian ng mga uring panlipunan.<sup>50</sup> Muli, hindi maipaghihiwalay ang hinihinging pagkakapantay-pantay, karapatang pantao, hustisya, at kasarinlan.

Karaniwang ipalagay na ang pakay ni Mabini ay kritisismo ng kakulangan ni Aguinaldo, mga depektong pampersonal. Dapat mahulo na si Aguinaldo ay halimbawa lamang ng mga tipong marupok o mahina, walang kontrol sa pagpigil sa masimbuyong ambisyon. Masahol na katiwalian ang pagpapauna ng personal na hangarin sa halip na kolektibong kapakanan. Mahusay na naipaliwanag ang kontradiksiyon sa Kabanata 1. Batid ni Mabini ang prinsipyo ng Kaliwanagan (*Enlightenment*): *“Isang pangangailangan at likas sa lahat ng nilalang, sa indibidwal o kolektibong paraan man, ang paglago o pagsulong.”* Hindi hilig ng madla ang marahas na pagbabago, ang rebolusyon, sanhi sa *“likas na preserbasyon ng sarili”* dahil kadalasan

<sup>48</sup> Apolinario Mabini, *“A mis compatriotas,”* in *Readings in Philippine History*, ed. by H. de la Costa, S.J. (Manila: Bookmark, 1965), 243.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Mabini, *“Cual es la verdadera mision de la revolucion filipina?”* 269.

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nagtatagumpay ang isang uring maimpluwensiya na “nagsasamantala sa kamangmangan o katiwalian ng kanilang mga kababayan, at nanlilinlang para sa mga pansariling layunin.”<sup>51</sup>

Masinop ang paglalarawan ni Mabini ng mga kontradiksiyon. Sa pagitan ng ebolusyon o unti-unting pagbagago at marahas na rebolusyon, kailangan ang prudensiya, maingat na kalkulasyon. Organikong proseso ang dapat alalahanin. Sa halip na umayon sa eskolastikong preskripsiyon na laging sumusunod sa awtoridad ng Simbahan o minanang kaugalian,<sup>52</sup> lumihis si Mabini. Naging realistikong anggulo ang pagdalumat niya, ayon sa siyentipikong humanismo ng *Renaissance*. Humango sa kasaysayan ng kolonyalismong Espanyol ang naturalistikong pagsusuma ni Mabini, na sa katunayan ay babala sa Amerika na huwag tumulad sa imperyong Espanya. Hindi pa tapos ang laban, ang paligsahan sa pagtatamo ng hegemonya, ang lideratong moral-intelektwal ng proletaryo/masang inaapi.<sup>53</sup>

Ang buong akda ay maituturing na paunawa sa U.S. na huwag magpalalo at huwag suwayin ang batas ng kalikasan na kabuklod sa produktibong lakas ng sambayanan, sa masang lumilikha ng yaman ng lipunan. Babala rin ito sa kasalukuyang gobyernong mapagsamantala at mapaniil:

Ngunit hindi magaganap ang ebolusyon kung hindi inaayunan ng kaayusang panlipunan, tulad ng halamang hindi lumalago sa di-binabagayang lupa. Kung pagkabansot ng bayan ang tinutupad ng gobyerno alang-alang sa pansariling kapakanan o ng isang partikular na uring panlipunan o sa anupamang dahilan, hindi maiiwasan ang rebolusyon. Nararapat na umusbong at umunlad ang isang sambayanang hindi pa nakasasapit sa ganap na pamukadkad ng buhay, *sapagkat kung hindi ay mapaparalisa ito, at kamatayan ang pagkaparalisa*. Kung paanong di-likas ang isuko ng isang nilikha ang sarili sa pagkalipol, kailangang gawin ng bayan ang lahat upang maibagsak ang gobyernong humahadlang sa kaniyang pag-unlad. Kung mga anak

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<sup>51</sup> Mabini, *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino*, 3–4.

<sup>52</sup> Adriano C. Reyno, *The Political, Social, and Moral Philosophy of Apolinario Mabini* (Manila: Catholic Trade School, 1964), 61–64.

<sup>53</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971) 162–163.

ng bayan mismo ang nagtagtag ng gobyernong ito, kailangan itong maigupo.<sup>54</sup>

Malinaw dito ang naturalistiko't realistikong perspektiba na nagsusog sa pagkawatas ng "*ley natural*" o likas na batas, sa direksiyong sekular at naturalistiko. Hindi nakalimutan ni Mabini na ang porma ng gobyerno ay niyari ng pagkakataong historikal at isinaayos sa kalkulasyong kapakipakinabang. Nais ngayong ipakita ang ahensiya ng taumbayan sa pagyari ng ordeng pampulitika na tugma sa krisis at pangangailangan ng sirkumstansiya.<sup>55</sup> Ikumpara ang tila reaksionaryong kumbiksiyon ni Leo Strauss na dahil sa *historicism* ng modernidad, nawalan ng bisa ang klasikong konsepto ng batas pangkalikasan na nakasalig sa pribadong pag-aari.<sup>56</sup> Kontra dito si Ernst Bloch na nag-usig sa partisanong interes ng positibong batas pabor lamang sa mayaman at makapangyarihan, sa halip na nakatindig sa karapatan ng sambayanan (*jus gentium*), sa katarungang hinahangad ng mga maralitang nangangailangan ng dignidad. Argumento ni Bloch: "There can be no human dignity without the end of misery and need, but also no human happiness without the end of old and new forms of servitude."<sup>57</sup>

### Transmutasyon/Paghuunos

Sa katunayan, pumasok na si Mabini sa epoka ng *Renaissance* at humanistikong sibilisasyon. Tumulok na siya sa piyudal/teokratikong ugali ng Espanya. Naging sekular ang batas ng kalikasan bilang basehan ng awtoridad pampulitika bunga ng Repormasyon sa panahon ng giyera ng mga relihiyon.<sup>58</sup> Sa halip na ipagpatuloy ang abstraktong ideya ng batas ng kalikasan (hango sa Stoikong pilosopiya at teolohiyang natural ni Aristotel/Santo Tomas Aquino), sumalok siya sa bukal ng kaisipan ni Benedict Spinoza. Iminungkahi ni Spinoza na maisasakatuparan ng tao ang pag-unlad ng kaniyang rasyonal na kaluluwa, kalayaang espirital, sa loob ng lipunan. Ang pagsulong ng lakas ng pagkatao, ang marangal na kakayahan ng tao, ay mapapahinog sa loob ng maayos na komunidad. Bunsod ito ng pagtutulungan o kooperasyon, saligan ng kalayaan at katiwasayan, at ng gobyernong umaalalay dito: "*The object of government is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or puppets, but to enable them to*

<sup>54</sup> Mabini, *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino*, 4. Sa akin ang pagbibigay-diin. Kamang-mangha ang alusyon sa pakaparalisa sa sitwasyon ng paralitikong bayani.

<sup>55</sup> Maling pagkaunawa ang paratangang "awtoritaryanistiko" si Mabini. Tingnan: Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War 1889–1902* (Larence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 34.

<sup>56</sup> Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

<sup>57</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 208.

<sup>58</sup> Bowle, *The Western Political Thought*, 271–273.

*develop their minds and bodies in security and to employ their reason unshackled...In fact, the true aim of government is Liberty.*<sup>59</sup>

Pinaligiran ang naratibo ng LFR ng diskurso ukol sa katarungan, kalayaan, batas natural, udyok ng pag-unlad, mula pagputok hanggang pagkagapi ng himagsikan. Paglilimi iyon sa mga categoryang nakapaloob sa hibla ng mga pangyayaring inihanay. Pahiwatig ito na bagamat may kaloobang magnais ang bawat tao, limitado ito ng materyal na kondisyong sumasaklaw sa bawat nilalang. Tunghayan na lang ang kondisyon ng paralitiko, sintomas ng lagay ng kalusugan sa lipunan. At ang estigmang nakakabit dito, na ginawang paraan ng pagtungayaw at pag-alimura kay Mabini ng mariwasang pangkat sa Kongreso ng Malolos (Buencamino, Paterno, atbp.). Tutol siya sa mga pakana ng mga kasike ng prinsipalya. Tsismis na ang sakit niya ay galing sa sipilis at bisyong masama, kaya napilitang ipagbitiw siya ni Aguinaldo upang mapanatili ang konserbatibong hilig sa pamunuan.<sup>60</sup>

Sa ano't anoman, hindi trahedya ang wakas. Sumuko si Aguinaldo nang humina ang hukbo sa pagpatay kay Heneral Luna. *Hubris* at gawing balakyot ng karakter ang puminsala sa liderato, kapintasang supling ng makauring lipunan. Gayunpaman, nagpatuloy sina Heneral Sakay at mga awtentikong makabayan. Mataimtim ang pag-asam ni Mabini na sa kalauna'y maipapakilala ng bayan na taglay ang dignidad at katalinuhang maging karapat-dapat sa demokratikong karapatang ipinangako ng Amerika. Mala-komedyang, kung ganoon, ang indayog ng Kongklusyon dahil marubdob ang pag-asa ni Mabini na makakamit ang kalayaan at kasarilinan sa bisa ng mga mabuting repormang naisakatuparan ng himagsikan, sa kabila ng pagkagapi ng kampon ni Aguinaldo. Ang proseso ng pag-unlad ay sumusugod sa paraan ng pag-atras, pagkagupo, pagkariwara—isang moda ng sintesis ng masalimuot na kontradiksiyon ng kasaysayang lokal at pandaigdigang.

### **Komadrona ng Bagong Salinlahi**

Nilikha sa bisa ng birtud ni Mabini ang LRF, ang makasaysayang testamento ng pambihirang himagsikan. Binistay at pinaglapat ang klasikong dunong ng kabihasnang Griyego-Romano, teolohiyang natural ni Santo Tomas, at humanistikong agham nina Spinoza at mga pantas ng Kaliwanagan, kapagkwa'y nahubog ang pangitaing progresibo't mapagpalaya ni Mabini. Naibunyag sa itaas ang sandigan ng etika-politikang

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<sup>59</sup> Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951), 259. Kunsultahin din: Bowle, *Western Political Thought*, 384–394.

<sup>60</sup> Ocampo, *Meaning and History*, xiv–xvii.

pundasyon nito sa katotohanan—empirikal na kognitibong analisis ng karanasan—at pag-uugnay ng iba’t ibang salik sa kategoryang unibersal ng katuwiran at katarungan. Mahigpit na tumalima si Mabini sa realistikong pananaw nina Aristotel/Aquino salungat sa nominalistikong tendensiya nina Ockham, Erasmus, Grotius, Bacon, at Locke. Ito ang dahilan na nakaakma siya sa rebolusyonaryong tendensiya ng demokratiko-sosyalistang aktibidad sa Inglatera, Pransiya, at Haiti.

Isang daloy ng akda ang hindi pa napagtuunan ng masusing imbestigasyon. Kung ang konsepto ng batas-natural ang nagsusudlong sa batas eternal at positibong batas ng tao, ang ideya ng birtud (“*la virtud*”)—mediyasyon ng teorya (isip) at praktika (gawain)—ay patibay na sanay na si Mabini sa diyalektikang historikal/materyal nina Marx at Engels. Marahil, si Isabelo de los Reyes lamang sa mga Propagandista ang nakinabang sa pakikisalamuha niya sa mga anarkista-sosyalistang kilusan sa Europa. O baka nakasagap din si Mabini ng mga butil ng punla mula sa panitik nina Del Pilar, Lopez Jaena, Rizal, Jacinto, atbp. Bukod sa lohiya ng masoneria (kilala sa pangalang Katabay), kasapi si Mabini sa Liga ni Rizal at sa Cuerpo Compromisarios na humalili (nang maitapon si Rizal sa Dapitan) kung saan siya ay naglingkod bilang kalihim ng organisasyon.<sup>61</sup>

Hindi na kailangang mag-ibayong dagat ngayon. Dahil sa galing ni Mabini sa argumentasyon legal—malalim ang kasanayan niya sa pagtuturo at pagtrabaho sa opisina ng hukuman<sup>62</sup>—sapat ang dunong niya sa paglalagom ng kumplikadong detalye sa isang unibersal na kategorya. Isang kategorya ang dangal o mabuting pagkatao. Nang matapos niya ang LFR, nakasumpa na si Aguinaldo na pailalim sa soberanya ng Amerika. Subalit pabirong hamon ni Mabini na mababawi niya ang dangal kung mag-aalay ng buhay si Aguinaldo sa pakikipaglaban. Kamatayan sa larangan ng pakikibaka ang makatutubos sa napinsalang prestihiyo ng dating pangulo ng Republika.

Palagay ko’y hindi biro iyon. Sakripisyo ng buhay ng maraming mandirigma ang pundasyon ng magandang kinabukasan ng bayan, dulog ni Mabini. Walang kalinangan at sapat na giting si Aguinaldo. Sinalungguhitan na naman ni Mabini ang halaga ng katotohanan sa sambayanang kaunlaran:

Nakakamit ang tunay na karangalan sa paglinang ng ating talino upang matutuhang kilalanin ang katotohanan at sa pagtuturo sa ating puso upang kasanayang mahalín ang katotohanan. Sa pagkabatid sa katotohanan, naarok natin ang ating mga katungkulan

<sup>61</sup> Constantino, *A Past Revisited*, 154; Mabini, *Al Pueblo y Congreso Norteamericanos*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Zaide, “Apolinario Mabini,” 283–284.

at ang katarungan ... Huwag kalilimutan na nasa unang baitang tayo ng ating pambansang buhay, at pinaakyat tayo at makaaakyat lamang tayo kung birtud at kabayanihan ang tuntungan.<sup>63</sup>

Dagdag pa niya na ang kaganapan ng pagkatao ay makakamit ng lahat sa patuloy na pagsulong ng bansa. Pakli niya sa mga ilustradong nagsabing hindi pa handa ang bayan sa pagsasarili, na sila mismo—ang mga Amerikanista—ang nagpapatunay ng kanilang haypotesis.

Muli, bumaling ang muni ng organikong intelektwal ng Tanawan, Batangas, sa paksa ng birtud—“*la virtud y del heroismo*”. Naungkat na ito sa “Panimulang Pahayag,” sa orihinal na pagsasawika: “*Si en la armonia entre la razon y la experiencia esta la verdad, en la armonia entre la teoria y la practica se encuentra la virtud.*”<sup>64</sup> Malimit talakayin ng klasikong pilosopiya (Plato, Aristoteles, Cicero, Machiavelli, Montesquieu) ang paksang ito. *Virtu*, sa kultura ng Italyanong *Renaissance*, ay tatak ng kagalingan ng karakter, sintomas ng pinakabuod na katangian ng isang mamamayan. Sinasalamin ito ng ordeng pulitikal. Ang mga katangiang ito ng mamamayan—karunungan, katapangan, makatarungan, maingat maghatol, atbp.—ay magkakasanib sa isang disposisyon na sumusunod sa rason/katwiran. Ang katapangan, halimbawa, ay disposisyon sa pagkilos na kumokontrol sa simbuyong takot at kapangahasan. Ginagabayan ito ng prudensiya na bunsod ng dunong at pagkamakatarungan. Sa paglapat ng disposisyong angkop o tugma, makakamit ng bawat tao ang ligayang pinakasasabikan.<sup>65</sup> Angkin ni Mabini, ayon kay Agoncillo, ang “katapangan ng konsiyensiya.”<sup>66</sup>

### **Pahimakas at Pagbati sa Bukang-Liwayway**

Naititik ni Mabini sa isang liham ang birtud ng pakikipagkapwa. Makikita ang pagsasanib ng kabatiran at intuwisyon sa tugon niya sa sulat ni Luisita Blanchard, isang Filipino-Amerikana sa Brooklyn, New York. Nobyembre 19, 1900 ang petsa ng liham. Sandaling pinakawalan si Mabini ng Amerikanong militar buhat nang mahuli siya sa Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija at nabilanggo, at bago ipatapon siya sa Guam. Ginamit ni Mabini ang wikang Ingles, *verbatim* na inilathala ni Ambeth Ocampo sa kaniyang tudling:

<sup>63</sup> Mabini, *Ang Rebolusyong Filipino*, 100–102.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv.

<sup>65</sup> Crane Brinton, *A History of Western Morals* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959). Tingnan din: Roger Scruton, “Virtue,” in *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 486–487.

<sup>66</sup> Teodoro Agoncillo, “Apolinario Mabini: The Courage of Conscience,” in *Archipelago*, 1 (December 1974), 8.



*I am very much obliged to you for your deep sympathy and true friendship toward me as well as for your sorrow for my illness. Let me shake very friendly and warmly your hand across the seas, seeing that it is indiscreet to kiss it.*

*To correspond your familiarity I tell you that about thirty-five years ago I was born in a town of Batangas province at the south of Manila between Kabite and Laguna provinces and between the lake of Bay and the lake of Bombon or Taal. By my father and mother I am of pure native origin. Although my parents were poor I got some instructions and became a lawyer, thanks to persistive efforts. Since January 1896. I cannot stand because of a weakness in my waist and legs. I do not suffer any other ache and I look as if I were not sick. The physicians say that I will never recover my health; but I do not despair because I am still able to do something good for my country. Fortunately I have neither wife nor children, for this reason is more tolerable the sadness of my life, for I do not suffer in my loves except in that of my country. My father and mother are dead ....*

*You are a true Filipina by heart and feelings and so I love and admire you ... I appreciate the American women in their culture and independent habits which render them utterly helpful workers to the aggrandizement of womankind. You are a highest example. Your very thankful and affectionate friend, Ap Mabini.<sup>67</sup>*

Sa maikling talambuhay na luhog sa babaeng nagmalasakit, naisilid ni Mabini ang padron ng birtud/*virtu* na hinimay natin. Nakapupukaw ang maantig na balik-tanaw at dalumat ng pinagdaanang landas na naikintal dito. Matatanto ang disposisyong marangal, matapat, matapang, at magiliw na pag-angkin sa katutubong ugat at batis ng kaniyang pagka-Filipino. Sa komunikasyong ito, naipaabot ni Mabini ang lunggating magkadaupangpalad sa kalaunan ang lahing Filipino at Amerikano, isang nakalubog na motibasyon sa diskurso ng LFR. Alinsunod sa konsepto ng hegemonya, makakamit ito sa paraang kompromiso sa isang kasunduan upang maisulong ang pangkalahatang mithiin ng inaapi't nagnanais ng dignidad. Sa ganitong

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<sup>67</sup> Ambeth Ocampo, "Mabini by Mabini," in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (22 November 2012), <<https://opinion.inquirer.net/41319/mabini-by-mabini/#xzz88gOqngqO/>>.

pagtaya, ang huing kabanata ng LFR ay propetikong pagtanaw sa tagumpay ng rebolusyon sa hinaharap.

Sa ultimong pagtatasa, ang LFR ay representasyon ng rebolusyonaryong espiritu ng sambayanang umayaw sa kolonyalismo. Kapwa Kristiyano, Moro, Lumad, Igorot, atbp., na bumubuo ng mayoryang katutubo ang lumaban sa teokratikong Espanya at nagwagi. At pagkatapos, lumaban sa rasistang U.S. at natalo, at sa pagkatalo, nagbunga iyon ng kamalayan-sa-sarili o determinasyong makasarili. Tumayo at lumakad ang paralitiko—ito ang analohiyang maitatanghal sa pagsusulit. Pagbulay-bulayin natin ito bilang isang palaisipang ironya o kabalintunaan ng ating kasaysayan na patuloy na dumadaloy.

Maituturing din na isang epikong naratibo ng pagkakaisa ng mga tribu at komunidad sa kapuluan ang sinisikap ilahad ng LFR. Nakatahi sa hinabing naratibo ang alegorya ng diyalektika ng alipin at panginoon na unang isinadula ni Hegel sa *Phenomenology of Spirit* at naging paradigma sa manifesto nina Marx at Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, Lukacs, Fanon, Sartre, at iba pang agham-pantas. Sa dalawang yugto ng himagsikan na inilarawan ni Mabini, bago pa man nagkaroon ng pormal na independensiya noong Hulyo 4, 1946, napatunayan na umabante na kahit bahagya ang Pilipinas sa landas ng modernong kabihasan. Totoo, hitik pa ito ng mga kontradiksiyon, subalit nakuha nang humakbang, umakyat, ang masang dati'y api't nakalugmok sa ilusyon at kawalang pag-asa. Tumindig ang dating alipin, taglay ang dignidad at karapatan. Gumising na ang sambayanan, saksi ang testimongyong LFR ng dakilang lumpo. Si Mabini ang tribuno ng uring anakpawis, ng proletaryong namulat, ang taliba ng kasalukuyang pagbabanyuhay ng mga lahi't liping kayumanggi, ng Filipino, taglay ang kaluluwang pinapanday sa apoy ng mobilisasyong sukdulang mapangahas, makatarungan, at mapagpalaya.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> E. San Juan, *Maelstrom over the Killing Fields* (Quezon City: Pantax, 2021)

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## Sartre and the Modality of Bad Faith: The Contingency Debate

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*Nahum Brown*

**Abstract:** This article investigates the nature of Sartre’s bad faith by analyzing the concept’s modal dimensions. It focuses, in particular, on the discussion of how frequent bad faith is in our everyday lives. On one side of the debate is the reading that bad faith is temporary, avoidable, and contingent. Sartre’s well-known examples of the woman and the waiter in the chapter “Bad Faith” in *Being and Nothingness* support this reading of bad faith as a state that we come in and out of, as something we can refrain from doing or succumb to and fall into. Bad faith is in this way interpreted to be a normative, ethical concept. However, on the other side of the contingency debate is the reading that bad faith is a constant in our lives. I borrow an argument from Schopenhauer to investigate how having bad faith about the ultimate goals of life presents us with the most prevalent variation of bad faith. This article offers a topography of this debate, thereby underscoring one of the main topics about the modality of bad faith, which has not yet been fully articulated in the literature on Sartre, but which is vital to understanding the concept.

**Keywords:** Sartre, Schopenhauer, bad faith, modality

**A**s a byproduct of the motif of nothingness in his major work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Jean-Paul Sartre presents bad faith as the activity of lying to oneself. This activity is central to the general ontological project of the book, as the prominent placement of “Bad Faith” as the second chapter of *Being and Nothingness* indicates. Because it is that type of deception that one does to oneself, bad faith resembles Descartes’s act of doubting in the *Meditations*. It also resembles a specific mode of Husserlian

intentionality (that consciousness is consciousness of) in that the agent of bad faith is both the act and the object of the deception, leading to a paradox about agency and to questions about the role that bad faith plays in Sartre's theory of consciousness. Because of its prominence and the excitement surrounding this concept, there have been many excellent commentaries and critical treatments of bad faith, ranging from discussions of the social conditions of bad faith,<sup>1</sup> to its applicability for psychoanalysis,<sup>2</sup> to its value for phenomenological descriptions of everyday life.<sup>3</sup> However, there has not yet been a study that focuses on the modal dimensions of bad faith. This article contributes to filling in this omission in the literature.

There are three fundamental questions that help to advance a productive analysis about the nature of the modality of bad faith: (1) How is bad faith possible at all given that it places us in the paradoxical position of being both the deceiver and the deceived? This question leads to a modal inquiry into the basic existence or impossibility of bad faith. (2) Is bad faith a necessary condition of the structure of consciousness, according to Sartre? This question leads to a debate about the formal necessity of bad faith as a condition of self-consciousness. And (3), how common is bad faith and how often are we in it? This question leads to a debate about the degree of contingency or prevalence of bad faith. The scope of this article is limited to (3), but I will briefly address (1) and (2) as a way to establish the parameters of this piece and outline other related research directions.

(1) On the face of it, bad faith is puzzling, if not problematically inconsistent, in that it requires the agent of bad faith to simultaneously play both the role of the liar and the role of the lied to. Lying to others does not cause this seemingly paradoxical act of self-reference since normal structures of deception compartmentalize the act and the object of the lie. But the person in bad faith has to deceive the same person who is acting out the deception, thus calling into question whether it is truly possible to be in bad faith. This line of inquiry uncovers a basic debate about the modality of bad faith in that it brings into question whether the existence of bad faith is possible at all.

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions about the social conditions of bad faith are modal discussions in that they talk about necessary requirements that allow for the emergence of bad faith. For this discussion, see Jonathan Webber, "The Project of Bad Faith," in *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Routledge, 2009). See also Ronald E. Santoni, "Is Bad Faith Necessarily Social?," in *Sartre Studies International*, 14 (2008), and Matthew C. Eshleman, "Bad Faith is Necessarily Social," in *Sartre Studies International*, 14 (2008).

<sup>2</sup> For a book-length commentary of Sartre's relationship to psychoanalysis, including a treatment of bad faith, see Mary L. Edwards, *Sartre's Existential Psychoanalysis: Knowing Others* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> For an examination of bad faith from within the phenomenological and existential traditions, see Thomas Flynn, "Authenticity," in *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Some commentators are suspicious of whether bad faith is a consistent concept, citing the seemingly paradoxical nature of bad faith as evidence of the contradiction and therefore impossibility of any kind of genuine self-deception.<sup>4</sup> Other commentators attempt to prove that bad faith is possible by disarming the paradox of bad faith, by demonstrating that there is a division in the self, and that such a division allows for self-deception.<sup>5</sup> Since there have already been a number of commentaries that address the possibility or impossibility of bad faith as a concept,<sup>6</sup> this article will not focus on this debate, other than to assume that bad faith is coherent enough to be possible.

(2) Does Sartre think that, in some respect, bad faith is a necessary condition for the emergence and stability of consciousness? This question leads to the necessity controversy about bad faith and requires a thorough investigation into Sartre's distinction between the ego and consciousness in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936) as well as the formal modal suppositions about the concept of nothingness in relation to the self in *Being and Nothingness*. This is a worthy discussion and an important piece of the project of outlining the modal nature of bad faith, but I save this topic for another article in the future.

I will focus, instead, on (3), a set of fundamental questions about the contingency and frequency of bad faith. How often are we in bad faith? How prevalent is it in our everyday lives? Is it a contingent, normative state that we come in and out of and should avoid if we can? Or is it a prevalent condition of everyday life that we are constantly, or nearly constantly, involved with? In some of Sartre's discussions, especially in his popular examples of the woman on a date and the waiter in the café, bad faith would seem to be quite temporary. As these examples suggest, bad faith is an activity that we are only sometimes engaged with. In *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, Sartre also talks about bad faith in normative terms as a state that

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<sup>4</sup> According to Phyllis Sutton Morris, M.R. Haight holds this view. See Phyllis Sutton Morris, "Sartre on the Self-Deceiver's Translucent Consciousness," in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 23 (1992). See also M.R. Haight, *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding: New Essays in Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. by Mike W. Martin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 53–54. In addition, Ronald E. Santoni argues that bad faith is only possible in a very qualified sense. Ronald E. Santoni, "Bad Faith and Lying to Oneself," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 38 (1978).

<sup>5</sup> For an elucidating discussion of the various strategies for how to compartmentalize the deceiver and the deceived, thus leading to arguments that bad faith is possible, see the Stevenson–Gordon–Hymers debate from the 1980's. Leslie Stevenson, "Sartre on Bad Faith," in *Philosophy*, 58 (1983), 254–256. Jeffrey Gordon, "Bad Faith: A Dilemma," in *Philosophy*, 60 (1985), and Michael Hymers, "Bad Faith," in *Philosophy*, 64 (1989), 397.

<sup>6</sup> For example, see my own work on this topic, Nahum Brown, "How Is Lying to Oneself Possible? The Dialetheism Reading of Sartre's Bad Faith," in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 17 (June 2023).

we can free ourselves from and overcome. These accounts give us the resources to argue that bad faith is only sometimes present in our lives. These arguments make up what I call the “weak interpretation” of the contingency debate, since they direct us to the conclusion that we are only temporarily, or even rarely, in bad faith.

However, in one of the most revealing statements of the chapter “Bad Faith,” Sartre claims that “for a very large number of people it can even be the normal aspect of life.”<sup>7</sup> This statement opens the path for a different way of thinking about bad faith. What if bad faith is so prevalent that it should be understood as a constant, or nearly constant, condition of our everyday experience? What if Sartre’s point is not that we should avoid bad faith, but is, rather, that we should recognize it and diagnose it so that we can live with it? These questions lead to the strong interpretation of the contingency debate. To explore the strong interpretation, I briefly introduce a comparative study between Sartre and Schopenhauer. If we apply bad faith to Schopenhauer’s provocative argument in volume 1, section 29 of *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) that we have no ultimate reason for willing, we find ourselves in bad faith constantly through every act of volition. This leads to a content version of the strong interpretation, that is, to the thesis that we are all constantly lying to ourselves about the ultimate purpose of existence.

The point of this article is to explore the topology of this modal debate, rather than to argue in favor of the weak or strong interpretation. Still, in the working out of this exploration, arguments are given for both sides, some better than others.

### **The Woman, the Waiter, and the Argument that Bad Faith is Contingent**

In the second division of the chapter “Bad Faith” (“Forms of Bad Faith”), Sartre claims that we can “resolve the difficulty”<sup>8</sup> of how to come to terms with bad faith as a unity of opposites, that is, as being both the deceiver and the deceived, if we establish examples that illustrate bad faith. To this end, Sartre presents a series of memorable examples, including one of a woman on a date and another of a waiter at a café.<sup>9</sup> These examples are emblematic of Sartre’s tremendous gift as a literary figure as much as a philosopher, and they also open the way for “weaker” interpretations of bad

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<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Routledge, 2018), 91.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Sartre also presents a third example, the homosexual. *Ibid.*, 108–109.



faith in that the examples help to demonstrate the contingent, temporary nature of bad faith.<sup>10</sup>

Sartre offers, as a first example, a psychological portrait of a woman on a date with a man for the first time: “She knows full well the intentions entertained, in relation to her, by the man speaking to her. She also knows that sooner or later she will have to make a decision. But she does not want to feel its urgency.”<sup>11</sup>

The woman commits bad faith to delay the inevitable decision she will have to make about whether to go further with the man or not. She is in bad faith because she both knows the man’s intentions and the urgency that this creates but acts as if she does not know or does not fully realize these intentions, thereby causing a double-position that allows her to escape, for a moment, the existential responsibility of the decision she faces with the man.

She does not see his behavior as an attempt to make the so-called “opening moves”; in other words, she does not want to see the possibilities of development over time that his behavior presents; she confines his activity to what it is in the present, and has no wish to read, in the sentences he addresses to her, anything but their explicit meaning.<sup>12</sup>

By fixating only on the present and choosing to read into his actions only the most literal meaning and not the full meaning of the situation, the woman deceives herself. Sartre is careful here to limit the scope of the woman’s bad faith: it is not her intention to deceive the man—she is not lying to another—in the way that ordinary deception is typically organized, with its clean, categorically distinct dualism of the deceiver and the deceived as separate people. Her bad faith is, instead, a specific kind of self-deception where she simultaneously understands and does not understand the context and future direction of the man’s intentions.

The underlying concept of bad faith generated in this way makes use of the twofold property of human beings, of being a *facticity* and a *transcendence*. These two aspects of human-reality are, in truth—and ought to be—capable of being validly coordinated. But bad faith does not want to coordinate them, or to resolve them by means of a synthesis. From its point of view, it is a matter of affirming their identity, even while preserving their differences. Facticity must be affirmed as *being* transcendence and transcendence as *being* facticity, in a way that allows us, at the moment we apprehend one of them, to find ourselves suddenly faced with the other.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Two articles that have guided my analysis of these examples are D.Z. Phillips, “Bad Faith and Sartre’s Waiter,” in *Philosophy*, 56 (1981) and Jonathan Webber, “Bad Faith and the Other,” in *Reading Sartre: On Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 97.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Sartre often characterizes bad faith, as he does in this subsequent passage about the woman, as the uncoordinated interplay between facticity and transcendence. We can think of facticity as having the character of identity, actuality, and presence as it connects to Sartre's terminology of "being-in-itself." In contrast, we can think of transcendence as having the character of potentiality, projection, in other words, an attitude that looks forward into the future and tracks something beyond and thereby connects to Sartre's terminology of "being-for-itself." By fixating on the present moment and interpreting the man in only the most literal way, the woman does not allow the twofold property of facticity and transcendence to resolve itself, as it normally would, but suspends and delays this resolution. When he touches her hand, she neither withdraws nor accepts, but simply leaves it there as if she had forgotten it. The identity of facticity as imbalanced with its corresponding transcendence is embodied in the double-position of her noticing and not noticing his hand on hers, and in the way that she allows herself generally to separate from her own body. Yet, by lifting herself and the man up to the most intense conversations about life,<sup>14</sup> she also affirms the identity of transcendence in an unresolved way without fully aligning it with the facticity of the situation, drawing them far beyond the projections of the moment. Through an array of bad faith tactics, she gains for a moment an otherwise impossible and unsustainable position of an ambiguity between her facticity and transcendence, where she neither accepts nor denies the man, but suspends them in the in-between of the decision.

One consequence we can draw from this analysis of the woman is that her bad faith is as temporary as the suspension effect it brings about. Bad faith may appear to be a necessary element of flirtation, since it enables the double-position of withholding without denying the man's intentions. And yet its prevalence as a condition for the ambiguity of the moment is overshadowed by its fleetingly temporary status. Sartre describes it as a set of tactics that the woman makes use of to navigate the situation. But as the situation resolves so too goes the bad faith. Bad faith is, in this sense, clearly contingent.

Let's turn to Sartre's second example of the waiter and attempt to measure the extent of the contingency of bad faith in this example. There is more confusion in this text about how prevalently this character is in bad faith. In some passages, Sartre makes it sound as if only some waiters are in bad faith, while others are not. And even if a waiter is in bad faith some of the time or is in it to some degree and with some amount of intensity, the waiter may eventually emerge out of it. Sartre's descriptions of a shaky waiter

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

boy who has not yet found his way in the world suggest this temporary state of bad faith:

Consider this café waiter. His movements are animated and intent, a bit too precise, a bit too quick; he approaches the customers with a bit too much animation; he leans forward a bit too attentively, his voice and his eyes expressing an interest in the customer's order that is a bit too solicitous. Finally, here he is, on his way back, and attempting in his attitude to imitate the inflexible exactitude of some kind of automaton, while carrying his tray with the recklessness characteristic of a tightrope walker, holding it in a constantly unstable and constantly disrupted equilibrium, which he constantly restores with a light movement of his arm and hand.<sup>15</sup>

Sartre describes the waiter as someone who does not quite fit in with what he is doing. The waiter's movements are out-of-place. His body is ahead of itself. He is overly focused on each activity and movement. Here, Sartre makes bad faith appear to be part of the process by which we come to realize ourselves in a given vocation. The overactions of his body betray the underlying conflict that the waiter has not fully made a decision about who he is. For Sartre, it is of our utmost freedom that we have to decide for ourselves and make our own way. We cannot have these decisions made for us. But we can, nevertheless, delay the inevitable decisions that we must make. This delay, where we both are and are not, is expressed as bad faith. It is an expression of the complexity of freedom and of our desire to avoid this complexity. But this interpretation of the waiter also suggests that we grow out of bad faith as we settle down and embody the vocation. Moreover, it suggests that coming of age might not always require being in bad faith at all. Sartre describes a shaky waiter boy who suffers from the symptoms of alienation from a vocation. Not all waiters are like this.

However, the next passage in the text offers a different, more prevalent interpretation of bad faith. Here, Sartre suggests that the profession of being a waiter always requires being in bad faith; he goes even further in the extreme that the waiter is just an example, and really all tradesmen are in bad faith insofar as their social roles appear to be fixed when they are not.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–103.

[The waiter] is playing, amusing himself. But what, then, is he playing at? One does not need to watch him for long to realize: he is playing at being a café waiter. Nothing in this should surprise us: play is a type of research and investigation. The child plays with his body to explore it, to take stock of it; the café waiter plays with his condition in order to actualize it. This obligation is imposed in the same way on all shopkeepers: their condition is entirely ceremonial, and the public demands them to actualize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, the tailor, the auctioneer, through which they try to persuade their customers that they are nothing more than a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the shaky young waiter in the first description, who is temporarily in bad faith by tricking himself into thinking he knows what he is doing when he does not, Sartre here presents bad faith as a prevalent condition for being a waiter or being a tradesman in general. As with the woman on the date, there is once again an unbalanced interplay between facticity and transcendence. To be a waiter, one must take up the attitude of being a waiter, but this attitude then stands against what one really is as a facticity that does not fully embody the whole truth of the situation. As much as we embody it, having a vocation equally stands against us as an overly-sedimented facticity that we inherently transcend insofar as we are not only a waiter, a grocer, a tailor, etc. The waiter is not only a waiter but fundamentally transcends this characterization; nevertheless, society limits the waiter to only this characterization in its immediate facticity. We can draw an even larger consequence from this, which is that we are in bad faith whenever we play the part of a social role (e.g., a waiter, a grocer, etc., but also a father, a Parisian, etc.). This interpretation leads to a much more prevalent version of bad faith. How often are we playing at social roles? How pronounced is our self-deception when we posture as if we exist only as the role we are currently assigned to in our social settings. Certainly, there may be periods of rest where we feel alive and genuine and engaged with our work and our place in society, without self-consciously pretending to play roles that we do not fully embody in our inner being. Sartre may have also overexaggerated the extent of this discordance between the roles that society places on us and our transcendence of these roles. We also may go through periods in our lives where we refuse to play the game of upholding social roles and embrace instead a momentary resolution of our facticity and

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

transcendence. But it is also clear that this broader function of bad faith uncovers a more prevalent form, which while not entirely constant in our lives, may account for a portion of our life energy.

Both of Sartre's examples—of the woman and the waiter—imply various degrees of contingency. Since she merely uses bad faith as a tactic, the woman's bad faith has a high degree of contingency to it. The example of the waiter, on the other hand, is a bit more complicated to analyze. If we interpret Sartre's description as a coming-of-age story, then the double-directions of bad faith that emerge out of choosing one's vocation from a multitude of possibilities present a slightly different register of contingency from the woman's, but nevertheless present a temporary state of bad faith. Although the further interpretation—that implicates all waiters, all tradesmen, and all social roles in bad faith insofar as we are playing a part that we are not fully embodying—offers a much more prevalent version of bad faith, even this interpretation falls short of being a completely constant state of bad faith. It is the closest Sartre comes in these examples to the claim that bad faith is prevalent, but our analysis should stop short of the conclusion that bad faith is a permanent fixture in our lives, since it emerges from the limited sphere of social roles and since Sartre builds into the description a confusion about whether the waiter, or anyone in any vocation, can eventually come to embody that vocation harmoniously in good faith.

As further textual evidence for the argument that Sartre thinks bad faith is at least somewhat contingent, let's look at a noteworthy passage from *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946):

We ... judge a man when we assert that he is acting in bad faith. If we define man's situation as one of free choice, in which he has no recourse to excuses or outside aid, then any man who takes refuge behind his passions, any man who fabricates some deterministic theory, is operating in bad faith. One might object by saying, "But why shouldn't he choose bad faith?" My answer is that I do not pass moral judgment against him, but I call his bad faith an error. Here, we cannot avoid making a judgment of truth. Bad faith is obviously a lie because it is a dissimulation of man's full freedom of commitment. On the same grounds, I would say that I am also acting in bad faith if I declare that I am bound to uphold certain values, because it is a contradiction to embrace these values while at the same time affirming that I am bound by them. If someone were to ask me: "What if I want to be in bad faith?" I would reply, "There is no reason why

you should not be, but I declare that you are, and that a strictly consistent attitude alone demonstrates good faith.”<sup>17</sup>

Here, Sartre clearly presents the view that bad faith is a temporary state that we come in and out of. Even if it is an important part of our everyday lives, as the examples of the woman and the waiter suggest, Sartre claims here that bad faith has normative implications. By calling bad faith an “error,” and by being critical of people who actively seek out bad faith and even of people who subsist in bad faith through negligence, Sartre here takes up an ethical stance and talks about bad faith as something that we should avoid. We should avoid it whenever we can, and for those of us who are in bad faith, we should try to climb out of it. Moreover, we can demonstrate “good faith” by acknowledging that we are in bad faith. The worst position is to be in such a deeply-sedimented state of bad faith that we are unwilling to fully acknowledge it, even though we know we are in it since we are the ones lying to ourselves. This passage from *Existentialism Is a Humanism* is striking and revealing, but it also conflicts to some extent with the more positive aspects of bad faith that Sartre draws up in the chapter of *Being and Nothingness*,<sup>18</sup> where he demonstrates how bad faith is used to create productive ambiguities and to suspend us, momentarily, in positions which are not only in error, but are also transformative for the embodiment of our existential freedom.

### Having Bad Faith about the Ultimate Goals of Life

Although Sartre’s literary examples of bad faith are significant and powerful in their own way, do they fall short of exhibiting the momentous philosophical significance that the bad faith concept implies? What if bad faith is more deeply rooted in us than Sartre’s examples and the passage from *Existentialism Is a Humanism* imply? What if the human condition is, at its core, mixed up with bad faith, not in a sinister way where we try to deceive and get over on another and take advantage, but in a lying-to-oneself kind of way, where we sustain and delay and cover over the full recognition that being is not something that can be reconciled? What if we are in bad faith about being itself?

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<sup>17</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 47–48.

<sup>18</sup> Because Sartre gave it as a public lecture without intending to publish it as is, some commentators are wary that *Existentialism Is a Humanism* is a hasty work that does not fully represent Sartre’s mature views.

Socrates's radical questioning of the basic assumptions of reality comes to mind here. Most of us behave as if we know this or that about reality. What if this attitude of knowing things is a farce? What if the only true knowledge is that we do not know? What if knowing that you do not know is the only way out of bad faith? As a continuation of the radical questioning that the Socratic method exemplifies, let's analyze the strong interpretation, the branch that views bad faith to be very prevalent, even constant, in our lives. This branch hinges on the question of whether there is something in our day-to-day experience that we are constantly in bad faith about. Let's explore this version of the idea of bad faith by arguing that we are constantly in bad faith whenever we engage in any act of the will—that every purpose or goal is done in bad faith—that the meaningfulness of determinate being is only possible because of bad faith. This version of bad faith comes from an argument from Schopenhauer in section 29 of *The World as Will and Representation*:

Every will is the will to something, it has an object, a goal of its willing: now the will that is presented to us as the essence in itself of the world: what does it ultimately will, or what does it strive for?... Everywhere, a ground can only be given for appearances as such, for particular things, never for the will itself or for the Idea in which it is adequately objectified. So we can look for a cause for every individual movement or alteration in nature... but never for the natural force itself that is revealed in this and in countless other similar appearances: and it is real ignorance, born of a lack of clear-headedness, when people look for the cause of gravity, of electricity, etc.<sup>19</sup>

Here, Schopenhauer recognizes that all willing is a willing towards some goal or object, but that, at the same time, our constant willful striving has, in its essence, an empty underside. There is an underlying, inexplicable aimlessness to our will in an ultimate sense. We strive in determinate ways, and we often know what we are after; sometimes we reach a given goal; sometimes we fail to reach it; but, nevertheless, each goal is concrete and obtainable. The problem arises, however, when we think more deeply about what it is we are really doing when we strive. Can we ultimately say why we will? Schopenhauer's examples of gravity and electricity explain this distinction well. It is easy enough to give an account of such principles in

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<sup>19</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 187.

nature, and even to give an account of how they function, their underlying laws and causes-within-causes, etc. But when we try to give an account of the reason why these laws are in an ultimate sense, we either fail altogether or, like people of “real ignorance,” according to Schopenhauer, think that we can seek out and find an ultimate origin, where there is none. Schopenhauer continues:

Every human being always has purposes and motives guiding his actions, and always knows how to account for his particular deeds: but when asked why he wills in general, or why in general he wills to exist, he would not have an answer and in fact the question would make no sense to him.<sup>20</sup>

Instead of the woman and the waiter, proponents of the Schopenhauerian branch of the strong interpretation think that it would have been better if Sartre had given more radical examples. The business person who constantly puts off the lurking question of the real reason why she desires to earn money is in bad faith. Of course, on the surface, there are many reasons. She might want to start a family or save money for the future or buy luxuries and live a life of convenience in the present. Certainly, these are reasons, and arguably good reasons, to earn money. But if she reflects more deeply on her situation, will she not come to the unsettling thought that beyond the local, short-sighted goals of promotion, living a lifestyle, saving for the future, etc., there is no real, ultimate goal to any of this? We maintain life for as long as we can, but eventually, inevitably, we die. The business person reaches goal after goal, collects wealth, buys luxuries; but what is the real point of doing this? She carries on and grows old, but because that underlying question is always there and is not properly addressed, she carries on in bad faith. We all carry on in bad faith. We eat, sleep, give birth, raise families, relate to each other, and get ready to die without being able to give a proper account of why we do these things that we do. Certainly, we can say that it is for the sake of health, or it is for the sake of our children, or it is simply because nature compels us. But to give these answers to that question is to continue to deceive ourselves in the most basic way about that which we are constantly doing in affirming our lives. This is the perspective from the proponent of the Schopenhauerian branch of the strong interpretation.

We are constantly pretending, like Hamlet plays a part, that our willful actions have some ultimate reason to them, when they do not. We hide behind religious and metaphysical stories about the afterlife so that we can

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.



carry on and continue to pretend that our lives have meaning, beyond the relative circular meaning we attribute to them when we do not look too closely at what we are doing. We hide behind career goals and financial benchmarks so that we can continue to deceive ourselves. We play games of chance and immerse ourselves in consuming forms of entertainment so that we can put off for later the underlying meaningless of it all. We are constantly spurred on by a multitude of local and sometimes competing aims, which drive us to continue in this way and that way to reach for something. But since we do not really know in an ultimate sense what we are reaching for, we live in a constant state of bad faith.

Let's apply what we know from Sartre's examples of the woman and the waiter to this strong interpretation. By being in bad faith, we delay and suspend making a decision, which, in the case of the strong interpretation, is a decision we usually delay until death. On the one hand, in the back of our minds, we know the whole time that there is something deeply missing from our comprehension of why we ultimately will. And yet, on the other hand, we continue to will in bad faith.

Likewise, the bad faith of the strong interpretation takes on many forms. (1) We can lie to ourselves by pretending that we are in fact seeking out the truth of our will, or, even, that we have found the source of the will, for example, in nature or God. According to Schopenhauer, this is one of the ways that we lie to ourselves. We cover over the underlying suspicion that this answer does not really solve the problem, since we are just as well unable to grasp the ultimate reason for nature or God as we are unable to grasp the real reason behind our individual will. Or, (2) we can console ourselves that the underlying rationale of the will should not really matter to us. A common form of bad faith is to simply shrug and say, "let's live and not worry about why we ultimately will." This form of bad faith ignores the fact that comprehension of the will is the driving force behind the meaning in our lives. Our lives are meaningful in terms of the goals we establish to support the reason why we will for this or that. When we immerse ourselves in the reasoning behind the will at an everyday level, while casting off the larger question of why we will at all, we live according to a double standard and thus in bad faith. Ignoring the problem leads to bad faith just as much as falsely declaring the problem to be solved by positing an abstract concept and then not asking further for the reasoning process behind it.

How prevalent is the bad faith of this Schopenhauerian interpretation? Since it establishes bad faith about the basic conditions of life—sleeping, eating, procreating, etc.—it becomes nearly impossible to avoid being constantly implicated in this version of bad faith. Perhaps one way to avoid bad faith is to follow Schopenhauer's theory to its logical endpoint, to his primary solution to the problem of suffering, which he

establishes in Book 4 of *The World as Will and Representation*, the complete denial of the will to life. In this case, the ascetic monk who ceases to will at all likewise emerges out of this pernicious form of bad faith by refusing to engage in the basic conditions that maintain life. We thus find an element of contingency in this strong interpretation after all, insofar as there is some way, however extreme, to cast off one's bad faith.

But we can also argue that the constancy of the strong interpretation challenges us to change our attitude about bad faith. Rather than viewing it as "an error" that we should avoid or overcome if we can, the strong interpretation helps us to think about how to diagnose bad faith and live with it. The question of how frequent bad faith is in our daily lives predisposes us to assume that bad faith is something that can be overcome, even if it takes the most radical disposition of an ascetic monk. But maybe this is the wrong approach. Maybe, instead, the aim should be to acknowledge bad faith as an inevitable structure of fundamental reality in that we aim to attribute meaning to the basic tasks of life, where, at the same time, we can find no ultimate goal or reason. In other words, if we break from Schopenhauer's prescriptive project of denying the will but borrow his argument that there is no ultimate goal or reason to why we will, we are left with, arguably, the most unsettling, all-encompassing register of bad faith. We are all in bad faith constantly insofar as we attribute meaning and have goals where the reason for the meaning and the goals cannot be truthfully established. And yet the point would not be to deny the will nor to find our way out of this completely sedimented self-deception, as Schopenhauer thinks we should. The point, instead, would be to describe and analyze the condition of being in bad faith about the basic structures of affirming our lives.

## Conclusion

Sartre probably wants his reader to interpret bad faith as at least somewhat contingent. There is clear textual evidence for the weaker interpretation, such as Sartre's examples of the woman and the waiter, as well as the normative undertone of his discussion of bad faith in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. And yet, Sartre sometimes complicates the matter by claiming that there is an ontological dimension to bad faith, and that it acts as a condition for truth, such as when he writes: "Bad faith determines the nature of truth ... the ontological characteristic of this world of bad faith, in which the subject suddenly immerses himself, is that, in it, being is what it is not, and is not what it is."<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it is one type of question to ask whether Sartre himself intends the concept of bad faith to be contingent; it is another type of question

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<sup>21</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 114.

to ask whether bad faith should be recognized as contingent, beyond whether Sartre himself intended the concept to be this way. There are, arguably, valuable insights to be drawn from the concept of bad faith when we distance ourselves from what Sartre actually thought and wanted his reader to understand about bad faith and, instead, embrace how the concept can be applied and what ramifications emerge from this application, especially if we look beyond Sartre's examples of the woman and the waiter to the more disturbing example of someone in bad faith about the ultimate goals of life.

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## A Wittgensteinian Perspective on the Multidimensionality of Truth in the Community of Philosophical Inquiry

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**Abstract:** Truth is vaguely conceived in the method of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program's Community of [Philosophical] Inquiry (COI or CPI) either as "discovered," implied as objective and universal, or even "generated" or something subjectively and relatively apprehended in a COI. There are also extreme views that assert that it is not central to a philosophical inquiry, as the latter is only concerned with refining judgment and belief clarification. Is attaining truth not a concern of a community of philosophical inquirers? This essay discusses the notion of truth in a COI, which is the primary approach of the Lipman–Sharp P4C program. It asserts that a multidimensional representation of truth in the context of a COI is not fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies but gives a complete and more comprehensive account of how a child naturally understands the world and attains knowledge through an education based on inquiry. By adopting Wittgenstein's multidimensional model of representation highlighted by Kuusela, it further argues that a multifaceted perspective on truth complements the nature of the COI process, which aligns with the goal of P4C to provide children with opportunities to discover, assess, and analyze ideas openly and fruitfully.

**Keywords:** Wittgenstein, community of philosophical inquiry, philosophy for children, truth

*"Sometimes the use of the word 'truth' is confined to designating a logical property of propositions; but if we extend its significance to designate the character of existential reference, this is the meaning of truth: processes of change so directed that they achieve an intended consummation."  
– John Dewey, Experience and Nature*

## Introduction: Problematizing the Nature of Truth in Philosophy for Children

Truth is vaguely conceived in the method of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program's Community of [Philosophical] Inquiry (COI or CPI). There are disagreements among thinkers and practitioners in P4C as to the nature of truth evident in the COI.<sup>1</sup> Some P4C practitioners view truth as something "discovered" in the context of a communal inquiry, implying a theory about truth being objective and universal. Some thinkers see it as "generated" through collaborative dialogical inquiry, which lends credence to the perspective that truth seems subjectively and relatively apprehended in a COI. There are also extreme views that assert that truth is not central to a philosophical inquiry, as the latter is only concerned with refining judgment and belief clarification. Interestingly, there are some practitioners who even argue that the method and practice of P4C is riddled with an implicit paradox given that doing philosophy demands a focus on the general and the abstract while the practice of employing it in classrooms requires integrating the concrete and particular experiences and perspectives of children.<sup>2</sup>

How does P4C present truth and demonstrate its import in a COI session? It is generally regarded as an unspoken fact that the practice of the P4C program's COI method is not truth-focused but, rather, inquiry-focused. The primary aim of the approach is to get students to inquire about what they know for the purpose of refining their understanding of reality and the world in the spirit of collaborative meaning-making. Lipman defines inquiry as "a self-corrective practice in which a subject matter is investigated with the aim of discovering or inventing ways of dealing with what is problematic."<sup>3</sup> Topics come from prompts in the form of stories or novels infused with philosophical themes that incite the exercise of thinking skills. Children ponder on questions they identify individually, and later on, as a whole, as they cast votes to decide which query to resolve in the inquiry. The community proceeds by carefully unpacking the question, providing provisional answers, clarifying ideas, and building upon the thoughts of everyone until they arrive at "the most reasonable judgment"<sup>4</sup> (or "the most

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Bleazby, "Overcoming Relativism and Absolutism: Dewey's Ideals of Truth and Meaning in Philosophy for Children," in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43 (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Maria Kasmirli, "The Paradox of Philosophy for Children and How to Resolve It," in *Childhood & Philosophy*, 16 (2020).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 184.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

reasonable philosophical one,” according to Gregory).<sup>5</sup> Participants collaboratively and caringly take part in the development of the inquiry as they are guided by the facilitator who is responsible for making sure that reason takes over. Respect and care for one another are maintained at every step.

Considering the nature of the process in a COI session, does it mean that the P4C program promotes a relativistic conception of truth in education, propagating the postmodernist views that “anything is considered acceptable” and “all opinions are equally valid”? Does the COI method, which is the central pedagogical tool of the P4C program, also subtly proliferate the alleged postmodernist ideology that presents truth as arbitrary and unobjective? And wouldn’t this fact about the COI method negatively impact the acceptability of it being introduced as a pedagogy applicable to teaching young children?

It would help to analyze how truth is rightly conceived in the COI method based on its nature and process. This essay adopts Wittgenstein’s theory of “meaning as use” expounded by Oskari Kuusela and considers how a multidimensional view of truth facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the notion of truth in the COI method.<sup>6</sup> This essay also examines the COI method as a unique “language game” and “a form of life” in the way Wittgenstein views the two concepts to get a good grasp of what transpires in a COI.<sup>7</sup> I argue later on that a dynamic and multidimensional view of truth would help address the issue of the COI method being relativistic and problematic and how instrumental such a method is in equipping children with thinking skills and honing capacities for thought to attain a better understanding of the reality they live in.

### **The Lipman–Sharp Philosophy for Children Program’s Method of Community of Philosophical Inquiry**

In the late 1960s, American philosophers and educationists Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp pioneered an innovative reading program and pedagogical technique to train children to become reflective thinkers and inquirers. The reading program was called “Philosophy for Children.” It was designed to equip children with philosophical skills and engage them in dialogues revolving around philosophical themes and concepts infused in

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<sup>5</sup> Maughn Gregory, “The Arc of Inquiry in Classroom Dialogue,” Lecture. International Summer Workshop at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Mendham, New Jersey. August 5, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Oskari Kuusela, *Wittgenstein on Logic as the Method of Philosophy: Re-examining the Roots and Development of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 210–219.

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1958).

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novels and stories. The pedagogical technique is one in which the classroom is set up to closely imitate a community wherein inquiry and dialogue happen among its members. This approach is called the Community of [Philosophical] Inquiry (COI or CPI) method. Through this inquiry-based pedagogy, classrooms are transformed into communities of inquirers. In the COI, teachers become facilitators of dialogues among students while the latter participate as co-inquirers and take responsibility for their learning.

In the P4C program, the concept of education takes a different form as it is presented as a reconstructive process that a learner engages in rather than a phase that a learner programmatically undergoes “for the transfer of bodies of established knowledge” to take place.<sup>8</sup> In this light, education becomes an opportunity to inquire about one’s experiences and participate in meaning-making and clarification by involving oneself in a communal dialogue with other inquirers. Furthermore, P4C redesigns students’ learning experience, thereby abandoning the traditional framework that stunts the intellectual growth of the children. Traditionally, in the classroom, teachers are metaphorically treated as the show’s director, as the students depend primarily on their knowledge and ideas. Teachers communicate their knowledge and expertise through teacher-led discussions and didactic lectures on pre-identified topics and themes while the students absorb information and regurgitate it in assessments. In a P4C classroom, the responsibility of keeping the atmosphere educative is shared both by the teachers and the students through participating in a collaborative dialogue on topics democratically identified and chosen. P4C classes become a community endeavor; each member relies on one another, thus making education relevant, engaging, interactive, and fruitful.

The COI method is a critical concept in the program.<sup>9</sup> It is a “theory of education made flesh.”<sup>10</sup> P4C treats education as a process that “has no end beyond itself; it is its own end,” which “is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming.”<sup>11</sup> When learners participate in an inquiry, they engage in “the reconstruction of one’s own experience, as opposed to absorbing pre-packaged content delivered by the textbook or the teacher.”<sup>12</sup> Lipman argues that this is what education should be about, that is, allowing students to discuss problems and think for themselves as they engage in

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Cam, “The Theory of Education Made Flesh,” in *In Community of Inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp: Childhood, Philosophy and Education*, ed. by Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Laverty (New York: Routledge, 2018), 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> John Dewey, “Democracy and Education,” in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, ed. by J.A. Bodyston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1916/2008), 50.

<sup>12</sup> Cam, “Theory of Education Made Flesh,” 31.



inquiry with others.<sup>13</sup> Education should be an opportunity for collaborative inquiry and problem-solving. Lipman asserts that when children are not allowed to explore and answer the issues they identify together in the context of a COI, “no interest or motivation is engendered,” and education will simply be “a charade and a mockery.”<sup>14</sup> If one wants education to be experienced by students truly, thinking is what should be happening in the classroom.<sup>15</sup> By definition, a COI is a group of individuals committed to working together to clarify and refine their understanding of reality by asking questions, sharing ideas, and reasoning well with others. The COI also refers to the approach by which the community members participate in dialogues about philosophical topics.

In light of the nature of education proposed in the P4C program and embodied through the COI method, questions as to the entire process being “unduly relativistic” and “open-ended” which can be seen as “problematic in the educational context” have come to the fore.<sup>16</sup> To a certain extent, COIs are “condemned to relativism, that is, the view that there can be no way of adjudicating between conflicting theories or views of the world,” or falling into subjectivism, which is “the view that each of us is condemned to live in our worlds, bound to our own individual perspectives.”<sup>17</sup> To a certain extent, these issues resonate with the postmodernist theory of truth as arbitrary, which stresses that all opinions are valid and that no objectivity can be reached in any form of agreement. When applied to education, a postmodernist approach to truth challenges the objectivity of knowledge and the high premium educational institutions place on perennial foundations of human understanding and activity. Postmodernism applied to truth poses significant threats on the education of children. Rhodena Townsell argues that:

there is no view that a postmodernist refuses to act upon, however absurd or immoral. There is no method that the postmodernist regards as indispensable. The postmodernist opposes only one thing. That opposition is held against universal standards, laws, ideas, and the

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<sup>13</sup> Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cam, “Theory of Education Made Flesh,” 30.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Margaret Sharp, “What Is a ‘Community of Inquiry?’” in *In Community of Inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp: Childhood, Philosophy and Education*, ed. by Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Laverty (New York: Routledge, 2018), 41.

type of behavior that results from the practice of those standards.<sup>18</sup>

In the COI, should students be left to their own devices to decide on the objects of class discussions and, ultimately, their education? Letting children decide on the objects of their education is empowering, but what if they engage in discussions that make unnecessary hullabaloo on frivolous, uneducational matters, thus stealing the limelight from academic endeavors? Also, do children possess absolute autonomy to take responsibility over what topics merit attention in class discussions? Can learners be trusted entirely to take control? Allowing discussions to flow freely without a specific direction might also create an inescapable impasse of conflicting opinions, which may become more harmful than beneficial to the intellectual experience of a naïve child. While an inquiry-based education can unlock the intellectual capacities of children, one should be reminded that an inquiry, in and of itself, can also be employed in ways that increase intellectual slovenliness and indifference or apathy.

In the next section, a case for analyzing the notion of truth in the COI method through Wittgenstein's multidimensional model of representing language and meaning will be explored.

### **Oskari Kuusela on Wittgenstein's Multidimensional Model of Representing Language and a Theory of Meaning as Use**

The same postmodernist view of truth was misappropriated to the later Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein was wrongly conceived to have repudiated his previous thoughts on the nature of language and truth, evident in his early writings, specifically in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. When Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, turned his attention to ordinary language and veered away from a somewhat limited perspective on logic as a strict system of truth and falsehood, he was said to have turned entirely away from Russellian and Fregean logic. Proofs of this sudden change in outlook, among many others, were the absence of logical notation in *Philosophical Investigations*, the introduction of the concept of a language game and the notion of language being a "form of life" in the writings of the later Wittgenstein.

Oskari Kuusela challenges this view by claiming that Wittgenstein maintained a multidimensional representation of language and truth in

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<sup>18</sup> Rhodena Townsell, "A National Look at Postmodernism's Pros and Cons in Educational Leadership," in *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, 25 (2007), 2.

*Philosophical Investigations*, which is to say that Wittgenstein did not abandon his earlier theories on logic, language, and truth but brought it closer to how we use them in everyday discourse.<sup>19</sup> He argues that Wittgenstein's methodology of describing language in *Philosophical Investigations* does not intend to put forward theses of strictness in language use and highlights the necessity of seeing a concept and understanding its meaning from different perspectives, which may initially look contradictory.<sup>20</sup> For example, while considering the case of color concepts, Wittgenstein's mention of agreement as an essential feature of the use of color concepts, according to Kuusela, is his way of clarifying that being generally agreed about the colors of things is necessary for communication about colors to take place.<sup>21</sup> General agreement on meaning is essential for communication and discussion, but this does not mean we see things similarly, especially when perceiving colors, which is difficult to ascertain and defend. In the same vein, although the earlier Wittgenstein might be said to claim that logic has strict rules and truth is that which can be subjected to the strict rules of logic, the later Wittgenstein does not contradict such a claim and instead defends a more expansive and a more inclusive description of logic and truth to include even those items that do not fall within the traditional notions.

In this light, Kuusela discusses Wittgenstein's methodology of combining different modes of representation or description in which the legitimacy of one representation method does not automatically exclude the possibility of an additional description.<sup>22</sup> For example, does seeing one image in a Gestalt picture automatically exclude the possibility and legitimacy of seeing other images from the same picture? Wittgenstein, according to Kuusela, will surely disagree with the said statement, as several models of representation are not exclusionary.<sup>23</sup> Instead, they offer mutually independent perspectives on the same picture. Here, Kuusela brings forward several examples of how Wittgenstein employed a multidimensional description of language and logic when he talks about (1) the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of grammar at the same time, (2) meaning as constituted strictly by rules and meaning as ungoverned by fixed rules, and (3) mathematical propositions as arbitrary and non-empirical versus mathematical rules as having an application to reality.<sup>24</sup> Wittgenstein's nonreductive and nonempirical approach to describing language recognizes that there is a necessary amount of vagueness and ambiguity in language use,

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<sup>19</sup> Kuusela, *Wittgenstein on Logic as the Method of Philosophy*, 210–219.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 210–219.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

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making language valuable and useable. Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, became more open to understanding language and how humans participate in language use, allowing for a more comprehensive and naturalistic account of it.

Furthermore, limiting the meaning of a word to one account or description does not work well within Wittgenstein's theory of "meaning as use." Wittgenstein employs the term "language-game" to emphasize that "the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life."<sup>25</sup> One cannot divorce the use of language from the context in which it is done. On the topic, Wittgenstein enumerated examples of language-games such as "giving orders, describing, reporting, speculating," and many others.<sup>26</sup> On any occasion that language is used, one participates in an activity or a game that is uniquely characterized and bounded by rules. Language has an "essential connection with the environment of its use."<sup>27</sup> Language gets continuously shaped as its users use it and so does meaning and one's conception of a word. The participation of language users as "embodied beings in interaction with their surroundings or environment" adds layers and facets to the shaping of language and meaning.<sup>28</sup> This is also why Wittgenstein calls language a form of life. As a form of life, language "cannot simply be detached from" the environments in which it is used, which means that to understand the meaning of words and concepts, they must be analyzed in light of the environment and context in which they are used.<sup>29</sup> Thus, since word usage is nuanced as it should not be understood detached from a linguistic environment, descriptions of meaning should also showcase the same multidimensionality and complexity.

In the next section, a multidimensional representation or description of truth will be employed to make sense of the notion of truth in the COI method.

### **A Multidimensional Representation of Truth in the COI Method**

How is truth exactly understood in a COI? What functions does truth perform in the exchanges of ideas in an inquiry? Truth is multidimensionally conceived in the COI method. The following subsections discuss the conceptions of truth at play in the COI inquiry process.

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<sup>25</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Kuusela, *Wittgenstein on Logic as the Method of Philosophy*, 201.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

*Truth as a Result of Reason*

In a COI, the goal of the inquiry is for children to develop habits of the mind to prepare them to engage in philosophical considerations of concepts with other thinkers. Children are taught logical rules not through a lecture but by allowing them to participate in dialogues guided by reason, thus equipping them with skills such as detecting errors in reasoning, spotting fallacies, and identifying contradictions, among many others. Dialogues in a COI session are “disciplined by logic” as “one must reason to follow what is going on in them.”<sup>30</sup> Logic is employed in the inquiry as rigidity and structures, when applied to thinking, also help expand one’s understanding and arm one with thinking skills to be ready to take on more complex thoughts and ideas. Essentially, when the classrooms become COIs, “the moves that are made to follow the argument where it leads are logical moves.”<sup>31</sup> Everything that happens in the inquiry is a step to prepare children for thought and deeper thinking based on sound argumentation. Lipman further asserts:

As a community of inquiry proceeds with its deliberations, every move engenders some new requiredness. The discovery of a piece of evidence throws light on the nature of the further evidence that is now needed. The disclosure of a claim makes it necessary to discover the reasons for that claim. The making of an inference compels the participants to explore what was being assumed or taken for granted that led to the selection of that particular inference. A contention that several things are different demands that the question be raised of how they are to be distinguished. Each move sets up a train of countering or supporting moves. As subsidiary issues are settled, the community’s sense of direction is confirmed and clarified, and the inquiry proceeds with renewed vigor.<sup>32</sup>

Inquiry is structured in the COI method as it follows a kind of logic. Lipman asserts that thinking operations in a dialogue follow a “functional” hierarchy in order to support the flow of ideas.<sup>33</sup> Steps in the inquiry are taken

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<sup>30</sup> Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 92.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

to ensure progress and cater to the individual needs of the participants. To this end, the facilitator is trained to see the direction of the inquiry according to a “hierarchy of inquiry moves<sup>34</sup>.” Occupying the top spot in the hierarchy of inquiry moves is the “time-out.” This move shows the importance the COI method gives to “taking a pause” in the inquiry as it is aimed at making sure all the participants are essentially on the same page and the exchange of ideas is adequately summarized, thus ensuring that no one is left behind in the course of the discussion. The second move is “clarify.” Here, students ask questions to clear the ground and settle ambiguities in thought. Those who share their ideas are requested to make their opinions more understandable by offering analogies, illustrations, and whatnot. Other members of the community may assist in clearing things up by stating what they understood as well at that point in the inquiry. The next move is “respond.” This is offered when one member wants to build upon an idea shared by another participant. This move helps expand and extend the discussion, thereby allowing progress in the inquiry to take place. The last move is “offer a new idea.” This move holds the least priority as it is meant to be made whenever someone needs to open a new topic or lead the discussion toward another path. The fact that inquiry is structured based on the hierarchy of moves one can make as one participates in it shows that principles of logic and reason are embedded in the whole process. Through these moves, “truths” come to view naturally as they are discovered along the way in the pursuit of answers and clarity.

Accordingly, when the rules of logic are employed in the COI, students generate truths and refine their understanding of them with the guidance of reason. Children learn that not all thinking and argumentation are sound; in fact, some are fallacious and contradictory. Through the structures of reason, they learn in the inquiry along the way; they become disciplined in entertaining thoughts that seem to pass off as truthful and factual and learn to navigate the inquiry with other thinkers by sifting through the ideas together. Here, one discovers one aspect of truth evident in the COI—truths are seen as the products of applying rigidity and structures to thinking and dialogue. Truths, in this sense, are gems discovered on the way towards understanding, refined and collected to build a comprehensive account of reality. In the same light, truths are treated as solid building blocks generated through discussion that are foundational to erecting an edifice of collective knowledge and wisdom.

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<sup>34</sup>This order of inquiry moves was shared by one participant in the International Summer Workshop at the IAPC, Mendham, New Jersey in August 2017. This hierarchy intuitively follows what facilitators must consider to take precedence in a COI.

*Truth as the Most Reasonable Philosophical Judgment*

The end goals of COI sessions are “provisional judgments” arrived at by the community through thorough discussions, and they are described as the most reasonable philosophical judgment possible.<sup>35</sup> Although it could take hours and many sessions before a community of inquirers gets to the bottom of things, there is always an attempt to settle some, if not all, of the issues and topics that came to light in the dialogue. Interestingly, these “occasional settlements” should not be characterized with “finality” as they are “perches or resting places.”<sup>36</sup> A settlement is always open-ended in a dialogue or inquiry. Dewey puts it this way:

The “settlement” of a particular situation by a particular inquiry is no guarantee that *that* settled conclusion will always remain settled. The attainment of settled beliefs is a progressive matter; there is no belief so settled as not to be exposed to further inquiry .... In scientific inquiry, the criterion of what is taken to be settled, or to be knowledge, is *so* settled that it is available as a resource in further inquiry; not being settled in such way as not to be subject to revision in further inquiry.<sup>37</sup>

These reasonable provisional judgments constitute another perspective of truth in the COI. Truths are understood as the most reasonable philosophical judgments in the inquiry, but they are not held with finality and completeness. Lipman took it from Dewey’s notion of truth as “warranted assertibility” — a term substituted by Dewey for truth, showing his disinclination towards using it.<sup>38</sup> Dewey understands and presents truth as warranted assertibility which “designates a potentiality rather than an actuality.”<sup>39</sup> This characterization of truth achieved in an inquiry being never final and entirely settled makes the COI method a unique pedagogy in education. The treatment of answers in an inquiry directly contrasts with that of the traditional conception of education in which answers are thought to be achieved when one passively listens to the teacher and ticks the to-do lists designed by a knowledgeable other.

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<sup>35</sup> Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 93.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938), 8–9.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Joseph Cahill, “John Dewey’s Concept of Truth” (Master’s Thesis: Loyola University Chicago, USA, 1954), 33, <[https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1930&context=luc\\_theses](https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1930&context=luc_theses)>.

<sup>39</sup> Dewey, *Logic*, 7–9.

Furthermore, learning in the COI session implies learning with others—a shared experience that children actively participate in with many others, not only with one or a few knowledgeable adults. This is also why truth is conceived in a COI only as a form of judgment or an opinion. The inquiry allows for treating answers and ideas with openness and liberty. The inquiry is set up in an atmosphere in which students can freely share their thoughts without being afraid of getting judged by other people because all are invited to contribute to providing the most reasonable answer to the question.

Indeed, reasonableness (and rationality) is significant both in the process of inquiry and the result of the inquiry, which is the community's provisional judgment. Lipman notes:

To be reasonable in the context of a community of inquiry means that “one has the capacity to employ rational procedures in a judicious manner, in the sense that, say a hospital physician dealing with a highly contagious patient must make reasonable judgments as to the employment of standard medical procedures. But to be reasonable can refer not just to how one acts, but to how one is acted upon: It signifies one's capacity to listen or to be open to reason. Both senses of the term are fundamental for the community of inquirers.<sup>40</sup>

This note is important to discuss to highlight that although the occasional settlements of the community are not treated as strongly conclusive, the procedures through which they are attained are guided by reason and argumentation, which shows the strength and the validity of the process and the reasonableness of the said outcomes. Seen in this light, some truths, after all, are difficult to ascertain fully, but they nonetheless give us directions in the pursuit of clarity and understanding. As “perches” or “resting places,” the provisional truths give a sense of closure to the inquiry participants.

### *Truth as Elusive in an Inquiry*

Truth is difficult to catch in an inquiry participated by people coming from different backgrounds. This shows the other aspect of truth evident in participating in an inquiry—it is elusive and hard to come by. In the same vein, Wittgenstein understood the complexity of language use and the

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<sup>40</sup> Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 97.



difficulty of arriving at a complete agreement when it comes to meaning due to “facts of nature” that “mould language.”<sup>41</sup> “Uniformity” seems to be an impossibility, considering that where one is certain, “someone else is uncertain” about the same thing.<sup>42</sup> Kuusela argues that

the fixity of the boundaries of concepts is therefore affected, for example, by factors such as variation or lack of uniformity in the behaviour of language users, including how confidently or reliably they can identify something as falling under a concept.<sup>43</sup>

The lack of uniformity in understanding due to facts of nature is also experienced in a COI session. For example, a class composed of students with different socioeconomic backgrounds will have difficulty agreeing when talking about what constitutes a fulfilling, successful life. Those from well-to-do families may regard success as completing college degrees and landing jobs and professions that provide more considerable compensation. In contrast, those from families living in harsh and impoverished conditions may find being able to provide for the basic needs of their families constitutive of a successful life. Because these students came from different economic realities, agreement may not be reached, and a uniform answer may not be available. Differences in experience account for the difficulty of coming up with a unified meaning of a concept or a word as it is used daily. The same is true for basically any word or concept which is widely used in different contexts. But does this mean that the word or the concept at hand may never be used and fully understood?

In the COI session, agreement in meaning is not given the sole focus but the refinement of one’s understanding regarding the meanings of experiences. Following the example used above, an inquiry which proceeded on the said route may end on a note that success in life is understood differently depending on one’s values, principles, and priorities. This means that a provisional answer, the most reasonable philosophical judgment about the topic, may still be reached despite the lack of a shared experience and perspective on an issue.

Truth being elusive is not so much a weakness in a philosophical inquiry but a natural consequence of the direction and the process of the COI method. Logical clarification and analysis are the breath in which the philosophical inquiry takes place. The entire experience of participating in an

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<sup>41</sup> Kuusela, *Wittgenstein on Logic as the Method of Philosophy*, 202.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

inquiry provides the participants with an avenue where they can clarify their ideas and help others describe theirs, analyze and unpack their thoughts through the help of other thinkers, and share the burden with the other members of the community to refine judgment and expand the community's understanding of a topic or an issue. Objectifying truth, i.e., treating truth as something everyone is looking for as it is simply hiding somewhere, is a wrong conception of what the whole community aspires to achieve. Attaining understanding and gaining an awareness of the complexity of thought, not simply a specific notion of reality, is what the inquiry is about.

### *Truth as a Muddle that Jumpstarts Inquiry*

In the COI method, there is a sense in which truth is conceived as a "muddle" or a problematic hypothesis or thought that, when found, opens the door for inquiry to take place. Lipman argues that "for there to be an inquiry, there must be some doubt that all is well, some recognition that one's situation contains troubling difficulties and is somehow problematic."<sup>44</sup> Dewey also recognizes "problematic or indeterminate situations" as conditional to an inquiry.<sup>45</sup> Dewey states, "Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole."<sup>46</sup> Thus, the identification of problems, in the form of vaguely understood truths, puts inquiry to use by providing it a context in which its process may be employed.<sup>47</sup>

In this light, truth is considered problematic and something which needs to be further clarified. This experience of engaging in doubting and problematizing on a topic happens in the COI session right after a material or a prompt in the form of a story or text is provided. After reading the prompt or the text, children are given time to develop questions they want to discuss in the inquiry. These moments of silence and processing engage children in thinking about ideas they can create questions about. These opportunities give them time to identify which ideas in their head baffle them and recall experiences that provide them with a sense of doubt, which are great prompts for philosophical questioning. The goal of the inquiry, thus, is for the community to resolve the problems or issues embedded in the chosen question of the session. Truth, as conceived here, constitutes those

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<sup>44</sup> Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 94.

<sup>45</sup> Cahill, "John Dewey's Concept of Truth," 41.

<sup>46</sup> Dewey, *Logic*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Cahill, "John Dewey's Concept of Truth," 42.

problematic, individual perceptions of children regarding reality the stimulus prompted them to think about.

This additional conception of truth seems confounding. Appropriating Wittgenstein's concept of a language game to the COI method, it should be maintained that speaking the language of the community of inquirers is part of an activity or a form of life distinct to the environment in which the language is spoken. In the environment where the COI is meant to take place, truth is also understood as that which propels inquiry. A truth that is not problematic enough cannot open the discussion or dialogue. Moreover, being open to being challenged and doubting one's previous knowledge is also a part of participating in a COI activity. Doubt has a role to play in the COI. Fynes-Clinton and Renshaw explain that in a collaborative activity like the COI, "epistemic doubt," as they call it, initiates the process of inquiry and is cultivated further as children participate in the process.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, doubt is present in the whole process of inquiry because it is the one that promotes collective inquiry and becomes the "philosophical stance of ignorance" that begins the inquiry.<sup>49</sup> At this juncture, it is important to note that although an inquiry may be considered "settled" after a grueling and prolonged exchange of ideas among participants, the whole experience fosters the habit of approaching resolutions with openness and judiciousness. Thus, if the community decides, they can take up the same resolution as the basis of their future inquiries and start in renewed doubt as they consider the topic as if approaching the same issue for the first time. Doubt, indeed, plays a prominent role in the COI method.

### **Conclusion: Why Seeing the Community of Inquiry as a Language Game and a Form of Life Important in Education**

Education is meant to prepare children intellectually to take on more significant epistemic pursuits in the future. Dewey argues that education should concern itself with what matters in life. As the popular Deweyan statement goes, "Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself." The children we teach in schools will eventually become active participants in building and strengthening their communities. Their participation involves inquiring with others and collaborating with different people in epistemic and intellectual endeavors. Educational institutions can contribute to helping children transition effectively and smoothly to taking up essential roles in society by arming them with skills that fit the bill. If, at

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<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Jane Fynes-Clinton and Peter Renshaw, "The Role of Doubt in Collaborative Philosophical Inquiry with Children," in *Childhood & Philosophy*, 17 (2021).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

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an early age, children are exposed to the complexities of understanding and making sense of their realities, and even the idea of the difficulty of grasping truths, they can be better equipped in their future intellectual pursuits. The COI method, in a sense, simulates the kinds of intellectual experiences children may be confronted with in the future, and it does so by structuring the practice of inquiry while at the same time keeping the exchanges of ideas as authentic and close-to-real as possible.

This is why the COI method, to an extent, provides a structure to inquiry while leaving some room for organic discussions to take place as the exchanges come about as messy and cluttered, yet open, complex, and expansive. The whole method mimics how an inquiry inside our minds proceeds naturally—unstructured and complex at times but eventually turns out to be progressive and disciplined when allowed to take its course naturally. Similar to how Wittgenstein defines the practice of language guided by rules that change and evolve, the COI method is also process-oriented, despite the process being open and unfixed. The COI method, as a language game, does not limit the practice of inquiry within pre-set bounds. The structure only serves the purpose of igniting inquiry, but the actual exchanges of ideas and reasons are what ultimately lead the direction of the inquiry.

Sharp recognizes this ambiguity in the practice of the COI. She regards the COI as an “open-ended process,” that is, “it is rather a process through which children come to ‘live the life of inquiry’” which is an “on-going conversation.”<sup>50</sup> In the Wittgensteinian sense, the COI has a life of its own. This is an essential feature of the COI method because through participating in the COI, one becomes a participant as well in an education that prioritizes engaging students in the “process of growth in the ability to reconstruct one’s own experience so that one can live a fuller, happier, qualitatively richer life.”<sup>51</sup>

Ironically, the question of what exactly constitutes a COI is baffling to Sharp. Sharp finds it challenging to answer the question when one teacher told her in a teacher education residential workshop in P4C at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children that “they were now truly a community of inquiry.”<sup>52</sup> The difficulty of answering does not come from the lack of a definitive answer to the question—it comes from the fact that Sharp herself recognizes that the COI is an example of “lived experiences that we know are genuine, recognized as such when we experience them, even

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<sup>50</sup> Cam, “The Theory of Education Made Flesh,” 30.

<sup>51</sup> Ann Margaret Sharp, “What Is a Community of Inquiry,” in *Journal of Moral Education*, 16 (1987), 45.

<sup>52</sup> Sharp, “What Is a ‘Community of Inquiry’?,” 38.

though we can't describe or explain them in words."<sup>53</sup> Sharp argues that the difficulty of calling any specific discourse a COI exists not because of the impossibility of perfecting an inquiry but because she knows that different inquiries occur among COIs. There may be similarities, but the contexts and the directions those inquiries are taking will always be distinctly unique vis-à-vis one another. Each experience in a COI session is a *sui generis*; participation across sessions is incommensurable. Sharp maintains that "[t]here is something about the notion of 'community of inquiry', whether posited as the goal of good teaching or described as a lived experience, that calls for analysis and a ferreting out of identifying criteria and assumptions."<sup>54</sup> In a similar sense, I argue that given that there is no one-size-fits-all conception of a COI, there is also an absence of a one-size-fits-all conception of truth in participating in the inquiry. COIs emerging and happening across communities of participants are unique and distinct from one another. As a natural consequence, the discoveries and outcomes, i.e., the truths that emerge from every inquiry, are different, making every engagement alive and unique.

Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, uses the term "affinities" when he discusses language games as forms of life.<sup>55</sup> Appropriating it to the COI method, the COI is a language game that has a unique form of life. Every inquiry takes different forms and proceeds in different directions. Every inquiry is alive—evolving depending on the context of usage, the backgrounds of the participants, and the topics discussed. Dewey understands the process of an inquiry in the same manner as he maintains that each inquiry is special in that outcomes of an inquiry are "parts of an enterprise that is continually renewed, or is a going concern."<sup>56</sup> Thus, truth in the inquiry, is "not merely one successful operation, but rather the accumulation of resolved situations ... truth is rather in a process, just as life itself does not consist of an instant of activity, but of a flow of activity."<sup>57</sup> The participation of each member and many other factors add layers of complexity and uniqueness to this unique form of life, which only goes to show that each inquiry is alive and dynamic. Each experience in an inquiry characterizes its own. This is also the reason why some inquiries demand "closures" while some do not. Some inquiries go off on a tangent and still flourish, while others appear very linear but focused. Each inquiry is unique.

When adopted in children's education, the COI approach exposes children to the complexities of thinking and the ardent task of grasping

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>55</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.

<sup>56</sup> Dewey, *Logic*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Cahill, "John Dewey's Concept of Truth," 34.

truths, which prepares them for life as Dewey envisions. This does not only become a preparation, but participating in an inquiry is an actual activation of their capacities—it gets them to “actually do” it. Children are not taught how to think but are given opportunities to perform what they already have capacities for. Education here becomes facilitative, appropriate, and directly relevant to learners. And such an education is what children deserve to experience.

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## Are Filipino Children Too Young to Do Philosophy?<sup>1</sup>

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*Peter Paul E. Elicor*

**Abstract:** Children from various countries have been acknowledged and studied for their ability to philosophize, while, unfortunately, Filipino children have not received similar recognition. In this paper, I make a rather unpopular claim that Filipino children can and already are doing philosophy in their efforts to make sense of their existential conditions. “Doing philosophy” here refers to the act of being perplexed by one’s own or other people’s experiences and making an effort to comprehend them. Filipino children, are a vast and diverse group, coming from various backgrounds, speaking different or even multiple languages, and representing rich cultures and unique circumstances. This diversity adds richness to the wide array of experiences from which existential questions can emerge. However, to truly comprehend the philosophical thinking of Filipino children, they need opportunities and guidance to explore their existential questions and solutions, regardless of how tentative or rudimentary these may seem to adults. Without such opportunities, it remains unclear to what extent their thinking engages with philosophical themes and issues. This not only offers Filipino adults a view of children’s inner worlds but also brings fresh perspectives to commonly held assumptions.

**Keywords:** Filipino children, philosophy for/with children, community of Inquiry, Filipino philosophy

A few years ago, while on a flight to Tacloban to attend a philosophy conference, I happened to sit beside a woman with a daughter who was about six years old. It was apparent from her excitement that she was experiencing her first plane ride. As the child saw the clouds up close, she could not contain her curiosity and full of excitement, she turned to her

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<sup>1</sup> Louella Tumaneng’s invaluable insights, probing questions, and encouraging support have been instrumental throughout the writing process of this paper.



mother and asked loudly, “*Nanay, di ba gihaharani-i na la kita hit langit? Makikit-an ta ba it Ginoo?*” (“Mama, aren’t we close to heaven now? Would we be able to see God?”) Her mother, seemingly embarrassed for disrupting the silence in the cabin, hushed her straightaway. The child was pensive for a while but, like most children, could not help but think out loud. As if having a dialogue with an imaginary friend, I overheard her ask in a soft voice, “*Kun may-ada Ginoo kay ano nga diri ko man hiya nakikit-an?*” (“If God is there, why can’t I see him?”) Without her knowledge, this Filipino child’s young mind was puzzled by a question that has perplexed many philosophers. The only difference is that her question was articulated in a straightforward, non-hermetic language. Unfortunately, many adults treat these kinds of questions as naïve childish musings. They are deemed superfluous, sometimes embarrassing, and unworthy of serious attention. As a result, these questions often land on dismissive ears.

In this paper, I intend to negate the question “Are Filipino children too young to do philosophy?” and put forward a rather unpopular claim that Filipino children can do and, in fact, are already doing philosophy.<sup>2</sup> While children from various countries have been acknowledged and studied for their ability to philosophize, Filipino children, unfortunately, have not received similar recognition for their potential as young philosophers.

This paper has four (4) parts: First, I claim that Filipino children are already doing philosophy in their attempts to grapple with their existential questions. Second, I discuss a few important elements in Philosophy for/with Children, which is at present the only available educational and philosophical program where children and young people are encouraged to explore their existential questions in the context of a community of inquiry. Third, I examine what Philosophy for/with Children can possibly offer Filipino children if utilized. Finally, I anticipate possible objections from three points of view, namely, parents, educators, and philosophers, and provide answers with concrete suggestions.

## Filipino Children as Philosophers

Are Filipino children too young to do philosophy? Better still, can they do philosophy? To begin with, *all* children regardless of culture are capable of doing philosophy. Philosophy is not viewed here as a subject content transferred from a teacher to a student, requiring academic degree and expertise. Instead, it is an inquiry into one’s own and others’ experiences

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, while I use the term “children” to encompass individuals aged 3 to 18 years, I acknowledge the distinctions within this wide range of ages, such as preschoolers, schoolchildren, adolescents, and youth.

and perspectives, many of which are informed by beliefs and assumptions everyone has “to make sense of the world.”<sup>3</sup> Doing philosophy in this context refers to the experience of being puzzled about one’s existential conditions and the attempt to grapple with them, where questions, many of which are deeply philosophical, naturally emerge.

In connection, Filipino children philosophize when they ask existential questions. For instance, when a child asks her mother, “Why does *tatay* have to work abroad?”; or when a female 5th grader questions, “Why does Gerald like to wear our uniform?”; or when a child from a gated community wonders, “Why doesn’t *lola* allow me to play with the kids from outside the village?”; or when a child inquires, “Why do I have to wear polka-dotted clothes on New Year’s day?”; or when an adolescent ponders, “Why am I not as pretty as the other girls in school?”

Any adult or parent of course can satisfy a child’s curiosity by giving the simplest answer. However, while these questions may seem ordinary on the surface, there is always an opportunity to explore beyond them and discover their underlying existential worries. Gareth Matthews, one of the forerunners of Philosophy of Childhood, notes that “a parent or teacher who doesn’t hear the questions of a child, or doesn’t understand that they are more than, and different from, a mere request for information, misses a chance to do philosophy.”<sup>4</sup>

To illustrate this point, as to the child’s query, “why does *tatay* have to work abroad?” a parent may respond by simply highlighting the financial benefits of working as an OFW. However, beneath the child’s seemingly naive question, there may be an underlying existential question tied to the notion of work, family, and society, which are philosophical themes in social philosophy and ethics.

Concerning the question, “Why does Gerald like to wear our uniform?” a parent may answer by resorting to a full-stop reply, “*Bakla kasi siya*” (“Because he is gay”), missing the chance to recognize a possible existential worry concerning individuality, gender roles, and sexual identities, which are philosophical themes in natural law, queer theory, and ethics.

In response to the question, “Why doesn’t *lola* allow me to play with the kids from outside the village?” a father may assert the grandmother’s authority and reassure the child that it is for her own good, overlooking a possible underlying existential concern related to friendship, freedom,

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Jackson, “Homegrown,” in *Educational Perspectives*, 44 (2012), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Gareth Matthews, *The Philosophy of Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 39.

authority, and even poverty, which are philosophical themes in social philosophy, philosophical anthropology and ethics.

Similarly, regarding the query, “Why do I have to wear polka-dotted clothes on New Year’s Day?” a relative may respond with “*Syempre, para swerte*” (“Of course, for good luck”) or the usual adage, “*Wala may marwala nato kung mutuo ta, di’ba?*” (“We don’t lose anything if there’s no truth in it”), justifying belief in superstitions. Although this line of thought might make sense to many Filipino adults, providing it as an answer to a child’s question only disrupts the exploration of a possible curiosity pertaining to belief and truth, which are philosophical themes in epistemology and metaphysics.

Moreover, on the question, “Why am I not as pretty as the other girls in school?” a father may address her distraught daughter with a soothing reply “*Bako yan totoo, aki ko, an gabos na tawo magayon sa mata kan Dyos*” (“That’s not true, my daughter, in the eyes of God all persons are beautiful”). While this typical response may offer his child immediate reassurance, the father nevertheless misses the opportunity to examine an existential distress possibly linked to the concepts of beauty, self-esteem, self-value, and culture, which are philosophical themes in aesthetics and ethics.

Lastly, returning to the child in the plane, the mother had missed an opportunity to seize the moment in order to explore—even tentatively—the notions of God, knowledge, and faith, which are philosophical themes in philosophy of religion and theodicy.

All these examples show that while offering the simplest answer to a child’s question may seem like the most practical response, it ultimately restricts the opportunities for both the child and the adult to explore and inquire together. For the child, it means missing an opportunity to delve into an experience; while for the adult, it denies them a chance to re-evaluate their assumptions or to discover the philosophical themes underlying even the seemingly simplest questions in life.

At this point, I anticipate some difficulties: first, it is unrealistic to expect Filipino parents or adults to participate in, let alone initiate such dialogues, since understandably, not everyone possesses the basic skills, background in philosophy, or even the willingness (and also, patience and energy) required in philosophical discussions. Second, not all venues and circumstance are appropriate for a dialogue when children ask these kinds of questions, for example, inside a jeepney, while at a party or during a church activity. I will address these difficulties in the last section. For now, the focus is that Filipino children can, and are already, doing philosophy.

Filipino children are a vast and diverse group, coming from various backgrounds, speaking different or multiple languages, and representing rich cultures and unique circumstances. This diversity adds richness to the wide array of experiences from which existential questions could spring. Hence,

there is no reason to believe that Filipino children are any less capable of doing philosophy than children from other cultures and countries. However, to develop the potential of Filipino children in doing philosophy, it is necessary to provide them with opportunities and guidance in exploring their existential questions and answers no matter how tentative or simplistic they may sound. Without such opportunities, it would never be determined how much of their thinking touch upon various philosophical themes and issues that could give Filipino adults a glimpse of their inner worlds, which can also enrich our knowledge.

Instead of asking whether Filipino children can do philosophy or, are too young to do philosophy, the more meaningful question is whether Filipino adults are open and willing to expose children to activities that encourage philosophical thinking. The focus shifts from the children's supposed lack of capacity to philosophize towards the adults' responsibility to foster a nurturing environment for philosophical exploration. This shift entails rejecting the deficit view that Filipino children need to become adults first in order to practice higher-order thinking. Hence, common responses, like *"isip bata ka pa"* ("you still think like a child"), *"wala ka pa masyadong karanasan sa buhay"* ("you don't have much experience in life yet"), or *"hindi ka pa namulat sa katotohanan"* ("you have not been exposed to the truth yet"), should be deeply examined and perhaps corrected.

Another implication of this shift is the need to rethink a common Filipino parenting style that places importance on shielding children from what parents perceive as adult, mature, and taboo themes, which they believe could potentially taint children's innocent minds. Thus, the typical replies like, *"baka malason lang ang isip mo"* ("your mind could be poisoned") and *"wala ka pa sa tamang gulang para malaman 'yan"* ("you are not yet in the right age to know that") should likewise be questioned. While some may find these responses suitable and practical in certain situations, their problem lies in the outright dismissal of children's questions, effectively silencing them rather than sustaining their curiosity.

Further, several questions need to be considered: Does our society value and appreciate philosophical thinking? Do Filipino adults listen to and know how to recognize children's philosophical questions? Are there safe and supportive spaces where Filipino children can freely express and explore their thoughts, questions, and experiences without competition or consequence (e.g., grades or rankings)? Do Filipino children in general feel rewarded or satisfied when they exercise philosophical thinking? At present, the possible responses to these questions tend to favor "no" rather than "yes" answers. Nevertheless, these questions highlight the fact that without the necessary enabling conditions, children's ability to philosophize remains untapped.

## Philosophy for/with Children at a Glance

Most of the conversations described earlier typically happen between a child and an adult. These, of course, could also naturally happen between children themselves, e.g., between friends, cousins, or classmates who exchange random questions and ideas while, say, having lunch or playing together. However, imagine such conversations happening among several children *and a facilitating adult* in a collaborative dialogue, where everyone follows some guidelines in sharing their own existential questions and views about them. In this section, I will describe this possibility by discussing the educational-philosophical program called Philosophy for/with Children.

Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC hereafter) is a global movement spearheaded by philosophers, education specialists, and teachers who believe that philosophy can and should be taught not only to high school and college students but also to schoolchildren. Matthew Lipman, one of its forerunners, along with Ann Margaret Sharp, asserts that “children begin to think philosophically when they begin to ask why.”<sup>5</sup> Being naturally inquisitive, they possess the fundamental impulses essential in philosophizing, namely, wonderment, curiosity, and openness. They are, according to Jaspers and Onfray, “‘spontaneously philosophical’ because of their continual and sweeping existential questioning.”<sup>6</sup>

With this view on what children are and what they are capable of, P4wC employs philosophy as a collaborative activity that is accessible to children. This approach challenges the typical impression of philosophy as something restricted to universities and only accessible to adult students and experts. The underlying assumption here is that philosophy, on one hand, and children’s natural disposition to wonder, on the other, blend well together. As prominent in Matthews’ works, “the impulse to philosophize is integral to our humanity, and begins in early childhood.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, P4wC begins with a rather radical assumption that children are natural philosophers. Of course, other educational approaches also emphasize a non-deficit view on young people’s inherent capacities, such as the Reggio Emilia and Montessori approaches, but only P4wC begins with this assumption.

The Community of Inquiry (COI hereafter) is one of P4wC’s defining features. It rests on the premise that learning is best experienced in a context

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, and Frederick Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 58.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, *Philosophy: A School of Freedom, Teaching Philosophy and Learning to Philosophize: Status and Prospects* (France: UNESCO Publishing, 2007), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Laverty, “Gareth B. Matthews, A Philosopher’s Life with Children,” in *Gareth B. Matthews: The Child’s Philosopher*, ed. by Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Laverty (London: Routledge, 2022), 1.

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where all participants treat each other as equal co-learners in the pursuit of knowledge. The emphasis is on nurturing a community where children trust each other enough to build on everyone's ideas like how players work within a team. Consequently, the thinking that transpires in the community, according to Karin Murriss, "transcends the thinking of any one individual" such that "the insights acquired could never have been reached by the individuals alone."<sup>8</sup> Thus, in a dialogical inquiry, children exercise thinking together—an approach that is essentially Socratic. Led by their own questions, children exchange ideas, listen to each other, and, in some cases, arrive at a consensus in a collaborative manner.

From a P4wC practitioner's point of view, the COI bridges the discipline of philosophizing, on the one hand, and education, on the other. What this means is that teaching philosophy to children requires a different approach other than transmission-based pedagogies. Just as one cannot teach someone to swim by merely explaining the process but by actually demonstrating how to do it, teaching philosophy involves showing how to engage actively in philosophizing. A lecture-type approach to teaching philosophy may have its benefits in other contexts, but in a COI, the facilitator's primary role is not so much about spewing Plato's dialogues line-by-line or explaining Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, but rather in modelling a reflective and inquiring mind regardless of the topic of dialogue. Therefore, in the COI, the facilitating adult is a co-learner, not an encyclopedic authority of answers.

By and large, P4wC recognizes that children have their own unique ways of grasping their reality and encourages them to explore their own questions. For this reason, it differs from typical philosophy courses in that it emphasizes *doing* philosophy collaboratively rather than studying it individually. Through philosophical dialogues, children explore anything that interests them, including some questions that are philosophical in nature, in a manner that is suitable for their developmental stage. Consequently, it makes philosophy more engaging for young curious minds, allowing them to develop appreciation of their own and others' ways of thinking about the world. The focus on collaboration and dialogue guarantees that children's voices are heard and their perspectives are carefully considered.

At present, P4wC is being applied and practiced in more than 60 countries. However, what can it possibly offer to Filipino children and to the Philippine society? I will address this question in the next section.

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<sup>8</sup> Karin Murriss, "Can Children Do Philosophy?," in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 34 (2000), 264.

## What P4wC Can Offer to Filipino Children

P4wC is not new in the Philippines. In the past two decades, several Filipino scholars and practitioners have attempted to apply it in the locale, researched and appropriated the COI as a teaching strategy in classrooms, and organized P4wC teacher trainings and workshops.<sup>9</sup> In this section, I examine how P4wC can influence the development of critical and reflective thinking, and cultivate democratic values among Filipino children—goals that do not only benefit children but the Philippine society in general.

### *P4wC Develops Critical and Reflective Thinking*

One of P4wC's benefits for Filipino children is the development of their capacity for critical and reflective thought. Zosimo Lee, the country's pioneer in P4wC, advises that "Filipino children have to be encouraged, as early as possible, to participate in philosophical dialogue and enhance their thinking skills."<sup>10</sup> In the COI, children are introduced to various "thinking tools" that can stimulate further their curiosity about the world. These include, among others, reflecting on experiences, clarifying ideas, making distinctions, probing assumptions, providing examples and counter-examples, exploring alternative ideas, finding criteria, and respectfully challenging others' ideas when necessary. As children become familiar with using these tools in the context of dialogue, they also develop a reflective disposition and critical thinking habits.

In her P4wC research with second grade students in Camarines, Abigail Thea Canuto records that philosophical dialogues "enhance children's critical thinking skills and allow them to think reflectively" which manifests in their ability to "ask probing questions, and make reasonable judgments."<sup>11</sup> These skills, which go beyond mere reasoning, enable children to think well and develop a reflexive aptitude that cultivates open-mindedness as well as self-correction. She observes that her students were "able to widen [the] whole group's perspective about a particular concept by making connections between the arguments and analyses made by their

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<sup>9</sup> See Marella Ada Mancenido-Bolaños, "Narrowing the Gap between Theory and Practice: Community of Inquiry and Its State in the Philippines," in *Kritike*, 12:2 (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Zosimo Lee, "Philosophy for Children in the Philippines," in *Children Philosophize Worldwide: Theoretical and Practical Concepts*, ed. by Eva Marshal, Takara Dobashi, and Barbara Weber (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), 584.

<sup>11</sup> Abigail Thea Canuto, "Developing Children's Reasoning and Inquiry, Concept Analysis, and Meaning-making Skills through the Community of Inquiry," in *Childhood & Philosophy*, 14 (2018), 449.

peers.”<sup>12</sup> Her study is important not only because it is one of the few researches on P4wC conducted in the Philippine context but also because it shows how the COI has enabled her students to experience what Lee calls “synergy in thinking” where diverse individual thoughts are woven together to form a cohesive fabric of new or broader idea.<sup>13</sup>

For his part, Leander Marquez highlights that “philosophy looks at education as education in thinking,” contrasting this to the supposed framework in Basic Education which is “oriented towards the descriptive sciences and skills training.”<sup>14</sup> Mainly for such reason, he offers a radical but necessary suggestion, which is to institute philosophy as one of the core subjects in Basic Education.<sup>15</sup> P4wC’s emphasis on improving the quality of thinking, among others, and not merely to prepare students for future employment, is its important contribution to Philippine schools.

### *P4wC Cultivates Democratic Participation*

Aside from critical and reflective thinking, the procedures of inquiry in the COI support children in developing basic interpersonal and social skills necessary to grow as responsible members of their community, and as citizens in general. Several of its concrete manifestations include willingness to listen, respect for diverse viewpoints, appreciation for the plurality of positions, and openness to resolve problems together. Certainly, this process does not occur overnight but unfolds gradually through repeated exposure to philosophical dialogues. As Lee explains:

One of the intended results of embedding Philosophy for Children in the educational system is the development of a citizenry that demands and participates in discussion of crucial issues, including the basic principles of their society and its social interactions. Citizens can do these things if they are habituated early in collective reflection and decision-making; what will matter is the collective mind and intentionality. These cannot be the product of individual decisions and perspectives alone, but have to be constructed together

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Zosimo E. Lee, “Nurturing Communities of Inquiry in Philippine Schools,” in *Suri* 4 (2015), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Leander Marquez, “Philosophy in Basic Education: Towards the Strengthening of the Foundations of Philippine Education,” in *Policy Futures in Education* (2017), 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*



through the deliberative process and extended reflections and discussions over time.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophical dialogues in the COI are a concrete application and exercise of some democratic principles, which prepare students for the procedures of rational deliberation essential in a democracy. The procedures of inquiry in the COI equip children with the basic skills necessary to participate actively in nation building later on. For Lipman, fostering and strengthening critical thinking in schools is crucial since in a democratic state citizens are expected to think “flexibly but responsibly” in order not to fall prey to “authoritarian and conformitarian propaganda.”<sup>17</sup> This is why the commitment to engage in a COI is, according to Sharp, a “political commitment even at the elementary school level.”<sup>18</sup> Depending on their age and readiness, children in a COI may choose to examine views and practices that are common but often taken for granted in society, thereby cultivating a sense of belonging and accountability even before reaching the age of majority. The procedures of inquiry in the COI, encompassing practices like taking turns, voting, exchanging ideas, agreeing or disagreeing, making meaning, and maintaining openness to diverse viewpoints, cultivate equality, fairness, and respect—values that are integral in a democratic society. Hence, democratic participation is a disposition that children gradually learn and practice in the COI.

### Objections and Suggestions

In this third section, I anticipate some objections from three points of view, namely, that of parents, educators, and philosophers/specialists. Some of these objections are based on feedback I received from colleagues, relatives, students, and friends, which I think represent widely held views towards philosophy in general and P4wC in particular. My responses to these objections are accompanied by some concrete suggestions for actions. However, I emphasize that these suggestions are interrelated; each in fact, necessarily implies the others not least because enabling Filipino children to do philosophy is incumbent on the larger community.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lee, *Philosophy for Children in the Philippines*, 596.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 209.

<sup>18</sup> Ann Margaret Sharp, “The Community of Inquiry: Education for Democracy,” in *Thinking*, 9 (1991), 35–36.

<sup>19</sup> See Cathlyne Joy P. Alvarez-Abarejo, “Facing an Inestimable Giant: Socio-philosophical Reflections on the Difficulty of Implementing Philosophy for Children Program in the Philippines,” in *Diskurso*, 2 (March 2022).

*Parents' Point of View*

Parent 1:

"I understand that philosophy generally deals with the big questions in life. While thinking about these questions is generally important, letting my child encounter them early is not age-appropriate. My child is supposed to have an innocent and carefree childhood. Why would I let her think about life's serious problems so soon? I want her to grow a little bit older and mature before I let her engage in these issues."

It is not entirely accurate to assume that children directly confront the "big questions" in life. Oftentimes, the questions they are interested in naturally grow from their lived experiences and are expressed in their own level of language development. In most cases, these questions gradually arise from an immediate but perplexing experience, or of something that they encounter regularly but find interesting nevertheless. In other words, existential questions emerge from a child's present conditions and circumstances. In a philosophical dialogue, either between a parent and a child, or in a COI, the topics or questions are determined by the children themselves. It is not the parent's role to steer the dialogue in whatever direction she pleases. Instead, what a parent does is model an open and inquiring mind and ensure that the child is given proper guidance in using some philosophical thinking tools. The fact that the questions that occasion a dialogue come from the children themselves addresses the worry about age-appropriateness. When a child expresses an existential question, it indicates her readiness to learn more about it and the ideas surrounding it. Conversely, a dialogue will not progress if the topic or question is something that the child is not ready for or interested in engaging with.

Parent 2:

"I don't feel comfortable letting my child question our faith, traditions, and practices. Exposing him to P4wC might only encourage him to question authority and social norms. I worry that introducing philosophy to my child at an early age might lead him to think it is acceptable to challenge authority figures, including me and other elders. *Baka maging pilosopo!*"

It is inevitable that children would raise questions that may seem to challenge certain traditions, practices, and beliefs. This inclination to pose such questions is in fact what makes children essential in a democratic society, as they naturally inquire about matters that many adults have taken for granted or are often reluctant to question. While this might cause worry for some conservative parents, the COI does not condone disrespectful behavior as this goes against its democratic ideals. After all, being critical does not necessarily mean being defiant. Hence, it is incorrect to think that children who are exposed to philosophy are encouraged to object insolently to societal beliefs and family traditions. Reflecting further, these questions are not necessarily problematic; rather, they present an opportunity to encourage children to uncover the assumptions behind their inquiries and what these assumptions might signify to them. What I see as a problem is when children are forbidden from asking such questions, denying them the opportunity to broaden their perspectives beyond what is told to them. On this note, Marquez is correct in pointing out that the COI “opens the person to ideas outside his/her socio-cultural and religious milieu”, which actually helps expand one’s horizons.<sup>20</sup> Thus, no matter how difficult or unsettling these questions may be, they must be taken seriously since it is the child’s way of making sense of her personal experiences. In addition, raising these questions may be a child’s only means of surfacing a deeper issue (e.g., abuse or trauma).

At this point, I step sideways and address the two difficulties mentioned earlier: first, it is impractical to expect Filipino parents to initiate philosophical dialogues with their children due to differing levels of skill, philosophical knowledge, and willingness. Second, not all situations are suitable for dialogues when children ask such questions. Some possible solutions to these difficulties include encouraging parents to sustain their children’s curiosity, accompanying their children as co-learners, and supporting their children’s philosophical abilities. Let me elaborate on each.

First, when children ask such questions, parents are not obliged to address them immediately, particularly when the timing is not suitable or when the parent is not prepared to discuss the matter. What I think a parent can do is to sustain their curiosity by either assuring the child that the question will be inquired at a later time or by asking the child probing questions, such as: What made you ask that question? What did you see, hear, or experience that provoked you to ask the question? Why is this question important to you? Another way is to keep a record of their questions. An example would be to create a “wonder wall” at home where children’s

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<sup>20</sup> Marquez, *Philosophy in Basic Education*, 3.

questions are written using text or pictograms, which could serve as prompts for reflection and dialogue. This helps sustain their curiosity and, most importantly, honors their questions regardless of how they may sound to an adult.

The basic idea is to avoid any instance when children think and feel that their questions are less important or irrelevant. The worst reply that a parent can say is “That is a stupid question,” even if it is only meant as a playful banter. Children’s naivety, openness, and curiosity should not be stifled most especially at home not least because they are integral to their overall human development. Besides, when children do not get answers or support from parents, they will naturally turn elsewhere, such as the internet where information mostly lack some regulation. Alternatively, parents may use content-appropriate children’s literature that can deepen their children’s curiosity about a certain topic or question.

Second, it is important to note that not all questions from children are philosophical. Some arise from their interest and curiosity but may not have any underlying existential worry. For willing parents, the crucial task is to pay attention to questions with philosophical potential and to accompany their children *as co-learners*. This, of course, neither requires parents to have a prior knowledge of relevant philosophical themes nor must they feign mastery. Rather, parents can act as “sounding boards” to their children’s philosophical musings, offering a receptive ear without assuming control or passing judgments. On this note, Gareth Matthews highlights “that wonderfully strange mode of inquiry in which grownups cannot control the outcome or rely on the advantage of age and experience to maintain their position,” and to “be able to enjoy the special thrill that comes when insight bursts unexpectedly on shared puzzlement and miraculously clears it away.”<sup>21</sup> Such patient and respectful accompanying as co-equal learners is in itself a skill that parents I believe should also learn.

Third, many modern Filipino parents desire their children to acquire life skills or engage in creative hobbies at a young age. Many even want their children to become “future-proof” by allowing them to acquire practical competences early on, such as foreign languages, digital literacy, culinary arts, finance, and entrepreneurship, in addition to conventional extracurricular skills in music, arts, and sports. Unless they are already knowledgeable in these fields, parents do not need to impart these skills themselves but can send their children to trainings or extra classes where professionals and experts teach them. Similarly, doing philosophy is also an important skill that can equip children to face the future with the confidence to think for themselves and with others. Similar to the other skills mentioned

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<sup>21</sup> Gregory and Laverty, *Gareth B. Matthews, The Child’s Philosopher*, 23.

earlier, parents do not have to be professional philosophers in order to teach philosophy to their children. One effective approach involves exposing them to activities aimed at enhancing their philosophical thinking abilities, such as philosophical dialogues (in person or online)<sup>22</sup>, philosophy summer camps,<sup>23</sup> and ethics competitions,<sup>24</sup> among others. However, these activities require the presence and active involvement of Filipino philosophers—a rather bold suggestion which will be discussed in the next part.

### *Philosophers' Point of View*

Philosopher 1:

“I understand that children are naturally curious. Nevertheless, I do not think that just because they are curious and are able to question qualifies them as philosophers. While anyone can pose a question, not everyone with this capability is a philosopher. A philosophical thought is a product of an independent mind. Many children can hardly think for themselves, let alone express their thoughts clearly and convincingly.”

To some extent, it is inaccurate to say that children are philosophers based only on their propensity to ask existential questions. Here, it is important to make a distinction between academic philosophers and natural philosophers. Academic philosophers pursue philosophy as a profession, conducting research and teaching. In contrast, children and young people are natural philosophers because they ask these questions spontaneously not for any other gain aside from understanding their immediate environment and real-life experiences. According to Viktor Johansson, “it is in the way children ask questions, in the way they are puzzled by their encounters with ideas, the world, and others, that they demonstrate their capacity for abstract thought,

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<sup>22</sup> Between 2020 and 2021, the Philosophy with Children and Youth Network for Asia-Pacific (PCYNAP) has organized philosophical dialogues online with some children from various countries in the Asia-Pacific including some Filipino children.

<sup>23</sup> In the Philippines, there are currently no existing and ongoing P4wC programs, but there are regular philosophy summer camps for children and youth in Canada, the US, and Europe. For example, P4C/Aggie School of Athens Philosophy Summer Camp for Teens. See <<https://blog.apaonline.org/2021/01/21/the-p4c-aggie-school-of-athens-philosophy-summer-camp-for-teens-wins-the-2020-apa-pdc-prize-for-excellence-and-innovation/>>.

<sup>24</sup> An example is the Ethics Olympiad, which aims “to do more than just help them think through ethical issues: It is to teach students how to think through ethical issues together, as fellow citizens in a complex moral and political community.” See <<https://ethicsolympiad.yahoosites.com/how-does-it-work.html>>.

and it is their ability to remain in this puzzlement that demonstrates their ability for philosophy.”<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, given that most young children lack advanced language skills and complex conceptual abilities, as well as the capacity to sustain prolonged attention, it is not only practical but also advantageous for them to philosophize among peers in the context of a dialogue where there is no competition or consequence. For this reason, philosophical dialogues are a shared experience created together by free and co-dependent minds, distinct from the solitary pursuit of philosophy by independent minds.<sup>26</sup>

Philosopher 2:

“P4wC is a foreign concept and practice. Most of its underlying assumptions (e.g., reasonableness) are predicated on western constructs, which oftentimes do not match our unique ways of viewing the world. I am afraid that P4wC, despite its noble goals, actually ‘colonizes’ further the mind of Filipino children.”

It is a fact that P4wC as a program first grew in Western soils. However, despite its foreign origins, I think it can work in the Philippine context by integrating it in our culture, languages and practices. It goes without saying that contextualizing and localizing P4wC is necessary, such as using Filipino-authored children’s literature, employing criteria and procedures that are germane to the local community, drawing on local experiences as stimuli, and using the local language in actual dialogues. Moreover, implementing P4wC within a local context should also consider children’s positionalities. This means that philosophers and educators who wish to practice P4wC are responsible for discerning whether their goals and methodologies address the unique needs and contexts of children. In addition, it is incumbent on the philosopher-educator to pay attention to the subtle dynamics of power, privilege, and exclusion, which may be reflected and reproduced in the COI.<sup>27</sup> In this way, philosophy will not be introduced to children as a foreign practice, but one that organically emerges from them through their situated perspectives, shared language, and common beliefs.

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<sup>25</sup> Viktor Johansson, “Children as Philosophers,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood*, ed. by Daniel Thomas Cook (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2020), 405–406.

<sup>26</sup> See Peter Paul Elicor, “Children as Dialogue Partners in Doing Filipino Philosophy,” in *Suri*, 10:1 (2022).

<sup>27</sup> See Peter Paul Elicor, “Resisting the ‘View from Nowhere’: Positionality in Philosophy for/with Children Research,” in *Philosophia International Journal of Philosophy*, 21:1 (2020), 19–33.

As mentioned in the preceding part, the presence and active participation of Filipino philosophers in providing opportunities for children to hone their philosophical thinking abilities is not only important but necessary. Similar to some education professionals who engage with the local communities by giving voluntary lectures, seminars, and workshops, providing assistance (like tutorials and career advice), raising awareness about some issues (such as, gender sensitivity, inclusivity, etc.), Filipino philosophers can also make a valuable contribution by collaborating with primary and secondary school teachers nearest to them. Matthews refers to this approach as the “visiting philosopher” model, which he had personally implemented in the United States. For him,

What a professional philosopher can do is to collect examples of philosophical thinking in young children and then, by linking those childish thoughts to our philosophical tradition, help parents and teacher to recognize philosophy in their children, respect it when it appears, and even participate in it and encourage it on occasion.<sup>28</sup>

Given that philosophy departments nationwide regularly organize extension programs aimed at engaging with local communities through research initiatives and outreach activities, establishing connections with local children in collaboration with teachers and parents can also be viewed as a valuable component of such efforts. One possibility is to engage directly with a group of children by doing philosophical dialogues on a regular basis. Another option is to collaborate with teachers who are willing to be trained in facilitating philosophical dialogues with their students. These approaches can potentially address the concern regarding the limited capacity of many Filipino parents and teachers in initiating philosophical dialogues with children. Again, like most social advocacies, these activities rely on the voluntary participation of Filipino philosophers.

Moreover, Filipino philosophers interested in working with children may consider exploring the philosophical dimension present in many Filipino children’s literature. A possible approach is to select specific children’s literature that contain philosophical themes, and write reviews and guidelines (e.g., teacher’s discussion guides) on how they can be used as provocations for philosophical dialogues. Another approach is to create original children’s stories with embedded philosophical questions/themes and introduce them to schools. Both can significantly assist parents and

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<sup>28</sup> Matthews, *Philosophy of Childhood*.

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educators in understanding and appreciating some topics in philosophy and discovering effective methods for introducing them to their children or students.

Finally, it is imperative to maximize social media in passing on information to the public about some philosophical themes in relation to children's existential questions. This has a double effect: it encourages philosophical dialogues with children and at the same time corrects the stereotypical portrayals of *pilosopo* prevalent in social media. Philosophy departments can encourage their students (undergraduate and/or graduate levels) to conduct projects such as content creation, just like what brand influencers do.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, this entails conveying philosophical questions and ideas through ordinary everyday language and accessible mediums such as images, memes, and videos, ensuring they are understandable and stimulating even to non-specialists. This kind of public engagement is I think comparable to Socrates's discussions with ordinary people in the Agora. For the many Filipinos who do not have the chance to learn formal philosophy but probably spend time regularly with their social media accounts, this can be a way to introduce them to philosophy through what we may aptly call "philosophy influencers."

### *Educators' Point of View*

Teacher 1:

"I understand that philosophy can help develop critical and reflective thinking. However, as many educators working at the elementary level have observed, Filipino children, particularly the younger ones, are generally shy. Only a few have the confidence to voice their questions and ideas. Even less are those who can stay attentive and participative in the entire duration of a class. The reason is because they are not cognitively ready, and obviously, most of them do not have enough experiences in life. Thus, it is better to postpone philosophizing until they reach Senior High."

Children from various countries who have been exposed to P4wC are reported to show improvement not only in thinking and communication

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<sup>29</sup> For example, some philosophy undergraduate students from MSU-IIT (Iligan) use TikTok to promote some concepts in philosophy.



skills, but also self-esteem.<sup>30</sup> I am confident that a similar outcome can occur with Filipino children who engage in COI from the early stages of their basic education onward. Just like learning a foreign language is more effective when started at a young age, introducing children to philosophical dialogues early on can give them confidence in thinking for themselves and communicating their thoughts. Even more fundamental I think is that allowing Filipino children to engage in philosophical dialogues responds to the need to promote their right to be heard, which should begin in elementary schools. Thus, while P4wC serves as a means for developing children's cognitive and linguistic abilities, it should not be overlooked that these capacities are enabled precisely because P4wC is deeply committed to protecting children's fundamental right to be seriously heard and listened to even if they may have fewer experiences than adults.

Teacher 2:

*"Busy po kami! Aside from a lot of paperwork, we also do extra-curricular activities, already sacrificing our own personal time and resources. Besides, we are not Philosophy graduates. Most of us are not trained to facilitate philosophical dialogues."*

It is safe to assume that many teachers are familiar and perhaps already use classroom activities that encourage thinking and participation to enrich their classes like debates, think-pair-share, gallery walk, and roundtable discussions. Although the COI is distinct from these interactive discussion activities, it nevertheless shares some facilitation principles with these approaches. Some of these principles include creating a safe space, ensuring equal participation, maintaining respectful and organized discussions, promoting collaboration, modeling active listening, and ensuring that everyone respects each other's turns. Similar to how teachers use these principles when managing the activities mentioned, P4wC practitioners also utilize them in facilitating dialogues in the COI. Simply put, Filipino teachers who are interested in appropriating P4wC in their classrooms are not starting from scratch. Even without formal training in philosophy, they can effectively facilitate philosophical dialogues by simply enhancing what they are already capable of. This entails acquiring a general understanding of the various branches of philosophy, their corresponding assumptions and questions, along with the common arguments and counter-arguments addressing these questions. While this may still sound daunting

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<sup>30</sup> UNESCO, *Philosophy: A School of Freedom*, 8.

to some overloaded teachers, it is still possible to integrate the COI as a *pedagogical complement* to the established strategies used in teaching non-philosophy subjects in Basic Education.

The critical and reflective thinking exercised in the COI can be valuable for children across various subjects since the process of dialogue-based inquiry encourage a “philosophical mindset,” even when the topic of shared interest is not directly related to a philosophical question or theme. Students develop this mindset every time they consciously and constantly exercise “(re)constructing experience and knowledge through the critical analysis of subject matter, questioning, and the challenging of assumptions.”<sup>31</sup> Whether exploring historical knowledge, scientific concepts, or everyday life themes, students in the COI develop cognitive and socio-emotional intelligence. For this reason, several Filipino educators have emphasized the value of integrating COI in various subject areas in the Basic Education curriculum.

For instance, in the context of science education, Ma. Theresa Payongayong opines that “if the creation of the community of inquiry would be permitted to serve as an educational paradigm then surely it will manifest a back-to-back reinforcement of concept and skills acquisition” which for her are “reasoning and analytical skills.”<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, talking about social studies education, Canuto asserts that

knowledge about history, culture, society, politics, economics, and geography in the community [of inquiry] is built and not merely transmitted, as students are given opportunities to ask questions and share their opinions while following the train of logic in the process of inquiry.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, several case studies conducted in the Philippines have examined the impact of COI in classrooms. For instance, in a study involving 7th and 8th grade students at Pangasinan State University Integrated High School, COI has been observed to be effective in teaching English especially

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<sup>31</sup> Daniela Dumitru, “Communities of Inquiry. A Method to Teach,” in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 33 (2012), 239.

<sup>32</sup> Ma. Theresa T. Payongayong, “Creating a Community of Inquiry through Philosophy,” *Transactions of the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines* 29 (2007), 309.

<sup>33</sup> Abigail Thea Canuto, “Social Studies for Democracy: Cultivating Communities of Inquiry for Filipino Students as Deliberative Citizens,” in *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 18 (2022), 6.

in fostering students' autonomous learning.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, various researchers have documented significant positive outcomes when implementing COI in blended and online K–12 learning settings.<sup>35</sup>

As a final note, utilizing COI as a pedagogical complement does not mean exclusive reliance on it as the sole teaching strategy not least because it can be employed in conjunction with other methods, including those considered “traditional” (e.g., lecture, demonstration, etc.). Depending on the subject area, a teacher may switch between teacher-led and student-led approaches to respond to different learning needs and objectives. For example, science teachers may initiate a lesson with a lecture or demonstration, followed by hands-on experiments. Subsequently, they could facilitate a COI session to further enhance understanding, encouraging them to exercise their philosophical mindset. This progression allows students to grasp concepts both through direct instruction, active participation, and collaborative engagement.

*Kindergarten am See  
Salzburg, Austria*

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<sup>34</sup> Alqy Novia Rachman, Ana Maghfiroh, Diyah Atiek Mustikawati, and Niken Reti Indriastuti, “Community of Inquiry for Students’ Autonomy in English Language Learning: A Case of Philippines High School,” in *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 6 (2021).

<sup>35</sup> See Juliet Aleta Rivera Villanueva, Petrea Redmond, and Linda Galligan, “Manifestations of Cognitive Presence in Blended Learning Classes of the Philippine K–12 System,” *Online Learning*, 26 (2022). See also Mark James Javier and John Vincent Aliazas, “Community of Inquiry Framework in Basic Science Process During Synchronous Learning Modality,” *International Journal of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*, 2 (2022).

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## For the Love of (Local) Wisdom: University, Thomism, and Filipino Thought

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*Jovito V. Cariño*

**Abstract:** The renewal of Thomism and the birth of Filipino nationalism were pivotal events of the 19th century, yet most accounts of them seem to be indifferent to their synchronicity. Rather than interface, what is often read is a re-enactment of the proverbial chasm separating the two. For the most part, historians depict their simultaneous occurrence as an outright clash of civilizations between the sacred and the secular or the medieval and the modern. The decolonial trend of Philippine scholarship further exacerbates this divide and leads to the exclusion of St. Thomas's thought as a potential resource of an enriched local philosophic discourse. This paper seeks to supply the missing link between Thomism and the birth of Filipino nationalism by identifying the intersecting lines as well as the divergent points of their separate yet closely parallel itineraries. The aim is to render a prospective rendition of the renewal of Thomism in the Philippines without glossing over the social and political traumas underlying our local intellectual history. I argue that an agonistic interaction between Thomism and philosophy in the Philippines is possible as it is necessary, and its pursuit is crucial if a sustained engagement between Aquinas's thought and the Filipino mind must be attained.

**Keywords:** Filipino philosophy, Thomism, Catholic, nationalism

This paper is part of a larger project on St. Thomas Aquinas and doing philosophy in the Philippines. This undertaking aims to look into the local reception of St. Thomas's philosophy as a preliminary step towards promoting, on one hand, Filipino scholarship on St. Thomas's intellectual legacy and hopefully, in the long run, a more agonistic interaction between Thomistic thought and Filipino philosophic discourse.

I wish to begin by saying that Thomism, in general, evokes theological and metaphysical thinking. Ironically, the campaign to promote the renewal of Thomism in the 19th century coincided with the rise of Filipino nationalism which strongly positioned itself against theological and metaphysical thought. In effect, one might say that the seeds of the post-theological and post-metaphysical in the Philippine philosophic discourse were sown by the emergence of Filipino nationalism which has been in conflict with the Catholic intellectual tradition ever since. This partly explains why, though predominantly Catholic, scholarly interest on theological studies and metaphysics in the Philippines has been on the wane since the tail end of the 19th century, the period when liberal and scientific ideas from Western Europe were introduced and propagated locally through the writings of *ilustrados* like Marcelo del Pilar and Jose Rizal. The anti-Catholic temperament of del Pilar and Rizal has somehow rubbed off on the present generation of Filipino theorists who remain critical of Catholic thought of which St. Thomas Aquinas is a prime representative. In this paper, I shall try to provide a route out of this perennial impasse and demonstrate a perspective by which Thomism and philosophy in the Philippines may be seen in agonistic rather antagonistic terms. The task is not really to fuse the two but merely to open a space for an encounter which, I shall argue, is both possible and necessary.

### Thomism in the Philippines: The Initial Contact

I begin my discussion with an abbreviated, retrospective account of the history of the University of Santo Tomas which, to an extent, coincided with the beginnings of doing philosophy in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Since its founding, the University of Santo Tomas, or UST, has been the center of philosophic education in the new colony. This was formally inaugurated when the Faculty of Philosophy, alongside the other oldest faculty at the university, the Faculty of Theology, was established on July 29, 1619, or just eight years after the institution's founding on April 28, 1611. The original name of the school was Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Santisimo Rosario. It was originally intended to be a seminary for the young recruits for priesthood. In 1617, it was renamed Colegio de Santo Tomas de Aquino, to honor the great Dominican theologian and saint, St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> See Alfredo Co, ed., *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: The Thomasian Collection (1924–1949), Volume I* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2020), xxii–xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> The longer substitute name was “Colegio de Santo Tomás de Nuestra Señora del Rosario” (1616) before it was shortened to “Colegio de Santo Tomas de Aquino” (1623). See Fidel Villaroel, OP, “The University of Santo Tomas of Manila (1611–1987): A Synthesis of its Four-Century History,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 23 (January–April 1988); Fidel Villaroel, OP, *A History*

inspiration behind the putting up of such school came from the Dominican friar, Fray Miguel de Benavides. With a seed endowment of a little over 1,000 pesos and the donation of his own library, the history of what would later be the University of Santo Tomas was set into motion.<sup>3</sup> His envisioned school was founded six years after he passed on July 26, 1605. He was 55.<sup>4</sup>

While one might consider the offering of philosophic courses at the Faculty of Philosophy the official introduction of academic philosophy in the Philippines, it was not certainly the first encounter between Thomistic thought and the islands' native inhabitants. One might recall that Fray Miguel de Benavides was a product of a Thomist school of thought that was current at the University of Salamanca (formerly Colegio de San Gregorio de Valladolid) which made its mark in the annals of history for championing social justice and the human rights of the natives in the Hispanic territories.<sup>5</sup> At the forefront of these advocacies were Salamanca's illustrious theologians, Fray Francisco de Vitoria and Fray Bartolome de las Casas.<sup>6</sup> The efforts of these Thomist scholars, de Vitoria and de las Casas, infused new vitality into

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*of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines, Vol. I* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012), 41.

<sup>3</sup> For the inventory of the Fray Miguel de Benavides' donation of books, see John N. Crossley, "The Books in the Earliest Library of the University of Santo Tomas," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 53 (May–August, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> This is debatable as there are conflicting accounts of the Fray Miguel's birth year. Piet Van der Loon placed it at 1552, but for Fr. Villaroel it was 1550. Van der Loon, however, did not provide any citation of his sources in contrast to Fr. Villaroel who offered multiple references in determining Fray Miguel's biography. In claiming that Fray Miguel died at 55 years old, I am following the lead of Fr. Villaroel on account of its reliability. It is important to note, however, that Fray Diego Aduarte, OP, the friar historian who wrote *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China* and one of the sources of Fr. Villaroel, did not specify the year when Fray Miguel was born. Of Fray Miguel's early life, Fray Diego only had this to say: "He was born in Carrion de Los Condes, of noble parents, well known in that region because of their descent and their virtue. When he was not more than fifteen years old he assumed the habit of this religious order, and learned by experience how true is the saying of the Holy Spirit that it is well for a man to carry the easy yoke of the service of God from his youth. He received the habit and professed in the distinguished convent of San Pablo at Valladolid." See chapter LXI of Diego Aduarte, OP, "History of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898, XXXI (1640)*, ed. by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), <<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42399/pg42399-images.html>>. See also Fidel Villarreal, OP, "Miguel De Benavides, O.P. (1550–1605), Friar, Bishop and University Founder," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 40 (May–August, 2005), 269; Piet Van der Loon, *The Manila Incunabula and Early Hokkien Studies* (P. Lund, Humphries, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> The University of Salamanca was associated with the so-called "School of Salamanca," but should not be confused with the latter. The "School of Salamanca" referred to the group of Spanish scholastics who tried to develop and extend a reading of St. Thomas Aquinas's thought far beyond its manualist versions. See Andre Acevedo Alvez and Jose Manuel Moreira, *The Salamanca School* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2010), 1–11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–23.



Thomistic thought which in the 16th century was lumbering in steady decline.<sup>7</sup> Against the backdrop of Scholasticism's hostile skirmishes with Reformation, Renaissance humanism, and the rise of the modern sciences, their innovative reading of St. Thomas Aquinas proved to be a breath of fresh air. Fray Miguel, who came to the Philippines in 1587 along with the first group of Dominican missionaries from Spain, was well steeped in the social justice bent of the School of Salamanca.<sup>8</sup> Together with his fellow Dominican and Salamanca alumnus, Fray Domingo de Salazar, he fought for the rights of the natives in the Philippine islands and sought their protection from the abuses of the *encomenderos* and the functionaries of the colonial government.<sup>9</sup> The same missionary zeal led Fray Miguel to learn the Chinese language and eventually wrote a book for the sangley converts at Parian.<sup>10</sup> The book was titled *Doctrina Cristiana en Lengua y Letra China*, which was actually the Chinese version of the original *Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>11</sup> These books were two of

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12. See also John Haldane, *Faithful Reason: Essays Catholic and Philosophical* (London: Routledge, 2004), 125–127. A contrary view may be found in Jacob Schmutz, “From Theology to Philosophy: The Changing Status of the Summa Theologiae, 1500–2000” in *Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Jeffrey Hause (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 221–241.

<sup>8</sup> See Fidel Villarroel, OP, “Miguel De Benavides, O.P. (1550–1605), Friar, Bishop and University Founder,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 40 (May–August, 2005), 267–311.

<sup>9</sup> See Domingo Mallo Peñaflor, “Miguel de Benavides: Advocate of Human Rights in the Spanish Regime,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 20 (May–August 1985); Lucio Gutierrez, OP, “Domingo de Salazar's Struggle for Justice and Humanization in the Conquest of the Philippines (1579–1594),” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 14 (May–August 1979); Lucio Gutierrez, OP, “Domingo de Salazar, O.P., First Bishop of the Philippines, (1512–1594): Defender of the Rights of the Filipinos at the Spanish Contact,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 20 (January–April 1985); chapters XLI to XLIII of Diego Aduarte, OP, “History of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898, Volume XXXI, 1640*, ed. by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), <<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42399/pg42399-images.html>>.

<sup>10</sup> An extant writing of Fray Miguel de Benavides may be found in *Philippiniana Sacra*. See Jorge Mojarro Romero, “Historia misional y literatura en un raro impreso de fray Miguel de Benavides, obispo de Nueva Segovia: Relación del estado de la fe (1601),” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 51 (January–April, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> The complete title was “Doctrina Cristiana en lengua y letra china, compuesta por los religiosos ministros de los Sangleyes, de la Orden de Santo Domingo. Con licencia, por Keng Yong, china, en el Parian de Manila” (1593). The authorship of this book is often attributed to Fr. Juan Cobo, OP, but Fr. Villarroel, backed by testimonies from Fray Miguel, Fray Domingo de Salazar, and Fr. Pedro Aduarte, OP, was convinced that it was Fray Miguel's. See Fidel Villarroel, OP, “Miguel De Benavides, O.P. (1550–1605), Friar, Bishop and University Founder,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 40 (May–August, 2005), 278. Van der Loon also assigned the authorship to Fray Miguel. See Van der Loon, *The Manila Incunabula*, 14. The original *Doctrina Christiana* was authored by the Franciscan friar Juan de Plasencia, OFM. He was one of the first group of Franciscan missionaries who arrived in the Philippines in 1578. The official title of *Doctrina Christiana* was *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala, corregida poe los Religiosos de las Ordenes. Impresa con licencia, en S. Gabriel, de la orden de S. Domingo. En Manila, 1593*. See also Jesus

the first three books published by the Dominican missionaries and printed in the Philippines in 1593.<sup>12</sup> The third book was *Shih-luh*, authored by another Dominican friar, Fray Juan Cobo.<sup>13</sup> The complete title of the said material is *Hsin-k'o seng-shih Kao-mu Hsien chaun Wu-chi t'ien-chu cheng-chiao chen -chuan shih-lu* or "A Printed Edition of the Veritable Record of the Religious Master Kao-Mu Hsien."<sup>14</sup> *Shih-lu* was also called *tratado*, after the Spanish translation of its title, *Tratado de la Doctrina de la Santa Iglesia y de ciencias naturales*. The book was written in classical Chinese and printed in Chinese characters. It was the only one, among the first three printed books, that dealt with specifically scholarly themes such as theology, cosmography, and natural history.<sup>15</sup>

Another Dominican friar worthy of mention cosmography, Fray Francisco Blancas de San Jose.<sup>16</sup> Fray Francisco came to the Philippines, together with his close associate and fellow friar, the Dominican historian, Fray Diego Aduarte in 1595. In no time, Fray Francisco brought himself to learn the Tagalog and Chinese languages.<sup>17</sup> Commending Fray Francisco's initiatives, Fray Diego wrote:

... he learned the common language of the Indians, called Tagal, so rapidly that he was able to preach in it within three months, and taught others the language within six... He printed a grammar of the Tagal language, and in that language he printed a memorial of

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Gayo, *Doctrina cristiana: primer libro impreso en Filipinas* (Manila: Imprenta la Universidad de Sto. Tomas, 1951); Carlos Quirino, "The First Philippine Imprints," in *Journal of History*, 8 (September 1960); Fr. Jose D. Gutay, OFM, "Life and Works of Fray Juan de Plasencia," <<https://ofmphilarchives.tripod.com/id8.html>>. An online version of *Doctrina Christiana* with an excellent account of *Doctrina's* bibliographic history is also available at <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16119/16119-h/16119-h.htm>>.

<sup>12</sup> For bibliographic details of the first printed books in the Philippines, see Jorge Mojaró, "Los Primeros Libros Impresos En Filipinas (1593–1607)," in *Hispania Sacra*, 72 (Enero–Junio 2020).

<sup>13</sup> See Pedro G. Tejero, OP, "400 Years of Dominican Apostolate among the Chinese of Binondo," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 28 (1983).

<sup>14</sup> A slightly shorter version of the title is *Pien Cheng-Chiao Chen Ch'uan Shih-lu* or *Testimony of the True Religion*. See Juan Cobo, OP, *Pien Cheng-Chiao Chen Ch'uan Shih-lu* (*Testimony of the True Religion*), trans. by Fidel Villaroel, OP (Manila: UST Press, 1986).

<sup>15</sup> See Patricia May B. Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers of the Twentieth Century: A History of the Book in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 20–21.

<sup>16</sup> See chapter II of Diego Aduarte, OP, "History of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898, Volume XXXII, 1640*, ed. by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), <<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42458/pg42458-images.html>>.

<sup>17</sup> For a sampling of Fray Blancas de San Jose's sermons in Tagalog, see Blancas de San Jose, OP, *Sermones*, ed. by Jose Mario C. Francisco, SJ (Quezon City: Pulong, 1994).

the Christian life, a book on the four last things, another of preparation for the communion, a treatise on confession, a book on the mysteries of the rosary of our Lady, and another to teach the Tagal Indians the Spanish language.<sup>18</sup>

Damon Woods also hailed Fray Francisco as the sole reason why “the Dominicans dominated Tagalog studies in the early Spanish period.”<sup>19</sup> He was indeed the first friar who wrote in Tagalog for the Tagalogs. Of the first printed books in the Philippines written in Tagalog, five were authored by Fray Francisco. Of the five, at least three were known to have been printed in *baybayin*, the native Tagalog syllabary. These three works were *Libro del Rosario de Nuestra Señora* (1605), *Libro de Quatro Postrimerias* (1608), and *Librong pinagpapalamnan yto nang aasalin nang taong Christiano sa pagcoconfesor, at sa pagcomulgar* (1608). An extant work of Fray Francisco, *Arte y Reglas de la Lengua Tagala*, was printed in Bataan in 1610 when the Dominican press was moved from San Gabriel to Abucay. For some time, the text *Librong Pagaaralan nang manga Tagalog nang uicang Castilla* (or *Libro en que aprendan los Tagalos, la lengua Castellana*) was also credited to Fray Francisco until recent scholarship has determined that its authorship belonged not to the linguist Dominican friar but to a native Christian, Tomas Pinpin.<sup>20</sup>

There are three important observations that can be derived from the historical sketch narrated above.

First, Thomism came to the Philippines in the 16th and 17th centuries as a tradition in search of itself. While it did get a boost from the Council of Trent (1545–1563) as well as the consequent declaration of St. Thomas Aquinas as Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius V in 1567 (just two decades before the arrival of the first Dominicans in the Philippines), it was not yet the “Thomism” around which the Catholic intellectual tradition would consolidate itself as intended by Pope Leo XIII via *Aeterni Patris* in 1879. The Thomistic legacy bannered by the early friar missionaries like Fray Domingo de Salazar, Fray Miguel de Benavides, and Fray Francisco Blancas de San Jose was a tradition looking for a new vitality as it reeled from the impact of modernity not to mention the bitter intramurals within the ranks of the Thomists themselves. Until Europe’s contact with the “New World” and its

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter II (“Father Fray Francisco de San Joseph Blancas”) of Aduarte, “History of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary.”

<sup>19</sup> Tomas Pinpin, *Librong Pagaaralan nang manga Tagalog nang uicang Castila*, ed. by Damon L. Woods (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2011), xiii.

<sup>20</sup> For an elaborate discussion of the legacy of Tomas Pinpin and its impact on Tagalog culture, see Damon L. Woods, *Tomas Pinpin and Tagalog Survival in Early Spanish Philippines* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2011).

eventual foray into the Eastern hemisphere, Thomism, for the most part, was a highly sheltered intellectual tradition rooted and perfected within the university halls or in the pages of hefty commentaries. However, with the new impetus stirred by the push for evangelization of the colonies, the friars had to devise new ways to employ their Thomistic theology and Scholastic pedagogy, no longer in the seclusion and security of lecture rooms but out there, in the countrysides, mountain villages, and river settlements. Instead of the young, eager, and believing minds of university students, their hearers would be the uninitiated, unlettered and untutored in the refinements of European civilization. The decision embraced by the School of Salamanca to set aside the manuals and read St. Thomas differently was a promising step towards Thomism's reinvention of itself in the face of new challenges introduced by modernity of which the West's expansion to Asia was a major feature. The early friars who, one way or another, had been exposed to the Salamancan experiment left no stones unturned upon reaching the local shores. The Gospel had to be preached and the friars themselves, like the Apostle Paul before, had to be all things to all men and women. Thomism itself was no exception. It also needed to engage a different, indigenous culture where the seeds of Christian faith could be sown. Thomism was introduced as an academic philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas but outside it, the thought of St. Thomas was also at work in catechesis, in sermons, in hearing confessions, in translation projects, in the production of dictionaries and grammar books and other forms of pastoral work and evangelization. Given these multiple embodiments, it was rather difficult, let alone, tricky, to determine which form of Thomism was more Thomist than the other. Hence, it was not unusual to find missionaries like Fray Domingo or Fray Miguel who invoked St. Thomas to protect the natives while elsewhere, there were those who would also brandish Thomistic texts to justify their continuous retention as slaves.<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding this and other forms of incongruity, the friars did manage to push the cause of evangelization and, along with it, the legacy of St. Thomas, with a remarkable headway. The gains and losses of this initial contact though should be further examined against the backdrop of the larger Philippine Hispanic history.

The second point I wish to make is that the tradition of Thomism introduced to the Philippines had a dual history. This means that, as an intellectual tradition, Thomism had a medieval pedigree, but it reached the Philippines under the auspices of modernity. This is a thought closely related to the earlier claim describing the Thomism brought by the friars in the 16th

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<sup>21</sup> See Tatiana Siejas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 66; William Henry Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1991), 4.

and 17th centuries as a tradition in search of itself. The Philippines as a mission frontier presented the friars an opportunity to transport Christian faith to an uncharted territory. Their instrument of choice was their Thomistic theological training which in terms of content, structure, and language was patently medieval. The early friars, however, were aware that their mandate in the Far East was not so much to transplant medieval culture but to spread the Gospel among hearers with hardly the faintest idea of Christian faith. To achieve this, they had to resort to strategies that should neither be rigidly medieval nor Thomistic. The Dominicans' founding of a university was part of such strategies.<sup>22</sup> To begin with, the promotion of higher education or establishment of higher education institutions for the natives was neither normative nor encouraged in the colonies. Educative goals were commonly set at the bare minimum and mainly to further colonial aims rather than the betterment of the locals.<sup>23</sup> As a clear deviation from this practice, Fray Miguel de Benavides saw the founding of a school as an extension of his Order's commitment to improve the lot of the newly Christianized natives.<sup>24</sup> Education was the instrumental goal of such missionary initiatives like language training, translation ventures, and publication of catechetical and grammar books, all of which were done at the service of the evangelization. Fray Miguel, like his betters, Fray Bartolome (de las Casas) and Fray Domingo (de Salazar), was convinced that cultivation of humanity could not be disassociated from kerygma. Once again, Salamanca's modern experiment might be an influence here. But in the context of both Salamanca and the foundation of UST, modernity was appropriated not as a negation of or departure from what is medieval but a re-fashioning of it to suit the changing

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<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that the Dominicans were not the only ones who founded a university or UST the only university that was founded in the early years of Spanish colonial campaign. UST may have been the oldest surviving university in the country, but it may not be the oldest in terms of founding history. In addition to UST, the colonial universities and their founders were listed by Alcala as follows: Colegio de San Ildefonso (1595, Cebu, Jesuits), the Colegio de San Ignacio (1595, Manila, Jesuits), the Colegio de San Jose (1601, Manila, Jesuits), the Ateneo de Manila (1859, Manila, Jesuits), and Colegio de San Juan de Letran (1640, Manila, Dominicans). See Angel C. Alcala, "Higher Education in the Philippines," in *Philippine Studies*, 47 (1999). For a contesting view, see Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas, "Which Is the Oldest University? Revisiting the Conflicting Claims of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila and University of San Carlos, Cebu in Light of the History of Seminario (Mayor) de San Carlos of Cebu," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 46 (January–April 2011).

<sup>23</sup> See John N. Schumacher, SJ, "The Philippine Higher Education and the Origins of Nationalism," in *Philippine Studies*, 23 (1975).

<sup>24</sup> In his last will, Fray Miguel wished that the school he had in mind "... must teach the sciences and the arts and theology, and that the religious novices and the others who may desire to may do so, as may also the sons of the citizens of this city and islands, and other persons ...." See Fidel Villaroel, OP, *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines*, Vol. I (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012), 33.

needs of the times and the exigencies of their preaching mission. The university as a medieval institution was able to square with modernity when it allowed itself to pursue its scholarly and humanistic aims without prejudice to the imperatives of the Gospel. Thomism in the 16th- and 17th-century Philippines shared the same story.

The third and final point pertains to the character of Thomism as a domain of contestation. It was so in the 16th and 17th centuries and remains as such until today. Part of Jacob Schmutz's argument, contrary to the customary view, why he thought Thomism never suffered any decline was because of the steady stream of readings and counter readings which helped Thomism maintain continuity amidst divergent interpretive claims.<sup>25</sup> A parallel, local example that can help demonstrate the notion that Thomism is a site of contestation would be Fray Juan de Oliver's *Declaracion de la Doctrina christiana en idioma Tagalog* which was written during his missionary stint in Batangas from 1582 to 1591.<sup>26</sup> Like Fray Juan de Plasencia, author of *Doctrina Christiana* cited above, Fray Juan de Oliver was a Franciscan friar involved in the early catechetical campaigns for the natives. He in fact knew Plasencia and at one point collaborated with the latter in the preparation of *Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>27</sup> Despite the near similarity of *Declaracion's* title with Plasencia's *Doctrina*, one should not be confused with the other. In a lot of ways, *Declaracion* may be read as an extended though enriched version of *Doctrina*. As an instructional material, it did resemble St. Thomas's catechesis which served as a model of the Roman Catechism, the chief instructional material mandated by the Council of Trent (1545–1563) for priests and teachers of religion.<sup>28</sup> Yes, Thomism may also assume a catechetical form which after all is not completely far-off considering that *Summa Theologiae* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, notwithstanding their being theological and philosophical texts, were also used as catechetical references. But, as argued by a number of scholars, the natives did not receive such catechetical inputs passively. And rather than see them as neutral means of religious instruction, these materials served as a site of struggle which pit the foreign Catholic theological categories, on one hand, and the local, though subdued, religious and moral intuitions, on the other. The Jesuit historian Fr. Mario Francisco brought this

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<sup>25</sup> Jacob Schmutz, "From Theology to Philosophy: The Changing Status of the Summa Theologiae, 1500–2000" in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Jeffrey Hause (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 221–241.

<sup>26</sup> Fray Juan de Oliver, OFM, *Declaracion de la Doctrina christiana en idioma Tagalog*, ed. by Jose Cruz, SJ (Quezon City: PULONG: Sources for Philippine Studies, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> See Edwin Wolf, "Introduction," in *Doctrina Christiana*, <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16119/16119-h/16119-h.htm>>.

<sup>28</sup> See also Thomas Aquinas, *The Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Rev. Joseph B. Collins, S.S., D.D., Ph.D., <[https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274,\\_Thomas\\_Aquinas,\\_Catechismus,\\_EN.pdf](https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274,_Thomas_Aquinas,_Catechismus,_EN.pdf)>.

to the fore in his discussion of de Oliver's hermeneutic of *loob* in *Declaracion*.<sup>29</sup> Vicente Rafael and Damon Woods shared the same observations regarding dissonance between the native mind and Catholic theology in their account of Tomas Pinpin's rendition of Catholic faith passed on to him by his mentor, the Dominican Fray Francisco Blancas de San Jose.<sup>30</sup> This is not to say that Thomism is ineffectual as an evangelical or catechetical medium; on the contrary, the said dissonance merely shows Thomism's capacity to work both ways, that is, on one hand, as facilitator of the transmission of Catholic faith and, on the other, as catalyst for the articulation of native thought. This paper aims precisely to underscore this point. In the next segment of the paper, I shall further explore this theme by turning to the 19th-century emergence of nationalism via a selective discussion of Jose Rizal's literary outputs. Then and now, Thomistic or scholastic thought has been traditionally portrayed by mainstream literature as the anti-thesis of nationalist discourse. What I shall try to do is to offer a counterclaim and demonstrate that, consistent with their original inspirations and against the views to the contrary, both the philosophic legacy of St. Thomas and the University of Santo Tomas had a constructive role in the formation of the Filipino mind. This means that as an intellectual tradition, Thomism is not self-contained and can in fact foster an interface with a different culture (in this case, our own) as shown by the efforts of the early missionaries, particularly those who were oriented to the theological anthropology of the School of Salamanca. It was a Gospel humanism that they themselves drew from their reading of St. Thomas and one that would resonate with the nationalist aims of the 19th-century Filipino thinkers, particularly, Jose Rizal.

### Thomism in 19th-century Philippines

As stated earlier, the 19th century is significant for Thomism and the Philippine intellectual history for two reasons: the promulgation of Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* and the birth of Filipino nationalism. At first glance, it seems highly far-fetched to infer any connection between the two other than this historical coincidence. They are in fact traditionally perceived as antithetical given nationalism's anti-friar agenda and Thomism's affinity with the friars, specifically the Dominicans. In this segment, I shall try to articulate an alternative perspective on this polarity and stipulate that while

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<sup>29</sup> Jose Mario C. Francisco, "The Tagalog 'Loob' in Oliver's 'Doctrina Christiana,'" in *Philippine Studies*, 44 (Fourth Quarter 1996).

<sup>30</sup> Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988); Damon L. Woods, *Tomas Pinpin and the Literate Indio: Tagalog Writing in the Early Spanish Philippines*, <<https://escholarship.org/content/qt7kz776js/qt7kz776js.pdf>>.

Thomism and nationalism are indeed opposite domains, a possible intersection between them may be charted. Such intersection is neither arbitrary nor fanciful but is continuous with the early missionaries' engagement of the local culture as well as the Christian humanist worldview which informed the initial catechetical and evangelical appropriations of Thomistic thought. Another factor to consider in this reconfiguration is the purported role of the University of Santo Tomas, the shared locus of the renewal of Thomism and the genesis of nationalism in the Philippines, and its contribution to the unfolding of the two historic events. As will be argued, Thomism and nationalism may not be seen as kindred traditions but the gap between them is not completely insurmountable. Both Thomism and nationalism imparted very subtle inspirations to each other which could then allow either of them to be mutually hospitable.

The first thing that comes to mind when one talks of nationalism and Thomism vis-à-vis University of Santo Tomas would be the infamous Chapter 13 of Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, "A Class in Physics."<sup>31</sup> In the said chapter, Rizal took his readers to a usual day in a physics class at the University of Santo Tomas, under the tutelage of the pompous figure of a certain Fr. Millon. By combining both his satirical humor and narrative talent, Rizal provided a sort of literary reportage on the miserable state of science education at the university (which, according to him, paled in comparison with the science classes at the Ateneo) as well as the humiliation suffered by the native students at the hands of their Spanish professors represented by the character of the aforementioned cleric. In general, this particular episode may be read as an amplification of an earlier critique of Rizal against UST and Thomistic philosophy expounded by Pilosopo Tasyò in *Noli Me Tangere* (Chapter 54). In Pilosopo Tasyò's conversation with Don Filipino, the village philosopher decried the decrepit state of education at the Dominican university as he, in the same breath, rebuked and lauded likewise the Jesuits for championing liberal thinking and scientific progress in the country. Pilosopo Tasyò thought of UST as antiquated and their scholasticism, dead.<sup>32</sup> Many historians and Rizal biographers, like Austin Craig, Austin Coates, Gregorio Zaide, Leon Ma. Guerrero, and Asuncion Lopez Bantug, did give credence to these vituperations and considered the said literary accounts as biographical and historical. Other scholars, however, like the Jesuit Fr. John Schumacher and the Dominican Fr. Fidel Villaroel, including Prof. Florentino Hornedo, preferred to take Rizal's polemics with caution. Rizal was certainly

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<sup>31</sup> Jose Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, trans. by Soledad Lacson-Locsin, ed. by Raul L. Locsin (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 98–108.

<sup>32</sup> Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, trans. by Soledad Lacson-Locsin, ed. by Raul L. Locsin (Makati: The Bookmark, Inc., 1996), 461–467.



a great patriot but, in the aforementioned scholars' views, that didn't mean what he said or wrote should be taken as gospel truth. To paraphrase Fr. Schumacher, it's one thing to read a historical novel and another to read history.<sup>33</sup> This is not to undermine the literary merit and historical value of Rizal's literary works. Neither is this meant to whitewash the friars' rather colorful colonial past. As suggested by Prof. Hornedo, understanding history, especially topics as complex as 19th-century nationalism and Rizal, requires careful treatment to prevent facts from mixing up with rhetoric and speculations.<sup>34</sup> For example, in the case of Rizal's complaints against UST being backward, the reverse was actually closer to the real story. As historical documents showed, it was in fact in the 19th century that significant developments at the University were put in place, showcased no less by the opening in 1871 of two new colleges, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and the Faculty of Pharmacy. The reform of UST's philosophy program was also implemented around that time.<sup>35</sup> Fr. Schumacher further added that the mere fact that the *ilustrados*, most of whom were students of UST, could conveniently transfer school from Manila to Madrid, was proof enough of the competitive quality of university education at the colony.<sup>36</sup> Even Rizal's praises for the Jesuits' leadership in scientific advancement was disputed by Rizal's own real discontent with the Jesuits' reluctance to embrace what he termed as "principles" of progress. In a letter to the Austrian scholar Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal recalled a conversation with Fr. Faura where he chided the latter over the Jesuits' ambivalence concerning science.<sup>37</sup> A critique of the state of education at UST more comprehensive than Rizal's was actually Jose Ma. Panganiban's study of the state of higher education in the

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<sup>33</sup> Schumacher wrote: "One cannot, of course, take a chapter from a novel, or articles in a newspaper whose principal aim was to counteract the influence of the Friars in Philippine life, as impartial and objective analyses of the state of higher education in late 19th century Philippines." John N. Schumacher, SJ, "The Philippine Higher Education and the Origins of Nationalism," in *Philippine Studies*, 23 (1975), 54.

<sup>34</sup> See Florentino Hornedo, *Ideas and Ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2001), 233–242.

<sup>35</sup> See Fidel Villaroel, OP, "Medicine, Pharmacy and Other New Courses," *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines, Volume II* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012); Luciano P.R. Santiago, "The Beginnings of Higher Education in the Philippines (1601–1772)," in *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 19 (June 1991); Alcala, "Higher Education in the Philippines"; Macario M. Ofilada, "Minerva Docet: Beginnings of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila (1896–1897) - Part I," in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 38 (January–April, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> John N. Schumacher, SJ, "The Philippine Higher Education and the Origins of Nationalism," in *Philippine Studies*, 23 (1975), 55. See also Fidel Villaroel, OP., *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2020), 83–84; Rafael Palma, *Ang Aking Talambuhay*, trans. by Virginia Palma-Bonifacio (Maynila : Cacho Hermanos, 1952), 27.

<sup>37</sup> Jose Rizal, "Rizal's Letter to Blumentritt, 2 February 1890," in *Correspondences with Blumentritt Vol. II* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 2011), 327–328.

Philippines published in *La Solidaridad* in 1889.<sup>38</sup> But like Rizal's two novels, Panganiban's serialized commentary was also a propaganda material for colonial reforms hence the need for a more nuanced reading. Fr. Villaroel, in his chronicle of the university's history, provided a corrective rejoinder to Panganiban's charges.<sup>39</sup> The Dominican historian's views, however, have been challenged lately by recent scholarship on Panganiban's *La Solidaridad* articles.<sup>40</sup>

Another matter that requires a closer look is Rizal's appreciation of Thomistic or scholastic philosophy, that is, the philosophy he learned from the University of Santo Tomas. As intimated earlier, Rizal thought of scholasticism as lifeless, not to mention, out of step with modernity's forward thrust towards development. This claim was amply illustrated in the account of a class in physics in *Fili* as well as the exchange between Pilosopo Tasyò and Don Filipo in *Noli* referred to earlier. Judging from the narratives alone, one may fairly conclude that Rizal had nothing for scholasticism but antipathy. Rizal's biographer, Leon Ma. Guerrero, seems to affirm this view.<sup>41</sup> The testimony, however, of Rizal's real-life engagement of Thomistic

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<sup>38</sup> Jose Maria Panganiban was one of the most illustrious students of UST, probably in the league of the likes of Fr. Jose Burgos, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Jose Rizal, Isabelo de los Reyes, Apolinario Mabini, and Emilio Jacinto, among others. From UST in Manila, he moved to Barcelona in 1888. He was elected as auditor of the executive board of Asociación La Solidaridad, together with Galicano Apacible as president, Graciano López Jaena as vice president, Manuel Bustamante Santa María as secretary, and Mariano Ponce. It is important to note that all the elected officers of the association were medical students and that all of them, except Graciano Lopez Jaena, began their medical studies at UST. Panganiban's critique of University of Santo Tomas and its sequels (also referred to as "University of Manila" or "University of the Philippines") were serialized in *La Solidaridad* from 1889 to 1891. The series was briefly interrupted in 1890 due to Panganiban's untimely death but it was later continued by Marcelo H. del Pilar and others to sustain their reformist campaign. See *La Solidaridad, Volume I (1889)* (Pasig: Fundacion Santiago, 1996); *La Solidaridad, Volume II (1890)* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1973); *La Solidaridad, Volume III (1891)* (Pasig: Fundacion Santiago, 1996); Virgilio Almario, ed., "Jose Maria Panganiban," in *Sagisag Kultura, Vol. 1* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2015), <<https://philippineculturaleducation.com.ph/panganiban-jose-maria/>>. See also Luciano P.R. Santiago, "The First Filipino Doctors of Medicine and Surgery (1878–97)," in *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 22 (June 1994).

<sup>39</sup> See Fidel Villaroel, OP, "Medicine, Pharmacy and Other New Courses," *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines, Volume II* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012), 173–176.

<sup>40</sup> See Javier Leonardo Rugeria, "Writing 'La Universidad de Manila' Anew: La Solidaridad and the Revival of José María Panganiban's Campaign for Reforms in Higher Education, 1890–1891," in *Bikolnon: Journal of Ateneo de Naga Graduate School*, 9 (2023). See also Javier Leonardo Rugeria, "Jose Maria Panganiban's 'La Universidad de Manila' and the Liberal Campaign for Reforms in Philippine Higher Education," in *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 69 (2021).

<sup>41</sup> Leon Ma. Guerrero, *The First Filipino* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1961), 69.

philosophy says otherwise. The “philosophy” being alluded to was actually called “metaphysics” in the academic parlance at UST of Rizal’s time. He did take up some philosophy courses for his pre-university education (Bachiller en Artes) at the Ateneo but took up “metaphysics” when he enrolled at UST.<sup>42</sup> At that time, “metaphysics” was considered a preparatory course for anyone wishing to enroll in higher degree courses like law or theology.<sup>43</sup> Students who wanted to study medicine needed to take a different preparatory course.<sup>44</sup> Apparently, Rizal was still undecided which degree to pursue on his first year at the university, thus, without a clear choice in mind, he merely followed the advice of his father to take up “metaphysics.” One can only surmise Don Francisco’s leaning to set up his youngest son for a potential legal career.<sup>45</sup> Rizal had a hard start. By his own admission, he was so academically detached he didn’t even procure the prescribed textbook for the course which was the *Philosophia Elementaria* (in three volumes) of the eminent Fr. Zeferino Gonzalez, erstwhile professor of Fr. Jose Burgos in the 1860s. And yet despite the slow and uneasy first steps and amidst the emotional turmoil he was going through, Rizal would later brag about the mark of *sobresaliente* that he obtained in all his four subjects and also for hurdling his *Acto de Metafisica* (Act of Metaphysics) with flying colors.<sup>46</sup> The “acto” was a terminal requirement for the preparatory “metaphysics” course where students’ discursive skills and wit were tested in a public debate. Aside from the ordinary “acto,” a public or general “acto” was also organized for an entire day in the month of January with students and professors from

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<sup>42</sup> These pre-university philosophy courses which he took up on his last year of studies at the Ateneo were logic, psychology, and moral philosophy. See Fidel Villaroel, OP., *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2020), 68.

<sup>43</sup> “Metaphysics” was comprised of courses in cosmology, metaphysics, theodicy, and history of philosophy. Upon completion, Rizal got the mark *sobresaliente* or excellent in all these courses. He was one among the eight in a class of sixty students, out of which only forty-nine passed. His grades in his preparatory philosophy classes were obviously better than his grades in his preparatory courses for medicine, specifically advanced physics for which he obtained *aprovechado* or very good. The disparity in his grades led both Fr. Villaroel and Guerrero to affirm that Rizal’s gifts were indeed on the humanities and letters and not really on the sciences. Rizal would also fared in a similar fashion when he studied in Madrid where he also took up humanities and medicine. See Guerrero, *First Filipino*, 104–105; Villaroel, *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas*, 73, 100.

<sup>44</sup> This preparatory course, according to Fr. Villaroel, was called *ampliación* or advanced courses in physics, chemistry, and natural history. Fr. Villaroel clarified that it was *ampliación* that Rizal took up at UST and not basic physics that was depicted in *Fili*. See Fidel Villaroel, OP, “Medicine, Pharmacy and Other New Courses,” *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines*, Volume II (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012), 149.

<sup>45</sup> Jose Rizal, *Memorias de un estudiante de Manila* (Manila: Imp. y Lit. de Cacho, 1949), 27.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

other faculties in attendance. The “acto” followed a syllogistic structure and was conducted in Latin. Rizal bested his classmates in this exercise.

A rehearsal of Rizal’s philosophic studies at the University of Santo Tomas is important to understand better his view of Thomistic philosophy. If one were to read closely Pilosopo Tasyò’s monologue in Chapter 54 of *Noli*, it could be safely assumed that the author Rizal was truly well-versed in Thomistic philosophy and in philosophy in general. He was drawn to philosophy that much that he decided to take it up again simultaneously with medicine when he enrolled at the Universidad Central de Madrid in 1882.<sup>47</sup> In Madrid, he got more exposed to the ideas of liberal and Enlightenment thinkers but, as Prof. Hornedo would argue, that didn’t mean he abandoned the core ideas he imbibed from Thomistic philosophy that he learned from the University of Santo Tomas. These ideas, as outlined by Prof. Hornedo, served as anchors of Rizal’s fundamental convictions, namely: 1) *God as the ultimate reason of the universe*; 2) *all men are equal in dignity*; 3) *freedom is an essential component of human dignity*; and, 4) *love is the supreme manifestation of man’s recognition of his divine origin*.<sup>48</sup>

Prof. Hornedo’s perspective does not seem to be an isolated view. A similar reading may be gleaned from Paul Dumol’s review of the last chapter of *Fili* where the author Rizal had Fr. Florentino speak of reason in relation with the struggle for freedom and human dignity. In his review of the same chapter, Dumol underscored Rizal’s creationist view of human dignity and the justification that Rizal provided for its indispensability in the quest for both humane and civic liberties.<sup>49</sup> Dumol neither quoted Aquinas nor used the label “Thomist” in his piece but he did highlight the theological tone of the last chapter of *Fili* which doubtless echoed the Thomistic orientation that Rizal acquired from the University of Santo Tomas.

The Jesuit Rizal scholar Fr. Raul Bonoan also shared Prof. Hornedo’s Catholic reading of Rizal’s ideas. In his review of Rizal’s letters as well as selected articles published in *La Solidaridad*, Fr. Bonoan likewise detected Rizal’s consistent employment of theological trope in constructing his moral and political ideas. In Fr. Bonoan’s presentation, one finds not Rizal the champion of European liberalism that the friars accused him to be but a crusader of a communitarian political ethic, a stance which brought him

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<sup>47</sup> Hornedo, *Ideas and Ideals*, 83–90.

<sup>48</sup> Emphasis supplied. Florentino Hornedo, *Ideas and Ideals: Essays in Filipino Cognitive History* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2001), 99–100.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Dumol, “Political Responsibility in Rizal’s *Filibusterismo*,” in *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*, 8 (2004).

closer to the Catholic worldview in direct contrast to his detractors' caricature of him.<sup>50</sup>

Another alternative reading came from Cesar Adib Majul who maintained that Rizal's ethical and political views remained rooted in the Scholastic tradition in which he was reared from the beginning.<sup>51</sup> Majul looked back at Rizal's two novels, including the two major essays, "The Philippines, a Century Hence"<sup>52</sup> and "On the Indolence of the Filipinos"<sup>53</sup> as well his commentary on the *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*<sup>54</sup> by Antonio de Morga and concluded that the key to understand Rizal's works was to acknowledge the basic postulates that the human person "was endowed by his Creator with innate moral and intellectual faculties or potentialities that were meant to be actualized in individual and social spheres. To develop these faculties, he also had innate right that were God-given through Nature."<sup>55</sup> Majul did identify certain affinities between Rizal's national sentiment and Rousseau's general will, but in the end, it would be the idea of a community that Rizal inherited from his Catholic background that would color his vision of a national community.

By subscribing to the insights of scholars such as Hornedo, Dumol, Fr. Bonoan, and Majul, one may find in Rizal's selected writings the vestiges of nationalism's and Thomism's intersection. These writings articulate and promote Rizal's nationalist orientation, but they also reinforce Thomist worldviews and Catholic values which play no small part in his personal history and university education. This intersection, however, is tenuous and is definitely open to further critiques and debates. One can always make a case that these perceived Catholic traces are mere iterations of Rizal's masonic and deist leanings which are essentially anti-Catholic despite their theological trappings. Fr. Bonoan has already challenged this interpretation, and after careful consideration of pertinent texts, has concluded that, despite the deist allusions, it could be argued that Rizal did maintain his Catholic moorings in

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<sup>50</sup> Raul Bonoan, "Rizal on Divine Providence and Nationhood," in *Philippine Studies*, 25 (Second Quarter 1977).

<sup>51</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), 22.

<sup>52</sup> Jose Rizal, "The Philippines, a Century Hence," in *Political and Historical Writings* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Jose Rizal, "On the Indolence of Filipinos," in *Political and Historical Writings* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Jose Rizal, *Events in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, "Rizal in the 21st Century: The Relevance of His Ideas and Texts," in *Public Policy Journal*, 3 (1999), 4.

his writings.<sup>56</sup> Instructive of such claim was the piece “Una Esperanza”<sup>57</sup> cited by Fr. Bonoan and if I may add, Rizal’s essay “El Amor Patrio,”<sup>58</sup> first published in *Diariong Tagalog* in 1882 and re-printed in *La Solidaridad* in 1890 and about which Fr. Bonoan also wrote a separate journal piece.<sup>59</sup> Understandably, so much remains to be done in mining and re-reading the strands of Catholic theology and Thomism in Rizal’s thought. Eugene Hessel’s *The Religious Thought of Jose Rizal* would have been a helpful guide in this endeavor, but Fr. Schumacher had certain misgivings concerning this particular text.<sup>60</sup> Besides the problem of methodology, he found the book’s account of the intellectual and political influences which shaped Rizal’s earlier and latter religious consciousness rather thin. A good starting point would probably be the chapter on “Religious Change, the *Noli* and Family Trials” in Fr. Villaroel’s *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas*.<sup>61</sup> The said chapter contains a rich amount of historical details surrounding the changes in Rizal’s religious worldview though it leaves much room for the discussion of the underlying tension in Rizal’s intellectual and religious convictions. Definitely, at one point, scholars should re-visit Rizal’s correspondences with his Jesuit spiritual director, Fr. Pablo Pastells, for a more intimate look at the evolution of the national hero’s religious outlook.<sup>62</sup>

It should be stressed that this exploration of a possible Thomistic reading of Rizal is not an attempt at a posthumous re-baptism of UST’s illustrious alumnus. Neither is it an effort to rehearse the age-old debate about the state of his religious faith during his final moments. The aim is plainly and mainly hermeneutic, that is, to articulate a way of reading which may bring both Rizal and Thomism into an agonistic interface. There have

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<sup>56</sup> Raul J. Bonoan, “The Enlightenment, Deism, and Rizal,” in *Philippine Studies*, 40 (First Quarter 1992).

<sup>57</sup> Jose Rizal, “The Philippines, a Century Hence,” in *Political and Historical Writings* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 2007), 223–226.

<sup>58</sup> Jose Rizal, “Love of Country,” in *Prose* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Raul J. Bonoan and Laong-laan, “Rizal’s First Published Essay: ‘El Amor Patrio,’” in *Philippine Studies*, 44 (Third Quarter 1996).

<sup>60</sup> Eugene A. Hessel, *The Religious Thought of Jose Rizal: Its Context and Theological Significance* (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1961). See also John N. Schumacher, “The Religious Thought of Rizal,” in *Philippine Studies*, 13 (July 1965).

<sup>61</sup> Fidel Villaroel, OP., *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2020), 150–179.

<sup>62</sup> Raul J. Bonoan, ed., *The Rizal-Pastells Correspondence: The Hitherto Unpublished Letters of Jose Rizal and Portions of Fr. Pablo Pastell’s Fourth Letter and Translation of the Correspondence Together with a Historical Background and Theological Critique* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994).

been critical texts on Rizal vis-à-vis Enlightenment,<sup>63</sup> modernity,<sup>64</sup> Marxism,<sup>65</sup> and lately, Asianism,<sup>66</sup> but a reading from a specifically Thomist standpoint has become more of a rarity especially in the aftermath of the acrimonious debates of the 1950s. The anti-friar and anti-Catholic climate spawned by the said debates made any reconciliatory publication on Rizal and Thomism highly unlikely. Rather than see it as a potential venue for [intertextuality](#)[A1], members and critics of the Catholic Church alike would have dismissed it as a counter-propaganda or a revisionist portrayal of the patrimony of either St. Thomas or Rizal. The air of animosity, however, has since tapered off and the quality of tolerance between contending parties has likewise significantly improved. In other words, we are in a much better position today to consider a possible intersection between Rizal's nationalist thought and Thomistic tradition with nary a fear of backlash or censure. The significance of probing the link between Rizal and Thomism, or in the earlier segment, Philippine culture and Thomism, cannot be overstated given the intricate texture of our own local intellectual history which until today, unfortunately, remains largely unexplored. In the title, I invoke "love of (local) wisdom" which in this paper refers basically to the vitality of local thought in its evolution and transformation within the continuum of our own intellectual history. Local wisdom is not, in my view, a fixed system with a rigidly defined dimension and contours; neither is it something confined within the conventional boundaries of geography, chronology, or even ethnicity. Something in this vital thought allows it to move to and from these determinate borders while it tries, at the same time, to reiterate itself via a series of continuous translations and negotiations. The first encounter of the 16th-century natives of the Philippines and the Thomist missionaries was characterized by such translations and negotiations that eventually led to an experience of Catholicism that was both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, Catholic and non-Catholic at the same time.<sup>67</sup> This was facilitated by the campaign for conversion at different frontiers such as religion, education, and language

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<sup>63</sup> Hornedo, *Ideas and Ideals*; Jose S. Arcilla, SJ, "The Enlightenment and the Philippine Revolution" in *Philippine Studies*, 39 (Third Quarter 1991).

<sup>64</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Books, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> See Epifanio San Juan, *Rizal in Our Time: Essays in Interpretation* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 1997); Floro Quibuyen, *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1999); Renato Constantino, "Veneration Without Understanding," in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 1 (1972).

<sup>66</sup> See John Nery, *Revolutionary Spirit: Jose Rizal in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011); Caroline S. Hau, *Interpreting Rizal* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Response, 1565–1700* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959).

which, somehow, also made an impact on the self-understanding of the missionaries and the Catholic faith that they brought in. The same interface was carried over in Jose Rizal's 19th-century writings whose relevance to a possible intersection between Thomism and nationalist discourse we are now exploring. And as in the 16th-century colonial experience, the effect of this intersection goes both ways. Something in Thomism did help Rizal to configure his brand of nationalism just as nationalism could also be a prompt for Thomist scholars to re-read and re-think Thomistic teachings.<sup>68</sup> Local wisdom "happens" in the very moment of this interface which is also its own guarantee against the pitfall of becoming self-referential or identitarian. Its articulation borders on the re-constructive and constantly aims at the recovery of nuances which might have been misread or neglected over time. It tries to accomplish this by fostering dialogue between seemingly contrary voices and traditions rather than bank on the stringent, traditional dichotomies such as the native and colonial, the secular and theological or the modern and the medieval. In other words, neither should Rizal's nationalism be read as a xenophobic, patriotic sentiment nor Thomism as an insulated philosophic or theological system. The moral and political views of Rizal, if we follow the readings of the scholars cited earlier (Hornedo, Fr. Bonoan, Majul, and Dumol), are actually laced with insights from the Thomistic/scholastic tradition, from which he obtained the moral grammar and foundation of his sociopolitical theories. At the core of such theories was a brand of humanism which echoed the theological anthropology espoused by St. Thomas Aquinas and propagated by the early missionaries who came to the Philippines. Once again, it is important to re-state that reading Rizal using Aquinas does not aim to exonerate the friars from their tainted past nor mitigate Rizal's hardline critique of the colonial frailocracy. However, just because the medieval St. Thomas Aquinas was himself a friar and that the Filipino Rizal was critical of friars do not mean the chasm between them is unbridgeable. The old, parochial view that tries to widen that chasm should be rethought and overcome for an inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural approach towards the study of religion, philosophy, culture, and Philippine history. On the Thomists' side, this could mean new opportunities for reading

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<sup>68</sup> Gradually, Filipino Thomist scholars are moving to this direction as one may find in Tomas Rosario, *Ang Etika ni Sto. Tomas de Aquino: Mga Piniling Teksto* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2003); Jovino Miroy, "Is Filipino Thought Medieval? Preliminary Work in Writing the History of Philosophy in the Philippines," in *Prajñā Vihāra*, 6 (January–June 2005); Bernardo Caslib, Jr., "Why 'Mahal' is Preferable: A Thomist Reading of the Concepts of Pag-ibig and Pagmamahal," in *Phavisminda Journal*, 20 (2021); Jovino G. Miroy and Ma. Liza Ruth A. Ocampo, ed., *Quaerens, Searchings, Paghahanap* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2008); Jeremiah Reyes, "Loób and Kapwa: Thomas Aquinas and a Filipino Virtue Ethics" (PhD Dissertation: KU Leuven, Leuven, 2015), <[https://www.academia.edu/82693301/Lo%C3%B3b\\_and\\_Kapwa\\_Thomas\\_Aquinas\\_and\\_a\\_Filipino\\_Virtue\\_Ethics](https://www.academia.edu/82693301/Lo%C3%B3b_and_Kapwa_Thomas_Aquinas_and_a_Filipino_Virtue_Ethics)>.



and writing about St. Thomas outside the proverbial box which, if pursued in earnest, could further enrich Thomism's renewal. The campaign for renewal is customarily retrospective and reiterative but there are instances, as shown by Rizal's recourse to St. Thomas's thought, when it can be inventive and disruptive. I would like to believe that the renewal envisioned by Pope Leo XIII was not mainly aiming at a repetition of the same words said by St. Thomas in the same way that he said them. For renewal to be authentic, there should be an exchange of "vitality" between two traditions (in this case, the local nationalist discourse and Thomism) such that their encounter becomes a mutually enriching and recreative transference. Only in this manner of encounter can the local get near to being Thomist and the Thomist come close to being native. I suppose this was what Rizal unwittingly accomplished in his subtle and subdued appropriation of Thomism. As per Fr. Villaroel's account, Rizal was already a medical student at UST when Pope Leo XIII promulgated *Aeterni Patris* in 1879. Its publication was officially announced and welcomed at UST with a special mass on February 24, 1880, followed by a string of other festivities.<sup>69</sup> And yet, as Fr. Villaroel recounted, hardly a reference to these events could be found in any of Rizal's literary outputs in the school year of 1879–1880. Not even one of the three poems he wrote in the second semester of that school year was remotely related to *Aeterni Patris* or Thomism.<sup>70</sup> Fr. Villaroel thought Rizal's rather partial leaning to poetry could be a factor here or perhaps, one could surmise the sway of a nascent anti-friar sentiment. Much later, in *Noli*, Rizal would have Pilosopo Tasyò mention Pope Leo XIII by name but only to ridicule the Dominicans and their scholasticism.<sup>71</sup> Literary reference like this (or its absence) is telling but I do not think it is sufficient to define Rizal's relationship with Thomistic thought. As Fr. Bonoan pointed out, it was clear in Rizal's mind that the target of his critiques was frailocracy and not Catholicism per se.<sup>72</sup> This important distinction is the silver lining underlying my view that the rapprochement between Rizal's brand of nationalism and Thomism is not a futile goal. But for this conversation to proceed, one should be ready to exercise some degree of hermeneutic flexibility to bring the texts near the threshold of the possible rather than detain them merely on the realm of what is permissible. This explains why tracing St. Thomas's presence in

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<sup>69</sup> Fidel Villaroel, OP., *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2020), 37–50.

<sup>70</sup> The three poems were "Abd-el- Azis y Mahoma," "A Filipinas," and "A La Juventud Filipina." See Fidel Villaroel, OP., *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2020), 88.

<sup>71</sup> Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, trans. by Soledad Lacson-Loecin, ed. by Raul L. Loecin (Makati: The Bookmark, Inc., 1996), 466.

<sup>72</sup> Bonoan, "The Enlightenment, Deism, and Rizal," 63.

Rizal's works with a strictly orthodox Thomist mindset would more likely miss the point. One won't find a Thomist citation in Rizal but a careful look at his philosophical anthropology, his confidence on human rationality, his defense of a created innate human dignity, his political vision, his ethics of suffering, and the primacy of common good will doubtless reveal the link that connects him with St. Thomas. And apparently, among the 19th-century Filipino thinkers, Rizal was not the only one who displayed the same proclivity. Cesar Adib Majul has also detected the same Thomist affinity in the political ideas of Apolinario Mabini<sup>73</sup> and a similar finding has also been uncovered by Johaina K. Crisostomo in Emilio Jacinto's *Liwanag at Dilim*.<sup>74</sup> These are all very positive incentives for a research trajectory rarely undertaken. With these studies setting the tone, there might be in the future a more dynamic convergence between Thomistic thought and our local intellectual culture. By fostering a dialogue open enough for critique and innovation, we can perhaps begin to realize that nationalism and Thomism are not estranged after all.

### An Interim Conclusion

What I tried to provide in this modest piece is a sketch of an itinerary towards the articulation of a local wisdom which treats both the native and the foreign as tributaries, the native being our endemic patterns of thought and the foreign, that is, the inherited Catholic ideals passed on to us by our colonial history from the 16th down to the 19th century. In such interface, the legacy of St. Thomas Aquinas, as has been shown, played a crucial role. Right from the outset, I tried to develop an argument that local wisdom is not *sui generis* and that its genuine expression is best articulated by a happy coming together of what we were born with and what we have received. Testaments of this notion of local wisdom can be found even at the earliest episodes of our colonial history as attested by the early catechisms, the publication of the first printed books, dictionaries, and grammar texts, as well as the oral preaching of the missionaries to native communities. These engagements served as locations of tensions, translations, and negotiations which eventually became the breeding ground of our local wisdom's assuming its evolved form. In the 19th century, the artistic and literary outputs of the *ilustrados*, represented in this paper by the works of Jose Rizal, served as a platform of local wisdom articulated with a nationalist tone. In this paper,

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<sup>73</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), 37.

<sup>74</sup> Johaina K. Crisostomo, "The Scholastic Foundations of Emilio Jacinto's *Liwanag at Dilim* (Light and Darkness), c. 1896," in *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 69 (2021).

Rizal and his writings were featured as a specimen to demonstrate how nationalist discourse and Thomism can engage one another. The focus on Rizal is guided mainly by the aim of highlighting the potential intersection and is not meant to prejudice other embodiments of local wisdom outside Rizaliana or the *ilustrado* oeuvre. In my view, wisdom comes to be only when it appears from its local dwelling. The task is to find it in its utter strangeness and make it look familiar.

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## The “Deflationary” Criticism of the Event: Ambiguities of the Theory of Change in Badiou’s *Being and Event*

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**Abstract:** This paper revisits the “deflationary” line of criticism that had been raised against the theory of event presented in Alain Badiou’s *Being and Event*. This line of criticism questions the Badiouian claim to have provided a theorization of radical novelty and change, suggesting that events and their consequences may be more banal than is assumed by the account of change based on truths, elaborated in Badiou’s great ontological treatise. Advancing a version of deflationary criticism, this paper proposes that there are important matters left unclear in the set-theoretical ontology of Badiou’s *magnum opus* that become particularly relevant when the categories such as *void*, *event*, and *truth* are deployed in analyses of specific and concrete extra-ontological situations. Exploiting some of those ambiguities, it will be argued that the theorization of change due to post-evental truths in *Being and Event* does not adequately establish the universality of the truths that, for Badiou, must commence with events. This is problematic for the Badiouian account of change because universality, or what Badiou’s ontological discourse terms “genericity,” is the property of truths that is supposed to ensure their transformative potential.

**Keywords:** Badiou, social ontology, social change, event

This paper revisits what could be termed the “deflationary” line of criticism, which had been raised against Alain Badiou’s theory of event and post-evental change elaborated in *Being and Event*. The deflationary line of criticism points to the problematic aspects of Badiou’s theorization on change unresolvable in the anti-relational set theoretical ontology of *Being and Event*. This paper develops a version of the deflationary criticism in the context of theorizing social change, which is categorizable as a political “truth procedure” within Badiou’s system. In particular, this paper

argues that the theorization of change due to post-evental truths in *Being and Event* does not adequately establish the universality of the truths that, for Badiou, must commence with events.

This poses a challenge for thinking social change with Badiouian categories because universality, or what Badiou's ontological discourse would term "genericity," is the property of truths that is supposed to ensure their transformative potential. What is consequently left ambiguous is the extent of the transformative effects of truths and the possibility of far-reaching social change. This ambiguity, it might be argued, stems from Badiou's deployment of set-theoretical ontology, which neither elaborates how a concrete situation come to be in its particularity nor provides an account of how situations sustain themselves and interact with each other. The section that immediately follows provides an outline of the set-theoretical ontology of *Being and Event*. This will then be followed by the discussion of a version of deflationary criticism that pursues the intuitions of earlier critics who have advanced that line of criticism and develops them further.

### Situations, Truths, and the Deflationary Criticism of Events

Based on an innovative reading of post-Cantorian axiomatic set theory as the discourse of being qua being (ontology) Badiou theorizes a *situation* as an outcome of the negation of the chaotic inconsistent multiplicity that precedes it. The structuring principle Badiou posits as having intervened in between chaos and order is termed "count-as-one," and the latter's emergence is conceivable as the structuration of inconsistent multiplicity into some particular infinite multiple (set). However, importantly, there is nothing in inconsistency itself that necessitates whatever particular count-as-one that has actually prevailed to be *its* structuring principle. The trace of the ultimate contingency of any situation is, in Badiou's theorization, the constitution of the inconsistency that must have been negated in the coming to be of a situation as a potentially destabilizing spectral real. Although uncounted or unrepresented in the structuring operation and thus not an *element* of a resultant situation, inconsistency haunts the situation as a "phantom remainder" whose "presentational occurrence" must be deferred in order for the situation to persist as it is.<sup>1</sup>

That which attests to the situation's deferral of inconsistency is the infinite proliferation of differences. This implies a second-order operation, a "count-of-the-count," that establishes a "proximity" between *presentation*—what exists as elements of the situation—and *representation*, which pertains to the symbolic-imaginary regime of what can be known, thinkable, and

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<sup>1</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. by Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 93.

imaginable in and of the situation. Effectively a self-confirmatory process Althusser would have associated with ideological structure, this re-counting operation that Badiou also calls the “state of the situation” could be seen as sustaining a kind of social imaginary that governs the range of what appears as possible in the situation,<sup>2</sup> or as Badiou puts it in the final volume of the *Being and Event* trilogy, *The Immanence of Truths*, “covers over” anything that happens “within already-known parameters, in a language that registers this occurrence as already thinkable based on prevailing practices.”<sup>3</sup>

It becomes clear here why Badiou holds that “infinite alterity” is not, *pace* Levinas, “the predicate of a transcendence” but rather “the banal reality of every situation.”<sup>4</sup> For if the maintenance of the situation depends on the establishment of a relation of proximity between presentation and representation, representation in an infinite situation can only involve an infinite proliferation of classifications and predications working to ensure that every possible element that exists and can exist in the situation has been counted—*accounted for*, that is—in advance. This idea, that the infinitude of the situation’s representational regime is a product of its immunological operation that forecloses something truly new, cautions against ascribing transgressivity to “fluid” plural identities as such. For Badiou, thinking transcendence—that is, real change—hence demands thinking the beyond of infinite differences whose proliferation aligns with processes sustaining the *status quo*, as encapsulated in his provocative universalist imperative: “Philosophically, if the other doesn’t matter, it is because the difficulty lies on the side of the Same.”<sup>5</sup>

It is his theorization of truth that answers to the task of thinking universality. In ontological terms, a *truth* can be defined as the power set of an initial infinite set whose cardinality immeasurably exceeds that of the latter. This is to say that a truth cannot be circumscribed, defined, or constructed using the classifications and predicates of the situation, making it an *indiscernible* part (subset) of the situation subtracted from the infinite

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<sup>2</sup> Min Seong Kim, “The Social Ontology of Alain Badiou’s *Being and Event*,” *Symposium: Theoretical and Applied Inquiries in Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 9 (2022), 271–272.

<sup>3</sup> Alain Badiou, *The Immanence of Truths*, trans. by Kenneth Reinhard and Susan Spitzer (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 211.

<sup>4</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. by Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2002), 25–27. “Any experience at all,” Badiou claims, “is the infinite deployment of infinite differences.” An encounter between two Englishmen from North London is no less (nor more) an encounter with infinite alterity than one between a Javanese Muslim and an Australian atheist. How such infinite difference can nonetheless appear similar is something that *Logics of Worlds* tries to explain. It should be noted that in the final volume of the *Being and Event* trilogy, *The Immanence of Truths*, Badiou shifts his terminology, referring to the “ordinary infinity” that is bound to constructability as “finite” See: Badiou, *Immanence of Truths*, 377.

<sup>5</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 27.

number of multiples that the situation's state is able to construct, or render representable, as elements of the situation. The indiscernibility of a truth implies its *genericity* for Badiou: it is the universal dimension of a situation obscured by statist differences. It can be said, therefore, that the transformative potential of a truth in any social situation—a factory, a nation state, universities, and so on—lies with the fact that its emergence in a situation forces another account of the situation based on the consideration of what is the most generic therein, namely *humanity*, in its simple being, without reference to classifications and predications on which identities and hierarchic positions organizing the situation are based. Hence, the most general sense that can be given to Badiouian "politics of truths" may be the following: processes by which situations are transformed by the *supplementation* of the situation by a truth, that is, by universalist and egalitarian practices of a collective subject that actualize previously unknown possibilities of human community. An elevated kind of humanism can be glimpsed herein. Badiou, in fact, goes as far as to declare that "Humanity, prior to the real forms of egalitarian politics, simply does not exist, either as collective, or as truth, or as thought."<sup>6</sup>

Connecting the theorization of what processes of truth *must be* to effects of truths in concrete empirical situations requires the occurrence of an exceptional *event*, for, if truths in practice are pursuit of possibilities in concrete situations in excess of what had been considered possible or imaginable therein, their inhabitants<sup>7</sup>—or as Badiou might describe them, the "human animals" prior to subjectivation<sup>8</sup>—must in some sense be awakened to those possibilities. An event testifies to radical contingency of the situation in which it takes place; hence its theorization as the presentational occurrence of inconsistency *in* the situation, or, stated differently, an irruption within the situation of its *void*—which is analytically distinguished from inconsistent multiplicity as such, about which nothing can be said except that it is that which precedes any objectivity, identity, and order, in that it names a *situated* inconsistency, or "a real whose realness is indexed with respect to a given particular reality."<sup>9</sup> As the point at which a process of radical novelty and change may begin, an event, when encountered by human animals, opens a way out of the existence to which they had hitherto been bound.

The gist of what might be termed the "deflationary" line of criticism is that events may be more common or banal than is assumed by the

<sup>6</sup> Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008), 175.

<sup>7</sup> Ed Pluth, *Badiou: A Philosophy of the New* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Sergei Prozorov, "Badiou's Biopolitics: The Human Animal and the Body of Truth," in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32 (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Adrian Johnston, *Badiou, Žižek, and Political Transformations: The Cadence of Change* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 29.

Badiouian account of change based on truths. This kind of criticism, which attempts to undermine the Badiouian theorization of radical novelty and change, has been voiced by a number of readers of Badiou (and *Being and Event* in particular). Ernesto Laclau, for example, has argued that “it is wrong to think that we have purely situational periods interrupted by purely evental interventions,” for “the contamination between the evental and the situational is the very fabric of social life.”<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, Peter Dews, alluding to the late Wittgensteinian reflections on mental processes, considers how something as mundane as expecting someone’s arrival may conform to Badiou’s definition of an event:

... there is no *determinate* set of thoughts and activities that can be said to be necessary and sufficient conditions of such expectation (and furthermore, activities which, in one context, are correctly taken as indicating expectation, may no longer have this meaning when transposed into a different context). It seems, then, that we could say, applying Badiou's terminology, that the “event” of expecting someone's arrival consists of the “evental site” (an indeterminate range of thought and activity)—plus the event itself ( $e_x = \{x \in X, e_x\}$ ).<sup>11</sup>

Expecting someone’s arrival is an event given the way that Badiou defines the latter, Dews suggests. But in this case, events, rather than exceptions to everydayness, may simply be thought as “the very texture of the socio-historical world, of the domain which Hegel—for example—terms ‘Geist.’”<sup>12</sup>

Questioning the exceptionality of events through the kind of deflationary criticism exemplified by Laclau and Dews, which turns to the *form* of an event laid out by Badiou’s set-theoretical general ontology, inscribed in Badiou’s ontological discourse as  $e_x = \{x \in X, e_x\}$ , however, invites a swift rejoinder. For such a challenge does not adequately take into consideration a qualification that is central to Badiou’s concept of event and his theorization of post-evental change: that an event be the revelation of a

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<sup>10</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (London: Verso, 2014), 201. For an examination of the difficulties that Laclau’s own approach, which rejects an absolute demarcation between event-ness and situationality, faces when theorizing novelty and change, see: Min Seong Kim, “The Break between Old and New Orders in Laclau’s Theory of Hegemony,” in *Problemas*, 103 (2023).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Dews, Review of *Being and Event* by Alain Badiou, in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2008), <<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/being-and-event/>>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

situation's *void*, of the latent inconsistency a situation *has to unrepresent* in order for it to constitute itself as a consistent multiplicity, and whose occurrence it is the remit of what Badiou terms the situation's "state" to foreclose. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the significance of the event for thinking social change is almost entirely expressed by Badiou in his stipulation that "what the State strives to foreclose through its power of counting is the void of the situation, while the event always reveals it."<sup>13</sup> Given this stipulation, Dews's deflation of events falters: the example of expecting someone's arrival does not consider the aspect of an event as the bringing forth of the void of a situation.

It might further be argued in favor of Badiou that the ubiquity of instances of events may not, after all, be so devastating. It could be argued, for instance, that an occurrence that has the form of an event is an *event proper* only once its consequences have unfolded. As Todd May points out, the refusal of Rosa Parks to give up her seat was an event, even though there "were others before her who also refused. What makes her refusal an event is the fidelity to her act by other committed activists. And it is only in retrospect that we realize that hers was an event while the previous refusals were not."<sup>14</sup> An event can only be consequential if and only if there is a subject that has decided that there is something—such as a political project—to be pursued subsequent to that event. However, subjectivation (as well as the concomitant initiation of a truth procedure whereby an event's consequences are realized in the situation through the collective endeavor of individuals "faithful" to the original moment of inspiration that the event has become for them) does not necessarily follow from an event. Granted that events that reveal the void of situations are rare and even those rare instances may not have been followed by a subjectivation on which their consequentiality in the situation entirely depends, it is possible to assert that although instantiations of events that formally conform to the matheme of the event may pervade the socio-historical world, only very few of these instances qualify as events proper.

Clarifying the details of the Badiouian theorization of events and truths does help to dissolve the force of the deflationary criticism of the sort raised by Dews and Laclau. This paper shall seek to show, nonetheless, that what is not precluded by the intricate architecture of *Being and Event* is an augmented version of the deflationary line of criticism. In other words, the radically transformative potential that Badiou's philosophy places on what it

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<sup>13</sup> Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. by Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2006), 119.

<sup>14</sup> Todd May, "Review of Badiou, Balibar, Rancière: *Re-thinking Emancipation* by Nick Hewlett," in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2008), <<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/badiou-balibar-ranci-232-re-re-thinking-emancipation/>>.

supposes to be exceptional and disruptive events can be questioned on the basis of the presuppositions and implications of Badiou's ontological treatise itself.

### The Extent of Post-evental Effects

Every situation “unpresents ‘its’ void,”<sup>15</sup> and “a genuine event” is “at the origin of a truth” in as much as the event “relates to the particularity of a situation only from the bias of its void.”<sup>16</sup> It should be emphasized, again, that in extra-ontological situations (the “concrete” situations other than the ontological discourse), the void is not the ontological void—that is, the negativity of non-being as such—but is the nothing that is particular to a situation. The “evental site”—a totally “singular” multiple that “borders” the void and is, importantly, the *material substrate* of an event—“is neither intrinsic nor absolute,”<sup>17</sup> for the determination of a multiple as an evental site thus depends on the particular structure of the situation in which it is positioned as a site. Accordingly, as Adrian Johnston puts it, the “event-ness of the site and/or event is a relative property.”<sup>18</sup> One extensionally identical “multiple could easily be singular in one situation (its elements are not presented therein, although it is) yet normal in another situation (its elements happen to be presented in this new situation).”<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, if the unrepresentable were to remain unrepresentable in every possible situation, change *qua* the production of novelty would be unthinkable. Nor is it the case that the situation in which an evental site would be “normal” could come about solely through an event and a truth procedure. On the contrary, the normalization of evental sites is a process constitutive of the metastructure, or state, of any situation: “any evental site, can in the end, undergo a state normalization.”<sup>20</sup> Hence, the “very same multiples that are evental *qua* abnormally singular/void in one situation or world easily could be non-evental in another setting,” and the elements unrepresented in one situation might, in a different situation, may “very well possess the non-void status of being integrated into the networks of a state-regulated situation or world through re/presentation.”<sup>21</sup> Because the void, in non-ontological situations, is a structural position retroactively delineated by the operation of count-as-one that is specific to a situation, *what* is

<sup>15</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 176.

<sup>18</sup> Johnston, *Badiou, Žižek, and Political Transformations*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–29.

unpresented, in non-ontological situations, is determined in relation to the situation for which it is *its* void.

It is because a situation unpresents the void particular to it that an event, which reveals that particular void, can be said to be a return of the repressed. In other words, the *situatedness* of an eventual site and particularity of the void that circulates within it indexes events and truths to particular historical circumstances, rather than turning them into irruptions at a point radically external to the situation. To draw the implications of the indexing of the void to a situation for theorizing social change, one might begin by considering what would be the void of *any* social situation. As noted earlier, that void is generic humanity, definable as the "pure be-ing human considered without reference to any criterion of hierarchy, privilege, competence, or difference,"<sup>22</sup> which provides, within Badiou's reflections on politics, the support for the egalitarian universality of a truth in social situations. In any given social situation, generic humanity will be its void, since the situation's statist regime stratifies the situation into "parts" or, in the case of social situations, social identities. In so far as it is possible to speak of different situations (the situation of Indonesia, the situation of the factory, educational situation, and so on), it has to be admitted that there is a plurality—an *infinite* plurality, as one could legitimately posit according to set-theoretical ontology—of social situations. Granted that there is an infinite plurality of situations that qualify as social, the following thought merits further examination: given that, ontologically, the fundamental individuating feature that differentiates situations are their differing regimes of count-as-one, and given that the void of a concrete situation is the void particular to a situation, in the singular, it may be the case that different events need not be revelations of the one and the same void, and, by extension, different truth procedures in different social situations, in so far as they are different, need not relate to their respective social situation from the bias of the void construed solely and invariantly as generic humanity in order to qualify as truth procedures.

For Badiou, "there is a *multiplicity* of singular events in singular situations which also enable a *multiplicity* of truths unfolded by 'faithful' subjects."<sup>23</sup> This is, Frank Ruda suggests, one of the features by which Badiou's theorization of event and change distinguishes itself from that offered by a thinker like Giorgio Agamben, for whom "there are *multiplicity* of singular event as ruptures of the given which always expose *one and the*

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 117.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Ruda, *Hegel's Rabble: An Investigation into Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (London: Continuum, 2011), 208.



*same* truth (of being)."<sup>24</sup> It is a strength (in that it better captures the sense of interventions in specific situations) of the Badiouian approach that it locates the origin of a process of change immanently within a particular situation as the revelation of a specific void and allows that fidelity to different events requires the invention of different ways of being and acting. The situatedness of events and truths implied by the fact that event-ness and void-ness are relative properties, however, introduces an ambiguity concerning the extent of support that the ontological discourse may offer for thinking far-reaching social change.

An illustration is useful here. In the early twentieth century, Italian football clubs allowed only Italian and English players to join. Footballers not of those two nationalities, if they were to sign with a club, would have had to conceal their nationality—these footballers would have been unrepresented in the situation of Italian football. On the 9th of March 1908, several members of the Milan Football and Cricket Club dissented against the club's exclusionary policy of admitting only Italians and Britons as members and found a new football club under a declaration that one could plausibly argue is egalitarian and universal for *this* situation, i.e., the situation of Italian football: "*Si chiamerà Internazionale, perchè noi siamo fratelli del mondo* (it [the new club] will be called *Internazionale*, because we are brothers of the world)."<sup>25</sup> The construction of a *generic multiple*—that is, a truth, considered in its universalistic being—to extend the situation of Italian football in fidelity to this declaration would not be required to approach the situation from the standpoint of generic humanity, the void of every social situation, but merely from the capacity to play football, in so far as it is voided of markers of nationality and ethnicity that had previously served to restrict the multiples (football players) that could be presented and represented in the situation. Such would be enough for a practice of realizing the founding declaration of the new club to be a truth procedure in *this* situation, and the being of the truth—the truth of the fact that beyond ethnic and national differences, football is an activity that offers itself to everyone—it incrementally produces to be a generic multiple, assembled by a criterion of belonging to the situation that considers elements without reference to qualifications that the situation's state or representational regime imposes to restrict membership.

What should be asked is whether it is possible for the situatedness of events and truths to work to *restrict* their socially transformative potential. For Badiou, there are "multiple procedures of truth, multiple creative sequences,"<sup>25</sup> and there is, accordingly, no "single Subject, but as many

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. by Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 109.

subjects as there are truths."<sup>26</sup> However, while "any one individual belongs to a vast number of situations, and subjective participation in any one procedure need not block other sorts of commitment," Peter Hallward notes that "to any one truth, there seems to correspond only one subject" and that there is "no obvious way that a situation might tolerate more than one subject."<sup>27</sup> This is one consequence implied by the thought of the non-ontological void: while an event is the irruption of void that disturbs the determinants of a given situation, the situation also conditions the possibilities that are opened thereby. As Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos have explained, because "the principle or law of the situation ultimately determines the site" of an event, an event finally "can only challenge what is determinate in the situation such as the state, the authoritarian party, the legal institution and so on."<sup>28</sup> Limits on the extent of the transformative effects of truths, together with the potential existence of an infinite number of situations (and a plurality of truth processes), raise the question of how these situations and change processes would interact. Noting the in-principle compatibility of truths in Badiou's philosophy, John Milbank writes that "if for Badiou the many different truth-processes are compatible with one another, then it does not seem satisfactory to say, as he does, that the public measure of their legitimacy is merely the non-interference of one process with another."<sup>29</sup> It is not satisfactory, Milbank claims, because the stipulated non-interference implies that Badiou's theory of eventual change lapses into a "liberalism," in the sense that a "clearly demarcated distribution of boundaries of discourse ... prevail over the unpredictability of a newly emerging Event."<sup>30</sup>

The critical point raised by Milbank (as well as by Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos) that events and their transformative consequences do not seem to transgress boundaries of particular situations appears to be supported by the strictly formal ontological theorization of truths. Subtraction from predication, by which the genericity of a truth is defined, is not absolute but is relative to the regimes of counting specific to a situation and its representational regime (that is, its state). If genericity of a multiple in an extra-ontological situation is a relative property, it must be said the

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<sup>26</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 28.

<sup>27</sup> Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 289.

<sup>28</sup> Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos, "Philosophy and Revolution: Badiou's Infidelity to the Event," in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 2 (2006), 222.

<sup>29</sup> John Milbank, "The Return of Mediation," in *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek, Creston Davis, and John Milbank (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 215.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

elements belonging to a generic multiple possess a further qualification in addition to the property of belonging to that situation pure and simple (in the example from the previous section, it would be that of having the capacity to play football). The being of a truth, Badiou explains, “is anonymously that which has no other mark apart from arising from presentation, apart from being composed of terms which have nothing in common that could be remarked, save belonging to *this* situation.”<sup>31</sup> The emphasis on “this” is crucial: in the formulation offered by Badiou, it is precisely the qualification “*this* situation” that is the marker of *deixis*, that which makes a truth the truth of a particular situation. What this implies is that in so far as the generic subset is generic by its non-relation to the determinations of the representational regime that prevails in a particular situation, a mark of particularity is retained in the being of a truth, a particularity that is none other than its being generic by its subtraction from the statist determinations, classifications, and predications, that stratify a particular situation. Even if it were asserted as a matter of principle that a political event invokes generic humanity, or that political truth procedure proceeds to investigate the implications of some maxim of a radically egalitarian universalism, it seems difficult to deny, in so far as a truth procedure is always the process of production of a truth in a particular situation, that the generic multiple that a truth is in its being will be marked in this way. But granted that a potentially infinite number of social situations can be thought (such as the situation of football, the situation of education, the situation of a racially segregated society, and so on), there is no *a priori* limitation on the proliferation, also infinite, of eventual sites and generic multiplicities that are indiscernible—hence unrepresentable—within *some* situation.

This outcome is relevant for thinking about the theory of social change that is supportable by the set-theoretical general ontology of *Being and Event*. Badiou writes in *Ethics* that “the place of truth should remain empty and precisely because of this feature it is equally valid ‘for all,’” and that a truth originating from an event is universal to the extent it “neither excludes nor constrains anyone.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, the extension of “for all” and “anyone” in such statements is limited to those that belong (or will come to belong) to some particular situation, and it appears that the transformative effects of each of the multiple truth procedures are confined, in the end, to the particular situation within which they unfold. Coupled with the fact that ontology abstains from responding to the question of—to borrow Terry Eagleton’s

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<sup>31</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 338–339.

<sup>32</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 73.

formulation—what is to “count as a situation, and who decides,”<sup>33</sup> or to put it differently, where a *particular concrete situation* begins and ends, what becomes ambiguous as a result is the meaning of the universality that these procedures, as truth procedures, are meant to produce. One could imagine that a truth procedure would, in its course, come to render representable, by transforming a situation’s regime of count-as-one, those that previously were not even properly counted-as-one within a situation. However, the group newly made representable as a result of that truth procedure is nevertheless particular, since it would be merely one group among the multiplicity of groups that populate other social situations, with the chance that some groups may as well form eventual sites in their respective situations due to the regimes of representation specific to those situations.

There is neither anything inherently objectionable in the thought that the transformative potentials of truths are restricted (at least initially) to situations that might appear, at first sight, to be of little significance outside their boundaries, nor is it inconsistent with the Badiouian account of change to suppose that the extent of a truth’s transformative potential remains unknown and can be pursued indefinitely. Nonetheless, the fact that the handful of events Badiou cites as revolutionary are widely recognized as such in science, art, and politics is enough to elicit the question of whether the conceptualization of a truth procedure should incorporate a distinction between the transformation of what might be regarded as relatively “local” situations (such as the situation of the Milanese football scene) and the transformation of relatively “global” situations (for instance, the state of Italy), or instead reject a distinction of such kind, thereby indexing any one process of transformation to a particular situation, without consideration of whether the situation is relatively local or global.

Regardless of whether such a distinction is ultimately desirable, it is, in any case, unclear how the distinction of that sort could be conceived using the resources of set-theoretical ontology.<sup>34</sup> Absent an account of a “global” transformative potential of an event and an how a situation in which an event

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<sup>33</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Žižek and Others* (London: Verso, 2003), 252.

<sup>34</sup> Within a situation, the predicates of its language (including relational predicates, which are simply higher-order predicates) quantify over that situation. This means that a statement such as “something that happens in *this* situation matters for social change more than something that happens in *this other* situation because the former situation is relatively global with respect to the latter situation,” for example, would be, in principle, verifiable if both situations featured in the statement are represented multiples of *another* situation. But since that *another* situation is itself a particular situation, there is no point from which the referents of “global” or “local” could be fixed from the interiority of any situation. The determination has to be made from a perspective outside *any* situation—and it is unclear both what that perspective would be and by what authority anyone would be able to claim to possess that perspective.

could have such far-reaching transformative potential might come about, or perhaps an account of how events, as Milbank suggests, could redraw the “boundaries” between a plurality of situations or discourses,<sup>35</sup> it would be difficult to avoid a conclusion of the following sort, drawn by Paul Livingston: Badiou’s system faces difficulty in “thinking the possibility of varieties of change and transformation that ... affect, or even disrupt, the unity and hegemony of global and total systems of organization, order, and control,”<sup>36</sup> precisely in so far as he “[relativizes] the void to situations” and restricts “the action of what he will go on to theorize as the event and its specific effects, as well, to situations, and to the specific possibilities of change that they structurally determine.”<sup>37</sup>

### **The Gap between the Ontological Discourse and Extra-ontological Situations**

Given the problematization of the transformative potential of events and truths discussed in the previous section, it might be asked whether the set-theoretical ontology of *Being and Event*, though it may not itself contain a full elaboration of the interaction between situations or the transformative effects of a truth beyond a particular situation, nevertheless contains the conceptual basis to theorize the latter. Badiou himself, after all, emphasizes the distance between ontological (that is, set-theoretical) and extra-ontological situations is one that Badiou registers, noting the latter are not to be reduced to the former. Responding to the question of whether a truth procedure is able to “traverse more than one situation,”<sup>38</sup> Badiou replies that while it is true that two truth processes do not unfold in one and the same situation, “concrete” situations are complicated by the fact that they are not the formal, ontological situation:

Two generic procedures are never actually in the same situation of reference because they are truths of their situations. But a concrete situation is not exactly the ontological scheme of the situation. A concrete situation is an interplay of different situations in the ontological sense of the term. Ontology is not by itself the thinking

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Paul M. Livingston, *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the Consequences of Formalism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 247.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>38</sup> Alain Badiou, “Ontology and Politics: An Interview with Alain Badiou,” in *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*, ed. by Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London: Continuum, 2004), 174.

of a concrete situation. Ontology is *a* situation, the ontological situation which is the situation of thinking, and finally, the mathematical situation. We can think a part of the concrete situation from the ontological schema. We can say, there is a multiplicity, it is infinite and so on. But there is a concrete analysis which is not ontological at all.<sup>39</sup>

It should be accepted, as Badiou implies, that analyses of concrete situations require more than just ontology. Still, granted the gap between the ontological discourse and extra-ontological situations, the inevitable question persists: if concrete analysis is "not ontological," *to what extent* can set-theoretical ontology advance an understanding of extra-ontological situations, which are in fact the only kind of situations in which events actually happen? Oliver Feltham's attempt to consider ways in which the consequences of an event may somehow spill over into other situations and transform the boundaries between situations attests to the difficulty of responding to such a question. Feltham argues that what is "in" an evental site of a situation must "come from somewhere," and suggests that an evental site "consists of an encounter between heterogeneous situations."<sup>40</sup> It is through an encounter between situations (Mali, Senegal, France) that heterogeneous elements come to enter one situation (France) to form its evental site (the *sans-papiers*), whose indiscernibility in that situation is to be accounted by the heterogeneity of its composition that makes it unrecognizable as a part of the (French) situation. An evental site, Feltham proposes, "can thus be defined as a non-recognized intersection between situations; a disqualified mix which appears, at the level of the state, as a pure disjunction."<sup>41</sup> The constitution of an evental site through the encounter or intersection between heterogeneous situations is one way to speak of the "interplay" between situations mentioned by Badiou in the passage quoted above. Such interplay in and between situations through which an evental site is constituted presumably implies some kind of pre-evental dynamics in situations. What Badiou terms *forcing*, namely the post-evental process by which a truth transforms a situation, then, can be understood as "[consisting] in amassing those multiples that are connected to the event."<sup>42</sup> Feltham explains forcing "as the slow expansion of the evental site; it extends and exacerbates the original point of opacity at which the event occurred," such

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 174–75.

<sup>40</sup> Oliver Feltham, *Alain Badiou: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2008), 122.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

that, in the course of “its continual assertion that this opaque enlarged multiple belongs to the situation,” it “breaks with the established distribution of the situation’s parts.” Enquiries (the practical component of a truth procedure), meanwhile, “create new parts or neighbourhoods with yet unknown boundaries,” which can affect “not only the original boundaries of the evental site and the established partition of the situation, but finally the very boundaries of the situation itself.”<sup>43</sup>

Introducing pre-evental kinesis and post-evental transformative effects that “spill over” the boundaries of a particular situation would indeed constitute an important step toward clarifying the ambiguities of Badiouian theory for thinking social change by opening up, to refer to one of the issues raised previously, the possibility of conceptualizing a “global” situation (and far-reaching transformative consequences) made possible through the interaction of a plurality of “local” situations. However, the gap between the ontological discourse and extra-ontological situations poses a difficulty once again when one begins to consider how Feltham’s sensible picture of pre-evental and post-evental dynamics would actually fit into the ontological discourse. The difficulty for thinking the former (pre-evental kinesis) arises because set-theoretical ontology relegates individuals to the status of objects fully determined by anonymous operations of count-as-one and assigns stasis as one of the characteristics of pre-evental situations. The difficulty for thinking the latter (post-evental dynamics) in terms of forcing emerges because a truth procedure is a process immanent to a situation, and “subject-language”—the medium of the articulation of truths—cannot refer to situations that are external to the initial situation.

As Burhanuddin Baki explains, forcing “is always locally implemented with reference to the elements that range over the situation  $S$ .”<sup>44</sup> The being of a truth is a generic subset of the situation, which is to say that the “ingredients” needed for its production is dispersed in the initial situation, as unrepresentable or indiscernible elements. Thus, in so far as the sets that play a role in a truth procedure are the initial situation, its state, and the generic subset that is constructed from the initial situation through enquiries, it must be concluded that “forcing procedure never goes outside the domestic immanence of  $S$  itself or the various states connected to  $S$ .”<sup>45</sup> Statements that are forced in situation  $S$  anticipate their semantic fulfilment, that is, the coming-to-be of the extensional equivalents (referents) of the names and predicates used in the statements—these extensional equivalents,

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Burhanuddin Baki, *Badiou’s Being and Event and the Mathematics of Set Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 208.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

however, do not arrive from outside S itself, for a truth is built from the void of *a* situation. This means, conversely, that whatever truth procedures that may be taking place in other situations do not affect S. In what way the boundary between S and that other situation may become indeterminate, such that transformative effects in one situation affects, or spills over into the other, is therefore unclear. If there is an eventual site with a certain material composition in a situation, what can be said is that it is *already there* in the situation, with the process in which they have *come to be* falling beneath theorization.

The preceding discussion suggests that ambiguities pertaining to the situatedness of events and truths—that is, questions concerning the extent of the transformative effects of truths on the social—that are not readily resolvable, and that this poses difficulties for any “application” of the theoretical categories of *Being and Event* to describe and analyze the specificity of a political event, which must occur social situations that are extra-ontological. There are, in fact, instances of Badiou’s own deployment of ontological categories that could be seen as symptomatic of this difficulty. In *Metapolitics*, the ontological thesis of the immeasurable excess of inclusion over belonging—that the state of the situation exceeds the situation (based on the result of set theory that the cardinality of the power-set is greater than that of the base set, and immeasurably greater when the base set is an infinite set)—is transposed onto the realm of politics through the equation of the state of a situation with the political state (the two shall be distinguished hereafter by capitalizing the latter). Badiou writes that there are “always more parts than elements, i.e. the representative multiplicity is always of a higher power than the presentative multiplicity. This question is really that of power. The power of the State is always superior to that of the situation.”<sup>46</sup> He then proceeds to suggest that “empirically, whenever there is a genuinely political event, the State reveals itself. It reveals its excess of power, its repressive dimension,” which has to “remain measureless, errant, unassignable” for the “normal functioning of the State.”<sup>47</sup> If what Badiou is suggesting is that a genuine political event induces the normally hidden repressive police apparatus of the State to appear on the scene, there is little that is controversial in the suggestion. That true radical politics provokes the State is not in itself a particularly contentious view. Indeed, the State’s violent reaction to an event may plausibly be argued to be one of the first signs that announces the possibility of change in the situation. But it is difficult not to concur with Livingston, who objects that the particular way in which the point is

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<sup>46</sup> Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 144–145.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.



expressed by Badiou conflates the *quantitative* excess of the state of the situation and the *qualitative* excess of the State's repressive power.<sup>48</sup>

In *Being and Event*, "excrecent" multiples are defined as multiples that belong to the state of the situation but not to the situation itself, hence multiples that exist as something like an external appendage to the situation. Excrecent multiples are a direct expression of the excess of inclusion (representation) over belonging (presentation)—they conform to the premise on which the repressive power of the State is based, namely, that "the representative multiplicity is always of a higher power than the presentative multiplicity." There is a way of reading this statement as a critique of representative politics: even in its most democratic form, the State represents individuals only through the means of groupings or classifications (such as electoral constituencies). The "excess" or "excrecence" of the State, some readers have argued,<sup>49</sup> refers to the fact that the State fundamentally stands at a distance from the individual members of those groups that it claims to represent. While that may be acceptable as a description of some ontic situations, the association of excrecent multiples with the empirical State is a metaphorical leap unsupported by set-theoretical ontology. For, given the way in which the being of a truth has been defined, a truth is also excrecent in exactly the same sense: it is included in the situation in so far as it is a subset but does not belong to the situation in so far as it is an infinite generic subset. Thought in its generic being, a truth, Badiou writes, is a "pure indistinct excess over presented multiples," indeed, an "anonymous excrecence."<sup>50</sup> Excrecence, then, is the type of multiple that by which the being of *both* a truth and the State is thought in set-theoretical ontology. In fact, it is none other than the immeasurable excess of representation over presentation on which the thought essential to Badiou's theory of post-evental change, namely, that a truth, in its being, is generic, infinite, and irreducibly separated from knowledge, is grounded. The equation of excrecence with the State, therefore, is not implied by the ontological discourse itself. Nor can the "repressive dimension" of the State be attributed to the excess of representation over presentation, in so far as a truth is essentially liberating and transformative (rather than repressive and inertial).

The equivocation between quantitative and qualitative excess of "power" works to compensate for the lack of a clear place in the Badiouian framework for the qualitative force that must be posited in order to account for the inertia and persistence of a social situation. While the mere existence

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<sup>48</sup> Livingston, *Politics of Logic*, 272.

<sup>49</sup> See for example: Nina Power and Alberto Toscano, "Politics," in *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts*, ed. by A.J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens (London: Routledge, 2014), 95.

<sup>50</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 342.

of the repressive apparatus of the State does not entail its intervention, the *fact* that the State has intervened in response to a certain event is seen as *showing* something about the event and the situation for which it is an event. The claim of this paper was that the fact that there is an infinite plurality of situations in a society may render events and truth procedures rather common in so far as they are limited to particular situations. The provocation of the State can be said to fulfill the following revelatory function in the Badiouian account of social change: the intervention of the State's repressive apparatus, its *resistance* to an event, confirms retroactively that the void that the event has revealed is in fact something that is disruptive, something that *matters* to the State, so much so that it is forced to intervene. It confirms, in other words, the non-mundanity of the event in a particular social situation—its status as a genuinely political event—that is not determinable in terms of set-theoretical ontology alone.

## Conclusion

The deflationary line of criticism questions the radically transformative potential that Badiou's philosophy places on what it theorizes as exceptional and disruptive events. If the deflationary argument advanced in this paper—that any specific void and the event that reveals it are indexed to a particular situation and that this situatedness limits the extent of the socially transformative potential of a truth—is right, then it must be asked whether the account of truth procedure is adequate to support the thought of an extensive transformation of society, if society is conceived (to use the same words that Badiou employs) "concretely" as the "interplay" of social situations, in the plural. While, on the one hand, it is not the task of general ontology to provide an account of extensive social change, it would, on the other hand, be hardly satisfactory to simply concede the incommensurability of concrete situations and the ontological situation. What the deflationary line of criticism highlights is the difficulty of co-articulating the two dimensions.

As the challenges that are highlighted by the deflationary criticism pertain to the *political* implications commonly associated with Badiou's philosophy, it is unsurprising that Badiou's works subsequent to *Being and Event* can be read, at least in one of their dimensions, as attempts to respond to the challenges of that line of criticism. One of the central claims of *Logics of Worlds*, the first of the two sequels to *Being and Event*, is that the realm of appearances is inherently relational and dynamic. The notion of "transcendentals" elaborated therein is designed to account for the sense of "more" or "less" in identities of objects and differences between them, hence for relationality in a way far more subtle than the binary logic of belonging (counted) and not belonging (uncounted) in *Being and Event*. It is undeniable

that developments in Badiou's philosophy since *Being and Event* has allowed him to introduce (or, better integrate into his system) nuances that undermine the absolute dichotomy between the static situationality and events questioned by critics such as Laclau. Indeed, Badiou has come to allow that there are "traces of the event prior to the event" based on which a pre-evental praxis could presumably be organized.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the evolution of Badiou's thought, however, the challenge of the deflationary line of criticism does not entirely dissipate. Noting that the realms of appearances and being qua being are held together by what Badiou calls the "postulate of materialism" (which *postulates* that "every atom of appearing is real"<sup>52</sup>), Livingston asks whether Badiou's "elaborate theory" of transcendentals offers an explanation of how they "actually come to structure worlds to which they apply, or to what they owe their force in governing these relations of appearing and 'intensities' of existence."<sup>53</sup> The very concept of the "world"—the category central to *Logics of Worlds* that serve as the phenomenological counterpart to the ontological category of situations—remains, for Livingston, "quite ill-defined."<sup>54</sup> If the deflationary line of criticism exploits the ambiguities in how situations come about and are delimited and sustained (where situations begin and end or, as Eagleton has put it, what "count as a situation, and who decides"<sup>55</sup>), it is a line of criticism that pertains to a difficulty that arguably has not entirely been resolved within Badiou's philosophical system.

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<sup>51</sup> Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2012), 62.

<sup>52</sup> Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, trans. by Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009), 218.

<sup>53</sup> Livingston, *Politics of Logic*, 245.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent*, 252.

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## Nietzsche's Nihilistic Triad

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**Abstract:** In this essay, I provide a construction of what I consider Nietzsche's nihilistic triad of the Christian/Jewish–German/Aryan–bourgeois/modern culture, arguing that his comments of one aspect of this triad ought to be read in junction with the other elements. I begin by revisiting Nietzsche's critique of Platonism and its implications upon nihilism, which lay the foundation for the three aspects of this nihilistic culture that Nietzsche diagnoses. I finally provide a grounded definition of nihilism not simply as the devaluing of the highest values as commonly referred to, but one mindful of nihilism's impact as the spiritualization, passivation, and privatization of humanity: The spiritualization of values through Judaism furthered by Christianity's globalized effort, the passivation of spirit by the idea of cultural superiority, and the privatization of affairs due to capital's productivity and the growing socio-economic modern stance.

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, nihilism, normative values, culture

To discuss nihilism in Nietzsche's philosophy is not a novel topic. Jill Stauffer highlights the detrimental effects of nihilism in that it wills nothingness only for a person to realize one's inescapability from it when nihilism climaxes to its extreme form.<sup>1</sup> This concept of nihilism seems to perfectly fit in Raymond Geuss's characterization as either the presence of too much normativity and the complete absence of such.<sup>2</sup> However, Keith Ansell-Pearson emphasizes how Nietzsche portrays nihilism as something lived and experienced as existential and historical phenomena, but ultimately

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<sup>1</sup> See Jill Stauffer, "The Imperfect: Levinas, Nietzsche, and the Autonomous Subject," in *Nietzsche and Levinas: "After the Death of a Certain God,"* ed. by Jill Stauffer and Bettina Bergo (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2009), 44.

<sup>2</sup> See Raymond Geuss, "10 Minutes with Raymond Geuss on Nihilism," *IIIIIII: four by three magazine*, 5 (2017), <<http://www.fourbythreemagazine.com/issue/nihilism-raymond-geuss-interview>>.

something to be overcome.<sup>3</sup> Within the plethora of Nietzschean references I wish to follow Kaityln Creasy in understanding nihilism from a psychological standpoint, thus its affective quality.<sup>4</sup> Morality previously served as an antidote to life's distraught conditions, yet its irony is that it eventually entailed life-negation.<sup>5</sup> This very inability of morality to provide meaning causes a psychophysiological futility.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the metaphysical emptiness following the realization of the absence or caused by the sheer abundance of decadent normative values accords with an ethical hollowness. Nihilism according to Creasy ultimately reveals a perversion of the will—a lust for the same, a subscription to a pathological desire, and a reversal of values.<sup>7</sup> Ansell-Pearson aptly captures this when he says “if God, and all that he stands for, is dead, and if Christian values can no longer provide European civilization with its ethical and cultural foundations, as he believed, then the question ‘immediately comes to us in a terrifying way: *Has existence any meaning at all?*’ (GS V:357).”<sup>8</sup> The value of meaning, of the decision to cling to the world or to the otherworldly, creates a reassessment of life.

In underscoring the affective component of nihilism, I seek to provide an alternative definition of what nihilism is. As mentioned in the introduction, nihilism is usually almost immediately defined by Nietzsche

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<sup>3</sup> Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 203.

<sup>4</sup> See Kaityln Creasy, “On the Problem of Affective Nihilism,” in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 49 (2018), 32.

<sup>5</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente Sommer 1886–Herbst 1887* [5]71 and 1887 [10]192), <[http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1887,5\[71\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1887,5[71])>. Hereinafter, cited as *NF* followed by year, journal number, and entry. All citations of Nietzsche's unpublished fragments are taken from the digital critical edition of the complete works and letters of Nietzsche, based on the critical text by G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 1967), ed. by Paolo D'Iorio; see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Werke und Briefe*, <<http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §345.

<sup>7</sup> Creasy goes to ends to present the psychophysical attributes of nihilism found in Nietzsche's texts: exhaustion; disgust; weariness; fatigue; disappointment and the great nausea with oneself; a dull, debilitating, long-drawn-out painfulness; a lethargy, heaviness, and depression; a slow sadness; a dull pain; a lingering misery; and finally better captured as a resistance to life. In this we see “an overwhelmingly negative valence—sadness, heaviness, and misery dominate—coupled with a feeling of impediment, obstruction, inhibition, or motion arrested. This is felt as exhaustion, heaviness, debilitation, and depression.” Creasy, “On the Problem of Affective Nihilism,” 36, citing Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, in *The Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. by Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), III:13–14, 19–20, and Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols: Or, How to Philosophize with the Hammer*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), II:1.

<sup>8</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 45.

scholars as simply the period in which the highest values devalue themselves.<sup>9</sup> This though I argue fails to capture the effect of such a period on the individual confronting this moment. I would rather offer to give attention to how nihilism perpetuates a state of lukewarm-ness and weariness. Nietzsche tells us that “we are *weary* because we have lost the main stimulus” in that the “sight of man now makes us weary – what is nihilism today if it is not *that?* – We are weary of *man*.”<sup>10</sup> Putting together these two ideas of Nietzsche written roughly around the same period, I offer to define nihilism as the experience of losing the fear of, hope in, respect for, and will to be human. Altogether, nihilism is the experience of having grown tired of both being human and of humanity.

In this essay, I attempt to provide a grounded view of Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism through a construction of his nihilistic triad, which I source from different periods. I argue that Nietzsche’s criticisms of one part of this triad should be read alongside his views of the other elements. Usually, nihilism is defined in Nietzsche as simply the period in which the highest values devalue themselves. However, I seek to expand the sense in which the concept of the “highest values” (*obersten Werthe*) is to be understood, which is done in relation to Nietzsche’s criticisms of three elements: 1) Christianity and Judaism; 2) the German or Aryan race; and 3) the bourgeois or his modern culture. These three I coin collectively as Nietzsche’s nihilistic triad, arguing that his comments of one aspect of this triad ought to be read in junction with the other elements.

### Nihilism and Platonism

It is necessary to question the source of the nihilistic disdain to be human according to Nietzsche’s purview. For this, we must turn our attention to Platonism. Praises of the ancient world abound in Nietzsche’s texts, namely lauds of the Roman Empire, its civilization, Greek culture, and even the pre-Socratic mode of thinking-qua-living. In fact, his very first publication which marked his entire academic career is an exaltation of a Greek culture far different compared to how such was read in Nietzsche’s academic circles.<sup>11</sup> However, excluded from such praises is the tradition established with Socrates, documented by Plato, and refined by Aristotle. Nietzsche recognizes in this triad symptoms of decadence, noticeable with a

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<sup>9</sup> See Nietzsche, *NF Herbst 1887*, 9[35].

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche, *NF Ende 1886–Frühjahr 1887*, 7[8], D; Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:12.

<sup>11</sup> See Marianne Cowan, “Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche,” in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* by Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. by Marianne Cowan (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1962), 4.



tension in dualistic accounts of ideal-real, objective-subjective, and rationality-myth and that the ideal (world) is impossible to attain.<sup>12</sup> It ought to be clear here that this dualism between what is seen and what lies behind it is totally different from Nietzsche's treatment of the Dionysiac and Apollonian drives in his *The Birth of Tragedy*. The object of his critique is in fact reality's seeming dialectical construction between something overt and covert, obvious in his remarks against Kant and Schopenhauer.<sup>13</sup> Reality with Plato is understood less of drives and the "awareness of Being as the play of presence and absence" and more of "a conception of Being as pure or genuine presence, namely ... the *Idea*."<sup>14</sup> This Platonic standard thus became the measure to reality in terms of ascending dialectics that is later translated by Aristotle into a descending form.

Plato's caliber of defining reality based on an ascending dialectics presupposes the existence of an all-inclusive Idea or Form. This "non-hypothetical principle" is realized through an intuition, which in turn commences an ascent terminating with a beatific silence due to the contemplation of the primordial Idea, through which everything else becomes intelligible. This was seen through in Plato's dialogues featuring various intuitions: death (*Phaedo*), remembering (*Meno*, *Phaedo*), aesthetic sensitivity (*Symposium*), and the sciences (*Republic*).<sup>15</sup> The ascent dichotomizes reality into polarities of the physical and the metaphysical with a seeming antithetical relationship between the two. This desire to know, in the Greek world, though does not end as a mental exercise but affects one's entire totality, greatly seen in the characterization of Socrates's savant-like episodes of sinking into a trance of pure intellectual activity.<sup>16</sup> Such was considered a primal demonstration of this familiarity with the metaphysical, only to be interrupted by the crude physical reality. The equation therefore of knowledge or reason with virtue and happiness as opposed to the absence of these spiritual qualities comes as no surprise due to the premium given to the tie between thinking and living. However, for Nietzsche this equation of knowledge and virtue creates a crude equation of knowledge and power found in Plato, becoming the basis for the entire falsity of metaphysics'

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<sup>12</sup> See Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, II:2 and Tracy Strong, "Hammers, Idleness and Music," in *Twilight of the Idols*, xxii.

<sup>13</sup> See Christoph Cox, "Nietzsche, Dionysus, and the Ontology of Music," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Keith Ansell Pearson (Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 499–500.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Rosen, *The Question of Being: A Reversal of Heidegger* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), xiv.

<sup>15</sup> See Dario Composta, *History of Ancient Philosophy* (Vatican: Urbaniana University Press, 1988), 164–165.

<sup>16</sup> See Peter Sloterdijk, *The Art of Philosophy: Wisdom as Practice*, trans. by Karen Margolis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), §1.

inquiry into a “beyond,” a metaphysical faith in favor of an agonal encounter.<sup>17</sup>

The connection between Platonism and Christianity is not farfetched, and Nietzsche's contention with Christianity is the inversion of epistemic standards and the feigning of the soul's flight to objectivity which resound his criticism of Platonism. In fact, what is found in Christianity, following Nietzsche's arguments is a total disruption if not perfection of the ascending dialectics in that God stands as both the start and end of the human person's life. Nietzsche's purview of role of the concept of God is clear: God serves as the idealization of the human person, the perfection of humanity, happiness, and morality, yet these are merely invented goals for Nietzsche, which point to the more obvious reason of his relentless critique of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Since God is this perfection, the human person is reduced to a state of guilt in offending the magnanimous God. Previously, Nietzsche explains, guilt was simply mete out with external punishment through the infliction of pain for a failed payment, yet Christianity internalized it as a self-corrective principle that created a memory for “improvement” and the possibility to make compromises.<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche further tells us, “Guilt before *God*: this thought becomes an instrument of torture to him. He apprehends in ‘God’ the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, in the concept of and belief in God we witness a certain twofold reversal of values: ontological (God–man) and epistemic (Ideal–real).<sup>21</sup> The merging of the two

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<sup>17</sup> See Geoff Waite, *Nietzsche's Corpsle: Aesthetics, Politics, Prophecy, or, The Spectacular Technoculture of Everyday Life* (London: Duke University Press, 1996), 279 and Louis Althusser, “The Transformation of Philosophy (1976),” in *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays*, ed. by Gregory Elliott, trans. by Ben Brewster, James H. Kavanagh, Thomas E. Lewis, Grahame Lock, and Warren Montag (London and New York: Verso, 1990), 251. See also Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §344.

<sup>18</sup> See Nietzsche, “The Four Great Errors,” in *Twilight of the Idols*, 8. See also Paolo A. Bolaños, *On Affirmation and Becoming: A Deleuzian Introduction to Nietzsche's Ethics and Ontology* (Newcastle upon Tyre: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 37. The human person must act in obedience to God for God's offering of himself is done as good; God is good and everything he does is done *sub specie boni*. See Nietzsche, November 1887 – März 1888, 11[57].

<sup>19</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, II:13.

<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, II:22.

<sup>21</sup> Sufficient to say now is that Christianity's moral valuation is gleamed dependent on affinities to God – hence the valuation *good* and *evil*. The opposite of good is evil and God is taken as man's opposite, *all that is not man*. The question comes as which takes the role of good and of evil? If God is absolute, omniscient, and omnipotent then he *must* be good, and due to the polar opposites, man necessarily becomes evil in face of this good God. To appease ourselves from this contemptable conclusion, the Christian appraisal of the divine act of God saving man becomes praiseworthy: “God himself sacrifices himself for the guilt of mankind, God himself makes payment to himself, God as the only being who can redeem man from what has become unredeemable for man himself – the creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of love (can one credit that?), out of love for his debtor!” (Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, II:21). The problem

for Nietzsche is a further repression of the individual's capacity done in praise of God in that God stands as man's ultimate comfort yet negator, refuge and constraint. In turn, God's greatness is measured upon man's imperfection, and so the same force that thrusts man to feign God thrusts him now to be *contra* God, to kill him; "What? Is humanity just God's mistake? Or God just a mistake of humanity?"<sup>22</sup>

Nietzsche therefore rejects Platonism and Christianity, and along with these, the entire history of western metaphysics. For him, Platonism represents the metaphysical element of reality that ought to be killed, and Christianity stood as Platonism for the people;<sup>23</sup> similar to how Marx much later described it as opium for the populace. The reason that man killed God, following Nietzsche's account, is the contempt for the antagonistic otherworldly, metaphysical perfection. In being Platonism for the people, Christianity spiritualized passions as God stood as man's antithesis.<sup>24</sup> Christianity *idealized* what it meant to be man, and therefore asceticism is a faithful's way to get a glimpse of the truth beyond this world. With the ontological reversal of values of God becoming man comes an epistemic reversal that infringes on ethical concerns—a denial of the body and a hope for the soul. Platonism, the impasse in thinking and idealization, is given a moral face through Christianity. For Nietzsche, God and the Platonic ideals stand not as a source of freedom but as a "transcendent prohibition" that limits freedom. Rather than enabling potentials, these have become an opiate: God has become an inhibitor; truth has become a deception.

With the remarks on the tie between nihilism and Platonism, I may appropriately continue turn to what I consider Nietzsche's nihilistic triad of the Christian/Jewish–German/Aryan–bourgeois/modern culture. My formulation of this nihilistic triad comes from Nietzsche's own criticism of practices during his time:

I also do not like these latest speculators in idealism, the anti-Semites, who today roll their eyes in a Christian-Aryan-bourgeois manner and exhaust one's patience by trying to rouse up all the horned-beast elements in the

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with the good–evil valuation is the lack of any physiological basis which is therefore relegated to a theo-ontological grounding. Nietzsche describes this divine act in a caricatural manner—in that the creditor (God) takes the place of the debtor (man) to pay of a debt (in atonement of sin). The creditor takes the place of the debtor for a debt owed to himself, out of love!

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Epigrams and Arrows," §7.

<sup>23</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Preface.

<sup>24</sup> See Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, V:1.

people by a brazen abuse of the cheapest of all agitator's tricks, moral attitudinizing (that *no* kind of swindle fails to succeed in Germany today is connected with the undeniable and palpable stagnation of the German spirit; and the cause of that I seek in a too exclusive diet of newspapers, politics, beer, and Wagnerian music, together with the presuppositions of such a diet: first; national constriction and vanity, the strong but narrow principle "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,*" and then the *paralysis agitan* of "modern ideas").<sup>25</sup>

The way Nietzsche explicitly lumps together those clinging to idealism, anti-Semites, and the triad of the Christian–Aryan–bourgeois manner discloses certain affinities which I wish to draw out in this essay.

### Christian/Jewish Element

I now turn to the three elements, or rather the connection of the three elements in Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. For this first element, it is unsurprising that people associate Nietzsche with anti-Christianity and antisemitism considering that one of his books is entitled *The Antichrist* and numerous passages of his other works contain rather dangerous notions such as that the Jews are a people born for slavery, they began the revolt in morality;<sup>26</sup> or that the Jews are a potential necessary scapegoat for the improvement not simply of European civilization but also of one's race.<sup>27</sup> It is easy to get lost amidst the numerous passages contained in Nietzsche's works, yet what ultimately earns his ire is how these two religions promote the ascetic ideals. The association of the Christian and the Jewish element is not just due to the obvious religious affinities, but due to what which Nietzsche considers as life-negating psychocultural or psychosocial disposition in these religions.<sup>28</sup>

It is remarkable, as Nietzsche notes, how it is the Jews who begin utilizing the emotions in service of life-negating values, transforming anger,

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<sup>25</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, III:26.

<sup>26</sup> See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §195 and *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:7.

<sup>27</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), §475.

<sup>28</sup> See Yirmiyahu Yovel, "Nietzsche contra Wagner on the Jews," in *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy*, ed. by Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 132; and Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 141–144.

or its usual cause of something bad, into something sacred as done by the Divine or their angry prophets.<sup>29</sup> These angry prophets, whom Nietzsche mentions, are those who conveyed the message of the angry YHWH and preached against the waywardness of the Jews in the Old Testament, yet what Nietzsche seems to maintain in this association is how the anger comes from a self-righteousness, a recognition that one is above another. This in turn fuels one's apparent indignation at the perceived wrong done by the other. This idea from *Daybreak* we may associate with his remark in *On the Genealogy of Morality* in which Nietzsche recounts that *ressentiment* itself turned creative and birthed life-negating values.<sup>30</sup> The First Essay is devoted to explaining the inverse relationship between the valuations of the master's description of good–bad as opposed to the slave's evaluation of good–evil. Nietzsche traces the origins of morality to a pre-moral living condition with illustrative categories of good and bad, yet, from these descriptive qualities of existence, the slaves narrowed them to a moral valuation: goodness referred to their base state and evilness was to incite blame and guilt on the masters.<sup>31</sup>

Christianity's role in this narrative is quite significant since, according to Nietzsche, the idea of punishment in Hell is Christianity's own doing. With the reversal of values in Nietzsche's fictitious master-slave dialectic (which he ties with Judaism), a social and political manifestation of such an occurrence was demonstrated by Christianity's existence within the Roman Empire: what was once persecuted eventually dictated the reigning morality.<sup>32</sup> Christianity's takeover of political power or space seemed to be thrust by its capture of time, not of the present but of eternity. In "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," Nietzsche writes how art and religion are eternalizing forces in that they construe a seemingly nihilistic relationship between an individual and history.<sup>33</sup> Religion makes an individual forget becoming in that time is historicized, presented as something which life is in service of.<sup>34</sup> While Judaism signified the realization of valuation's spatial quality (through the pathos of distance), Christianity represented time's relegation to either the past's constant remembrance or *anamnesis* and the future's impending judgement. Christianity further

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<sup>29</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, ed. by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), §38.

<sup>30</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:10.

<sup>31</sup> See Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Ethics and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33.

<sup>32</sup> See Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §72.

<sup>33</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazealy, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), II:10.

<sup>34</sup> See Gianni Vattimo, "Nihilism and the Problem of Temporality," in *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, trans. by William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 11.

subverted time by equating suffering and eternity as a consequence of today's valuation of action as either good and evil. Thus, while the spirit of revenge is from Judaism, Christianity globalized this impetus of rage tied with *ressentiment*.<sup>35</sup>

With the moral premise of doing good and avoiding evil, a seeming ascending dialectics emerges here in that the somatic is denied in favor of a perceived or yet to be intuited spiritual reality. The ascent is fueled by asceticism, whose ideals stem from "a desire to *deaden pain by means of affects*."<sup>36</sup> Ironically, affects are employed by the ascetic ideals in order to temper the passions. In honing this somatic quality of emotions or passions, the ascetic ideal turns the body against the body and "enshrines the life of self-denial as the highest expression of human flourishing."<sup>37</sup> Maudemarie Clark provides the transition of this hypothetical belief into normative responsibilities by drawing attention to the slave's mantra of "I do not want to" or "I will not" as opposed to "I ought not" in part three of the second essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*.<sup>38</sup> This amply shows how by taking the ascetic beliefs as not an external regulatory idea but a personal desire, the reactionary morality has become imbedded in the social consciousness, and the ascent has become society's normative condition.

In confronting life's difficulties, ascetic beliefs conjure certain practices to make sense of reality. Such a type of belief may be considered as beliefs-as-vouchsafe that provide the epistemic and ethical normative conditions for making sense of reality. It is a belief in something since others believe in it. For Nietzsche, the ascetic ideals are nothing but gaps in existence, a type of restriction promoted in order not to explain, justify, and understand suffering.<sup>39</sup> The formation of these ideals stems from a spirit of revenge, rooted in what Nietzsche hypothesizes as the slaves' revolt in morality.<sup>40</sup> Revenge is in fact mirrored by the anger felt by the "holy" prophets whom Nietzsche likewise criticized due to their incessant otherworldly justification of physical reality. Thus, these beliefs are testament to a basic fact of the human will, of its desire to have a goal and fear of its absence, rather willing nothingness than not to will at all.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, V:195.

<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, III:15.

<sup>37</sup> Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1997), 101.

<sup>38</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Ethics and Politics*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, III:28.

<sup>40</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:7. See also Vattimo, "Nihilism and the Problem of Temporality," 15.

<sup>41</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, III:1.

Nietzsche ultimately warns us of a time that “*the necessary is spoiled to us.*”<sup>42</sup> Blindly following mere obligations and prohibitions creates rigid living conditions in which the will wills nothing but mere obedience, wherein the belief is empty yet reified—metaphysical emptiness. It is concerning this point that Nietzsche declares the death of God in order to exasperate those living with such a decadent culture. This ends my discussion of the first element of the nihilistic triad. What I tried to underscore here was the ties between Judaism and Christianity and how the ascetic principle was truly the object of Nietzsche’s critique.

### German/Aryan Element

I now turn to the second element of the triad, the entire German or Aryan culture. The Aryan and German races are closely linked in Germany’s history. The story of a pure, strong, master race that dominated Europe or at least Germany that Nietzsche links to the Goths was an accepted historical narrative during his time.<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche alludes to a history—to be precise, a philologically reconstructed history—that places the origin of this type of people much north, later migrating toward the European plains, where they eventually were known as the Teutonic tribes, from which we get the word *Deutsch*.<sup>44</sup> We can playfully assimilate the biological blond beast befitting of

<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche, *NF* Ende 1886–Frühjahr 1887, 7[8], D. Translation is mine.

<sup>43</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:5. In particular, it was commonly accepted then that the Aryans were a *Urvolk* from India that invaded Europe. This led to philologists establishing the Indo-European link in languages. Drochon gives an excellent commentary on this. See Hugo Drochon, *Nietzsche’s Great Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 83–84.

<sup>44</sup> There is no clear root to this word, yet there are several ways at tracing the development. The PIE root is *teuta* meaning “tribe” and the Old English *‘peod* “people, race, nation” and *\*peodisc* “belonging to the people.” *\*peudō* eventually gave shape to the Proto-Germanic *\*theudō* meaning “popular or national” hence is the same root for *theodiscus* or *teuton* which means people or nation. From *teutonic*, a consonant shift from t to d made it into *deutsch*. (See Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. “teuton,” <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/teuton>>, s.v. “Deutsch,” <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/deutsch>>, and s.v. “dutch,” <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/dutch>>.) Conversely, we observe the Latin *Germania* with Caesar’s writing and Tacitus affirms a long narrative. See Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, trans. by W. A. Macdevitt, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10657/pg10657-images.html>> and Publius Tacitus, *On Germany*, trans. by Thomas Gordon, <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2995/2995-h/2995-h.htm>>. *Germanus* was a person who lived beyond the natural borders of Danube and Rhine of the Roman Empire. The Romans feared these formidable barbarians. The crossing of the Rhine of the barbarian tribes marked a catastrophic turn for the Roman Empire. The Romans had a great fear of the Goths, the Germans. In particular, the Gallia Celtica experienced constant raids from the Germanic tribes that eventually gained control of the region by the 5<sup>th</sup> century. My other adjectives of these tribes came from the alleged Celtic origin, yet further research still needs to delve into possible affinities

mythical status to these people: the noisy, rowdy, ill-mannered yet strong and fierce tribes; the shouting neighbors across the Rhine, this people mindful of their strength and power were the blond Germanic, Teutonic beasts.<sup>45</sup> Yet, Nietzsche's fascination of these powerful individuals, as I will argue, is not the same exuberance shared by Aryanists during his time or much later by the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) or National Socialist German Workers' Party (more commonly known as the Nazi Party).<sup>46</sup>

Nietzsche's close relations with the Wagner household not only fueled the perception of his support of antisemitic principles but also an Aryanist. Besides this, his own sister, Elisabeth married a notorious antisemite named Bernhard Förster who founded a colony set up with the ideals of a pure Aryan race in Paraguay named Nueva Germania. Several times did Elisabeth invite Nietzsche to invest in the colonial venture, but he shrugged the offer away — not even any sign of support and even caricaturing his sister as “the llama [who] has jumped away from me and gone among the anti-Semites.”<sup>47</sup> War-torn Paraguay was not similar to modern Europe; only 40 families signed for the venture without knowing “exactly where Nueva Germania was [for the] Försters had brought their countrymen out to populate a concept, a fiction, a nowhere.”<sup>48</sup> Ben Macintyre paints a good picture of the Försters' personae and the aftermath of their ideological stint. In order to expedite things, faced with economic and health problems in handling the colony, Bernhard committed suicide in 1893 that ingrained in Nueva Germania some traces both of German culture and Aryan ideology. Elisabeth later sought to publicize her husband's death as a heroic gesture and with the turn of events Hitler sent a package of German soil to be placed on Förster's grave as a sign of commitment to racial purity.<sup>49</sup>

What lies at the heart of this perceived racial superiority is obviously questionable based on today's standards, however, power is still the main attribute. What Aryanism offered was an alternative to long-standing aristocratic claims of European superiority based on Biblical and religious traditions. Affirmed by this type of racial claim is the separation of science

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with the Celtic *Germani*. A useful thing to consider is that one of the official titles of the king of Sweden is “King of the Goths” used since the 1100s.

<sup>45</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:11.

<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche was even clear when he says: “although between the old Germanic tribes and us Germans there exists hardly a conceptual relationship, let alone one of blood.” Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, I:11.

<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche as quoted in Sue Prideaux, *I am Dynamite: A Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Tim Duggan Books, 2018), §18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> See Ben Macintyre, *Forgotten Fatherland: The Search for Elizabeth Nietzsche* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992).



from ecclesiastical tutelage matures.<sup>50</sup> In fact, what is affirmed is not simply the possibility or plausibility of constructing society beyond the Christian purview but a further marginalization of Judaism, which still plays a role in Christianity's development. What is alarming about this is the prominence that Social Darwinism had during Nietzsche's time. While the Enlightenment is credited to be the source the correct use of reason, it is likewise the source of racist views in history.<sup>51</sup> Thus, this type of societal evolutionary theory coupled with a fictitious origin of Aryanism fueled discussion in academic circles.

In a fragment toward the end of his life, Nietzsche lists seven arguments against Darwinism, which we may take also against Social Darwinism. For purposes of this essay, I focus solely on the last point: "—if only what was *continuously* proved to be useful has been preserved, then first and foremost the damaging, destructive, dissolving abilities, the senseless, accidental,—."<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche discusses the qualities of a species preserved or sustained, and rather than that which is powerful, he sides with the contrary. What is in fact useful (*nützlich*) for him is not what is predictable, but the senseless (*Sinnlose*) and the accidental (*Zufällige*).

Nietzsche admits though that at one point there was something fascinating with the Germans of the past or rather the Germany that Goethe, Schiller, von Humboldt, Hegel, and others lived in. Yet, while other cultures were drawn to the "Milky-Way shimmer [...] these same Germans began to exert themselves to get rid of this Milky-Way shimmer; they knew too well that they had not been in the heavens – but in a cloud!"<sup>53</sup> The romantic drive then at the same time brought about Germany's intellectual death; contrary to the Enlightenment's aims, Nietzsche sees in Germans the tendency for false beliefs and dependence on superstition, a will to truth and belief; "their vices are, as they have always been, drunkenness and a tendency to suicide ... their danger lies in everything that suppresses the reasoning faculties and unchains the emotions."<sup>54</sup> In this same quotation, Nietzsche exhibits that a

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<sup>50</sup> See Jonathan Judaken, "Léon Poliakov, Philosophy, and the Secularization of Anti-Judaism in the Development of Racism," in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 35 (2014), 188.

<sup>51</sup> See Heinz-Georg Marten, "Racism, Social Darwinism, Anti-Semitism and Aryan Supremacy," in *Shaping the Superman: Fascist Body as Political Icon Aryan Fascism*, ed. by J.A. Mangan (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 27.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, *NF* Ende 1886–Frühjahr 1887, 7[25]. Translation is mine, but the emphasis is maintained.

<sup>53</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §190.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, §207. We can trace Nietzsche to German Philosophy through his academic take of Schopenhauer's ethics which was in reaction to Kant's. Nietzsche's radical pronouncement especially in his later works indeed, as I read it, follow the tradition of German Philosophy, yet he wished his works to be a reevaluation of such esteem. The romantic tradition that Nietzsche was closest to (in historical proximity), is for him that which signaled the apparent end. See

fault of the Germans is their inability to improvise, their deep reliance on obedience, of following order, and observing rules. Nietzsche criticizes the Germans' lack of accidental qualities, the smallness of the German spirit, exposing that this seeming type of rigidity is detrimental for society's betterment.

Perhaps a fitting criticism of the smallness of this spirit is found in Zarathustra's discourse on the virtue that makes small, in which he is taken aback by the small people and their preaching of their own small virtue.<sup>55</sup> Of course the adjective small (*kleine*) here is not to be taken literally but ought to be read in relation to downsizing, decreasing, or shrinking (*verkleinern*). This for Zarathustra refers to their disposition toward life. Their own virtue makes them smaller because what they ultimately desire is not virtue but falsity, contentment, mediocrity, and cowardice. Bridging this to the German spirit, we read in *Beyond Good and Evil* that "Everything ponderous, lumbering, solemnly awkward, every long-winded and boring type of style is developed by the Germans in over-abundant diversity."<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche's characterization here refers to the narrowness of the German spirit, developing in abundance yet seemingly the accidental which is in fact useful. He thus concludes that they are not spirited enough, needing still the tension of the bow and the goal of being one.<sup>57</sup> This spirit is boring, lacking in lust, and, quoting Michelet, a spirit that is fatalist, ironic, and metaphistophelic.<sup>58</sup>

It is for this reason that Nietzsche distances himself from such small virtue, from this small spirit, and identifies himself more with Europe than Germany. In a letter to his mother, he writes that it is good for the antisemites to go with Förster to Paraguay than to stay in Europe "for even if I shall be a bad German—I am in any event a very good European."<sup>59</sup> He resented the German culture that he viewed as decadent, drunk, and petty. And so, rather than the greatness that the NSDAP recognized in the German race or the positive qualities which Wagner equates with Aryanism, Nietzsche finds in this type of spirit a smallness denotes nihilism. It is a smallness that ultimately truncates one's understanding of being human and dampens one's desire to be one.

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Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §11. Brian Leiter sheds more light on this in his introduction to Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, xiii–xxvi.

<sup>55</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Virtue that Makes Small," in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, trans. by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §28.

<sup>57</sup> See *Ibid.*, Preface.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, §209.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, letter to his mother, quoted in Yovel, "Nietzsche contra Wagner," 133.

## Bourgeois/Modern Element

Having gone through the two elements of the nihilistic triad, this section focuses on the final division composed of the merge between the bourgeois and modern culture. The tie between the modern period and the rise of the bourgeois class may be summarized by the effects of modernity upon society's arrangement for modernity's embrace of secularization and privatization recontextualized politics while introduction of a political economy disrupted the hierarchical nature of social organization, through the creation of a *middle* class. Keith Ansell-Pearson thus rightly notes how Nietzsche's political thought is fundamentally characterized by the desire to transcend the atomistic and individualistic nature of modern society.<sup>60</sup>

Ian Cooper provides the historical basis for this when common in Europe was the emergence of "a bourgeoisie, a class of entrepreneurs whose existence relied not on the state, but rather on private profit, and who became the site of economic (as opposed to political) power."<sup>61</sup> The goals therefore of this class or rather of this way of living was strictly economic and not cultural. Modernity's reception of the reactive morality served not as a counterbalance to the decadence but its prolongation and putting to use the old tablets as morality.<sup>62</sup> Their morality "is herd instinct in the individual."<sup>63</sup> Modernity, aided by the economic promise of the bourgeois class, limited the goals of society and dominated by philistinism that Nietzsche found in "a dull and safe 'bourgeois' existence."<sup>64</sup> Humanity has become homeless because of nihilism, conserving nothing, not seeking a return to the past nor working for real progress.<sup>65</sup> The liberal, *bourgeois* culture has conflated humanity's desire to merely economic success that offers comfort and security. Modernity made use of the ascetic ideals to make citizens follow the wave of the Enlightenment, forging capitalist ethics.

In aphorism 329 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche provides his critique of the United States' gold rush and points out a development in modernity's understanding of virtue as the state of "doing something in less time than someone else."<sup>66</sup> Though this description might seem harmless, it has enormous effects upon society's ordering. Virtue in this modern period is

<sup>60</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 87.

<sup>61</sup> See Ian Cooper, "Nietzsche, Money, and *Bildung*," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. by Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, GmbH, 2008), 608.

<sup>62</sup> See James Luchte, Preface to Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Peacock and the Buffalo: The Poetry of Nietzsche*, trans. by James Luchte (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 27.

<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §116.

<sup>64</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §377.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, §329.

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reduced to an individual's relationship with time, or rather the possibility of its consumption in favor of some purported end rather than the more immediate and natural recognition of virtue in the enactment of good acts following the master's description. What is praised in this modern culture is an individual's efficiency and the opportunity this provides for a rather democratic organization of society. This seems to be in direct opposition to Nietzsche's blatantly hierarchical consideration of society. In fact, he directly blames the economic concerns of his day for the disruption of beliefs and the dissolution of classes.<sup>67</sup>

Turning to another passage, Nietzsche continues this critique of work by highlighting its crude form not simply in industriousness but one that is compelled simply by gain: "it is aware of itself and of its objectives, and desires with possessions power, with power the greatest possible freedom and individual nobility."<sup>68</sup> Nietzsche mentions two types of work. We're asked the first type is because of necessity, the second time seems to stem from a pathological desire to make oneself too secure. Connecting this to the earlier aphorism, what is noticeable in both of these passages is the haste that characterizes this crude form of work, that type which just acts based on the desire for more. This is a mood that lacks depth, spirituality, and ultimately control of oneself.<sup>69</sup> This loss of spirit [*Geistlosigkeit*] is the dampening of the affects which ultimately points to the nihilistic element central to this third part of the triad.

The question that arises in relation to work is whether labor is indeed life-affirming or life-negating. The gauge of whether an activity may be considered either is recognized through the test that Nietzsche provides us with in the eternal return:<sup>70</sup> What if life is to return, would one find oneself still melancholic in the workplace? Incentives or bonuses are a crucial consideration when selecting one's profession or actual work today. More premium is given to wage or benefits rather than the degree in which that particular labor contributes to the proper expenditure of oneself. Although it would be hypocritical for me to say that incentives should not play a big role, the danger that Nietzsche points to is the reality that these considerations eventually take center stage in our selection of professions. Taking it a step further, what Nietzsche is critical of is this highly reactive culture that is a product of this variance of work as the emptiness of *bourgeois* values leaves the individual to decide for himself:

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<sup>67</sup> See Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, III:4.

<sup>68</sup> See Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, §478.

<sup>69</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §329.

<sup>70</sup> See *Ibid.*, §341.

There is a mistrust of these modern ideas here, there is a disbelief in everything built yesterday and today; perhaps it is mixed with a bit of antipathy and contempt that can no longer stand the bric-a-brac of concepts from the most heterogeneous sources, which is how so-called positivism puts itself on the market these days.<sup>71</sup>

The human person is not anymore one that acts and expends, not a master of one's own capacities, but today this person has become a slave to what the dictates of the economy are. In a certain sense, we may say that this dependency on external factors is an experience of nihilism's affective form, especially when one finds oneself compelled to do a type of work that is not fulfilling—yet it pays well. Modernity hegemonized ideals, merging boundaries, lowering standards, and reducing tensions, and in this condition, Nietzsche tells us, “we fail to recognize our best power and underestimate ourselves ... We are *neither as proud nor as happy* as we might be.”<sup>72</sup> The danger of this experience is the thought that such nihilistic experience is the end in itself; instead of lusting after life, an individual is reduced to the monotonousness of everyday existence, captured entirely by Sloterdijk's cynical subjects.<sup>73</sup>

What is nihilistic in this third element the overly quantified component in society, be it wealth, intelligence, or the sheer number of one's military capacity.<sup>74</sup> This criticism is equally raised to individuals who act not with culture or politics in mind but profitability and success. This becomes the tyranny of the *bourgeoisie* in that the “bourgeois logic of cultural consumption has become allied to nationalist will to power, the shallow satisfactions of the *Kulturstaat*.”<sup>75</sup> The pettiness of the German spirit, which was the critique of the previous section, is extended here to the inherent pettiness of bourgeois individualism and the atomized subject of modernity. Modernity's industriousness is an object of Nietzsche's critique in that it serves as another way for individual to vainly establish security for themselves, without leaving open the possibility of living dangerously.<sup>76</sup> It is a disposition that has taken on action to be more important than life.

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<sup>71</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §10.

<sup>72</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §301.

<sup>73</sup> See Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. by Michael Eldred (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

<sup>74</sup> See Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, II:6.

<sup>75</sup> Cooper, “Nietzsche, Money, and *Bildung*,” 613.

<sup>76</sup> See Michael Kilivris, “Beyond Goods and Services: Toward a Nietzschean Critique of Capitalism,” in *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 5 (December 2011), 31.

Nietzsche criticizes this lack of play that does not allow the Dionysian spirit to be manifest in an overly worked world.

### Do We Need Nihilism?

What I have done in this essay was to present the greater context of Nietzsche's critique. He did not simply promote antisemitic feelings, unpatriotic sentiments, or socialist doctrines but criticized these in order to make us realize the greater nihilistic sphere or the greater ontological pathology. What I ultimately argue is that the Christian/Jewish–Aryan/German–bourgeois/modern context paved the ascetic ideals' **spiritualization**, **passivation**, and **privatization** of humanity: The spiritualization of values through Judaism furthered by Christianity's globalized effort, the passivation of spirit by the idea of cultural superiority, and the privatization of affairs due to capital's productivity and the growing socio-economic modern stance. This nihilistic context, which I have surmised in three ways, heralds a great crisis in authority as religious, cultural, and social affairs are plagued with decadence.<sup>77</sup> However, it should remind us of our immense possibilities. Rather than a conclusion, I end this essay with a rejoinder to Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole.

Mindful of his style of writing, the hyperbolic characterizations utilized to express his critique requires one to be critical of any initial impressions that are sustained; although Nietzsche stresses the nihilistic elements in the three strands discussed throughout this essay, Platonic idealism is also presented to a more matured reader:

All philosophical idealism to date was something like a disease, unless it was, as it was in Plato's case, the caution of an over-rich and dangerous health, the fear of over-powerful senses, the prudence of a prudent Socratic.—**Perhaps we moderns are merely not healthy enough to be in need of Plato's idealism?** And we are not afraid of the senses because—.<sup>78</sup>

The physician that Nietzsche presents himself to be diagnoses us anew. He underscores our weakness to fully be free of the shackles of our reactive morality. The emphasis I add to the quoted passage highlights his changed presentation of Platonism—and perhaps even of nihilism. Nietzsche criticizes nihilism's ascetic content yet does not totally denounce it. He maintains his

<sup>77</sup> See Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 102.

<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §372. Emphasis is mine.

reverence for the ascetic ideas in so far as they are true;<sup>79</sup> as long as they are life-affirming, they earn his reverence or respect while their life-negating qualities garner his staunch criticism. The nihilism that we find ourselves in through the deaths of God, culture, and modernity, allow us to understand the fundamental roles we allowed these “idols” to play in our lives. It is only through their deaths that a second innocence can arrive.<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche tells us ““Either abolish your reverences or—*yourselves!*” The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be—nihilism?—This is *our* question mark.”<sup>81</sup> He provides us with various facets of his own time (the three elements I presented in this essay) in order to exasperate us of nihilism with the ultimate aim of showing how we must overcome our culture, our very selves. Confronting humanity’s great question mark means to reckon our powerlessness in merely embracing the ideological confinements that the latter coerces on each person. This remains the challenge for the philosophers of the future who live with dangerous perhapses, those who are still to come.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, III:26.

<sup>80</sup> See Bolaños, *On Affirmation and Becoming*, 37.

<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §346.

<sup>82</sup> Nietzsche differentiates between “new” or “real” philosophers vis-à-vis “normal” philosophers, and Rolf-Peter Horstmann gives a superb overview of the former as those, in short, interested in what Nietzsche calls “dangerous perhapses” (I:2). See Rolf-Peter Horstmann, “Introduction,” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, xix.

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# Fascism and the Omnipresence of Communication<sup>1</sup>

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*Regletto Aldrich D. Imbong*

**Abstract:** This paper will investigate the intersection between fascism and social media communication. Drawing from Christian Fuchs's notion of digital fascism and placing it in dialogue with other Marxist literature, the paper will argue that the state retains a centering role in the organization of fascism as against the post-organizational position which highlights its ambivalent, fluid, and decentered character. The paper will further argue that the propagandistic character of fascism requires it to instrumentalize technical specifications of communications technologies. What (digital) fascism instrumentalizes today is what will be developed as the omnipresence of communication, primarily supported by the complexities of today's internet powered social media. The paper will examine fascism as it has taken place in the Duterte-Marcos Jr. fascist continuity in the Philippines. The paper will conclude by proposing a kind of anti-fascism that goes beyond the ecosystems of the social media, reiterating both technical as well as socio-political transformations required to overcome fascism.

**Keywords:** fascism, ideology, terror-tagging, communication

This paper will investigate the intersection between the Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity and social media communication. The investigation concerning such an intersection is not new. Some scholars have already done similar projects in the past.<sup>2</sup> These interventions have examined

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<sup>1</sup> This research is part of the author's postdoctoral project conducted last 2023 at the University of Vienna. The author would like to thank the Ernst Mach ASEA-UNINET Fellowship Grant and the Faculty, REPS, and Administrative Staff Development Program of the University of the Philippines for their financial support.

<sup>2</sup> See Antoine Acker, "How Fascism Went Digital: A Historian's Perspective on Bolsonaro's Victory in Brazil," in *Geschichte der Gegenwart* (7 November 2018), <<https://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/how-fascism-went-digital-a-historians-perspective-on->

the intersection between fascism and social media but have mainly focused on grassroots level initiatives that have provided effective support for the rise of fascism through social media. Without totally discounting the conclusions derived from these existing interventions, the paper will show how the one-sided preoccupation with supposed mass-driven support or grassroots level initiatives for fascism tends to obscure the centering and organizing function of the state behind all the supposed confusions of social media's networked activities. The said one-sidedness may even absolve, or at the very least, diminish the role of the state and the ruling class in organizing fascism and give an incorrect picture of an exhaustively manipulated and irredeemable masses. Further, the said view tends to advance a partial conception of fascism that isolates it in and only within "the ecosystems of social media."<sup>3</sup>

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri had already traced the relation between communication and power in their book, *Empire*. At the beginning of the present century when the internet and particularly the social media were still in their infantile stages, Hardt and Negri were able to identify "communication systems" and "information networks" to be the media that could organize and control brains and bodies. While sharp in their recognition of how power could ultimately unravel itself through complex networks, their work understandably does not sufficiently touch on the intersection between social media communication and fascist power.<sup>4</sup> Christian Fuchs's book *Digital Fascism* is perhaps the most comprehensive intervention on the matter so far. It opened by asking the question "how is fascism communicated on the Internet?"<sup>5</sup> Drawing from the debates within and across various theoretical traditions as well as empirical investigations of how right-wing, authoritarian, and fascist discourse is communicated and is shaping both the online and the concrete world today, Fuchs developed a new concept of fascism that, while preserves "the general characteristics of fascism," is also "in certain ways different from previous forms" of it. Fuchs called this as digital fascism, the "communication of fascism online as well as the fascist groups' and individuals' use of digital technologies as means of information, communication, and organisation [sic]."<sup>6</sup>

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bolsonaros-victory-in-brazil/>; Maik Fielitz and Holger Marcks, "Digital Fascism: Challenges for the Open Society in Times of Social Media," in *UC Berkeley: Center for Right-Wing Studies* (16 July 2019), <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/87w5c5gp>>; and Wolfram Schaffar, "New Social Media and Politics in Thailand: The Emergence of Fascist Vigilante Groups on Facebook," in *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies*, 9, no. 2 (2016), 215–234.

<sup>3</sup> Fielitz and Marcks, "Digital Fascism."

<sup>4</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Fuchs, *Digital Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 318.

Drawing from Fuchs's concept of fascism and placing it in dialogue with other Marxist literature, this paper will examine how the Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity has taken place in the Philippines through and beyond social media. The paper will argue that the state retains a centering or organizing role in today's fascism. Further, coming from existing literature and developing David Auerbach's concept of a meganet, the paper will argue how the Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity has taken advantage of the technical specifications of today's social media. It will contend that social media's technical specifications provided the possibility for an omnipresence of communication, an important condition which the Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity has taken advantage in the consolidation of fascism in the country.

The paper will be divided into four parts. After a brief introduction, the paper will discuss the ideological dimension of fascism, its need to communicate and take advantage of communications technologies, and how it is primarily organized by the state. The third section will develop what will be called an omnipresence of communication as the very condition for the communication of fascist ideology today. The last section will conclude the paper by forwarding an anti-fascist position beyond the ecosystems of the social media.

## **Fascism and the Anti-Terror Ideology**

There is no homogeneous and single accepted definition of fascism. It carries with it the opposing conceptions proponents and critics alike have developed throughout history. The earliest proponents of fascism conceived it as a social movement and a statist intervention of party ideologues that aim simultaneously at, on the one hand, a kind of national and spiritual restoration and, on the other hand, a systematic and terroristic eradication of supposed impure social elements (Marxists, communists, Jews, etc.).<sup>7</sup> Critics would later critically use the term to describe either of the following: an exceptional form of state that corresponds to a particular conjunctural crisis (Poulantzas); an allied dictatorship of the fascist party, bureaucracy, army, and big business (Neumann); a movement whose social basis is traceable to specific classes, their configurations, and their anti-communist interests (Gramsci); a social pathology resulting more from specific social tendencies than from historical circumstance and education or the lack thereof and whose psychology is "largely engendered by manipulation" (Adorno); finally, a ruthless regime in the peripheries to further consolidate global

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<sup>7</sup> See Benito Mussolini, "The Political And Social Doctrine Of Fascism," in *The Political Quarterly*, 4, no. 3 (1933), 341-356; Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Hurst and Blacklett Ltd, 1939).

neoliberalism (Amin and Mongaya).<sup>8</sup> Despite the divergence of meanings, these conceptualizations of fascism, whether those advanced by the proponents or by the critics, affirm its inherently propagandistic character. For example, the Nazis saw the importance of radio and consciously utilized broadcast technology for their propagandistic objectives, giving the communications apparatus a dominant place vis-à-vis the other ideological state apparatus during the period of Nazi fascism.<sup>9</sup>

Fascism, then and now, has strategically exploited technology and media for its propagandistic objectives. Stanley Payne described how Nazi fascism consolidated itself through propaganda by making use of “all forms of the media.”<sup>10</sup> Roger Griffin explained how the Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels recognized “the power of the latest technology of mass communications” then in the supposed rebirth of Germany. Such a technological power amplified the propagandistic language of fascism which likewise enabled the coordination and channeling of “the creative energies of a modern, highly pluralistic nation into a ‘spiritual’ force” that provides cohesion for an “organic national community.”<sup>11</sup> Herbert Marcuse argued how Nazi Germany sustained its reign of terror “not only by brute force” but also by the “ingenious manipulation of the power inherent in technology” among which is technology and mass media’s power to advance propaganda.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Nazi fascism even transformed the use of new forms of advanced technology, such as the radio then. From a purely individualized means of cultural consumption, it was specifically transformed by the Nazis as a mass media and a means for mass mobilization.<sup>13</sup> This view is also

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<sup>8</sup> See Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism* (London: Verso Books, 2019); Franz Leopold Neumann, *European Trade Unionism and Politics*, ed. by Carl Raushenbush (New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1936); Antonio Gramsci, “The Two Fascisms” (1921), <[https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1921/08/two\\_fascisms.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1921/08/two_fascisms.htm)>; Theodor Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. by Henry Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. by Jay M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991); Samir Amin, “The Return of Fascism in Contemporary Capitalism,” in *Monthly Review* (1 September 2014), <<https://monthlyreview.org/2014/09/01/the-return-of-fascism-in-contemporary-capitalism/>>; and Karlo Mikhail Mongaya, “Fascism, Fascisation, and Neoliberalism from Marcos to Duterte,” in *In Authoritarian Disaster: The Duterte Regime and the Prospects for a Marcos Presidency*, ed. by Regletto Aldrich Imbong (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 167.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 253.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Technology, War, and Fascism*, ed. by Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1998), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Payne, *A History of Fascism*.

maintained by the cultural Marxist Raymond Williams who explained that there was no prior developed mass use of radio than that in Nazi Germany, where “under Goebbel’s orders the Party organized compulsory listening groups and the receivers were in the streets.”<sup>14</sup> Fascism is an example of how technical specifications of technology are made to serve the most nefarious and oppressive ends.

Today’s fascism and several other milder populist and illiberal regimes have similarly taken advantage of communications technology to further their political objectives. For example, social media has been a contentious site where both democratic and authoritarian views flourish and produce effects in the real world. While the internet and social media have initially promised greater democratization, it has, as noted by Ignas Kalpokas, “not only fulfilled but also exceeded this promise,” as it has likewise democratized truth.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have taken note of how social media has abetted the rise of a political condition shaped by a supposed indistinction, or better yet, a manipulation of truth and falsity to serve nefarious ends.<sup>16</sup> An extreme determinist reading, which will be criticized subsequently, even suggested that “social media offers a beneficial terrain for the far right,” as “elements of social media” not only support far-right interests but also “stimulate perceptions of imperilment.”<sup>17</sup>

Fascism necessarily utilizes or takes a discursive form because of its ideological dimension. As elucidated by Christian Fuchs, fascism both has its economic and ideological dimensions.<sup>18</sup> Not only the economic contradictions, such as capital’s tendency to exhaust super profits from an already impoverished yet unyielding workforce, shape the development of a fascist regime but also the employment of specific ideologies whose effects, directly or indirectly, serve the consolidation of fascism. Yet ideology works its way through the realm of meaning, employing signs that, according to the Soviet philosopher Valentin Voloshinov, without it, ideology is impossible. In further elucidating this ideological dimension of fascism, one can extend

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Ignas Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth* (Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. See Nora Martin, “Journalism, the Pressures of Verification and Notions of Post-Truth in Civil Society,” in *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 9, no. 2 (2017), 41–56; Serena Guisti and Elisa Piras, *Democracy and Fake News: Information Manipulation and Post-Truth Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Tetiana Viktorivna Kovalova and O. Yevstushenko, “Overcoming the Challenges of Post-Truth in Modern Socio-Cultural Communication,” in *Obraz*, 1, no. 38 (2022), <<https://essuir.sumdu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/88007>>; and Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*.

<sup>17</sup> Fielitz and Marcks, “Digital Fascism,” 1–2.

<sup>18</sup> See Fuchs, *Digital Fascism*.

Voloshinov's thesis that "without signs there is no ideology" to also mean that without the manipulation of signs there is no fascism.<sup>19</sup> But since signs are socially embedded, it could only take shape within specific forms of social intercourse or in the exchanges of utterances and statements between individuals and groups, that is, through discourse.<sup>20</sup> Here lies the importance and why fascism takes advantage of communication and the various technologies that support it. Communications technology, like the social media of today, is instrumentalized to serve the manipulation of signs in a manner peculiar to its technical specifications.

As mentioned earlier, Fuchs's definition of digital fascism includes the important component of communication where fascism utilizes digital technologies "as means of information, communication, and organisation [sic]."<sup>21</sup> What is being informed and communicated here is the fascist ideology as it assumes a discursive form whose effects are felt through the various (re)organizations of institutions and the entire social life according to the ideology in question. For example, by spreading the propaganda of the "rich exploiting Jew" during the Nazi period, an anti-Semitic ideology was not only informed and communicated to appease the mystified petty-bourgeoisie but also, through it, organized certain effects that "shifts the anti-capitalism of the petty-bourgeois masses onto the Jews" and aligns them towards fascism's colonial and imperialist interests.<sup>22</sup> A more contemporary example is how the paligenetic populist ultra-nationalist ideology was deployed by fascist groups in Thailand to organize a sort of witch hunt against individuals accused of violating the *lèse-majesté*. Vigilante-like fascist groups communicated this ideology through Facebook and has effectively mobilized a large following, both online and offline.<sup>23</sup>

Every fascism mobilizes distinct and makes dominant ideologies strategic to its interests. Nazi fascism mobilized anti-Semitic and anti-communist ideologies while contemporary forms of fascism/authoritarianism/right-wing extremism deploy varying ideologies: racist, ultranationalist, militarist, "anti-oligarchic," among many others.<sup>24</sup> Ideologies are strategic because they are not abstract signs devoid of a performative dimension. Eagleton suggested and likewise fine-tuned a broad definition of ideology, which considers it as "a body of meanings and values

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<sup>19</sup> Valentin Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. by Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso Books, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> Fuchs, *Digital Fascism*, 318.

<sup>22</sup> Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, 255.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Schaffar, "New Social Media and Politics in Thailand."

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*.



encoding certain interests relevant to social power.”<sup>25</sup> For Eagleton, ideologies are strategic because they take concrete forms and assume functionalities that work to unify, orient action, rationalize, legitimize, universalize, and naturalize social power.

The Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity likewise mobilizes specific ideologies strategic to its interests. Among these are the family and democracy ideologies, present in the very discourse of The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).<sup>26</sup> To supposedly gain the sympathies and ensure consensus of the Filipinos for its notorious counterinsurgency campaign, the NTF-ELCAC stokes fears concerning how communist insurgency has purportedly endangered the lives of the youth, the stability of the family, and the flourishing of democracy. Without discounting the realities of a violent communist insurgency driven by socio-economic maladies,<sup>27</sup> the one-sided manner in which the NTF-ELCAC constructs a supposed imperiled future of the family and democracy rests mainly on manipulation and disinformation. For example, among the figures that it mobilized to strengthen its family ideology is the youth activist Alicia Lucena whom the NTF-ELCAC alleged to have been recruited/kidnapped by the communist insurgents. A common hashtag the NTF-ELCAC uses is the #HandsOffOurChildren, alleging a form of notorious communist indoctrination and abduction. However, what the NTF-ELCAC deliberately hid was the fact that it was Lucena herself who confessed that she did not feel safe in a home suspicious of her activism and so decided to leave. Alicia was able to assert her legitimacy as a legal activist and prove the accusations of the NTF-ELCAC and her family wrong.<sup>28</sup> With regards to the NTF-ELCAC’s supposed defense of democracy against the communist insurgents, one could only wonder what kind of democracy it is talking about especially that it has been part and defensive of regimes associated with gross abuse of democratic processes and principles, regimes that are even very adamant about allowing the International Criminal Court to conduct an

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<sup>25</sup> Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, 45.

<sup>26</sup> See Regletto Imbong, “The Performativity of Terror-Tagging and the Prospects for a Marcos Presidency,” in *Authoritarian Disaster: The Duterte Regime and the Prospects for a Marcos Presidency*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Regletto Imbong, “Forging a Just and Lasting Peace in the Philippines,” in *Peace Review*, 31, no. 1 (2019), 66–73.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Lavarro, “‘I Don’t Feel Safe Here:’ For the 7th Time, Youth Activist Alicia Leaves Home,” in *Bulatlat: Journalism for the People* (17 August 2021), <<https://www.bulatlat.com/2021/08/17/i-dont-feel-safe-here-for-the-7th-time-youth-activist-alicia-leaves-home/>>.

investigation concerning possible crimes against humanity committed by Duterte himself.<sup>29</sup>

What unites both the family and democracy ideology discursively advanced by the NTF-ELCAC is the anti-terror ideology. On the one hand, such an ideology functions to ensure what Fuchs identified as one of the four elements of fascism: the friend-enemy scheme. Briefly, the friend-enemy scheme constructs socio-political scapegoats who are “presented as society’s ills and as the causes of social problems.”<sup>30</sup> The anti-terror ideology expresses itself discursively through terror-tagging. Through terror-tagging, political scapegoats are conveniently constructed that, according to Fuchs, “distract from social problem’s foundations in class inequality and power asymmetries.”<sup>31</sup> Without any due process, terror-tagging labels as terrorists virtually anyone whom the NTF-ELCAC deems as its enemy: leftist individuals and organizations, the opposition, celebrities, civil society-initiated community pantries, a bookstore, a judge, a city mayor, a bishop, or a university chancellor, among many others.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Jason Gutierrez, “Philippines Officially Leaves the International Criminal Court,” in *The New York Times* (17 March 2019), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/17/world/asia/philippines-international-criminal-court.html>>; also “Philippines Will Not Cooperate with ICC in Drugs War Probe, Marcos Says,” in *Reuters* (21 July 2023), <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-will-not-cooperate-with-icc-drugs-war-probe-marcos-2023-07-21/>>.

<sup>30</sup> Christian Fuchs, “Authoritarian Capitalism, Authoritarian Movements and Authoritarian Communication,” in *Media, Culture & Society*, 40, no. 5 (2018), 783.

<sup>31</sup> Fuchs, *Digital Fascism*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> See Bea Cupin, “After SONA, VP Duterte Goes All out in Taunting, Red-Tagging Makabayan Bloc,” in *Rappler* (1 August 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/sara-duterte-goes-taunting-red-tagging-makabayan-bloc-august-2022>>; Brynch Bonachita, “Robredo Red-Tagged in Streamers on Eve of Leyte Visit,” in *Rappler* (29 March 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/leni-robredo-red-tagged-streamers-leyte-visit-march-28-2022>>; Bea Cupin, “ABS-CBN Defends Angel Locsin, Liza Soberano against Red-Tagging,” in *Rappler* (23 October 2020), <<https://www.rappler.com/entertainment/celebrities/abs-cbn-statement-defending-angel-locsin-liza-soberano-parlade-red-tagging>>; Iya Gozum, “Red-Tagging of Community Pantry Sparks Uproar Online,” in *Rappler* (20 April 2021), <<https://www.rappler.com/moveph/philippine-government-red-tagging-community-pantry-sparks-uproar-online>>; Angelica Demegillo, “Groups Decry Red-Tagging, Vandalism of Two Metro Manila Bookstores,” in *CNN Philippines* (24 March 2022), <<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/3/24/anti-communist-vandalism-bookstores-manila.html>>; Angel Yabut, “Judge Attacked Online for Junking Terror Tag on CPP-NPA | Inquirer News,” in *Inquirer.Net* (25 September 2022), <<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1669815/judge-attacked-online-for-junking-terror-tag-on-cpp-npa>>; “Red-Tagged Anew, Baguio’s Magalong Warns of Legal Action,” in *Philstar* (16 January 2023), <<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2023/01/16/2237983/red-tagged-anew-baguios-magalong-warns-legal-action>>; “Red-Tagged Bishop Alminaza: ‘I Cannot Be Silent amid Violence and Injustices,’” in *Rappler* (24 February 2023), <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/visayas/bishop-alminaza-says-cannot-be-silent-violence-injustices>>; and “UP Cebu Students, Faculty Condemn Red-Tagging of Malagars,” in *ABS-CBN*

On the other hand, the anti-terror ideology has strategically produced effects that, to a certain extent, regulated the conduct and identities of institutions according to the ideology in question. For example, the anti-terror ideology has introduced certain regulations in governmentality, limiting and penalizing any action of government units deemed supportive of the left and other progressive forces.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, it has sanctioned a type of education supposedly purged from a terrorist-influenced knowledge by banning books from libraries, stopping books from being printed, and terror-tagging a publishing house.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, it has continued to impose a militarist education through making mandatory the Reserve Officers' Training Corps.<sup>35</sup> Lastly, it has challenged even the meanings of collective identities shaped through hard struggle as it denounced the decades-long use of the term *Lumad* which signifies the unity of ethno-linguistic groups determined to oppose state and imperialist aggression.<sup>36</sup> And these regulations come within a backdrop of rising cases of human rights violations such as abductions, tortures, harassments, and political killings many of whom had terror-tagging incidents in the past. The anti-terror ideology's construction of an enemy image has allowed the fascist continuity to invoke such an image in the organization of institutions and in the institutionalization of terror.<sup>37</sup>

What is observable is how the anti-terror ideology could be traced as primarily generated and shaped by the state, through the NTF-ELCAC. The study conducted by Don Kevin Hapal and Raisa Serafica revealed how the NTF-ELCAC to be "at the center of the network of Facebook pages and

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*News* (30 September 2022), <<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/09/30/22/up-cebu-students-faculty-condemn-red-tagging-of-malagars>>.

<sup>33</sup> "DILG Warns LGUs Not to Pay 'Permit to Campaign Fees' to the NPA," in *DILG CALABARZON News* (14 January 2019), <<http://news.calabarzon.dilg.gov.ph/3749/dilg-warns-lgus-not-to-pay-permit-to-campaign-fees-to-the-npa>>.

<sup>34</sup> Elvira Ramirez-Cohn, "Anger as University Books Purge Described as 'Academic Freedom,'" in *University World News* (9 November 2021), <<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20211109172041360>>; Joseph Peter Calleja, "Philippines Bans Five 'Subversive' Textbooks," in *Ucanews.Com* (15 August 2022), <<https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippines-bans-five-subversive-textbooks/98401>>.

<sup>35</sup> Bonz Magsombol, "Sara Duterte's Push for Mandatory Military Service Shows 'True Militarist Nature' - Groups," in *Rappler* (22 January 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/groups-reactions-sara-duterte-proposal-mandatory-military-service-filipino-youth>>.

<sup>36</sup> Marita Moaje, "Drop 'Lumad', Use Ethnic Group Names Instead: NCIP," in *Philippine News Agency* (4 March 2021), <<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1132620>>.

<sup>37</sup> Jove Jim Aguas, Paolo Bolaños, and Jovito Cariño have argued how, by criminalizing the "spectre of terror" through the anti-terror law, the nation has been placed under a "permanent state of exception." See Jove Jim Aguas, Paolo Bolaños, and Jovito Cariño, "The Spectre of Terror: Philippine Democracy and the Threat of the New (Ab)normal," in *Interfere: Journal for Critical Thought and Radical Politics* (28 August 2020), <<https://interferejournal.org/2020/08/28/the-spectre-of-terror/>>.

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/18.1.a7>

[https://www.kritike.org/journal/issue\\_34/imbong\\_march2024.pdf](https://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_34/imbong_march2024.pdf)

ISSN 1908-7330



groups pushing out [terror-tagging] content.”<sup>38</sup> This networked propaganda works on a sophisticated relation between what can be called as the central and amplifying layers. These layers are composed of clusters of Facebook pages and groups that distribute terror-tagging contents in Facebook either to the general public or to niche but engaged communities. The central layer is composed of the Facebook page of the NTF-ELCAC along with other state-owned media (like the Philippine News Agency and the Philippine Television Network) and official military channels. This layer generates the main discursive terror-tagging contents. These state institutions comprise the central layer and together with the amplifying layer shape a counterinsurgency discourse governed by the anti-terror ideology. The study further elaborated the relationship between the central and amplifying layers by indicating how terror-tagging content from the NTF-ELCAC is shared in hundreds of Facebook pages and groups of the amplifying layer thereby distributing in an exponential manner the content generated from the former.

Through the NTF-ELCAC, the state assumes an organizing and centering role not only in the exponential distribution of terror-tagging contents but also in generating effects that allow further the consolidation of fascism. The organizing and centering role of the NTF-ELCAC, through its Facebook page, offers an insight of how digital fascism has taken place, at least in the Philippines, and challenges the claim of Fielitz and Marcks that digital fascism is “highly fluid and ambivalent” which “lacks a clear organizational center” and which identifies the “digitally networked masses” to be the “engine of their own manipulation.”<sup>39</sup>

Coming from a post-organizational framework, Fielitz and Marcks remarked that fascism cannot be “fully grasped with actor- or ideology-centered approaches” but rather requires an analysis of it as a “social phenomenon of cultural practices.” Such a fluidity and ambivalence is supposedly a result of “opportunity structures” in social media “that are particularly beneficial for far-right agency.” The feedback loop of today’s social media supposedly renders indistinct the boundaries between activists and audience as even the latter take part of the “swarm-like penetration of online discussion boards” which provides the conditions for their self-engineered manipulation. Amidst this swarm is the supposed decentralized movement that integrates individuals into sub-cultures of virtual networks characterized by a “leaderless, dispersed digital resistance that is tailored to the needs of online activism.” Out from this decentralized movement grows

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<sup>38</sup> Don Kevin Hapal and Raisa Serafica, “New War: How the Propaganda Network Shifted from Targeting ‘addicts’ to Activists,” in *Rappler* (3 October 2021), <<https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/how-propaganda-network-created-online-environment-justifies-shifted-killing-activists>>.

<sup>39</sup> Fielitz and Marcks, “Digital Fascism.”

“digital structures of the masses” that “may produce new orders of perception prone to fascism.”<sup>40</sup>

Fielitz and Marcks considered digital fascism to be a “family-like variation” of classical fascism whose fascist core feature, however, derives its dynamics “out of social structures in the digital world” and not from the interplay of classes, institutions, and social forces. Given the peculiarities of a highly fluid, ambivalent, leaderless, and mass-driven digital fascism, Fielitz and Marcks concluded that in digital fascism, the political opponent is “an intangible one, leaving civil society actors confused about how to approach the phenomenon and how to pinpoint who or what exactly has to be countered.”<sup>41</sup>

Coming from a determinist reading of social media which considers its opportunity structures as supposedly inherently advantageous to the far-right, Fielitz and Marcks advanced a reified conceptualization of social media, treating it as something that not only attains a life of its own but also “structures” contemporary fascism, or at least its conditions. Their analysis ironically construes social media to be a structuring thing/agent responsible for today’s leaderless, fluid, and centerless fascism. Reification fragments and dislocates aspects of the social experience taking the part for the whole and likewise construes objects as “facts governed by laws to which the individuals can only relate through technical or strategic practices.”<sup>42</sup> Fielitz and Marcks speak of a digital fascism as something as emerging online and dislocated from the totality of real-life contradictions, one which emerges through and only within “the ecosystems of social media.” Their reading “fetishized” social media as though it is a “misty realm of religion” where its agentless products appear autonomous and take a life of their own.<sup>43</sup>

While classical fascism also utilized communications technology such as the broadcast radio, it never came to a point that a certain “broadcast fascism” was then conceptualized as something as reified as the digital fascism understood by Fielitz and Marcks. Fascist radio propaganda should be seen as an aspect or moment of the totality of fascism. The ultimate danger here is a kind of absolution for agents who hide behind the chaos and swarm of misinformed masses, despite the former’s culpability for such a phenomenon. While the study of Fielitz and Marcks tested an argument of Antoine Acker concerning digital fascism, it fails to mention that even Acker recognized that in Brazil during Jair Bolsonaro’s presidential campaign,

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Feenberg, *The Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing: Nature and Revolution in Marcuse’s Philosophy of Praxis* (New York: Verso Books, 2023), 45.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 165.

“hundreds of businessmen involved themselves in massive electoral fraud at the service of the PSL.”<sup>44</sup> Acker continued that “in complete illegality, companies paid up to four million dollars each to acquire users’ data, to create Whatsapp groups and bombard millions of private accounts with defamation of PT candidates.” And a crucial observation of Acker is that “once such a poison is *introduced* into the digital world, mass manipulation quickly becomes a participative process powered by the masses themselves.”<sup>45</sup> A similar situation was also observed in the Philippine elections last 2016. The appearance of a leaderless swarm activity was laid bare as a networked and organized disinformation campaign whose core is composed of wealthy politicians contracting elite advertising and PR strategists. The latter organized political deception with responsibilities distributed to “diverse and loosely interconnected groups of hierarchized digital workers.”<sup>46</sup> Without a class of business and/or political interests whose economic power allows them even the most minimal yet effective introduction of disinformation and, in the case of the Philippines, an exploited precarious digital workforce, such a “mass manipulation” would have been at the very least difficult to engineer. Unlike Fielitz and Marcks, Fuchs takes into account the contradictions between classical and contemporary fascism but did not ignore how the latter “combines a central ideological apparatus with the organization of user-generated post-truth, user-generated fake news and filter bubbles that spread fascist ideology.”<sup>47</sup> A central “ideological apparatus” is a state apparatus, one which allows the overall organization of fascism, taking into account the diversity of tactics within the general contemporary fascist strategy, where it simultaneously employs direct tactics of domination and the more subtle ones hidden behind what it fuels and tolerates as disinformation-driven swarm activity of the masses.

Understanding digital fascism requires piercing through social media’s religion-like misty realm, comprehending its technical complexity and how such a complexity has been made to serve fascism by real-life actors and social forces. Shattering this mysticism means going beyond the appearance of complexity and confusion to identify (state/class) agents who not only are responsible but also has to be made accountable for real-life fascist atrocities such as those that has been taking place in the Philippines.

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<sup>44</sup> Acker, “How Fascism Went Digital.”

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Ong and Jason Vincent Cabañes, “Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines,” in *Scholarworks @UMassAmherst* (2018), 15, <[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1075&context=communication\\_faculty\\_pubs](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1075&context=communication_faculty_pubs)>.

<sup>47</sup> Fuchs, *Digital Fascism*, 321.

To do so, one needs to understand social media, its technical specifications, and how the state has taken advantage of its potential to consolidate fascism.

### The NTF-ELCAC and the Omnipresence of Communication

In December 2018 by virtue of the Executive Order 70 signed by Duterte, the NTF-ELCAC was established with the aim of “synchronizing the government’s instrumentalities of power” through a whole-of-nation approach of counterinsurgency.<sup>48</sup> Scholars have already pointed how the NTF-ELCAC effectively subordinated not only national government agencies but also local government units to the demands of a militaristic counterinsurgency program.<sup>49</sup> In this way, authoritarianism was brought to a level unprecedented in the past with counterinsurgency as a shared if not imposed imperative for civilian government agencies and units to follow. It is alarming how critical voices in different government instrumentalities are either harassed or threatened, as in the case of Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong and other progressive lawmakers under the *Makabayan Bloc* or silenced by assassination as in the case of Councilor Bernardino Patigdas.<sup>50</sup> Such repressive acts show how said government instrumentalities are coerced to work in a whole-of-nation militaristic counterinsurgency program.

The NTF-ELCAC is composed of twelve operational clusters, each with its own lead agency/agencies and support agencies. Two important features are observable in the composition of the clusters. First, the appearance of civilian supremacy where no operational cluster is headed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). However, the AFP is present in every operational cluster as a “support” agency. But the organizational disposition of the agency betrays its militarist orientation. The NTF-ELCAC is co-chaired by the national security adviser who, both during the regimes of Duterte and Marcos Jr., are military men: former Gen. Hermogenes

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<sup>48</sup> “Executive Order No. 7,” in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines* (2018), <[https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2018/12dec/20181204-EO-70-RRD.pdf?\\_cf\\_chl\\_tk=xwOKkfQNm.UuAszI4vTh\\_DgNjKp8RvVTYSa49CtBglQ-1714179864-0.0.1.1-1599](https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2018/12dec/20181204-EO-70-RRD.pdf?_cf_chl_tk=xwOKkfQNm.UuAszI4vTh_DgNjKp8RvVTYSa49CtBglQ-1714179864-0.0.1.1-1599)>.

<sup>49</sup> Sonny Africa, “Counterproductive Counterinsurgency,” in *Ibon* (17 November 2019), <<https://www.ibon.org/counterproductive-counterinsurgency>>; Imbong, “The Performativity of Terror-Tagging.”

<sup>50</sup> See “Red-Tagged Anew, Baguio’s Magalong Warns of Legal Action”; “Press Release - Red-Tagging of Makabayan Bloc Another Diversionary Scheme - De Lima,” in *Senate of the Philippines* (3 December 2020), <[https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2020/1203\\_delima1.asp](https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2020/1203_delima1.asp)>; and Marche Espina, “Negros Occidental City Councilor Shot Dead,” in *Rappler* (23 April 2019), <<https://www.rappler.com/nation/228768-negros-occidental-city-councilor-shot-dead-april-22-2019>>.

Esperon and former Gen. Eduardo Año, respectively. Just recently, the daughter of former president Duterte and Education Secretary Sara Duterte was also named co-chair of the NTF-ELCAC. The NTF-ELCAC is chaired by the president himself. Second, the importance it assigns to strategic communication through the creation of the cluster called Strategic Communication Cluster (SCC). This is led by the Presidential Communications Operations Office which is also present in every operational cluster as a support agency.

In an earlier 2017-2022 National Security Policy, the Duterte regime recognized the importance of national consensus and a shared understanding or appreciation of national security. Such a consensus, understanding, and appreciation was seen as the “basis for collective action” to address the most pressing national security concerns, with counterinsurgency as the number one priority. The Policy continued that “creating a culture of national unity and cohesiveness requires effectively communicating ... the Government’s aims and intentions to the Filipino public.”<sup>51</sup> Given how important communication is in ensuring the national security goals,

the government shall harness all available communication platforms—news outfits, social media, and private think tanks, among others—for information sharing and advocacy, and for promoting collaboration and policy feedback system.<sup>52</sup>

The mention of social media as an important communication platform in advancing the national security goals is unprecedented in Philippine history. For example, this was never mentioned in the National Security Policy of the previous regime of Benigno Aquino III, which mentioned the term communication twice but not given any strategic importance. Of course, this is understandable given the levels of development of social media and information technology between the two regimes. The appreciation given to strategic communication, which includes social media, was consolidated by the NTF-ELCAC. As the SCC of the NTF-ELCAC explained, strategic communication efforts shall be conducted “to effectively disseminate information on government programs and counter national propaganda of the [communist terrorist groups], while creating external

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<sup>51</sup> “National Security Policy for Change and Well-Being of the Filipino People: 2017-2022,” in *National Security Council* (2017), <<https://nsc.gov.ph/attachments/article/NSP/NSP-2017-2022.pdf>>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*



mechanisms to facilitate public engagement and policy support.”<sup>53</sup> As will be explained subsequently, the technicalities of social media supported what the National Security Council (NSC) and the NTF-ELCAC, respectively, raised as the need for a “policy feedback system” and “public engagement and policy support.”

Counterinsurgency strategic communication through social media was initiated by the Duterte regime and later continued by the Marcos Jr. regime. Counterinsurgency strategic communication is omnipresent, in two senses. First, it is omnipresent in an organizational sense. It is shared not only by all the operational clusters under the NTF-ELCAC but also participated by multi-level state actors that push counterinsurgency discourses through their Facebook pages. The research of Hapal and Serafica revealed the dynamics of a networked propaganda composed of layers of agents that push terror-tagging content, the structure of counterinsurgency discourse shaped by the NTF-ELCAC.

Second, it is omnipresent in a technical sense. While counterinsurgency propaganda was already practiced in the past, this was done through the available technical means then, the broadcast technology. In general, broadcast technology follows the one-to-many flow of communication as characterized by radio and television.<sup>54</sup> Williams elaborated the material developments that shaped broadcast technology then. He explained that broadcast technology is not only a means of communication that preceded its content but also something that enabled a form of “mobile privatization,” which combined the “apparently paradoxical yet deeply connected tendencies of modern urban industrial living:” mobility and the self-sufficiency of the home. A “general intake, within the home” takes place as it offered a variety of social intake like music, news, and entertainment, through “central transmitters and the domestic sets.”<sup>55</sup> Inherent within the broadcast technology is the contradiction between centralized transmission and individualized or privatized reception.

With the rise and eventual development of the internet, it provided the possibility for a large-scale many-to-many flow and feedback of information. Furthermore, the development of smartphones “augured an era of being always online, always reachable.”<sup>56</sup> Unlike the broadcast days where

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<sup>53</sup> “National Security Policy 2011-2016: Securing the Gains of Democracy,” in *National Security Council* (2011), <<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2011/08aug/NATIONAL-SECURITY-POLICY-2011-2016.pdf>>.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. David Auerbach, *Meganets: How Digital Forces Beyond Our Control Commandeer Our Daily Lives and Inner Realities* (New York: Public Affairs, 2023), EPUB.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, *Television*, 19–23.

<sup>56</sup> Auerbach, *Meganets*, Chapter 1.

information sources are localized in some bulky devices at home, the age of the internet and smartphones universalized the possibility of not only everyone sharing, receiving, and feedbacking information at once but also doing these operations virtually anywhere in their internet-enabled portable devices. Social media is an example of how this many-to-many flow of communication and feedback loop simultaneously takes place. Here, there is not only a universal intake characteristic of the broadcast technology but also a universal discharge of communication taking place simultaneously in a feedbacking loop. Not only this, the simultaneous activities of intake and discharge this time go beyond the confines of a self-sufficient home. In fact, the “home” has been integrated as an essential page in most social media platform, providing an interface that feeds an endless flow of engageable and potentially viral contents. Home has been everywhere but nowhere, omnipresent in its existence but within the technicality of the portable device.

The extent as well as the dynamics of communication’s omnipresence can be better grasped by employing David Auerbach’s notion of meganets. For Auerbach, a meganet is “*a persistent, evolving, and opaque data network that controls how we see the world.*” It is persistent because it is never offline and never reset. Likewise, it also has the “ability to respond to changes and update itself, keeping in sync with the world.” It is evolving because it is constantly being modified by the interaction of millions of entities, from programmers, users, to artificial intelligences (AIs). And it is opaque because “it is difficult and frequently impossible to gauge why the meganet behaved in a particular way.”<sup>57</sup> Social media is an example of a meganet. Facebook, for example, is never offline. One could log oneself out from it, but the program and its contents persist. It is also evolving especially given how various actors, like a social media community and its programmers, interact to change, for example, its community standards. And it is also opaque because none of the actors involved could actually ensure transparent control over what thrives and develops in social media. For example, after the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Facebook’s chief technology officer asked its director of AI to “examine the societal impact of the company’s algorithms.” This after the fact call for reflection suggests how ambiguous the relationship is between the technical aspect of a “social” media and its effects to the “social.”<sup>58</sup> Here, one is reminded and likewise could reiterate how, for Williams as in the case of broadcast technology, the technology precedes the content in a manner that reflection only comes after a supposedly technology-instigated tragedy.

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>58</sup> Karen Hao, “How Facebook Got Addicted to Spreading Misinformation,” in MIT Technology Review (11 March 2021), <<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/03/11/1020600/facebook-responsible-ai-misinformation>>.

A meganet facilitates communication and discourse. In fact, a meganet discourse has three essential components: volume, velocity, and virality. Volume refers to the enormous amount of data that is stored and retrievable thanks to the development of powerful computers.<sup>59</sup> In the case of Facebook, it generates four petabytes of data everyday stored in what is called as the Hive. A petabyte is a thousand terabytes. This component of volume has allowed the storage and retrieval of persistent posts.<sup>60</sup>

But the crucial component of a meganet discourse is not so much the volume as the velocity and virality that give meganet discourse a qualitatively different character. Velocity refers to the meganet's brain to only think fast, never slow. Auerbach cites the psychologist and economist Daniel Kahneman who differentiated the brain's capacity to think either fast or slow, either reactive judgment or reflective consideration. Auerbach suggested that meganet's velocity is one of reactive and fast judgment rather than reflective and slow deliberation.<sup>61</sup> The distinction between reactive and reflective could be further illustrated using the *Erfahrung-Erlebnis* distinction. Following Walter Benjamin, Feenberg notes that *Erfahrung* is an "experience shaped by a deep relation to reality," while *Erlebnis* is a "momentary response to passing sensation." The former somewhat characterizes the velocity of meganet or social media, a "defensive response to the speed and shock of daily life in a modern society."<sup>62</sup>

The velocity discussed above results in virality. A key feature of Facebook or any social media platform that renders virality possible is its feedback and engagement mechanisms. In the case of Facebook, aside from the comment option, it has its react (like, love, care, laugh, wow, sad, and angry) and share options. These options have allowed what was earlier identified by the NSC and the NTF-ELCAC as "policy feedback system" and "public engagement and policy support," respectively. The technical specificities of social media proved effective in realizing policy requirements which earlier technologies could hardly support. This is where an internet-enabled meganet qualitatively differs from the transistor-powered broadcast technologies of the past. The latter lacks what, for example, Facebook has as feedback and engagement mechanisms. Fuchs distinguished the particularity of social media by explaining how it has integrated tools that "support various forms of sociality into one platform," such as cognition,

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Auerbach, *Meganets*. Chapter 2.

<sup>60</sup> "Wild and Interesting Facebook Statistics and Facts (2023)," in *Kinsta* (28 December 2018), <<https://kinsta.com/blog/facebook-statistics>>.

<sup>61</sup> Auerbach, *Meganets*. Chapter 2.

<sup>62</sup> Feenberg, *The Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing*, 8.

communication, and co-operation.<sup>63</sup> The integration of these tools along with functionalities that allow a feedbacking loop and accessibility of smartphones have supported the possibility of the omnipresence of contents.

The table below summarizes the comparative quantitative data of two sets of NTF-ELCAC's Facebook posts. As of this writing, the NTF-ELCAC Facebook page has 194,000 followers.

Category	January 7, 2020, to June 30, 2021 (under the Duterte regime)	June 9, 2022, to February 28, 2023 (under the Marcos Jr. regime)
Total number of days	540	264
Total posts	422	685
Total reacts	652202	207244
Total shares	450721	93685
Total comments	52634	16720
Total number of engagements	1,155,557	317,649
Average posts per day	1	2
Distributed average engagements per day	1207 reacts, 834 shares, 97 comments	785 reacts, 354 shares, 63 comments
Distributed average engagements per post	1545 reacts, 1068 shares, 124 comments	302 reacts, 136 shares, 24 comments
Average engagements per day	2,140 or 1.1% of the 194,000 fans/followers	1,203 or .62% of the 194,000 fans/followers

The 540 and 264 Facebook posts of the respective sets of data garnered millions of engagements. And with the exponential manner on how content is distributed in Facebook, one could just imagine the extensive and massive reach of NTF-ELCAC's communication. According to the leading social media management platform Hootsuite, a Facebook post with more than 100,000 followers has an average engagement rate of .05%.<sup>64</sup> NTF-ELCAC's engagement in of .62% to 1.1% is already above average. What this means is a counterinsurgency agency shaping a counterinsurgency discourse with an unprecedented manner of distribution, feedback, and engagement. The meganet, with the dynamic interaction of powerful machines, "engaged actors,"<sup>65</sup> and persistent connectivity and contents, provides the conditions

<sup>63</sup> Christian Fuchs, "Social Media and the Public Sphere," in *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 12, no. 1 (2014), 58.

<sup>64</sup> Christina Newberry, "42 Facebook Statistics Marketers Need to Know in 2023," in *Hootsuite.com* (17 January 2023), <<https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-statistics>>.

<sup>65</sup> A different study could be made to examine the authenticity of the accounts "engaging" NTF-ELCAC's posts.

for an omnipresent communication. The extensive, massive, and persistent reach of meganet-supported counterinsurgency discourse today makes terror-tagging and the anti-terror ideology omnipresent. Human rights organizations and civil society groups have observed how “widespread” the distribution of terror-tagging contents today are, compared in the past.<sup>66</sup> For example, the secretary general of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Jonathan de Santos, has noted how the practice of terror-tagging has been “more common and because of social media more widespread under the Duterte administration.”<sup>67</sup> Terror-tagging and anti-terror ideology being widespread is not just because there are already too many communication devices accessible by the many but also because such devices have technical specifications that could render as omnipresent a propagandistic content generated and pushed primarily by the state. As elaborated earlier, these devices are specified to be constantly online and portable, networked to potentially unlimited nodes and databases, and designed with functionalities that invite engagements and feedback supportive of online virality. These combinations technically support the omnipresence of propagandistic contents including those pushed by the state.

A counterinsurgency program powered by an omnipresence of communication has serious implications to policymaking. It has exaggerated the issue of communist insurgency by constructing a terroristic image of it and extending its scope even among unarmed civilian activists. This analysis has been earlier confirmed by Hapal and Serfacica when they explained how NTF-ELCAC counterinsurgency discourse has lumped “activists with terrorists and turns the communist insurgency into a problem that’s bigger than what it actually is.”<sup>68</sup> In the guise of a counterinsurgency program, the fascist continuity could further policies deemed strategic to its counterinsurgency efforts and consolidating of its power at the same time.

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<sup>66</sup> See Shawn Crispin, “‘Red-Tagging’ of Journalists Looms over Philippine Elections,” in *Committee to Protect Journalists* (5 May 2022), <<https://cpj.org/2022/05/red-tagging-of-journalists-looms-over-philippine-elections/>>; Imelda Deinla, “‘Red-Tagging’ and the Rule of Law in the Time of COVID-19,” in *Australian Institute of International Affairs* (1 April 2021), <<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/red-tagging-and-the-rule-of-law-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>>; and Tanyalak Thongyoojaroen, “Red-Tagging in the Philippines: A License to Kill,” in *Human Rights Foundation* (10 April 2023), <<https://hrf.org/red-tagging-in-the-philippines-a-license-to-kill/>>.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Crispin, “‘Red-Tagging’ of Journalists Looms over Philippine Elections.”

<sup>68</sup> Hapal and Serfacica, “New War.”

## Towards an Anti-Fascism beyond the Ecosystems of the Social Media

While an omnipresence of communication has allowed the NTF-ELCAC to exponentially distribute an anti-terror ideology strategic to the Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity, it does not however mean that 1) fascism emerges from online structures and 2) social media is technically determined to serve nefarious ends. First, in the case of the Philippines, digital fascism is only an aspect or a moment of the totality of Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity. Actively at play within and beyond the ecosystems of social media are real contradictions of opposing classes and forces and what Fuchs identified as a distinguishing mark of fascism—i.e., the institutionalization of a system of terror.<sup>69</sup> These serve as the material from which the Duterte-Marcos fascist continuity developed and consolidated. Institutions were organized, regulations were introduced, and terror was unleashed beyond social media, while instrumentalizing the latter to smoothen the viral distribution of a rationalizing and legitimizing anti-terror ideology. There is a dialectical interplay between the concrete and the online, with the former having a determinative role precisely because of its *intentions*. Williams elucidated this point when he argued that,

the notion of intention, restores the key question, or rather the key emphasis. For while it is true that any society is a complex whole of such practices, it is also true that any society has a specific organization, a specific structure, and that the principles of this organization and structure can be seen as directly related to certain social intentions, intentions by which we define the society, intentions which in all our experience have been the rule of a particular class.<sup>70</sup>

In connection with this, the notion of intention rejects, or at the very least, challenges a determinist reading of social media which considers it as inherently beneficial to fascism. While there have been various cases where social media has enhanced the dynamics of democratic social movements, proving it as a terrain of contestation, one also needs to be wary of a

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Ligaya Lindio-McGovern, “Neoliberalism, Fascism, and People’s Resistance in the Philippines,” in *The Global Rise of Authoritarianism in the 21st Century: Crisis of Neoliberal Globalization and the Nationalist Response*, ed. by Berch Berberoglu (New York: Routledge, 2021); Mongaya, “Fascism, Fascisation, and Neoliberalism from Marcos to Duterte.”

<sup>70</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2005), 36.

determinism that disempowers and disenfranchises human agency. On the one hand, it absolves the role of the state in organizing the very ideology, network, and actions of fascism—as the experience of the Philippines suggests. On the other hand, it blurs possible democratic interventions where social media could be made to serve democratic rather than fascist objectives. Scholars have provided workable suggestions to curb these dangers. For example, Fuchs proposed a “commons-based design principles and a commons-oriented society” to reorient the “sociality of society and the media.”<sup>71</sup> Auerbach also suggested some concepts like “soft social control” to enhance discourse; a great slowing down—for example by limiting group sizes, disabling automatic links sharing beyond friends of friends, increasing heterogeneity to curb selective bias; a transparent and fair mechanism of turn taking where the biggest loudmouths are temporarily quieted and the softer-spoken participants are amplified; and many others like chaos injection, shaking up the data, and poisoning the well.<sup>72</sup> In this way, the omnipresence of communication could be gradually made to serve initiatives that further informed engagement and democratic projects.

But beyond these technical fixes are the much needed socio-economic and political transformations. The corporate internet lacks the needed motives to address the problems of a commercially driven social media. Not until corporate internet consciously and earnestly addresses the issue of social inequality, it will never overcome its contradictions. Today’s inequalities, in the Philippines, as perhaps anywhere else in the world, is instigated by neoliberal capitalism. As Max Horkheimer declares, “whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism.”<sup>73</sup> While fascism today takes on complex forms through its instrumentalization of social media, it still retains in its current form an invariant which makes it discernible and likewise engageable the way it was in its classical form. Fuchs has elaborated the direction towards the possible weakening of fascism. He argued that “only a society that strengthens equality and overcomes exploitation and domination can undermine the roots of fascism.” This means that, in the short term, “reforms that redistribute wealth and power coupled with the advancement of the general level of education and critique of and deconstruction of false news, post-truth culture, and ideology can help to weaken fascism and digital fascism”.<sup>74</sup> What is needed is an anti-fascism that goes beyond the ecosystems of the social media and confronts structural

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<sup>71</sup> Christian Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Sage, 2013), 265.

<sup>72</sup> Auerbach, *Meganets*, Chapter 8.

<sup>73</sup> Max Horkheimer, “The Jews and Europe,” in *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by Major Thinkers*, ed. by Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Routledge, 2005), 226.

<sup>74</sup> Fuchs, *Digital Fascism*, 322.

injustices that have historically been the point where fascists manipulate their way to power.

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