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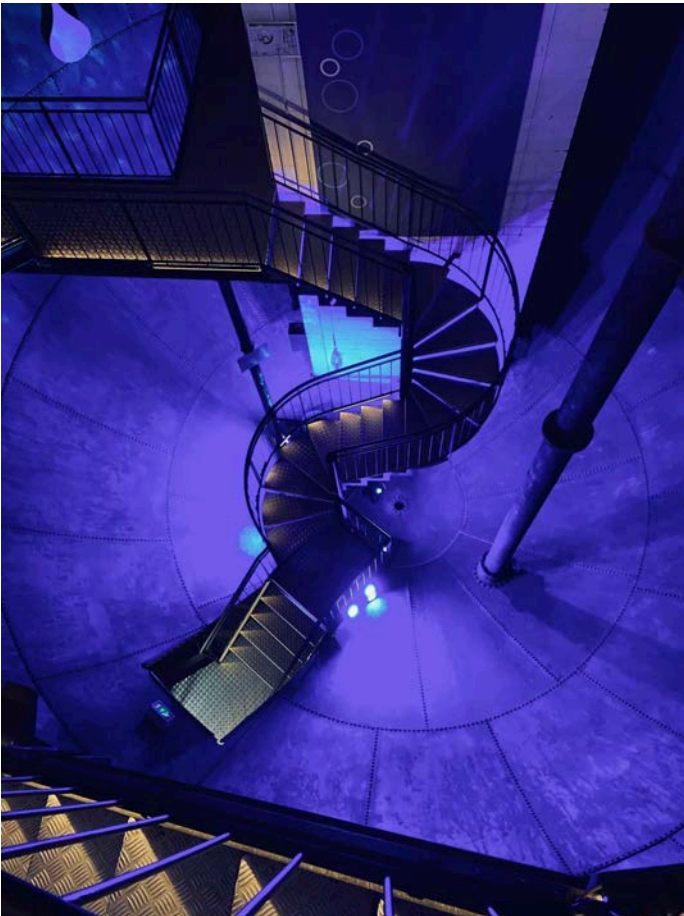
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## ABOUT THE COVER

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“Exit”

The cover photo features the view of the descent toward the spiral staircase (leading outside) inside the water tank of the old water tower in Lüneburg, Germany. Originally built in 1905 over the existing tower, it was repurposed into a museum in the late 80s as it was spared from demolition, ironically not because of its historical value but due to the high cost of demolishing the tallest tower in the city that is not a church. The vista offered by this photo showcases an individual’s exit of the water tank, toward the portal below with the word *Ausgang* (exit) above, aided by the usual symbol of a person dashing through the door. Coincidentally, this very word, *Ausgang*, is how Michel Foucault characterizes Immanuel Kant’s negative depiction of enlightenment as an escape from immaturity, an exit from irrationality. Perhaps, we may say that this photo shows what true enlightenment is: the sudden burst of water from a pipe, the speed at which the person flees the room, the movement from a higher topology to a more sensible one—ultimately, an exit. But we must caution ourselves against this immediate association since enlightenment could turn out – as a mistake! – to be equated to escaping the sincerity of reflection and solitude of space and embracing today’s highly commercialized world.

*KRITIKE: An Online Journal of Philosophy*  
18:2 (September 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.

**KRITIKE** supports the **Open Access Movement** and is classified under the "**Platinum OA**" category, which means that articles published by the journal are fully accessible online without a subscription fee. Moreover, the journal does not levy charges against the authors for the publication of their works. Articles can either be read on site or downloaded as pdf files and old issues are archived for future retrieval.

**KRITIKE** is committed to meet the highest ethical standards in research and academic publication. The journal is guided by the principles set in its **Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement**.

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Featured Article

## Martin Buber's Philosophical Anthropology and Philosophy of Dialogue (First of Two Parts)

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*Jove Jim S. Aguas*

**Abstract:** In contemporary philosophy, philosophical anthropology focuses more on the human person and the value of a concrete individual subject. Amid consumerism, materialism, and technological advancement, more philosophers focus on the dignity and value of the human person. By studying the human person, what he is, his concerns, intentions, and relationships with the world, God, and others, we can fully understand his essence as a concrete individual and relational subject. One of those thinkers who focused on the human person as a relational subject is the Jewish religious existentialist philosopher, Martin Buber. This paper highlights Buber's philosophical anthropology and philosophy of dialogue, based on an existential and relational or intersubjective character of human existence, man's relation with God as the eternal Thou, the distinction between the two fundamental types of human relations (*I-It* and *I-Thou*), and the realm of the "between." The main focus of this paper thus are Buber's notions of man as a relational subject and thou, intersubjectivity that is anchored on his notion of dialogue, the distinction between the two types of relations and their primal movements, genuine dialogue, the interhuman and its elements, and also social relations.

**Keywords:** Buber, philosophy of dialogue, philosophical anthropology, relational subject

**W**hat is man? What is the human person? What is his relationship with his fellow human beings and the world where he exists? What is the purpose of his existence, of his life? These are some of the expedient questions in philosophy, and time and again, philosophers and a host of other thinkers offer their answers to these queries. While there are

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other philosophical questions out there, and some could be more worthy of our attention, the question about man is one fundamental question. It is one question that has been the main concern of contemporary existential thinkers. Contemporary philosophical anthropology focuses more on the human person and his value as a concrete individual subject. In a consumerist and materialist society that is so engrossed with technological advancement, some philosophers have focused more on the dignity and value of the human person and stressed that man is a being with value and dignity. In the modern world that has provided some benefits, mostly material and practical, and has made human life less burdensome, there is a downside to advancement and progress, and that is that the human person is reduced to an “object” very much like any other object in the material, commercial, or technological world. The human person is deprived of personal qualities or individuality; sometimes, he is treated like an object or thing, and what he does is treated like a commodity. The human person sometimes experiences a loss of personal identity or a feeling of being an anonymous cog in a social machine. This usually happens when someone or society imposes or demands that its beliefs, values, or ideals be accepted and followed by everybody. This destroys the individuality of the person and makes him become whatever the people in power desire; this dehumanizes the person and reduces him to an object.

However, we are not lacking in those individuals who constantly remind us of the inherent value of the human person. There are thinkers who recognize the value of the person as a subject and are also mindful of the sad state or condition of the human person amid this advanced and fast-paced world that seemingly lacks deeper meaning and value. There are those who realize not only the value of man as a subject or person, but also that man is worthy of our attention as a subject of study. By studying man, what he is, what his concerns are, his intentions, his purpose in life, his aspirations, and destiny, we can fully understand his essence as a concrete individual subject. One of those thinkers is the Jewish religious existentialist philosopher Martin Buber. In his essay “What is Man?” he comments that since time immemorial, man has known that he is the subject most worthy of his own study.<sup>1</sup> He quotes the philosopher Malebranche:

Of all human knowledge, the knowledge of man is most deserving of his study. Yet this knowledge is not the most cultivated or the most developed which we possess. The generality of men neglects it completely.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 118.

And even among those who busy themselves with this knowledge, there are very few who dedicate themselves to it – and still, fewer who successfully dedicate themselves to it.<sup>2</sup>

However, man must struggle to focus on the wholeness of man, that is, to treat man as a whole subject in accordance with his total character. Now, in studying “man,” man can consider all things and exclude himself; this could be problematic because man is not considered in relation to other things. Man could also be studied as being divided into different aspects that can be treated independently; such an approach could lead to a fragmented understanding of man. Thus, Buber insisted that man should be studied in his wholeness.

Buber acknowledges that Kant was the first to formulate the proper question about the nature of man when Kant, in his lectures on logic, noted that philosophy in the universal sense posits four questions. *What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope for? and What is man?* Kant, however, according to Buber, despite the numerous works on the knowledge of man, never touched on the real issues about man, like man’s place in the world, his connection with destiny, etc. The wholeness of man does enter into his philosophical anthropology.<sup>3</sup> Hence, for Buber, we need to consider man as a subject and study him for his own sake, not just as a part of science or an object of study. Yes, we have to study man, but man must be considered a concrete subject, and such a concrete individual human subject is a relational or intersubjective subject who can enter into a living and mutual relationship with his fellow human beings.

As mentioned in the abstract, this paper discusses Buber’s philosophical anthropology and philosophy of dialogue. The first part deals with philosophical anthropology, focusing on man as a whole and unique being, man as a being-in-relation, man and God, and the eternal *Thou*, the realm of the “between” and the person as a *Thou*. The second part deals with the philosophy of dialogue, focusing on the life of dialogue, the kinds of dialogue, the two fundamental types of human relations, namely, *I-It* and *I-Thou* relations, the primal movements of relation, genuine dialogue and the interhuman, the elements of interhuman, and the *We* relation.

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<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth (De la recherche de la vérité)* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Quoted in Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 118.

<sup>3</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 119–120.

### Martin Buber's Philosophical or Existential Anthropology

Buber is best known for his dialogical philosophy or philosophy of dialogue; however, the point of departure for such a philosophy of dialogue is philosophical anthropology, that is, the problem of man.<sup>4</sup> In this discussion, we may interchange the terms existential and philosophical because Buber's anthropology, I contend, is both philosophical and existential. For Buber, philosophical anthropology is the study of the wholeness of man. His numerous writings set up philosophical anthropology as a systematic method that deals with the concrete, existential characteristics of man's life to arrive at the wholeness and uniqueness of man.<sup>5</sup> The medical and biological sciences are also concerned with the question of man. Still, they focus more on man's relation with nature, reducing man to a natural object or a physical or biological organism. Science investigates man not as a whole and unique being but as part of nature; it studies man in selective aspects and as part of the natural world.<sup>6</sup> The scientific method is the most perfected development of the objective way of knowing, and its method of abstracting from concrete actuality reduces the I or person into an object. Such a method is based on the *I-It* relation.<sup>7</sup>

On the contrary, the *I-Thou* relation makes the conception of the wholeness of man possible. Only through the *I-Thou* do we see the wholeness of the human person in unreserved relation with what confronts him rather than as a sum of parts, some of which are considered objective and therefore part of the known, and some are subjective and therefore part of the knower. However, Buber stressed that the study of the wholeness of man is connected with the questions regarding his place in the world, his destiny, his relation to the world of things, his understanding of his fellow human beings, his death, and his attitude towards the mysterious or divine. Man's essence is determined by the fact that he shares both finitude and infinity. Buber explains that we are connected with the finitude because we can only know particular things, and we participate in the infinite by our ability to know at all. While philosophical anthropology is anchored on particular metaphysics or ontology, it is not its purpose to provide a foundation for metaphysics because such an attempt will only be very general and will achieve a false unity of man, not a genuine wholeness. Buber writes:

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<sup>4</sup> Maurice Friedman, "Introductory Essay," in Martin Buber, *Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1965), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Buber, *Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1965), 15.

<sup>6</sup> See Friedman, "Introductory Essay," 19.

<sup>7</sup> The *I-It* and *I-Thou* relations will be discussed later in this paper.

A legitimate philosophical anthropology must know that there is not merely a human species but also people, not merely a human soul but also types and characters, not merely human life but also stages in life; only from the systematic comprehension of all these and all other differences, ... can it come to see the wholeness of man.<sup>8</sup>

### *Man as a Whole and Unique Being*

For Buber, in philosophical anthropology, “man himself is given to man in the most precise sense as a subject.”<sup>9</sup> The investigator or the philosopher must consider man as a whole subject and not just a part of nature; he must realize that he himself is a man and experiences his humanity in his inner experience in a way that cannot be experienced in any part of nature. According to Buber, philosophical knowledge is “essentially man’s self-reflection, and man can reflect about himself only when the cognizing person, that is, the philosopher pursuing anthropology, first of all, reflects about himself as a person.”<sup>10</sup> Other investigators may just see man as a detached and objectivized subject; man is something separated from connection with the whole real person. However, the philosopher stakes his real wholeness, his concrete self. Hence, it is not enough that he stakes himself as an object of knowledge. Buber writes:

He can know the wholeness of the person and, through it, the wholeness of man only when he does not leave his subjectivity out and does not remain an untouched observer. He must enter, completely and in reality, into the act of self-reflection in order to become aware of human wholeness.<sup>11</sup>

To do this, the philosopher must enter into this unique dimension as an act of his life, without any philosophical security; that means exposing himself to all that he can encounter in real life. Without any preconceived ideas, he encounters life, the world, and fellow men; he touches them and is also touched. Only in this way can he understand the wholeness of man. We can fully understand the person only based on his essential relation to what is. “Only the man who realizes in his whole life with his whole being the

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<sup>8</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 123.

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

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

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relations possible to him helps us to know man truly.”<sup>12</sup> This is based on our recognition of man as a whole and unique being. Buber further explains: “To be aware of a man is to perceive his wholeness as a person determined by the spirit; it means to perceive the dynamic center that stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness.”<sup>13</sup>

Hence, what we need is to find the essence of man in the constant flux of individuals and cultures and try to avoid the abyss of abstract unity and meaningless relativity.<sup>14</sup> However, by essence, Buber does not mean a universal and abstract nature of the human person because such an abstract nature of man cannot be applicable in the concrete human person. Buber recognizes that man’s essence is constituted by his participation in finitude and infinity, and his uniqueness is determined by the particular existential characteristics of his relation to “mystery,” cosmos, destiny, death, and his fellow men.

In the existential sense, for Buber, there is no absolute and abstract essence of man. Of course, he recognizes the corporeality of man. But no universal and abstract essence applies to all human persons or men. Existentially, man must be conceived as an individual person, unique in himself; he is in himself a total person determined by spirit. Man is a dynamic center that stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness. Buber also refuses to define man’s essence based on his being an individual or as a part of the collectivity. Man’s being is found in his being a subject, a whole subjectivity. He is a subject who is unique and who actualizes himself in relation. The person becomes fully human in relation; Buber locates the essence of man in his relationships with the world, his fellow man, and the Divine. Man is a being-in-relation, he said. Buber clearly states: “The essence of man which is special to him can be directly known only in a living relation.”<sup>15</sup>

Buber stresses that man is a creature capable of entering into living relations with the world and things, with men both as individuals and collective and with the “mystery of being.” By studying the development of the problem of a man very closely, Buber is critical of the answers offered to us by other known philosophers, from Aristotle, St. Thomas, St. Augustine, Kant and Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard, and Scheler. Buber criticizes Western philosophy, beginning with post-Socratic, scholastic, rationalist, and materialist thinkers, for failing to formulate the fundamental

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>13</sup> Buber, *Knowledge of Man*, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Friedman, “Introductory Essay,” 15.

<sup>15</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 205.

questions on which a philosophical anthropology could be founded.<sup>16</sup> Based on his analysis, there are three deficiencies in Western philosophical traditions: first, their hierarchical ordering of thought into discrete disciplines, such as ontology and theology; second is their isolation of man the knower from the object of his knowledge; and third is their unwillingness to conceive of man as distinctively a non-rational as well as rational being.<sup>17</sup> Buber argues that philosophy should adopt as its starting point a wide-ranging mode of inquiry extensive enough to conceive man in his wholeness and totality, his concrete existence and relatedness to the world.<sup>18</sup> He stresses that while the Greeks comprehended man as one with nature, only man is comprehended with the world; the world is not comprehended with him.<sup>19</sup> This notion of man as part of nature received full emphasis in the Aristotelian definition of man as a rational animal, and was later adopted and explained by St. Thomas. The philosophical anthropology proposed by Buber rejects the traditional idea that reason is the distinctive characteristic of being human; there is more to man than simply reason or the ability to think rationally. He explains:

The depth of the anthropological question is first touched upon when we also recognize, as specifically humans, that which is not reason. Man is not a centaur; he is the man through and through... The problem of philosophical anthropology is the problem of a specific totality and of its specific structure.<sup>20</sup>

Buber, with his emphasis on the wholeness of man, also rejects the idea that reason is a distinctive human characteristic. We must also recognize in man that which is not reason; man is not a duality of reason and body; man is a man through and through. Man must be conceived as a specific individual person, complete in himself, a total person determined by spirit. He is a dynamic center that stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness. Man as a subject is a whole and unique being.

Although Buber says that philosophical anthropology does not intend to provide a metaphysics or an ontology, we can imply an ontological

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–200.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Murphy, *Martin Buber's Philosophy of Education* (Great Britain: Billing and Sons, 1988), 41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 127.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

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foundation of his philosophical anthropology. His entire dialogical philosophy and his notion of intersubjectivity are based on an anthropology that recognizes the wholeness of man. And this anthropology is based on the recognition of the totality of human nature. Human nature is not only reason or animality; man is a unique and specific totality. His philosophical anthropology is, at the same time, an ontology. It is an ontology in the sense that it does not only explain what man is and how we ought to conceive man, but it also explains and depicts the basic reality of man, the true nature of man, and the “whatness” of man, and how he relates with the world and the infinite. As far as Buber is concerned, it offers us the ultimate ground, the foundation of man’s being, and further explains how this nature of man is actualized.

The reality of man is not found in a dual nature but in his wholeness; it is found not only in his reason but in his being a specific subject. Only when we consider man as a whole being can we fully grasp man’s true nature. The reality of man is his being unique; his every action and utterance is always stamped with his uniqueness. Man’s essence is not ontologically based on his being an individual nor on his being a part of the collectivity. Man’s being is found in his being a subject, a whole subjectivity, a subject who is unique and a subject who is actualized in relation. Relation is what actualizes man’s being. Man becomes fully human in relation: man is a being-in-relation. This is the ontological basis of man’s very being, to be in relation.

That is why, for Buber, it is not enough to be a being-with; one basic fact of human existence is not a man with himself; it is a man with another man. Human existence is between man and man. Human existence is grounded in the realm of the “between.” The reality of man’s existence in the world is not isolation but relation. Buber considered man to exist in an intersubjective world, in a world that is not only a world of things but also a world of fellow men.

### *Man as Being-in-Relation*

At this point, we need to explore more Buber’s notion of man as a being-in-relation. While Buber recognizes that man is part and related to nature, he emphasizes the difference between man and the other beings in nature. Man is different from the other beings in nature; even man’s hunger is not an animal’s hunger. Man is a specific nature, and we have already laid down his philosophical anthropology that man is given to himself in the most precise sense as a subject, that is, a subject in his wholeness. As a subject, he is a being that is different from things or from objects and must not be considered as a being understood in duality; man as a whole subject is different and unique from other beings. But how is man different from other

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things or beings? For Buber, man is different from other beings because he is a being-in-relation. Man “experiences his wholeness not in virtue of his relation to himself but in virtue of his relation to another self.”<sup>21</sup>

Buber, therefore, refutes Heidegger’s notion of man as Dasein, that is, man as being thrown into existence. Man is not just a being thrown into existence; he is a being-with-others; he is a being-in-relation. For Heidegger, man is a being in the world, but for Buber, man is a being in the world together with others.<sup>22</sup> Man is not just a being-in-the-world, he is a being-with-others, a being-in-relation. Man should be distinguished from objects; he is a unique subject because he relates with others. This is a central theme of Buber’s philosophy; his entire dialogical philosophy is anchored on the value of the person as distinguished from things and objects, the person who is able to stand in relation with others.

Relation, however, is not limited to man and fellow man; it is not only between man and man, but it is also between man and God. According to Buber, the fundamental relation is “triadic,” the self, God, and fellow man. Real relationship with other human beings is possible only in terms of a real relationship with God. In this aspect, Buber was influenced by Kierkegaard, from whom he found the importance of direct relations between God and the individual. The individual person must constantly risk all in the concrete uniqueness of each new situation and, in this process, emerge as a genuine person before going out to relate with others. He agrees with Kierkegaard’s insistence on being a “*Single One*.” The *Single One* refuses to be swallowed up in the “crowd” out of his own subjectivism and finds himself in relation with God. He also agrees with Kierkegaard that man realizes the image of God through having become a *Single One*: “To become a *Single One* is to fulfil the first condition of all religiosity . . . the *Single One* corresponds to God. . . man can have dealings with God only as a *Single One*.”<sup>23</sup>

Hence, Buber comes up with his interpretation of the *Single One*. For Buber, the goal of the *Single One* is to enter into relation, for the real person can have a complete relation of his life to the other self. Buber does not interpret Kierkegaard’s “To Become a *Single One*” Socratically; that is, it is not intended for the “right” life, but rather, to enter into relation with the other, not just the finite other but also the infinite or mysterious other. He explains:

To “become” means here to become for something, “for” in the strict sense, which simply transcends the circle of the person himself. It means to be made ready for the one

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>22</sup> See *Ibid.*, 168–169.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

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relation which can be entered into only by the *Single One*, the one; the relation for whose sake man exists.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike Kierkegaard, Buber refuses to limit the relation of self to itself and with God. As opposed to Kierkegaard, who insists that man should essentially speak only with God and himself, Buber stressed that the fundamental relation is “triadic”—self, God, and others. He refutes Kierkegaard’s stand that the relation of the *Single One* is exclusive. He points out that a real relationship with God cannot be achieved on earth if the real relationship between the world and mankind is lacking. Hence, a relationship with other human beings is possible only in terms of a real relationship with God. He refers to Jesus in the Bible, who, when asked about the greatest commandment, answered that we should love God with all our hearts, with all our minds, and with all our souls, and we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves.<sup>25</sup>

Man for Buber is not a being-in-isolation but a being-in-relation. He is that being who can have complete relations with God, nature, and his fellow human beings. Man can have an authentic and meaningful existence only through his living relationship with others. In virtue of his nature and his situation, man has a threefold living relation. He can bring his nature and situation to full reality if all his living relations become essential. Man’s living relation is: first, his relation to the world and things; second, his relation to men—both the individual and the many; third, his relation to the mystery of being—which is dimly apparent through all this but infinitely transcends it—for the philosopher he is the Absolute, while for the believer he is God.<sup>26</sup>

### *Man and God: The Eternal Thou*

Buber refuses to subsume God under the Aristotelian law of contradiction. God is the Absolute Person who is not a person but becomes one, so to speak, in order to know, be known, to love, and be loved. Non-contradiction does not sum up our relationship with God/another. God is not an idea or an image; he is a person to whom we can talk to.<sup>27</sup> If some philosophers have reduced God to the concept, illusion, or mere image, it is because the God that they considered has been confined to a subject-object type of relation. But man’s relation with God is a subject-subject relation. God is not an object that can just be conceptualized or imagined; he is a subject—

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 50

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>27</sup> See Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1952).

an Other. He is the God whom man can talk to, the God whom man can relate to, the God whom man can communicate and depend on. Buber says that if to believe in God means to be able to talk about him in the third person, then he does not believe in such a God, but if to believe in him means to be able to speak to him, then he believes in God.

Many people speak to God but do not know how to talk about God; many people talk about God but do not speak to God. The believer or the faithful may not even know how to talk about God, but he constantly speaks to God.<sup>28</sup> The conception of God as an illusion or a mental contract, a concept, just an image, or a silent God reduces God to just a “thing” or an “object” or an “image.” For Buber, such conception is based on an *I-It* relation and not an *I-Thou* relation.<sup>29</sup> He distinguishes between knowing God and knowing about God. The person who knows God talks to God, and the person who knows about God talks about God. So, if believing in God is to be able to talk about him in the third person, then for Buber, it is not belief, but if believing is to be able to talk to him, then that is a true belief. The true God is the God to whom Daniel prayed in his suffering, and he is the real God, the God of all.<sup>30</sup> The real God that believers believe in is a personal God who relates and communicates with us.

However, our understanding of God has been saturated by the “God talk” of the philosophers who do not even talk to God. And these “God talks” of the philosophers caused the disappearance of the real God. It has caused, according to Buber, the “eclipse of God,” a phenomenon or a situation where the real God has been concealed by the various and often contrasting views and conceptions about God.<sup>31</sup> This is the character of the historical hour, an eclipse of God on the human side experienced as the silence of God, through which the world is passing.<sup>32</sup> To this experience, Buber writes, “He who refuses to submit himself to the effective reality of the transcendence ... contributes to the human responsibility for the eclipse.”<sup>33</sup>

God is not an “It”; he cannot be expressed but only addressed. Buber says: “God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed.”<sup>34</sup> Further, he writes:

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<sup>28</sup> Jove Jim S. Aguas, “The Challenge of Secularization to the Christian Belief in God,” in *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 20:2 (2019), 247, <<https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.20.2.a.6>>.

<sup>29</sup> See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd ed., trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958).

<sup>30</sup> Buber, *Eclipse of God*.

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

<sup>32</sup> See Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 21–32.

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

<sup>34</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 81.

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“God is the wholly Other; he is also the wholly Same, the wholly Present. Of course, he is the *Mysterium Tremendum* that appears and overthrows... the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my I.”<sup>35</sup> We do not find God in staying or leaving the world, for God is not to be sought in things. But in every relation we have with things, in every finite *thou* we encounter, we encounter God as the *eternal Thou*. There are three spheres in which relation is built: first, our life with nature, which is below the threshold of speech; second, our life with fellow men in which relation takes the form of speech; and third, our life with spiritual beings which is outside of speech and yet begets it. In each of these spheres, we encounter the breath of the *eternal Thou*. In each *thou*, we address the *eternal Thou*.<sup>36</sup> Only God is this unlimited, *eternal Thou*. The ultimate *Thou* is always *Thou* without being limited by the *It* in space and time, thus an *eternal Thou*, the *Thou* that never becomes an *It*.<sup>37</sup>

We encounter God as the *eternal Thou* in a dialogue. For Buber, the dialogical man is a religious man, and vice versa. The religious man commits his whole being to God’s dialogue with the world and stands firm in this dialogue. As Buber writes: “God made no tool for himself; he needs none; he created for himself a partner in the dialogue of time.”<sup>38</sup> Also: “In this dialogue, God speaks to every man through the life which he gives him again and again. Therefore, man can only answer God with the whole of his life—the way in which he lives this given life.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, the basis for all statements about faith is the dialogical relation of trust, not the belief in dogmatic contents. Religious faith does not result from the mindless recitations of religious formulas or from the adherence to unintelligible liturgical routines but from the total commitment of one’s being and one’s life to the *eternal Thou*. God, the Absolute Person, becomes a person to meet man in a “supreme meeting.” In dialogue, man turns to God; this turning is nothing less than our redemption in God—the *eternal Thou*, the Absolute Person. By turning towards God, we enter into a life-altering relationship. We receive the presence of God as a power, as a gift, and as a revelation. Our lives become laden with meaning, a meaning which, while heavy to bear, is nonetheless real, palpable, and reassuring. And neither synagogue nor church nor mosque nor university can determine what this meaning is for us. Buber sees man as essentially oriented to God, the *Eternal Thou*. He sees life as a

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>37</sup> George Kovacs, “God as the Ultimate Thou and Meaning of Life in Martin Buber,” in *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 17 (March 1994), 33–49.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Buber, *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 131–132.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

“summon and sending,” and every man has his unique being as a gift from God, and it is his responsibility to realize it in its wholeness. Man’s relationship with God is one of dialogue; the religious man commits his whole being to God’s dialogue with the world and stands firm in this dialogue.

### *The Realm of the “Between”*

One of Buber’s most profound ideas is what he called the “realm of the between.” At the center of his philosophical anthropology is man with man. As we have discussed, man is by nature a being in relation, and according to Buber, the reality of man with man is found in the notion of the “between,” which he refers to as the ultimate ground of relation. The fundamental fact of human existence is man with man, and one peculiar characteristic of the human world is that something takes place between one being and another. There is that sphere or realm that is established with the existence of man as man; this is the “between.” Buber writes:

“Between” is not an auxiliary construction but the real place and bearer of what happens between men; it has received no specific attention because, in distinction from the individual soul and its context, it does not exhibit a smooth continuity, but is ever and again re-constituted in accordance with men’s meeting with one another.<sup>40</sup>

The realm of the between is found in moments of relation or encounter. And it is found not in each participant in a human encounter but between them. In a real conversation that is direct and spontaneous, in a real lesson that develops in mutual surprises, in a real embrace, and a real duel, in all these activities, what is essential does not take place in each of the participants, rather, it takes place between them in the most precise sense. If a person and another come up and meet each other and interact with each other, there is always that “remainder” between them; the totality of the interaction or encounter cannot be exactly divided because of that remainder, and that, according to Buber, is what is essential. This fact exists even in the tiniest and most transient events that barely enter into our consciousness. Buber further stresses:

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<sup>40</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 204.

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In the most powerful moment of the dialogic, where in truth “deep calls unto deep,” it becomes unmistakably clear that it is not the wand of the individual or of the social, but of a third which draws the circle around the happening. On the far side of the subjective, on this side of the objective, on the narrow ridge, where *I* and *Thou* meet there is the real of “between.”<sup>41</sup>

For Buber, the reality of the “between” provides the starting point for a genuine philosophical anthropology; the central subject of this science is man with man. The essence of man which is special to him can only be known in living relation; *I* and *Thou* exist because man exists and the *I* moreover exists only through its relation to the *Thou*. Only man with man can provide a full image; only man with man is a wholly outlined form. Consider man with man, and we see human life, dynamic; twofold, the giver and receiver, he who does and he who endures, the attacking and the defending force, the request begged and granted—and always both together, completing one another in mutual contribution, together showing forth man.

We come to fully grasp the answer to the question of what man is when we consider man with man. “Only man with man provides a full image.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, for Buber, if we are to conceive a genuine philosophical anthropology that will lead to the true knowledge of man, it should be centered on the realm of the “between,” that is, what happens in the relation between man and man. With this philosophical anthropology, Buber rejected individualism and collectivism. An individualistic anthropology, an anthropology that is substantially concerned only with the relation of the human person to himself, with the relation within this person between the spirit and its instincts, cannot lead to a knowledge of man's being. Neither is collectivism because it is only concerned with the collective whole and not with man. Individualism understands only a part of man; collectivism understands man only as a part: neither of the two advances the wholeness of man. Buber writes: “Individualism sees man only in relation to himself, but collectivism does not see man at all; it only sees the society.”<sup>43</sup>

Individualism and collectivism are all imaginings and illusions; when these barriers are overcome, then man is able to meet his fellow man, and this meeting takes only when a man knows the other in all his otherness as himself, as man, only when the person treats each other as a person does the between happen. There is genuine relation only between genuine persons.

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

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

Buber writes: “The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such.... it is man with man.”<sup>44</sup> The uniqueness of man is not to be found in the individual nor in the collective but in the meeting between *I* and *Thou*. In the concluding paragraph of his essay “What is Man?” Buber writes:

Consider (a) man with man, and you see human life as dynamic, twofold, the giver and the receiver, he who does and he who endures... Now, we may come nearer to the answer to the question of what man is when we come to see him as the eternal meeting of the One with the Other.<sup>45</sup>

Buber consistently stresses that man exists anthropologically not in his isolation but in the completeness of the relation between man and man; humanity is fully grasped in man with man, in relation to what humanity is, and can be grasped only in vital reciprocity.<sup>46</sup> Man should not be conceived of as an individual isolated from his fellow men or as a member of a conglomerate or a collectivity wherein his uniqueness fades away and is engulfed by the “general will” of the whole. Man exists not in his isolation nor in collectivity but in the completeness of his living relation with others. Man’s existence is actuated through relation; he lives a meaningful life and an authentic existence through his living relation with his fellow human beings.

In relation, man turns to others in their essential life, and he can raise every form of living relation not only to the technical and psychical level but to the real and essential. Buber writes: “Man is to be understood as the being who is capable of the threefold living relation and can raise every form of it to essentiality.”<sup>47</sup> Buber also clarifies the relationship between the person and the individual based on the fundamental human relations: *I-It* and *I-Thou*. The person is the *I* of the primal relation *I-Thou*, and as such, it is conscious of itself as subjectivity. The individual, on the other hand, is the *I* of the primal relation *I-It*, and as such, it is conscious of itself as the subject of experiencing and using. The individual makes its appearance by being differentiated from other individuals, while the person makes its appearance by entering into a relationship with other persons. As Buber writes: “The one is the spiritual

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>45</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 205.

<sup>46</sup> Buber, *Knowledge of Man*, 84.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

form of detachment, and the other is the spiritual form of natural solidarity, of connexion."<sup>48</sup>

Buber further states that the aim of self-differentiation is to experience and to use; its aim is life that lasts the span of man's life. On the other hand, the aim of relation is the relation's being, that is, contact with the *Thou*. According to him, through our contact with other *Thou*, we are stirred with the breath of the *Thou*, that is, of eternal life.<sup>49</sup> The person becomes conscious of himself as sharing in being, as co-existing, and thus as being. But the individual becomes conscious of itself as being such-and-such and nothing else. The person says, "I am," and the individual says, "I am such and such." "Know thyself" means, for the person, "know thyself to have being"; for the individual, it means "know thy particular kind of being."<sup>50</sup> The person, thus, looks at himself; the individual is concerned with its My—my race, my color, my kind, my creation. It differentiates itself from others and seeks to appropriate as much of it as it can through experience and use. Buber, however, makes it clear that despite the person's focus of attention to relation, the person does not lose its uniqueness since there is a link between uniqueness, dialogue, and relation.

### *The Person as a Thou*

Buber stresses that the person, or the individualized concrete man, should be distinguished from things and objects, for he is a subject, a *Thou*, not an *It*. The person, as he is capable of, must enter into a living interpersonal relationship with others, he must enter into an *I-Thou* relation. The person who confronts me is a person as long as I regard him as a person, but for him to be my *Thou*, I must enter into an elemental relationship with him. He is not yet a *Thou* for me until I step into a personal relationship with him; thus, if I do not enter into this elemental relationship, he is not a *Thou*. When I address a fellow man being as my *Thou*, I recognize him as a person, not a thing. Buber states: "If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things and does not consist of things."<sup>51</sup> When the *Thou* is spoken, the speaker does not have a thing for his object; rather, he has a partner, a person, and he takes his stand in relation with him. Buber explains:

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 62

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 63

<sup>50</sup> Buber, *Knowledge of Man*, 64.

<sup>51</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 8.

When the *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every *It* is bounded by others; It exists only through being bounded by others. But when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing. *Thou* has no bounds. When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing, he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation.<sup>52</sup>

The *Thou* as a person is neither something to be experienced nor to be described. If I address somebody as my fellow man, as my *thou*, I must not focus my attention on his qualities, his traits, or his characteristics. The *Thou* is likened to a melody; it is not a mere enumeration of notes or verse of words or statue of lines; rather, it is the unity of these scattered pieces and places. Each time that I focus on his qualities, his color, his race, and age, he ceases to be a *Thou*, and knowingly or unknowingly, I demote him to a mere object or thing, to an *It*, a *She* or *He*, not a *Thou*. Buber writes:

Thus, a human being is not a *He* or *She*, bounded by another *He* or *She*, a specific point in time and space within the net of the world, nor is he, as nature, able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of qualities. But with no neighbor and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heaven. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself. But all else lives in his light.<sup>53</sup>

This person whom I speak as my *Thou* will remain to be my *Thou* as long as I regard him as a person, as long as I focus my attention on our relation, but the moment I focus my attention on his qualities and traits, I step out of that interpersonal relation, and he is reduced to a mere *It*. This is where the swinging back and forth between the *I-Thou* and the *I-It* happens. It is impossible to sustain the *I-Thou* attitude; at some point, the *Thou* will be objectified, and the other human being will be treated like an object. This happens many times and, on many occasions, when we treat each other objectively. But to be objective does not mean in a negative or bad way because it is just the case that we can be objective in our attitude and dealings with each other. However, the challenge is to swing the attitude back to an *I-Thou* attitude.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 8.

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Featured Article

## Santo Tomas, Teyolohiya, at Pilosopiyang Kontinental

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*Jovito V. Cariño*

**Abstract:** From the outset, metaphysics was already implicated in theology through Aristotle's assertion of their identity. This is something refuted by St. Thomas Aquinas by clarifying that, despite their univocity, sacred theology remains different since it is derived from the Sacred Scriptures, beyond the scope of metaphysics. Despite the distinction, Aquinas is still constantly dragged in any talk about theology and metaphysics, and there are those who hold that since metaphysics no longer has a place in Western thought the same fate is also for Aquinas' metaphysical theology. However, there are those who hold an extremely different view. They contend that his theology is not metaphysical but rather resonating with the appellation of "post-metaphysical." This paper highlights these two competing views along with a re-statement of the relevance of Aquinas' intellectual legacy vis-à-vis Vatican II's *aggiornamento* campaign. This paper's argument rests on Aquinas' position on the clear boundaries between metaphysics and sacred theology. Metaphysics is important but only as a preamble to faith; it is neither the origin nor the destination of sacred theology. This important distinction is what secures a space for the thought of Saint Thomas in the contemporary intellectual discourse, be it in the local or continental context.

**Keywords:** St. Thomas, theology, continental philosophy, metaphysics

Sa pagdaraos ng Linggo ng Teyolohiya 2024, naatasan ako na talakayin ang paksâ ng teyolohiya kaugnay ng kontemporaryong direksyon ng pilosopiya. Sa madalîng salitâ, ang sentro ng aking panayam ay teyolohiya ngunit ang lenteng gagamitin ko sa paglalahad nito ay ang perspektibo ng disiplina na kinakatawan ko: ang pilosopiya. Dalawa sa tingin ko ang layunin ng mga nag-organisa nang ibigay sa akin ang nasabing paksâ. Una, nais nila na magkaroon ng isang interdisiplinaryong panayam tungkol sa teyolohiya at pilosopiya; pangalawa, nais din nila sariwain sa isip ng mga dadalo ang posisyon ni Santo Tomas hinggil sa dalawang disiplinang ito, ibig

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sabihin, na sila ay likás na magkaugnay bago sila pinaghiwalay ng panahong moderno. Sa pagbalangkas ng panayam, isinaalang-alang ko ang dalawang malaking okasyon na ginugunitâ natin sa kasalukuyan: ang mga taon ng hubileyo ni Santo Tomas (2023–2025) at ang ika-60 anibersaryo ng Pangalawang Konsilyo Vaticano (1962–1965). Malapit ang relasyon ng nasabing dalawang okasyon sa kabilâ ng problematikong bumabalot sa kanila. Kung si Santo Tomas ang itinuturing na modelo ng tambalan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya, ang Vatican II naman ang nagsaproblema ng Tomistikong bersyon ng ugnayang ito. Kalakip ng *aggiornamento* na isinulong ng mga kinatawan sa Vatican II ang panawagan ng mga teyologo ng simbahan na huwag ikulong ang kanyang teyolohikal na bisyon sa limitadong pamantayan ng Tomismo.<sup>1</sup> Ito ang batayan ng ilang nagsasabi na tila isinantabi na raw ng Vatican II ang Tomistikong bersyon ng ugnayan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya.<sup>2</sup> Sa katagalan, itatamâ ni Papa Juan Pablo II ang pananaw na ito sa pamamagitan ng ensiklikal na *Fides et Ratio* na siyang pormal na nagdeklara ng pagkilala ng Simbahan kay Santo Tomas bilang modelo ng ugnayan ng katwiran at pananampalatayâ.<sup>3</sup> Mahalaga ang ensiklikal ni Papa Juan Pablo II ngunit nananatiling tanong kung nakatulong ba ito o hindî sa pagpreserba ng Tomistikong hermenyutika ng ugnayan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya. Sa nabanggit na ensiklikal din kasi kinumpirma ng Papa ang pagkiling sa metapisika ng Katolikong intelektwal na tradisyon.<sup>4</sup> Maraming tanong ang binuksan ng Papa sa paninindigang ito. Sa pagbaling kay Santo Tomas at metapisika, tinuturing ba nito na magkatumbas ang dalawa? Kung ganito nga ang bása ng Papa, hindî kayâ niya pinapakitid ang interpretasyon sa kaisipan ni Santo Tomas? Paano ba dapat timbangin ang hayagang pagsunod ni Papa Juan Pablo II sa Tomismo at ang pasimpleng paglihis dito ng kanyang kahalili, si Papa Benedikto XVI? Ilan lámang ito sa mga katanungang kinakatawan ng pamagat ng panayam na “Santo Tomas, Metapisika, Teyolohiya at Pilosopiyang Kontinental.” Layunin ng papel na linawin ang relasyon ni Santo Tomas sa metapisika at ang implikasyon ng relasyong ito sa Katolikong teyolohiya. Ang konteksto ng pagtalakay ay ang pilosopiyang kontinental, partikular sa ika-19 at ika-20 na siglo, ang panahon kung kailan inilunsad ang kampanya sa pagpapanariwâ ng Tomismo sa

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Royal, *A Deeper Vision: The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 122–133.

<sup>2</sup> Tingnan Karim Schelkens, John A. Dick, and Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Aggiornamento? Catholicism from Gregory XVI to Benedict XVI* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 137–141. Para sa kontrang opinyon, tingnan Thomas Joseph White, “Thomism After Vatican II,” in *Angelicum*, 96 (2019), 185–202, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26753805>>.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio, on the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Vatican City: Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

harap ng malawakang pagtalikod sa metapisika sa kontinente ng Europa, at bílang ekstensyon, sa Hilagang Amerika. Ang kultural at intelektwal na pagbabagong ito ang sinasaksihan at hinarap ng Vatican II. Hahatiin ko ang aking panayam sa tatlong bahagi. Sa unang bahagi, maghahain ako ng maikling paglalahad ng relasyon ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya at kung bakit at paano ito naging problema pagdating ng ika-19 na siglo. Sa pangalawang bahagi, tutukoyin ko ang tugon sa problemang ito ng mga teyologong Tomista pati na rin ang impluwensya ng kanilang mga pananaw sa teyolohiya sa simulâ at pagkatapos ng Vatican II. Sa pangatlong bahagi, maghahayag ako ng ilang implikasyon ng mga isyung nabanggit sa pag-unawâ ng ugnayan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya dito sa Pilipinas, partikular sa pagaaral at pagtingin sa metapisika at intelektwal na pamana ni Santo Tomas. Bílang konklusyon, pagtitibayin ko ang aking argumento na hindi metapisika ang sukatan ng pananaw ni Santo Tomas alinman pilosopiya, lalò na sa teyolohiya. Ang problema hinggil sa metapisika, bagaman mahalaga, ay isa lámang intelektwal na problema. Hindi ito kapantay at lalòng hindi nito mahihigitan ang mga katanongan kaugnay ng kapakanan at kaligtasan ng tao pati na ng pagpapahayag ng Salitâ ng Diyos sa harap ng mga katanongang ito. Ito ang usapin na dapat pagtuonan ng pansin ng isang napapanahong teyolohiya.

### **Ang Relasyon ng Pilosopiya at Teyolohiya**

Likás na may ugnayan ang pilosopiya at teyolohiya at hindi gáling ang ugnayang ito kay Santo Tomas. Sa katunayan, minana lámang niya ang tradisyong tumangkilik at nagpayabong sa ugnayang ito. Hindi rin ang mga Griyego ang nagpasimulâ nito. Hindi pa umuusbong ang pilosopiya sa Gresya, may mistulang “pilosopiya” at “teyolohiya” na na mababása sa Vedas, Upanishads, at Bhagavad Gita pati na rin sa mga teksto ng Budhismo at Taoismo. Mababakás din ang ganitong kaisipan sa ilang sinaunang relihiyon gaya ng Zoroastranismo. Ang mga politeyistang Ehiptyano ay naniniwalà rin na ang pagaaral tungkol sa realidad ay hindi mahihawalay sa pagtukoy sa diyos. Sa kanila natutunan ni Pitagoras ang ganitong pananaw na minana naman sa kanya ni Platon. Ang gurò ni Platon na si Sokrates ay may inilaan ding puwang sa diyos sa kanyang pamimilosopiya. Ganito rin ang makikita sa mga pilosoper na nauna kay Sokrates, ang mga tinaguriang pre-Sokratiko. Ito ang tradisyong pormal na babalangkasin ni Aristoteles sa

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kanyang *Metapisika* kung saan niya sinabing ang pilosopiya at teyolohiya ay iisa.<sup>5</sup>

Sa pamamagitan ni Aristoteles, partikular ang bersyon niya na pinalaganap ng Neo-platonismo, dumaloy ang tradisyong nagtatangi sa ugnayan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya sa Hudayismo, Islam, at Kristyanidad. Dinatnan na ito ni Santo Tomas nang magsimulâ ang kanyang akademikong karera sa kalagitnâan ng ika-13 na siglo. Gaya ng nabanggit na, hindi kay Santo Tomas nagsimulâ ang pagkilala sa tambalang ito. Kung mayroon man siyang naiambag, ito ay walang iba kundî ang paglilinaw kung ano ang batayan ng nasabing ugnayan. Para kay Santo Tomas, bagaman magkalapit, maling isipin na walang anomang espasyo sa pagitan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya. Mahalagang linawin na malaking bahagi ng tinutukoy na pilosopiya noong ika-13 na siglo ay may kaugnayan sa metapisika ni Aristoteles. Metapisika ang ginamit ni Aristoteles para ipaliwanag ang mga umiiral bilang umiiral.<sup>6</sup> At dahil, ayon sa kanya, ang buong sanlibutan ay umiiral gaya ng diyos, ang pag-aaral dito ay dapat humantong sa pagtukoy sa diyos na umiiral bilang pinakadakilà at pinakamataas. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit ayon sa kanya, ang metapisika mismo ay isang teyolohiya.<sup>7</sup> Kahit noon pang panahon ni Santo Tomas, may mga mainit nang pagtatalo tungkol sa kaisipang ito ng Griyegong pilosoper. Sa katunayan, may mga teyologo gaya ng mga Franciscanong sila San Buenaventura at William ng Ockham, pati na rin ang Dominikong si Meister Eckhart ang piniling lumihis sa tradisyong metapisikal ni Aristoteles.<sup>8</sup> Marami ang nagaakalâ na dahil may mga metapisikal na ideyang hiniram si Santo Tomas kay Aristoteles, syento porsyento siyang sumasangayon sa paham na tinatawag niyang “Ang Pilosoper.” Totoo ito pero hindi rin totoo. Totoo na gaya ni Aristoteles, naniniwalâ si Santo Tomas na may bisâ ang metapisika na ipaliwanag ang mga umiiral bilang umiiral.<sup>9</sup> Ngunit hindi tulad ni Aristoteles, naniniwala siya na hindi ito ang pinakamataas na syensya.<sup>10</sup> Ibig sabihin, para kay Santo Tomas, limitado ang potensya ng metapisika. Kaya nitong ipaliwanag ang mga umiiral bilang umiiral pero hindi ang mismong pag-iral.<sup>11</sup> Sa kanyang

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<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1026a20–30, <<https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.html>>. Tingnan din F.M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1003a15–25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1026a15–20.

<sup>8</sup> Tingnan Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, “Prologue,” in *Commentary on Metaphysics*, <<https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/Metaphysics.htm>>.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q.1,a.5. <<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/>>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 12, a.1, Reply to Obj.3.

pananaw, magkaiba ang umiiral lámang sa mismong pag-iral.<sup>12</sup> Sa katunayan, lahat ng umiiral ay nakikibahagi lámang sa mismong pag-iral. Ang Diyos ay hindi “umiiral” lámang (*ens*) sapagkat siya ang mismong “pag-iral” (*esse*).<sup>13</sup> Para makilala ang Diyos, posibleng maging kasangkapan ang metapisika ngunit sa limitadong paraan.<sup>14</sup> Ang mas lubos na pagkilala sa Diyos ay magmumulâ hindi sa metapisika kundî sa pagtanggap ng pagpapahayag ng Diyos ng kanyang sarili na matatagpôan sa Banal na Kasulatan.<sup>15</sup> Sa madalîng salitâ, di gaya ni Aristoteles na naniniwalang magkaugnay ang pilosopiya at teyolohiya dahil sa kanilang pagkakamukhâ, naninindigan si Santo Tomas na ang ugnayang ito ay posible dahil sa kanilang pagkakaiba. Gayonman, sa kabila ng kanilang kaibahan, hindi ikinakailâ ni Santo Tomas na pwede silang magtulungan. Sa kabuoan, hindi itinuturing ni Santo Tomas ang metapisika bílang pundasyon ng reyalidad o ng pagpapaliwanag ng reyalidad. Ang reyalidad, ayon kay Santo Tomas, ay pagpapahayag ng kabutihan ng Diyos na una niyang isiniwalat sa pamamagitan ng paglikhâ.<sup>16</sup> Sa isang bandá, mistulang pundasyon ang Diyos sapagkat sa kanya nagmula ang lahat; ngunit mistulang hindi rin siya pundasyon sapagkat ang Diyos bílang Diyos ay hindi magagamit bílang isang paliwanag.<sup>17</sup> Sa tingin ni Santo Tomas, hindi sumasampalatayâ ang tao sa Diyos sapagkat kailangan niya ng sagot sa kanyang mga tanong;<sup>18</sup> sa kabaligtaran, ang Diyos, gaya ng hinahayag ng aklat ni Job, ang tumatayông isang malaking tanong na humahámon sa lahat ng inaakalâ ng tao.<sup>19</sup>

Batay sa nabanggit na, marapat na hindi isama si Santo Tomas sa bintang hinggil sa pagkakawing ng metapisika sa Diyos. Sa katunayan, mas metapisikal pa ang turing sa Diyos ng mga modernong pilosoper gaya nila Suarez, Descartes, Leibniz, at Hegel kaysa kay Santo Tomas.<sup>20</sup> Kahit nga sa kontra-teyolohiyang teyolohiya ni Feuerbach ay may mababakás ding metapisika.<sup>21</sup> Ang mga nabanggit na pilosoper ang kumakatawan sa metapisikal na ugnayan ng pilosopiya at teyolohiya dahil sa pagtingin nila sa

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 5. <<https://isidore.co/aquinas/DeEnte%26Essentia.htm>>.

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

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q.2, a.2, Reply to Obj.1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 1, a.2. Tingnan din Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, 4. <<https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles.htm>>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, q.44, a.4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, q.1, a.7, Reply to Obj. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Literal Commentary on Job*, Chapter 40. <<https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/SSJob.htm>>.

<sup>20</sup> Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), 108–153.

<sup>21</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 281–284.

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Diyos bílang paliwanag. Sa hanay ng mga Europeanong pilosoper, namumukod-tangi ang ginawâng pagtangi ni Kant kapwa sa metapisika at sa reyalidad na tinutukoy nito. Sa kanyang panukalà, binigyang-diin ni Kant na walâng reyalidad na pwedeng malaman ang tao.<sup>22</sup> Walâng ibang alam ang tao kundî ang akalà niyang alam niya sa reyalidad; hindî niya malalaman ang reyalidad mismo.<sup>23</sup> Para din kay Kant, walâng kinalaman ang Diyos o pananampalatayà sa pagbalangkas ng kaalaman.<sup>24</sup> Masyadong malayo ang pagitan ng isip ng tao at Diyos upang masangkot ito sa pagbuo ng mga konsepto. Walâ rin daw puwang ang Diyos sa mga epistemolohikal na mithî ng tao. Sa inpluwensya ni Kant, naging palaisipan sa mga susunod na teoryista at iskolar ang estado ng sinasabing “reyalidad.” Totoo nga bang may reyalidad? O baká naman kathâng-isip lámang natin ito? Gayonman, ang mga di-sangayon kay Kant ay patuloy sa paniniwalà na ang lahat ng pwede nating malaman ay nasa daigdig lámang at lantarang naghihintay para tuklasin natin. Kailangan lámang natin buksan ang ating mga mata at sundan ang pangunguna ng lohika at syensya. Ito ang binabandera ng mga tagapagtaguyod ng positibismo ng ika-19 na siglo. Nasa hanay ng kampanyang ito si Augusto Comte. Nang maging malabis ang pagtangkilik sa syensya ng mga gaya ni Comte at ng kanyang mga tagasunod, naging tumpunan din ito ng kritika dahil sa makitid nitong pagtayâ sa halaga ng reyalidad at karanasan ng tao. Nang magmistula nang metapisika ang modernong syensya, nagkaroon ng pangangailangan na balikan ang akalà nating alam natin, sariwain ang una nating tagpô sa reyalidad at tahakin ang landas pabalik sa orihinal na danas bago pa ito panghimasukan ng syensya. Ipinakilala ni Edmund Husserl ang ganitong pagtatangkâ sa tawag na *penomenolohiya*.<sup>25</sup> Alinmang panig ang piliin, positibismo man o penomenolohiya, dalawang bagay ang malinaw nating makikita: una, patuloy na naisantabi ang metapisika dahil sa inpluwensya ng dalawa; pangalawa, nadamay sa pagbuklat ng kahinâan ng metapisika ang paglantad ng sariling problema ng Katolikong teyolohiya. Kailangan samakatuwid ng isang napapanahong interbensyon upang mabigyan ang Katolikong teyolohiya ng bagong sigla sa gitnâ ng mga pasubaling hatid ng modernidad. Minabuti ng nanunungkulang Papa noon, si Papa Leo XIII, na lumingon sa

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<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 349.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 557–559.

<sup>25</sup> Para sa latag ng kasaysayan ng Kanluraning pilosopiya noong ika-19 at ika-20 na siglo, tingnan Allen W. Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn, *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) at Christian Delacampagne, *A History of Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, trans. by M. B. DeBevoise (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

aral ng nakaraan, partikular kay Santo Tomas. Kung paanong naging instrumental si Santo Tomas sa pagresolba ng mga isyung hinarap ng Simbahan noong edad medya at mga kasunod na panahon, umasa ang Papa na makatutulong pa rin ito sa pagtatanggol sa mga aral ng Kristyanong pananampalatayá sa ika-19 na siglo. Inihayag ng Papa ang kanyang panawagan sa ensiklikal na *Aeterni Patris* noong Agosto 4, 1879. Si Papa Leo XIII at ang kanyang *Aeterni Patris* ang pormal na nagbigay-daan upang makaharap ng teyolohikal na kaisipan ni Santo Tomas ang pilosopiyang kontinental.

### Ang Tugon ng mga Tomista at Vatican II

Ang ensiklikal ni Papa Leo XIII na *Aeterni Patris* ang naglahad ng pagaasam para sa bagong direksyon ng Katolikong pilosopiya at teyolohiya sa harap ng malawakang pagtuligsâ ng mga intelektwal ng Europa laban sa metapisika. At dahil may pinagsalohang nakaraan ang metapisika at Katolikong teyolohiya, hindi naiwasang malagay din sa alanganin ang katayòan nito nang maging kwestyunable sa paningin ng mga modernong kritiko ang merito ng metapisika bílang syensya. Upang lunasan ang sitwasyon, nanawagan si Papa Leo XIII para sa mulíng pagbalik kay Santo Tomas bílang gabay sa pagbuò ng Katolikong tugon sa krisis na ito. Kung paanong naging timon si Santo Tomas ng dáting konseho ng Trent pati na rin ng naunang Vatican I, malakas ang kumpyansa ni Papa Leo XIII na ang mga aral ni Santo Tomas pa rin ang magsisilbing gabay ng mga Katolikong iskolar sa pagharap sa hámon ng panahong moderno. Bago mahalal, si Papa Leo XIII, o ang dáting Cardinal Gioacchino Pecci, ay aktibong kalahok na ng pagpapanariwa ng mga kaisipan ni Santo Tomas sa Italya.<sup>26</sup> Pormal niyang pinalawig ang adhikàng ito sa kanyang *Aeterni Patris*. Umaasa siya na sa pagsunod sa Tomistikong tradisyon, mas mapapabuti ang pagtuturò at pangangaral ng Kristyanong pananampalatayà. Walàng duda ang pagkiling ng Papa kay Santo Tomas sa kanyang ensiklikal. Isang bagay lámang ang tila iniwan nitong hindi malinaw. Ang intelektwal na debate noong ika-19 na siglo ay umiikot sa kanselasyon ng metapisika (sa ngalan ng syensya, penomenolohiya, epistemolohiya), ngunit hindi naghayag ang ensiklikal ng malinaw na tuntonin kung paano isasagawà ang pagbalik kay Santo Tomas sa gitnà ng nabanggit nang metapisikal na krisis. Ang tanong ng iba, kung ang intelektwal na pamana ni Santo Tomas ay may bahid ng metapisika, metapisikal din ba dapat ang daan pabalik sa kanya?

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Louis Perrier, *The Revival of Scholastic Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2010), 159–160.

Ito ang problema na hindi ispisipikong tinalakay ng teksto ng ensiklikal. At dahil hindi tinukoy ito, nagkanya-kanya na lámang ang mga Tomista sa pagkamada ng kanilang tugon sa panawagan ni Papa Leo XIII ayon sa inaakalà nilang marapat na intepretasyon ng *Aeterni Patris*. Ang kanya-kanyang tugon na ito ng mga Tomista ang siyang huhubog sa anyô ng Tomismo sa kataposan ng ika-19 na siglo hanggang sa magbukás ang Vatican II. Kung nakatulong o hindi ang nasabing iba-ibang Tomistang tugon para palakasin ang Tomismo ay bagay na bibigyan natin ng linaw sa seksyong ito. Para sa malinaw na presentasyon, lilimatahan ko lámang sa tatlo ang tutukoyin kong Tomistang tugon. Sa tanong na dapat din bang balikan ang metapisika sa pagbalik kay Santo Tomas, ang tatlong naging dominanteng tugon ng mga Tomista ay (1) “oo,” (2) “hindi,” at (3) “magkahalòng oo at hindi.”

Nangunguna para sa “oo,” ibig sabihin, sa paninindigan na kalakip ng pagbalik kay Santo Tomas ang pagbalik sa metapisika ang primerong Tomista ng ika-20 na siglo, si Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange.<sup>27</sup> Si Lagrange ay kontemporaryong disipulo ng isa pang masugid na post-Tridentinang Tomista, si Cardinal Tomas Cayetano.<sup>28</sup> Si Cardinal Cayetano ay tanyag bílang primerang interpreter ni Santo Tomas sa panahong ng Repormasyon at pagkatapos ng konseho ng Trent. Kapanahon niya ang ilan pang post-Tridentinang Tomistang komentarista gaya nila Juan ni Santo Tomas at Domingo Bañez pero natatangi ang reputasyon at katanyagan ni Cardinal Cayetano. Sa katunayan, ang komentaryo ni Cardinal Cayetano ang tanging kalakip ng aprubadong bersyon ng *Summa Theologiae* ni Santo Tomas ayon mismo sa utos ni Papa Leo XIII.<sup>29</sup> Bagaman magkaiba ng panahon, nagkakasundô si Cardinal Cayetano at Lagrange sa pagtatanggol ng reyalismo at intelektwal na ugnayan ni Santo Tomas at Aristoteles, o mas partikular, ng kaisipan ni Santo Tomas at metapisika ni Aristoteles. Para kay Lagrange, posible lámang maunawaan ang isip ni Santo Tomas gamit ang metapisikal na balangkas at bokabularyo ni Aristoteles. Ang metapisikal na balangkas na ito ay walang iba kundí ang reyalismo. Inihayag ni Lagrange ang kabuòan ng kanyang pagkiling sa reyalismo ni Santo Tomas sa kanyang

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<sup>27</sup> Cajetan Cuddy, O.P., “Introduction,” in Réginald-Garrigou Lagrange, O.P., *Knowing the Love of God: Lessons from A Spiritual Master* (Illinois: Lighthouse Catholic Media, 2018), xv; Richard A. Peddicord, O.P., “Another Look at the Theological Enterprise of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.,” in *Angelicum*, 82 (2005), 835–848, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44616779>>.

<sup>28</sup> Cajetan Cuddy, O.P., “Sixteenth-Century Reception of Aquinas by Cajetan,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas*, ed. by Matthew Levering and Marcus Plested (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 144–158.

<sup>29</sup> Leo XIII, *Placere Nobis, Motu Proprio* (18 January 1880), <[https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/la/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_motu-proprio\\_18800118\\_placere-nobis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_l-xiii_motu-proprio_18800118_placere-nobis.html)>.

obrang *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*.<sup>30</sup> Sa nasabing akdâ, pinalawig ni Lagrange ang turò ni Santo Tomas na ang kaalaman ay nagmumulâ sa ating paggagap kung ano ang nariyan. Nagsisimulâ ang paggagap na ito sa ating pandama bago tayo makabuô ng isang ideya tungkol dito. Ang kaalaman natin tungkol sa Diyos ay nangyayari rin sa ganitong paraan. Umaasa lámang ang limitadong isip ng tao sa pahiwatig ng mga bagay na nariyan na. Kaugnay nito, anomang karanasan at kaalaman tungkol sa Diyos ay nagmumulâ sa pagdanas at pag-alam muna sa mga bagay na nakapaligid sa atin. Mahalaga ang metapisika sapagkat ito ang nagsisilbing kasangkapan para makamit ang kaalamang ito. Si Lagrange ang maituturing na primerong representante ng Neo-Tomismo, ang tawag na ibinigay sa kampanya ng pagbalik kay Santo Tomas na pinanawagan ng *Aeterni Patris*.<sup>31</sup> Kabílang sa mga naging estudyante ni Lagrange ay ang dáting Karol Wojtyla (na naging Papa Juan Pablo II) at ang bantog na Dominikong si Marie Dominique Chenu. Ang isa pang Dominikong teyologo na si Yves Congar ay kumikilala sa naging inpluwensya ni Lagrange sa kanyang bokasyong Dominiko.<sup>32</sup> Ang bantog na Tomistang si Jacques Maritain ay naging malapít din kay Lagrange bago sila pinaghiwalay ng magkaiba nilang bása kay Santo Tomas at mga politikal na pananaw.<sup>33</sup> Sa kabilâ ng kaugnayang ng mga nabanggit na personalidad, tíla walâ ni isa man sa kanila ang sumunod sa metapisikal na yapak ni Lagrange. Kahit ang konsepto ng metapisika ng pinaka-metapisikal sa grupong ito, si Jacques Maritain, ay mas malapit kay Bergson kaysa kay Aristoteles.<sup>34</sup> Sa pagdatíng ng Vatican II, ang uri ng metapisika na kinakatawan ni Lagrange ang isa mga unang isasantabi ng mga obispo.<sup>35</sup> Katibayan ito ng paghahanap at pagiging-bukás ng mga kinatawan ng Vatican II sa bagong perspektibo at bokabularyo na maglalapit sa Simbahan sa kasalukuyang panahon. Gayonman, sa tingin ko, hindí dapat itumbas sa naging kapalaran ng metapisika ang paghusga sa kontribusyon ni Lagrange sa pangangalagà ng Katolikong pilosopiya at teyolohiya. Ang kanyang isinulat tungkol sa mistikal na teyolohiya pati na rin ang pagharap niya sa tinaguriang “bagong teyolohiya” ay sariwâng bukal ng mga kaisipang

<sup>30</sup> Tingnan Reginald-Garrigou Lagrange, O.P., *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. by Patrick Cummins, O.S.B. (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1950).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Peddicord, O.P., *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.* (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), 35–36.

<sup>32</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., “Chapter 2, My Testimony,” in *Journal of a Theologian, 1946-1956*, trans. by Denis Mins (Adelaide: ATF Press Publishing, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garrone: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 146. Tingnan din *Ibid.*, 93–100.

<sup>34</sup> Tingnan Jacques Maritain, *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain: Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella (ed.), *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 312.

nagaanyaya sa mga Katolikong iskolar para higit pang limiin. Mapapansin ang pagkakahawig ng bása ni Lagrange kay Santo Tomas sa pananaw ng isa pang uri ng Tomismo, ang Tomismo ng Riverforest o kilala rin sa tawag na Aristotelyanong Tomismo.<sup>36</sup> Isa sa mga kilalang tagapagtaguyod nito ay ang manunulat at laikong Tomista na si Ralph McInerny.

Negatibo naman (ang posisyong “hindî”) ang pangalawang tugon kaugnay ng metapisika at pagbalik kay Santo Tomas. Para sa grupong ito, hindî kailangan ng metapisika sa pagpapanariwà ng Tomismo. Hindî lámang hindî ito kailangan, hadlang pa ito kung tutuosin sa pagsusulong ng makabago at napapanahong pagbása sa mga aral ni Santo Tomas. Nangunguna sa pagbandera ng ganitong bása ang Heswitang si Jose Marechal at sa kanyang liderato, mas nakilala ang kinakatawan niyang grupo bílang “transendental na Tomismo.” Sa pangalan pa lámang, mahihiwatigan na ang hangarin ng mga transendental na Tomista na ilapit ang pamanang intelektwal ni Santo Tomas sa dominanteng pilosopiya ng modernidad, ang epistemolohiya ni Immanuel Kant. Sa halip na iwasan, layon ng mga tagasunod ni Marechal na harapin ang pilosopiya ni Kant at ipakita ang kakulangan nito gamit ang pilosopikal na ideya ni Santo Tomas. Kabilang sa mga kahinàng ito ang turò ni Kant na hindî natin kailanman malalaman ang mga bagay na nariyan na. Hindî ko talaga malalaman kung ano ang aso. Ang tangìng alam ko ay kung ano lamang ang alam ko tungkol sa aso. Kapag tinanong mo ako kung ano ang aso, anomang depinisyon na sabihin ko sa iyo ay pahayag hindî ng natura ng aso kundî ng ideya ko tungkol sa aso. Ibig sabihin, sa pagturing ko sa kahit anong bagay, ang aking alam sa kanila ay lagìng limitado sa mga ideyang meron ako. Inilalapat ko lámang ang mga ideyang ito sa mga bagay sa paligid para palabasin na may alam ako sa kanila. Dahil sadyàng hindî ko alam kung ano talaga ang mga bagay sa mundo, ayon kay Kant, dapat na una kong tukoyin ang mga ideya sa aking isip kaysa anomang bagay. Ito ang dapat kong maging prayoridad. Una sa lahat ang pagbatid sa isip kayâ tinawag ito ni Kant na transendental.<sup>37</sup> Malaking inpluwensya si Kant sa kaisipan ni Marechal. Kontra kay Lagrange at iba pang Neo-Tomista, hindî siya kumbinsido na may kakayanan ang isip ng tao na alamin ang natura ng mga bagay sa mundo at sa pamamagitan nila, akyatin ang hagdan tungò sa pagkilala sa Diyos. Sa halip na sa mga bagay sa mundo magsimulâ, iminungkahi ni Marechal ang pagkilala sa Diyos (teyolohiya) na naguumpisa sa mismong paghahanap sa Diyos ng isip ng tao.<sup>38</sup> Hindî ang kaalaman natin sa mga bagay-bagay ang maghahatid sa atin

<sup>36</sup> John Knasas, *Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 9–14.

<sup>37</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 133.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony M. Matteo, *Quest for the Absolute: The Philosophical Vision of Joseph Marechal* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), 64–84.

sa Diyos; sa halip, ang ating kaalaman sa Diyos ang dapat na magbunyag sa atin ng kadakilaan at kagandahan ng mga bagay na nakapaligid sa atin. Ang Diyos bílang hindî-masusukat ang siyang dapat na maging pamantayan ng lahat ng nasusukat. Minamaliit natin ang Diyos kapag binaligtad natin ito. Halimbawà, maayos kung nakikita ang retrato ng aking anak sa kwadro dahil nga nakakwadro ito. Ang kwadro ang nagsisilbing katiyakan ng pananatili ng retrato sa sentro. Gayonman, madalas nangyayari na napapakò lámang ang pansin natin sa retrato at hindî sa kwadro sa kabilâ ng importanteng papel nito. Payak na paglalarawan ito ng nais sabihin ni Marechal. Kung ihahambing sa kanyang púnto, ang Diyos ang kwadro at ang mga bagay sa mundo ang retrato. Mas nais niyang unahin ang pagkilala sa Diyos sapagkat ito ang madalas malimotan sa ating pagtingin sa retrato. Sa paningin ni Marechal, mas posibleng maging inklusibo at kumprehensibo ang ating pananaw sa mundo kung magsisimulâ ang ating isip sa pakikipagsapalaran nito na matagpôan muna ang Diyos kaysa sa mga bagay-bagay. Hindî lamang si Kant ang inpluwensya ng transendental na Tomismo. Makikilatis din dito ang presensya ng mga kaisipan ni San Agustin at San Buenaventura. Kabilang sa mga naimpluwensyahan ng transendental na Tomismo ay ang mga Heswitang teyologong gaya nila Karl Rahner at Bernard Lonergan. Para sa kanila, ang paglalahad ng tagpôan ng isip ng tao at ng Diyos ang siyang primerong pananagutan ng isang teyologo. Anomang kaalaman o diskurso sa pananampalataya ay sekondarya lamang dito. Isang magandang paglalarawan ng púnto ni Rahner ang panayam na “Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God” na ibinahagi niya sa okasyon ng ikapitong sentenaryo ng pagpanaw ni Santo Tomas. Sa nasabing panayam, agad mapapansin ang prayoridad ni Rahner sa pag-abot sa Diyos ng isip ng tao na para sa kanya ay siyang pundasyon ng isang napapanahong Tomistikong teyolohiya.<sup>39</sup> Inilahad din ni Lonergan ang kanyang pananaw sa Tomismo at makabagong Katolikong teyolohiya sa panayam na pinamagatang “The Future of Thomism.” Sa kanyang pahayag, ispisipikong tinukoy ni Lonergan ang bagong direksyon na dapat tahakin ng Katolikong teyolohiya na bagaman lumilingon kay Santo Tomas ay dapat na umiwas na maging duplikasyon lámang ng ginawà niya noong edad medya, higit sa lahat, ng metapisika.<sup>40</sup> Bagaman naiiba, may kaalyado ang transendental na Tomismo

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<sup>39</sup> Karl Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God,” in *The Journal of Religion*, 58 (1978), S107–S125, <<https://doi.org/10.1086/jr.58.41575984>>. Tingnan din Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. by William Dych, S.J. (New York: Continuum, 1994); Paul Ricoeur, “‘Response’ to Karl Rahner’s Lecture: On the Incomprehensibility of God” in *The Journal of Religion*, 58 (October 2015): S126–S131, <<https://doi.org/10.1086/jr.58.41575985>>.

<sup>40</sup> Bernard Lonergan, “The Future of Thomism,” in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 13, A Second Collection*, ed. by Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 39–47.

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sa pilosopiya ng mga gaya nina Maurice Blondel at Soren Kierkegaard pati na rin ng teyolohiya ng mga Protestanteng sila Paul Tillich at Karl Barth. Tunay na malayo ang timpla ng mga kaisipan ng mga iskolar na nabanggit ngunit kasundô nila ang transendental na Tomismo sa pagtanggì sa reyalistang metapisika. Isang Tomista ang higit na nainpluwensyahan ni Kierkegaard sa pagtalikod sa rasyonalismo at reyalistang metapisika. Ito ay si Cornelio Fabro. Nag-iisa si Fabro sa kanyang klase ng Tomismo. Sa kanyang panukalà, ang hangad ng tao na maka-isa ang Diyos ang tunay na batayan ng kanyang pagiging-ganap. Tinutolan ni Fabro ang malabis na gamit ng katwiran sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa Diyos.<sup>41</sup> Ito ang elementong naghihiwalay sa kanya sa tradisyonal na Tomismo ni Lagrange at ng transendental na Tomismo ni Marechal. May alingawngaw din ang tinig ni San Agustin at San Buenaventura sa mga akdâ ni Fabro, higit sa lahat, sa pagtukoy niya sa loob ng tao bilang simulâ at sityo ng kanyang pakikipagniig sa Diyos. Mababanaagan din ang pagkakahawig ng kanyang posisyon kay Blondel dahil sa pareho nilang pagtatanggì sa higit na halaga ng kalooban ng tao kaysa sa kanyang katwiran sa pakikipagkaisa sa Diyos.<sup>42</sup>

Ang pangatlong posisyon kaugnay ng pagbalik kay Santo Tomas ay magkahalòng “oo at hindi.” Naniniwalà ang mga iskolar na nabibílang sa kategoryang ito na posibleng magkaroon ng puwang ang metapisika sa pagbalik kay Santo Tomas ngunit hindî sa paraang kasinghipit o kasingkitid ng kinakatawan ni Lagrange. Hindî rin sila sangayon kay Lagrange sa pagturing sa metapisika bilang pangunahing konsiderasyon sa pagbalik kay Santo Tomas. Ang pagsasaalang-alang sa metapisika, ayon sa kanila, ay nakasalalay sa mga mas pundamental na pamantayan ng pagpapakilalang mulî kay Santo Tomas sa modernong panahon. Maraming mga Tomista na may iba’t ibang pananaw ang maihahanay sa pangatlong posisyong ito. Una sa listahan ang mga Tomista na naninindigan na may mas pangunahing konsiderasyon ang kasaysayan sa pag-aaral kay Santo Tomas o sa Kristyanong teyolohiya. Para sa kanila, ang halaga ng metapisika sa kaisipan ni Santo Tomas ay higit na lalinaw kung sisipatin ito gamit ang perspektibo ng kasaysayan. Nangunguna sa grupong ito ang mga gaya nila Marie Dominique Chenu at ang kanyang kaibigang si Etienne Gilson. Pinag-aralan nila ang kaisipan ni Santo Tomas hindî bilang hiwalay na sistema kundî bilang isang organikong kaisipan na nakapaloob sa isang partikular na kasaysayan. Para kay Chenu, dahil historikal si Santo Tomas, hindî dapat ituring ang kanyang kaisipan bilang isang nag-iisang pamantayan ng

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<sup>41</sup> Cornelio Fabro, *Selected Works of Cornelio Fabro, Volume 9, God (An Introduction to Problems in Theology)*, trans. by Joseph T. Papa (Maryland: IVE Press, 2017), 101–107.

<sup>42</sup> Maurice Blondel, *Philosophical Exigencies of Christian Religion*, trans. by Olivia Blanchette (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 126–130.

ortodoksya.<sup>43</sup> Para kay Gilson, kay Santo Tomas makikita ang unang tangkâ na madaig ang metapisika ni Aristoteles sa pamamagitan ng metapisika ng *esse* na, ayon sa kanya'y, pinasinayaan ni Santo Tomas.<sup>44</sup> Kasaysayan din ang ginamit na giya ng mga Tomistang gaya nila Yves Congar at Joseph Pieper sa kanilang pagbâsa kay Santo Tomas.<sup>45</sup> Sa kasaysayan din nakaangkla ang proyekto ni Henri de Lubac na makabuô ng isang teyolohiya na ayon sa mga kritiko ay kontra-Tomismo ngunit mapapatunayang higit na malapit sa diwâ ni Santo Tomas matapos ang masusing pagbâsa.<sup>46</sup> At dahil sa kanilang pagsisikap na makabuô ng naiibang bâsa kay Santo Tomas at Kristyanong teyolohiya na nakabatay sa gabay ng kasaysayan, sila Chenu, Congar, Schillebeeckx, at de Lubac ay nakaranas ng paghihigpit at pagkastigo mulâ mismo sa simbahan dahil sa suspetsang pagkompromiso sa ortodoksya. Ang prayoridad sa kasaysayan ay makikita rin sa mga akda ng mga pilosoper gaya ni G.W.F Hegel, Marx, Sartre, at R.G. Collingwood. Nakasentro rin sa kasaysayan ang pilosopikal na kaisipan ni Martin Heidegger. Sa kanyang teyorya, malinaw na mababâsa ang matalik na ugnayan sa pagitan ng kasaysayan at karanasan ng tao. Ang pangingibabaw ng kasaysayan sa mga pilosopikal at teyolohikal na kaisipan sa kontinente ng Europa ang nagbunsod sa isang Alemang teyologo para sabihin na pagkaraan daw ng Vatican II, ang mga pinakamahalagang tanong na dapat harapin ng Kristyanong teyolohiya ay hindî tungkol sa metapisika kundî tungkol sa relasyon ng pananampalatayâ at kasaysayan. Ang Alemang teyologong ito ay si Joseph Ratzinger.<sup>47</sup> Ang kabalintunâan, nang siya ay maging cardinal at maging tagapamunò ng Kongregasyon para sa Doktrina ng Pananampalatayâ, si Cardinal Ratzinger mismo ang nanguna sa pag-usig kay Edward Schillebeeckx nang mas ilapit nito sa kasaysayan ang kanyang bersyon ng Kristolohiya.<sup>48</sup> Ang pangalawang grupo na mayroon ding

<sup>43</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, trans. by Paul Philibert, O.P. (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), 127.

<sup>44</sup> Etienne Gilson, *Thomism: The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Laurence Shook and Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2002), 137–174.

<sup>45</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., *A History of Theology* (Adelaide: ATF Press Publishing, 2019), 109–132; Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. by John Murray, S.J., and Daniel O'Connor (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1966), 99–104.

<sup>46</sup> Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998); Jacob W. Wood, *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. by Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 158.

<sup>48</sup> Stephan Van Erp, "Commentary," in *Concilium: International Journal of Theology* (2022), 135–136, <<https://concilium.hymnsam.co.uk/media/1127/founders-issue-final.pdf>>. Tingnan din Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology (The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx)*, Volume VI (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

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magkasamang “oo at hindi” na tugon sa metapisika ay ang mga Tomistang pinagtatabi ang Tomismo at penomenolohiya. Bilang isang tradisyong pilosopikal, penomenolohiya ang nangampanya, sa pamamagitan ni Edmund Husserl, na ibalik muli sa kognisyon ng tao, ibig sabihin, sa mismong suheto, ang pundasyon ng pamimilosopiya. Kabaligtaran ito ng reyalismo ng tradisyonal Tomismo na laging nagsisimula sa mga bagay na nasa labas ng isip ng tao. Hindi naman lahat ng naging estudyante ni Husserl ay sumunod sa transcendental (ibig sabihin, prayoridad sa kognisyon ng tao) na direksyon ng penomenolohiya ni Husserl. Isa sa maraming humiwalay sa pagkiling ni Husserl sa transcendentalismo ay ang pilosoper galing Polanya na si Roman Ingarden. Para kay Ingarden, hindi sapat ang epistemolohiyang transcendental ni Husserl para maipaliwanag ang kabuodan ng reyalidad.<sup>49</sup> Isa sa mga naimpluwensyahan ni Ingarden ang kanyang estudyanteng nagngangalang Karol Wojtyla. Sa pamamagitan din niya, nakilala ni Wojtyla ang mga akda ni Max Scheler. Ang natutunan ni Wojtyla sa Tomistang si Lagrange, sa penomenolohistang si Ingarden, pati na rin kay Scheler, ang magiging sangkap ng kanyang personalismong penomenolohiya.<sup>50</sup> Isa pang penomenohilista na lumihis din sa transcendental na direksyon ni Husserl ay ang kanyang dating kalihim na si Edith Stein. Kapwa may bahid ng metapisika ang pilosopikal na pananaw ni Wojtyla at Stein ngunit pareho rin silang umiwas sa reyalistang metapisika sa pamamagitan ng kanilang desisyon na simulan ang kanilang repleksyon sa tao kaysa sa mga bagay sa mundo.<sup>51</sup> Maihahambing ang penomenolohikal na Tomistang kaisipan ni Wojtyla sa mga ideyang mababasa sa isa pang Tomistang iskolar na si Norris Clarke.<sup>52</sup> Mapapansin din ang pagkakahawig ng penomenolohikal na Tomismo ni Wojtyla, Stein, at Clarke at transcendental na Tomismo ni Marechal dahil pare-parehong nagmumulâ ang kanilang repleksyon sa suheto (bahagi ito ng inpluwensya ni Kant sa penomenolohiya ni Husserl). Ang pagkakaiba ng dalawa, epistemolohikal ang direksyon ng transcendental na Tomismo samantalang etiko-antropolohikal naman ang sa penomenolohikal na Tomismo. Ang pangatlong grupo na bukás bagaman kritikal sa metapisika ay ang bagong-sibol na hibla ng Tomismo sa anyô ng

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<sup>49</sup> Roman Ingarden, *On the Motives which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism*, trans. by Arnor Hannibalson (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 38–43.

<sup>50</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Act and Related Essays (The English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyla / John Paul II, Volume 1)*, trans. by Grzegorz Ignatik (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 116–117.

<sup>51</sup> Edith Stein, O.C.D., *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being (The Collected Works of Edith Stein, Volume IX)*, trans. by Kurt F. Reinhardt (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), 35–43.

<sup>52</sup> W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 45–64.

analitikong Tomismo o kilala rin sa tawag na Wittgensteinianong Tomismo.<sup>53</sup> Sentral sa analitikong pilosopiya ang lohika at pagsusuri ng mga pangungusap ngunit sa kaso ng analitikong Tomismo, etikal ang dahilan ng pag-usbong nito. Nagsimulâ ang lahat nang ang mga Ingles na pilosoper gaya nina Elizabeth Anscombe<sup>54</sup> at Philippa Foot<sup>55</sup> ay nagtangkang dumulog sa mga kaisipan ni Aristoteles bilang pangontra sa dominasyon ng modernong etika sa kulturang intelektwal na Ingles.<sup>56</sup> Ang pagbaling kay Aristoteles, partikular sa kanyang pagdidiin sa papel ng mga birtud sa pagpapakatao, ang siyang naging tulay upang mapalapit ang analitikong tradisyon kay Santo Tomas. Sa kasalukuyan, ang analitikong pilosopiya ang masasabi nating isa sa mga pinaka-dinamikong sityo ng pagpapanariwâ ng kaisipan ni Santo Tomas.<sup>57</sup> Ang mga bantog na Tomista gaya nila Brian Davies, Anthony Kenny, at Anthony Lisska ay pawang galing sa tradisyong ito gayundin sila John Haldane, John Finnis, at Alasdair MacIntyre. Itinuturing din ni Eleonore Stump ang kanyang sarili bilang isang analitikong Tomista. Mapapailing na lámang marahil si Bertrand Russell kung mababalitâan niya kung paano pinahahalagahan ng kanyang mga kaalyado sa analitikong tradisyon ang mga ideya ni Santo Tomas na minsan na niyang kinutyâ dahil anyâ'y walâ raw tunay na ambag sa pilosopiya.<sup>58</sup> Ilan sa mga teyologong kakikitaan kapwâ ng inpluwensya ng analitikong tradisyon at Tomismo ay ang mga Dominikong Ingles na sina Herbert McCabe at Timothy Radcliffe.

Batay sa nailahad, mapapatunayan na hindî naging madalî ang kampanya na inilunsad ng *Aeterni Patris* ni Leo XIII para mapanariwâ ang pag-aaral sa kaisipan ni Santo Tomas. Kinailangan ng mga Tomista na harapin at lutasin ang tanong kung bahagi nga ba ng intelektwal na pamana ni Tomas ang pagsandal sa metapisika o hindî. Ang iba-ibang tugon sa tanong na ito ang naging giya ng iba-iba ring direksyon ng Tomismo. Sa madalîng salitâ, napanariwâ nga ng *Aeterni Patris* ang pag-aaral kay Santo Tomas ngunit hindî ayon sa paraan at resultang inaasahan nito. Sa halip na makabuô ang Tomistang kampo ng iisang tinig kontra modernidad,

<sup>53</sup> Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 21–22.

<sup>54</sup> Tingnan Elizabeth Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, ed. by Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> Tingnan Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> Tingnan Benjamin J. B. Lipscomb, *The Women Are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Tingnan Craig Paterson and Mathew S. Pugh (ed.), *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), 463.

nagkahiwa-hiwalay ito sa iba-iba at minsa'y magkakasalungat na tinig. Iba-iba rin ang naging relasyon ng Tomismo sa modernidad. Ang mga komentarihang gaya ni Lagrange ay tahasang kontra dito habang ang mga gaya nila Marechal, Chenu, at Wojtyla ay handang iangkop ito bagaman iba-iba rin ang lebel at uri ng pag-angkop na isinusulong nila. Sa gitnang lahat ng ito, naroon ang dominanteng tanong tungkol sa metapisika. Ang dominanteng papel na ito ng metapisika ang siya ring magtatakdâ ng magiging direksyon ng teyolohiya bago at matapos maganap ang Vatican II. Marami ang nagsasabing tagumpay ng Simbahan ang Vatican II ngunit para sa mga direktang lumahok dito, partikular ang mga teyologo, kinakatawan ng Vatican II ang isang malaking krisis kasama na ang krisis sa Tomismo. At magpapatuloy ang krisis na ito hanggang sa matapos magsara ang konseho noong 1965. Ang pagsulpot ng iba't ibang kaisipang teyolohikal sa Pilipinas ay maituturing na bahagi ng krisis na ito. Gayunman, bagaman krisis, mayroon pa rin itong positibong epekto. Tinawag ko itong positibo sapagkat pahiwatig lagi ang krisis ng isang nagbabantang pagbabago. Ang krisis na naguudyok na sumulong sa halip na umurong, na maghanap ng direksyon sa halip na magpakulong sa sariling alinlangan ay isang positibong karanasan. Ganito ko inilalarawan ang teyolohikal na klima sa Pilipinas matapos ang Vatican II na siya kong tatalakayin sa susunod na bahagi.

### **Ang Teyolohiya sa Pilipinas at Vatican II**

Dalawang leksyon ang mapupulot natin sa katatapos na bahagi ng papel. Una, hindi magkatumbas o magkapareho si Santo Tomas at Tomismo; pangalawa, hindi rin magkatumbas o magkapareho ang Tomismo at metapisika. Mahalagang tandaan ang pagkakaibang ito sa pagtaya natin sa relasyon ng pamanang intelektwal ni Santo Tomas, metapisika, at Vatican II. Ibig sabihin, bagaman may nagpapalagay na winakasan ng Vatican II ang dominasyon ng Tomismo sa Katolikong teyolohiya, hindi ito dapat ipakahulugan na isinantabi na ng Simbahang Katolika ang herensya ni Santo Tomas. Kung tutuosin, hindi mismong Tomismo ang tinanggihan ng Vatican II kundî ang ugnayang nagtatali sa Tomismo at metapisika. Ang pagtanggap ito ay tugon ng Simbahan sa mga hamon ng modernidad para sa isang uri ng teyolohiya na makabuluhan at napapanahon. Tila hindi na bagay ang dekahon at pormulaikong bokabularyo ng sinaunang teyolohiya na nakasandal sa lengwahe ng metapisika kayâ kailangang palitan ng isang teyolohiyang sasalamon sa mensahe ng Ebanghelyo at sa mithiin pati na sa saloobin ng modernong mananampalataya. Gayonman, hindi dapat ituring ang pagtanggap ito bilang isang lubusang pagtalikod sa metapisika. Kung may tinalikuran man ang simbahan, limitado ito sa isang partikular na basa sa metapisika at hindi sa kabuoan nito. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit ang mga iskolar na nagtataguyod ng penomenolohikal na Tomismo, analitikong

Tomismo, at Aristotelyanong Tomismo ay patuloy na kumikilala sa metapisika bagaman iba na ang hermenyutika at lapit nila dito kung ihahambing sa establisyimentong Tomismo. Isang mabisang kasangkapan ang metapisika. Hindî solusyon ang tuluyang pagsasantabi dito kung ang problema’y limitado lámang sa partikular na gamit nito. Ang paghahanap ng bagong lapat ng metapisika ang naging hámon sa mga teyologo bago at matapos ang Vatican II.

Ang paglihis sa makitid na metapisika ay maituturing natin na sangkap ng intelektwal na *aggiornamento* na ipinunla ng Vatican II. At gaya ng nabanggit na, ang paglihis na ito ay hindi nangangahulugan ng pagtanggap sa intelektwal na pamana ni Santo Tomas kundi higit pang pagpapasigla nito sa pamamagitan ng paglikhâ ng mga bagong hermenyutikal na espasyo na hindî kasing kitid o kasing higpit ng dati. Mayroong obserbasyon na nagsasabing ang limitadong presensya raw ni Santo Tomas sa ilang dokumento ng Vatican II gaya ng *Optatam Totius, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Gravissimum Educationis*, pati ang *Lumen Gentium* at *Gaudium et Spes* ay indikasyon ng kabigôan hindî lámang ng *Aeterni Patris* ni Papa Leo XIII kundî pati na ng mga nauna pang pahayag ng Simbahan kontra modernidad gaya ng *Pascendi Domini Gregis* ni Papa Pio X at *Humani Generis* ni Papa Pio XII. Makikita rin daw dito ang pagkatalo ng mga nagsusulong na gawing sentro ng kampanya ng *aggiornamento* ng Vatican II ang persona at mga aral ni Santo Tomas.<sup>59</sup> Marahil, kung ang adyenda ng mga diumano’y nagsusulong ang pagbabatayan, maituturing nga na kabigôan ang pagkawalâ ni Santo Tomas sa sentro. Ngunit kung titingnan natin ang mismong diwâ at persona ni Santo Tomas bílang teyologo, makikita na ang sinasabing pagkawalâ sa sentro, sa katotohanan, ay isang malaking tagumpay para makilala natin si Santo Tomas bílang “Santo Tomas” at hindî bílang isang anito lámang ng Tomismo. Sabi nga ng Italianong pilosoper na si Umberto Eco, kung may trahedyang mang maituturing sa búhay ni Santo Tomas, hindî ito ang kanyang maagang pagkamatay kundî ang kanyang pagkakabilanggô sa Tomismo na gumamit sa kanyang pangalan at naging sanhi ng malíng akalâ na siya ay isa lámang medyebal na mastrong de-kahon at konserbatibo.<sup>60</sup> Malayò ito sa katotohanan kung babalikan natin at titingnan ang mas malaking larawan ng naging karanasan ni Santo Tomas bílang gurò at mangangaral na walang

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<sup>59</sup> Tingnan Gerald A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 230; Aidan Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas: An Introduction to His Life, Work, and Influence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 142; Joseph A. Komonchak, “Thomism and the Second Vatican Council,” in *Continuity and Plurality in Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Gerald A. McCool, S.J.*, ed. by Anthony J. Cernera (Connecticut: Sacred Heart University Press, 1998), 53–73.

<sup>60</sup> Umberto Eco, “In Praise of Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Wilson Quarterly*, 10 (Autumn 1986).

takot hinarap ang mga hamon ng kanyang sariling panahon sa pamamagitan ng paghahanap sa katotohanan saan man ito posibleng matagpôan. Kagaya niya, maraming iskolar at eksperto ng Kristyanong pananampalataya ang naglakas-loob ding nanindigan para sa pagpapabago sa panahong kinakailangan ito ng Simbahan. Ang mga Tomistang gaya nila Chenu, Wojtyla, Congar, Rahner, Lonergan, at iba pang gaya nilang teyologo ang naging daan upang maramdaman ang presensya ni Santo Tomas sa konseho at tulongan ang Vatican II na tuparin ang layunin kung bakit idinaos ito: ang isang makatotohanan at malawakang *aggiornamento*. Ang kanilang buhay at hindi-matatawarang ambag ang katibayan na ang presensya at diwà ni Santo Tomas ay hindi nalilimatahan lámang sa pagbanggit o paglapat ng kanyang pangalan sa teksto o dokumento. Aktibong nakisangkot si Santo Tomas sa *aggiornamento* ng Simbahan sa pamamagitan ng mga ekspertong piniling sundan ang kanyang inspirasyon at halimbawà bílang teyologong hindi takot sa *iba* at *bago* at lalòng hindi marunong magkubli lámang sa awtoridad ng palagian o nakasanayan.

May isa ring Filipinong Dominiko at teyologo na naniniwalang hindi kinansela si Santo Tomas ng Vatican II sa kabilà ng minimalistang presensya nito sa mga pinal at opisyal na dokumento. Ang Filipinong Dominiko at teyologong ito ay si Arsobispo Leonardo Z. Legaspi na siya mismong pinarangalan ng taonang “Linggo ng Teyolohiya” sa pangangasiwà ng Facultad ng Sagradong Teyolohiya; Instituto ng Relihiyon; at Sentro sa Teyolohiya, Relihiyosong Aralin, at Etika ng Unibersidad ni Santo Tomas. Isa si Arsobispo Legaspi sa una, kung hindi man pinakauna, na naghayag ng kritikal na reaksyon laban sa mga nagbubunyî sa inaakalà nilang pagsasantabi ng Vatican II kay Santo Tomas. Sa kanyang artikulong “The Actual Validity of St. Thomas’ Teachings” na nalathalà sa *Philippiniana Sacra* noong 1966 o isang taon matapos isara ang Vatican II, pinabulaanan ng mabuting obispo ang bintang hinggil sa diskoneskyon ni Santo Tomas sa kasalukuyang sibilisasyon.<sup>61</sup> Ayon sa kanya, ang magaspang na kritika kay Santo Tomas o sa kanyang mga aral ay resulta kapwà ng malî at kulang na pagbása tungkol sa kanya at sa kanyang mga ginawâ ng mga bumabatikos sa kanya. Kung babasahin lámang mabuti at susuriin nang mas malapitan kapwà ang proyekto ng Vatican II at ang intelektwal na bayograpiya ni Santo Tomas, mas malinaw na makikita kung paaano nagkakaugnay ang dalawa. Ang pananaw na ito ni Arsobispo Legaspi ay mababanaagan din sa mga púnto na inihayag ni P. Yves Congar at ang kasalukuyang rector ng Angelicum sa Roma at kahihirang na maestro ng teyolohiya, si P. Joseph

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<sup>61</sup> Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., “The Actual Validity of St. Thomas’ Teachings,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 1 (1966).

White.<sup>62</sup> Ilan sa binanggit ni Obispo Legaspi ang pagbalik sa Banal na Kasulatan at turò ng mga Ama ng Simbahan, pagpapahalaga sa liturhiya at sakramento, paglingap sa karanasan at kapakanan ng tao, pati na rin ang pagtatampok ng isang uri ng eklesyolohiya na nakabatay sa isang masinop na Kristolohiya.<sup>63</sup> Ang lahat ng ito na nilalaman ng mga dokumento ng Vatican II ay pinagsikapang talakayin at isinulong din ni Santo Tomas sa kanyang buong karera bilang maestro at teyologo. Malamáng hindî ito batid ng mga kritiko ni Santo Tomas sapagkat nasanay silang ikahon ito sa kanilang prehuwisyo laban sa metodo at bokabularyo ng iskolastisismo. Mahalaga ang mga púnto na inihain ni Arsobispo Legaspi dahil itinatanyag nito ang isang problemang hindî kailâ sa atin ngunit hindî rin naman natin masyadong nabibigyang pansin. Ito ang problemang makikita sa mga teyologo, akademiko, at iskolar pabor man o kontra kay Santo Tomas: ang problema ng pagaakalâ na sapat na ang alam natin kay Santo Tomas pero hindî palá. At dahil hindi natin siya ganap na kilala, anomang sabihin tungkol sa kanya ay alinman sa labis o sadyâng manipis. Gaya ng madalas mangyari, lagìng ikinakawing ang pangalan ni Santo Tomas kay Aristoteles, sa metapisika, sa iskolastisismo, sa limang paraan ng demonstrasyon ng pag-iral ng Diyos at, sabi nga ni Arsobispo Legaspi, maging sa hulemorpismo.<sup>64</sup> Ang ganitong labis at kulang na pagkilala kay Santo Tomas ay nadagdagan pa ng kolonyal na bagahe dito sa Pilipinas. Maraming iskolar na kritikal sa Simbahang Katolika ang tumitingin kay Santo Tomas at Tomismo bilang instrumento ng kolonyalisasyon kayâ dapat daw itaboy o purgahin sa ating pambansâng kamalayan.<sup>65</sup> Madalas malimutan ng mga naturang kritikong iskolar na ang nagpasimulâ ng nasyonalistang tradisyon sa bansâ ay Tomista at Tomasino: si Padre Jose Burgos. Si P. Burgos ang maituturing natin na isa sa pinakauna, kung hindî man ang mismong pinakaunang kinatawan ng isang pinasiglang Tomismo na sinimulang gamitin sa Unibersidad ni Santo Tomas ni P. Zeferino Gonzalez bago pa malathala ang *Aeterni Patris* noong 1879.<sup>66</sup> Si P. Gonzalez, na naging gurò ni P. Burgos kapwa sa pilosopiya at teyolohiya, ay kinikilalang isang mahalagang pwersa sa pagsusulong ng makabagong pedagohiya at hermenyutika sa mga aral ni Santo Tomas hindî

<sup>62</sup> White, "Thomism After Vatican II," 194. Sinipi ni White ang pananaw ni Congar sa 187–188.

<sup>63</sup> May pagkakahawig ang sinasabi ni Obispo Legaspi sa ilang púnto ni Congar. Tingnan Yves Congar, O.P., *The Mystery of the Church*, trans. by A.V. Littledale (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960), 97–117.

<sup>64</sup> Legaspi, "The Actual Validity of St. Thomas' Teachings," 223.

<sup>65</sup> Hiwalay kong tinalakay ang tema ito sa isa pang papel, Jovito V. Cariño, "For the Love of (Local) Wisdom: University, Thomism, and Filipino Thought," in *Kritike*, 18 (March 2024), 88–114, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/18.1.a4>>

<sup>66</sup> Fidel Villaroel, O.P., *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines (1611–2011)*, Volume II (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012), 93–95.

pa man inihahayag ni Papa Leo XIII ang kanyang ensiklikal.<sup>67</sup> Sa kasamâang-palad, walâng naiwang akademikong sulatin si P. Burgos na magsisilbi sanang ispesimen ng Tomismo na ipinâsa sa kanya ng kanyang dakilang maestro.<sup>68</sup> Malagim ang sinapit ni P. Burgos ngunit saksi ang kasaysayan na hindî Tomismo ang pumaslang sa kanya kundî ang mapamuksang kolonyal na politika. Sa katunayan, kalahok siya sa pagpapasigla ng Tomismo sa Pilipinas na sinimulan ni P. Zeferino Gonzalez bago ito naantalà ng iba't ibang yugtô ng kasaysayan gaya ng pagsiklab ng Himagsikan noong 1896, ng digmaan sa pagitan ng Pilipinas at Amerika sa bungad ng ika-20 na siglo at ng pagsakop ng mga Hapon sa bansâ sa kalagitnâan ng panahong ito. Ang lahat ng mga historikal na kabanatàng ito ay may inpluwensya sa estado at direksyon ng teyolohiya sa bansâ. Ganito rin ang masasabi sa kalagayan ng teyolohiya at Tomismo sa Pilipinas nang ipatupad dito ang mga reporma ng Vaticano II sa pagitan ng dekada sienta at sitenta. Dominante noon ang teyolohiya ng liberasyon at ang nasyonalistang diskurso bílang kritika sa mga karahasan at kahirapang bunga ng pagpapatupad ng batas militar sa ilalim ng dating rehimeng Marcos. Ang reyalidad kakawing ng sitwasyong ito ang naging batayan ng iba-ibang hibla ng teyolohikal na tradisyon na namamayani noon. Sa isang hibla, ang radikal at progresibong tradisyon, maihahanay ang mga gaya ng Heswitang si P. Romeo Intengan, ang Dominikong si P. Pedro Salgado, at ang dáting parìng SVD na si Edicio de la Torre. May tradisyon din na naghahangad na gawing mas maka-Filipino ang timpla ng teyolohiya na siyang isinusulong ng mga gaya nina P. Catalino Arevalo, P. Leonardo Mercado, P. Salvador Beltran, P. Dionisio Miranda, P. Vitaliano Gorospe, at ang laikong teyologong si Prop. Jose de Mesa. Mayroon ding hibla ng isang maka-babaeng lapit sa teyolohiya at espiritalidad na mababakás sa mga naisulat at abogasya nila Sr. Mary Christine Tan, Sr. Mary John Mananzan, Ceres Doyo, at pati na rin ang ang dating propesor ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas na naging kontemplatibong madre, si Josefina Constantino. Nangunguna naman ang mga pangalan nila P. Anscar Chupungco at P. Eduardo Hontiveros sa pagsusulong ng maka-Filipinong teyorya at praktika ng liturhiya. Mayroon ding ilang banyagang teyologo na

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–66.

<sup>68</sup> John N. Schumacher, S.J., "The Burgos Manifiesto: The Authentic Text and Its Genuine Author," in *Philippine Studies*, 54:2 (2006), 153–304, <<https://www.philippinestudies.net/ojs/index.php/ps/article/view/157/166>>; John N. Schumacher, S.J., "The Authenticity of the Writings Attributed to Father Jose Burgos," in *Philippine Studies*, 18:1 (January 1970), 3–51, <<https://philippinestudies.net/ojs/index.php/ps/article/view/2092/5118>>; Luis Ma. Araneta, "The Works of Father Jose Burgos," *Philippine Studies*, 7:2 (April 1959), 187–193, <<https://philippinestudies.net/ojs/index.php/ps/article/view/3032/5652>>. See also John N. Schumacher, S.J., *Father Jose Burgos: A Documentary History (With Spanish Documents and Their Translation)* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999).

walâ mang dugông-Filipino ay kakikitaan ng malinaw at masiglang maka-Filipinong sensibilidad sa kanilang mga teyolohikal na akdâ. Sa ganitong karakter nagtatagpô ang mas eksperimental na teyolohikal na metodo ni P. Lode Wostyn at ang mas konserbatibong lapit nila P. Fausto Gomez at P. Joseph de Torre. Nakakabit naman sa pangalan ni Obispo Claver ang positibong bunga ng pagpapakalat ng basic ecclesial communities. Sa ganang kanya, itinalaga naman ni Arsobispo Legaspi ang kanyang pagaaral at praktika ng teyolohiya sa katekesis at eklesyolohiya.<sup>69</sup> Si Arsobispo Legaspi ang nanguna sa matagumpay na pagdaraos ng Pangalawang Plenaryong Konseho sa Pilipinas.<sup>70</sup> Maituturing ang Pangalawang Plenaryong Konseho sa Pilipinas na katibayan at tagumpay ng teyolohikal na bisyon ni Arsobispo Legaspi na ipinunlâ ng Vatican II at ng kanyang intelektwal at espiritwal na debosyon kay Santo Tomas.

Sa konteksto ng tema ng Linggo ng Teyolohiya 2024, may matutukoy tayong dalawang dahilan kung bakit mahalagang banggitin ang Pangalawang Plenaryong Konseho ng Pilipinas. Una, kinakatawan nito ang artikulasyon ng isang lokal na teyolohiya na hindi mababasa sa mga dokumento ng Vatican II. Hindi kataka-taka kung walâ mang banggit ang lokal na teyolohiya sa Vatican II dahil mas unibersal nga ang saklaw nito. Ang tukoy nito ay *aggiornamento* sa Simbahan sa pangkalahatan. Ang pagsasalokal ng nasabing *aggiornamento*, partikular ang pagbalangkas ng angkop na teyolohiya, ay magmumulâ sa lokal na Simbahan gaya ng sinikap buoin ng Pangalawang Plenaryo Konseho ng Pilipinas sa ilalim ng liderato ni Arsobispo Leonardo Z. Legaspi. Kayâ nga maituturing ang pagdaraos ng konsehong ito bilang katuparan ng mithûin ng Vatican II at katuparan din ng eklesyal na bisyon ng butihing arsobispo. Pangalawa, kinakatawan din ng Pangalawang Plenaryo ng Pilipinas ang katuparan ng maka-Simbahang adhikâ ni Arsobispo Legaspi na ayon sa kanyang nabanggit na artikulo noong 1966 ay matutukoy din sa bokasyon ni Santo Tomas. Noon pa mang edad medya, mahihiwatigan na kay Santo Tomas ang hangarin para isang uri ng eklesyal na pagbabago na may batayang Kristolohikal, biblikal, liturhikal, at pastoral. Saksi ang iba't ibang akdâ ni Santo Tomas na makapagpapatunay sa kanyang dinamikong ideya ng pagbabago at tradisyon. Ang palagay samakatuwid na nagsasabing ang kaisipan ni Santo Tomas ay nakakahon lámang sa mga konsepto at bokabularyo ng iskolastisismo gaya ng sinasabi ng mga Neo-Tomista ay isang misrepresentasyon ng yaman, lawak, at lalim ng isang progresibong iskolarsyip na marka na ng búhay-relihiyoso ni Santo

<sup>69</sup> Tingan Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., *Passion for Catechesis* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2007); Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., *Katekismo ki Maria* (Naga: Archdiocese of Caceres, 2009); Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., *The Church We Love* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 1997).

<sup>70</sup> Tingnan Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (20 January–17 February 1991)* (Manila: CBCP, 1992).

## 40 SANTO TOMAS

Tomas mulâ pa noong una. Sabi nga ng Franses na Dominikong si Marie Dominique Chenu, ang mismong pasya ni Santo Tomas na maging Dominiko ay isang malinaw na pahiwatig ng kanyang pagyakap at pagkikiisa sa progresibong espirito ng tagapagtatag ng mga Dominiko, si Santo Domingo.<sup>71</sup> Si Santo Domingo, kasabay ni San Francisco, ang naglatag ng direksyon para sa bagong ebanghelisasyon na patuloy umaalingawngaw sa iba't ibang pahayag ng mga Papa gaya ng *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ni Papa Pablo VI, ang *Redemptoris Missio* ni Papa Juan Pablo II at *Evangelii Gaudium* ni Papa Francisco. Ang kaparehong diwà ng bagong ebanghelisasyon ang naging inspirasyon ni Santo Tomas upang ilaan ang kanyang sarili sa urì ng pangangaral na sadyâng ibang-iba noong edad medya hanggang sa ngayon. Mulâ sa kanyang komentaryo sa *Sentences*, hanggang sa kanyang *Summa Contra Gentiles* at *Summa Theologiae*, sampô ng kanyang mga *disputatio, quodlibetales*, at mga Biblikal na komentaryo, masigasig na nag-ambag si Santo Tomas ng kanyang makakaya para isulong ang pagpapasigla sa Simbahan. Ang eklesyal na dimensyong ito ng bokasyon ni Santo Tomas ang mababakás sa kanyang imahen na ipininta ni Paolo Veneziano (1300–1365)<sup>72</sup> at Carlo Crivelli (1430–1495)<sup>73</sup> na nagpapakita kay Santo Tomas na hawak ang modelo ng simbahan sa kanang kamay at isang búkas na aklat naman sa kaliwà. Ito ang Santo Tomas na tinutukoy ni Arsobispo Legaspi na tila hindi kilala ng karamihan. Gaya ng mga pinta ni Veneziano at Crivelli, ipinapaalala ni Obispo Legaspi na ang tunay na *aggiornamento*, ang tunay na pagbabago, ay dapat magtampok sa Simbahan at hindi ng kaninomang pangalan, kahit na ng pangalan ni Santo Tomas. Para sa isang frayle at maestro na nasanay ikubli ang kanyang pangalan at persona sa likod ng kanyang mga akdâ, hindi rin mamatamin si Santo Tomas kung siya ang pagtuonan ng ating pansin sa halip na ang katotohanan na kanyang binibigkas. Ito ang binabanggit ng Tomistang si Josef Pieper na “katahimikan” ni Santo Tomas na siyang bukal ng kanyang mga isinulat at siya ring susi sa pagunawà sa kanyang mga akdâ.<sup>74</sup> Kayâ kung tila nawalâ man sa eksena si Santo Tomas o ang Tomismo sa mga dokumento ng Vatican II, higit niya marahil itong ikalulugod. Hindi ito nangangahulogan na walâ siyang iniambag o hindi na siya kailangan. Batid ni Santo Tomas na lingkod lámang siya ng Simbahan.<sup>75</sup> At kung ang

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<sup>71</sup> Chenu, O.P., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, 10–11.

<sup>72</sup> Paolo Veneziano, “Panel of an Altarpiece: Saints Thomas Aquinas, John the Evangelist, Paul, and Dominic (1937.33),” painting at the Harvard Art Museums, <<https://hvrtd.art/o/230775>>.

<sup>73</sup> Carlo Crivelli, “Saint Thomas Aquinas (NG788.9),” painting at The National Gallery, London, <<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/saint-thomas-aquinas-115245>>.

<sup>74</sup> Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 38–41.

<sup>75</sup> Kahit ang iskolar ng eklesolohiya na si Yves Congar ay nagsasabing ang kanyang motto bílang Dominikong mangangaral at teyologo ay hangò kay Santo Tomas batay sa sipi nito sa winikà San Hilario sa *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1, 2. Tingnan Yves Congar, O.P., “Reflections on

Simbahan ang maging tanyag sa halip na ang kanyang pangalan, para sa kanya, mas karapat-dapat itong tingnan bílang tagumpay. Higit pa sa Tomismo si Santo Tomas. At lalòng higit pa sa Tomismo ang kanyang pamanang iniwan. Ito ang pamana na, para kay Arsobispo Legaspi, ay dapat nating sariwain at balikan.

## Konklusyon

Ang relasyon ng teyolohiya at pilosopiya bílang metapisika ay isa sa mga kumplikado at problematikong bahagi ng pilosopiyang kontinental. Sa panayam na ito, sinikap nating itampok ang naging hakbang ni Santo Tomas para linawin na ang kaisahan ng dalawa ay nakabatay hindi sa kanilang pagkakamukhâ kundî sa sa kanilang pagkakaiba. Kinailangang gawin ni Santo Tomas ang paglilinaw na ito upang higit na itampok ang pagiging natatangî ng sagradong teyolohiya. Parehong nalimutan ng mga tagasunod at kumontra kay Santo Tomas na siya, una sa lahat, ay isang maestro ng teyolohiya kaya malíng ikulong o ikahon ang kanyang kaisipan sa mga kategorya ng metapisika kahit na ginamit niya ang mga konsepto at bokabularyo nito. Ang bintang na si Santo Tomas ay naiwan na ng panahon sapagkat walâ nang metapisika ay magkakabisâ lámang kung mapapatunayan na pinapaboran niya ang metapisika kaysa teyolohiya o kayâ itinuturing niya na patas ang dalawa. Ganito ang naging kahinàan ng Neo-Tomismo na sinikap namang ituwid ng ibang kampo ng mga Tomista. Ang naging kapalaran ng Tomismo pagdating ng Vatican II ay repleksyon ng nagbabagong pagpapahalaga kay Santo Tomas. May nagsasabing tandâ ito ng paghinà ng kanyang inpluwensya; may iba naman, gaya ni Arsobispo Legaspi, na tinitingnan ito bílang paanyaya upang maging pamilyar tayo hindi lamang sa metapisika o pilosopiya ni Santo Tomas kundî, higit sa lahat, sa madalas maisantabing mga aspekto ng kanyang teyolohiya. Isang teyolohiya ito na, ayon kay Arsobispo Legaspi, ay Kristolohikal at eklesyal, maliban sa pagiging liturhikal at pastoral. Sa diwà at inspirasyon, samakatuwid, nanatiling kaugnay si Santo Tomas sa *aggiornamento* na tinaguyod ng Vatican II, pati ng Pangalawang Konsehong Plenaryo ng Pilipinas. Napatunayan natin ito sa iba't ibang ambag ng iba't ibang Tomista na nagbigay sa atin ng pagkakataon na mas makilala ang iba't ibang dimensyon ng kaisipan ng Dominikong maestro. Mahalaga ang metapisika ngunit gaya ng nailahad na, hindi ito ang una at hulíng salitâ sa teyolohiya ni Santo Tomas.

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Being a Theologian," in *New Blackfriars*, 62 (October 1981), 405–409, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1981.tb03309.x>>.

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# Is a Nietzschean Defense of the Christian Valuation of Human Life Tenable?<sup>1</sup>

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*Alexis Deodato S. Itao*

**Abstract:** This paper asks whether a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life is tenable. Nietzsche has long been noted for his anti-Christian stance in his writings. Despite his candid revulsion and antipathy towards Christianity, however, there are scholars who argue that Nietzsche is a “Christian,” because we can actually find a good number of Nietzschean ideas that coincide with the teachings of the Christian faith. Foremost of these ideas is Nietzsche’s insistence that life must be affirmed and valued at all times — a position that perfectly resonates with the Christian doctrine on the value of human life. For this reason, in this paper, I aim to examine whether a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life is tenable, given that Nietzsche’s writings abound with direct and scathing attacks against Christianity.

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, Christianity, Christian morality, human life

## Nietzsche and Christianity

It is common knowledge that the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote plenty of harsh criticisms and acerbic diatribes against Christianity. For him, Christianity is simply “the greatest disaster for humanity so far.”<sup>2</sup> As such, it rightly deserves condemnation. “I

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Edward Kanterian (University of Kent, U.K.) for generously sharing his research work on Nietzsche with me. I am equally immensely grateful to Prof. Dr. Paolo A. Bolaños (University of Santo Tomas, The Philippines) for introducing me to Nietzsche’s philosophy of affirmation, in an unforgettable semester full of profound intellectual discussion and exchange.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” in *Twilight of the Idols: Or How to Philosophize with a 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), §47. Henceforth, *Twilight of the Idols* will be referred to as *TI*. Nietzsche

condemn Christianity,” he said. “I indict the Christian church on the most terrible charges an accuser has ever had in his mouth. I consider it the greatest corruption conceivable.”<sup>3</sup> From these two pronouncements alone, one can readily suppose that “Nietzsche really *hates* Christianity, and he makes the reader feel it. He hectors; he insists ... He is ... someone who finds Christianity genuinely maddening.”<sup>4</sup> That is why, in his view, “it is indecent to be a Christian.”<sup>5</sup> And he would underline this point by adding, “*And this is where my disgust [for Christianity] begins.*”<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, we can add a lot more to these anti-Christian vitriols that Nietzsche seemed to never run out of. But it would not be necessary as, at the bottom, what he wanted to drive at is the same: Christianity is, in many respects, a flawed religion. Obviously, if we solely consider Nietzsche’s overly negative and highly critical statements against Christianity, that’s already the end of the story. Nietzsche and Christianity would only stand as contradictories, fundamentally opposed to and irreconcilable with one another. I believe, however, that Nietzsche has a Christian side to him that has remained largely unexplored. In fact, if we closely examine his writings, we will find that Nietzsche actually had plenty of good words for Christianity — though perhaps not as plenty as his criticisms.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche had this to say: “The way in which respect for the *Bible* has, on the whole, been maintained in Europe might be the best piece of discipline and refinement in manners that Europe owes to Christianity.”<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche supported this observation in a fragment that he later wrote, expressing how “the most estimable people I know were Christians without any falsehood in them ... My own ancestors were Protestant clerics [who gave] me a noble and pure sense.”<sup>8</sup> A similar appreciation, this time combined with some sense of pride, can also be found

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wrote *TI* in late 1888, a few months before he would have a mental collapse in Turin, Italy on 3 January 1889, from which he would never recover.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, §62. Emphasis original. Henceforth, *The Anti-Christ* will be referred to as *AC*.

<sup>4</sup> Aaron Ridley, Introduction to Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ix. Emphasis original.

<sup>5</sup> *AC*, §38.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis original.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), §263.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Vol. 13, 622, quoted in Edward Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial: Nietzsche as a Christian,” in *Nietzsche on Morality and the Affirmation of Life*, ed. by Daniel Came (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 202. The *Kritische Studienausgabe* (*KSA*) is the critical edition of Nietzsche’s works and notebooks compiled together and published in 15 volumes between 1967 and 1988, with both Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, two well-respected Nietzschean scholars, serving as editors. Many scholars consider the *KSA* as the most authoritative and scholarly edition of Nietzsche’s writings.

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in another work, in which Nietzsche proudly declared: “I consider it an honor to descend from a family which in every respect has taken seriously its Christianity.”<sup>9</sup> Then, in *Daybreak*, albeit he filled it with bitter harangues against Christianity, Nietzsche could still not help but admit how Christianity is “a great comfort to the exhausted and despairing in the wilderness.”<sup>10</sup> And it is perhaps due to his deep admiration and esteem for Christianity that Nietzsche would affirm that “the Church is under all circumstances a *nobler* institution than the state.”<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche is explicitly and plainly saying here “under *all*” and not “under *some*” circumstances—a crystal clear indication that he held the Church, and in effect Christianity, in high regard.

That Nietzsche had a high regard for Christianity is further evidenced by a letter he wrote to his friend Peter Gast (whose real name was Johann Heinrich Köselitz), in which Nietzsche confessed: “[Christianity] is still and all the best piece of ideal life that I have really known; I have followed it since I was a child, into many nooks, and I think that in my heart, I have *never* been scornful against it.”<sup>12</sup> A similar letter, sent to another friend Franz Overbeck two days later, contains almost the same confession. Nietzsche wrote: “I have never, in my heart, been scornful against [Christianity] and have since childhood made an inner effort for its ideals, though in the end, admittedly, the outcome was always a pure impossibility.”<sup>13</sup>

We can therefore find in Nietzsche’s *oeuvre* two seemingly conflicting positions: his popular stance *against*, and his largely unrecognized stance *in favor of*, Christianity. But is there really a conflict in Nietzsche’s views? Was

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<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsches Werke* (Leipzig, 1914), IV (*Nachgelassene Werke*), §223, quoted in Hans Kelsen, “Nietzsche the Christian,” in *Secular Religion: A Polemic Against the Misinterpretation of Modern Social Philosophy, Science and Politics as “New Religions”* (New York: SpringerWien, 2012), 199.

<sup>10</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), §59. According to scholars, *Daybreak* “marks the beginning of Nietzsche’s central philosophical project: a reevaluation of all values, a thorough-going critique of morality itself ... More importantly, it is the book that first develops in a substantial way themes that mark the ‘mature’ Nietzsche.” So, his words of appreciation for Christianity here are something that must have come from an already mature perspective. For details, see Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, Introduction to *Daybreak*, viii.

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. by Bernard Williams, trans. by Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §358. Emphasis original. Nietzsche himself considered *The Gay Science* “the most personal of his books.” That being so, his esteem for the Church here, and subsequently for Christianity, could also be something very personal. For details, see Bernard Williams, Introduction to *The Gay Science*, xi.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “Letter to Peter Gast (21 September 1881),” quoted in Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial,” 201. Emphasis original.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “Letter to Franz Overbeck (23 September 1881),” in *KSB* 6, 110, quoted in Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial,” 201.

he only contradicting himself by criticizing and admiring Christianity simultaneously?

Aaron Ridley observes that while “Nietzsche’s increasingly obsessive attitude toward Christianity” began early on “it is only in 1888, the last of his productive life, that Christianity begins in a serious way to be equated with everything that Nietzsche finds most objectionable in modern culture.”<sup>14</sup> And yet, a fragment from that very same year reveals that Nietzsche actually “distinguishes between Christianity as a cure against contemporary man’s rawness and as the very symptom of the illness of *décadence*.”<sup>15</sup> This distinction is paramount because it clarifies that the Christianity he subjected to the fiercest attacks is *not* the same Christianity that he had always admired. As Thomas Nevin emphasized, “Nietzsche’s animus [was] against the bourgeois and hence pseudo-Christianity of his time.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, he was never really after mainstream Christianity, whether Protestantism (the dominant religion in Germany in Nietzsche’s lifetime) or Catholicism (the dominant religion in southern Europe, particularly Italy, which he liked to frequent); rather, his vehemence was specifically directed “against the bogus-Christianity of Bismarck’s new Germany.”<sup>17</sup> And this so-called pseudo- or bogus-Christianity, which he found “most objectionable in modern culture,” had a name: Christendom.<sup>18</sup>

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)—who, like Nietzsche, is considered a towering figure in the history of philosophy—offered a succinct explanation of how Christendom substantially and significantly differs from genuine Christianity. He said:

Christendom for Nietzsche is the historical, world-political phenomenon of the Church and its claim to power within the shaping of Western humanity and its modern culture. Christendom in this sense and the

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<sup>14</sup> Aaron Ridley, “Guilt Before God, or God Before Guilt? The Second Essay of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*,” in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 29 (2005), 38, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nie.2005.0008>>.

<sup>15</sup> Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial,” 201, citing *KSA*, 13, 448.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas R. Nevin, *Nietzsche’s Protestant Fathers: A Study in Prodigal Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2019), 267.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 263. Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) was Germany’s first-ever Chancellor (*Reichskanzler*) from 1871 to 1890, which practically covered the entire duration of Nietzsche’s active literary career. Labeled as the “Iron Chancellor,” Bismarck was the main architect of the so-called “new Germany” — that is, the newly established German Empire. Its historic establishment in 1871 marked the unification of Germany, which hitherto comprised several small kingdoms, states, duchies, and principalities. For further reading, see Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> See Nevin, *Nietzsche’s Protestant Fathers*, 269 and 273.

Christianity of the New Testament faith *are not the same*. Even a non-Christian life can affirm Christendom and use it as a means of power, just as, conversely, a Christian life does not necessarily require Christendom. Therefore, a confrontation with Christendom is *absolutely not in any way an attack against what is Christian*, any more than a critique of theology is necessarily a critique of faith.<sup>19</sup>

Heidegger is not the only one who has this view. The equally influential Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) held that “Nietzsche’s struggle against Christianity arises out of his own Christendom.”<sup>20</sup> That means that what Nietzsche had been lambasting all along was not really the Christian faith *per se* but the prevalent “Christian” culture and practice in Europe—in short, Christendom—which he found scandalous and loathsome. As Patrick Moroney confirms, Nietzsche was not truly anti-Christian but anti-Christendom; for although he would hurl ruthless and pointed attacks at “Christianity,” they were, in reality, attacks against Christendom.<sup>21</sup>

So, despite his candid revulsion and antipathy towards “Christianity,” if we look at his works more closely, Nietzsche is far from being completely hostile towards it. On the contrary, he continually expressed admiration for it. That explains why there are scholars who argue that Nietzsche is a “Christian,” or at least someone who shares some affinity with the Christian faith: because we can actually find a good number of Nietzschean ideas that coincide with the teachings of Christianity. These

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead,’” in *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. with an introduction by William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 63–64. Emphases mine.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Wahrheit und Leben: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Stuttgart-Zürich-Salzburg, 1965), 356, quoted in Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial,” 209. Jaspers is among the most renowned existentialist philosophers. Due to the unavailability of English translations of Jaspers’ *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, I consulted and perused the available Italian translation that I could comfortably understand, see Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche e il Cristianesimo*, trans. by Maria Dello Preite (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1952).

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Moroney, “Nietzsche: Anti-Christendom, Not Anti-Christian,” in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 54:4 (1988), 304, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/002114008805400404>>.

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scholars, among others, include Georg Simmel,<sup>22</sup> Karl Jaspers,<sup>23</sup> Karl Löwith,<sup>24</sup> Roger Hazelton,<sup>25</sup> Patrick Moroney,<sup>26</sup> Giles Fraser,<sup>27</sup> Bruce Ellis Benson,<sup>28</sup> Daniel Came,<sup>29</sup> and Edward Kanterian,<sup>30</sup> to name a few.

In this paper, I would like to center my inquiry on Nietzsche's insistence that life must be affirmed and valued at all times—a position that perfectly resonates with the Christian doctrine on the value of human life. I aim to examine whether, in view of Nietzsche's unwavering pro-life<sup>31</sup> stance,

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<sup>22</sup> Georg Simmel (1858-1918) was one of the early scholars to study Nietzsche's writings seriously. In *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* (originally published in 1907 as *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche: Ein Vortragszyklus*), Simmel noted: "Even though Nietzsche cannot understand the transcendence of Christianity, he testifies conspicuously to the success of that transcendence, which blinded him to the close relation of his own thought to Christian doctrine" (emphasis mine). For details, see Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. by Helmut Loiskandl, Deena Weinstein, and Michael Weinstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 142.

<sup>23</sup> See Jaspers, *Nietzsche e il Cristianesimo*.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Löwith (1897-1973) was a respected German philosopher, famous for being a student of both Husserl and Heidegger and for his voluminous writings. In Löwith's observation, "all the general topics of Christian apologetics against pagan philosophers recur in Nietzsche's philosophy." For this reason, he came to regard Nietzsche as someone who "was so thoroughly Christian." See Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 220–221.

<sup>25</sup> In an attempt to respond to the perennial question, "Was Nietzsche an anti-Christian?", Roger Hazelton claims that Nietzsche was technically not. Instead, the German philosopher was more of "a religious liberal ... for he shared with Christian liberals some of their most important distinctions and insights." For details, see Roger Hazelton, "Was Nietzsche an Anti-Christian?" in *The Journal of Religion*, 22:1 (January 1942): 65, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1197505>>.

<sup>26</sup> See Moroney, "Nietzsche: Anti-Christendom, Not Anti-Christian," 304 and 311.

<sup>27</sup> "Despite Nietzsche's enormous hostility to the Christian account of salvation it is important to recognize the extent to which his own position is related to, and clearly comes out of, the Christian tradition." See Giles Fraser, *Redeeming Nietzsche: On the Piety of Unbelief* (London: Routledge, 2002), 67.

<sup>28</sup> Benson maintains that "the extent to which Nietzsche remains connected to the logic—and perhaps even the substance—of Christianity is more significant than he realizes." See Bruce Ellis Benson, *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 190.

<sup>29</sup> Came suggests that Nietzsche "is *malgré lui* a Christian thinker," meaning, "that despite his avowed hostility to Christianity he may be deeply entangled in an interpretation of life and the world that he inherits directly from Christianity." It is precisely because of this deep entanglement that "Nietzsche was unable to fully extricate himself from the Christian worldview despite his most radical attempts to do so." For further reading, see Daniel Came, "Nietzsche as a Christian Thinker," in *Nietzsche on Morality and the Affirmation of Life*, 45 and 57.

<sup>30</sup> Kanterian believes that "the affinities between the Christian and Nietzsche's ethical outlooks, both taken as ways of coping with the problem of human existence ... [are] deeper affinities." Kanterian argues that in his "unwillingness to rest content with this world in all its brutality lies Nietzsche's deepest similarity with Christianity." See Kanterian, "Life's Affirmation and Denial," 201 and 216.

<sup>31</sup> By pro-life, I refer to Nietzsche who proudly identifies himself as one of the "advocates of life" (*Fürsprecher des Lebens*). Such identification is significant for it is Nietzsche's open admission of his perceived philosophical mission, that is, as a champion of life and an enemy of

a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life is tenable, given that despite having certain ideas that correspond with Christianity, Nietzsche's writings abound with direct attacks against Christian morality. To do this, I first briefly present Nietzsche's philosophy of affirmation. I next present, also briefly, the Christian valuation of human life. I then expose the prevalent anti-life position as a form of nihilism. I finally conclude this paper by responding to the question of whether a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life is tenable. For my purposes, I limit my discussion to the topics that I just outlined above.

### Nietzsche's Philosophy of Affirmation

One of the most repetitive themes throughout Nietzsche's corpus is his uncompromising position that life (*Leben*) must at all times be affirmed and prized with the highest value. It can easily be said as one of his central philosophical concerns since "Nietzsche has a long-standing interest in the question of the 'value of life' (*Werth des Lebens*)."<sup>32</sup> For Bernard Reginster, however, the value of life and its affirmation is something more; it represents Nietzsche's "defining philosophical achievement. We truly 'understand' him, he warns us, only insofar as we understand what the affirmation of life amounts to."<sup>33</sup> Tom Stern holds a similar view, maintaining that "[a]ffirmation is the pinnacle of Nietzsche's ethics and any attempt to outline a positive project in his work must grapple with its nature and its significance."<sup>34</sup> But what exactly is this life that we must affirm? Does it refer to all life forms, to life in general, or solely to human life? And what does affirmation mean in the first place?

In Nietzsche's works, while he no doubt recognizes all organisms to possess life, "his attention is overwhelmingly focused on one particular kind of organism, the *human*."<sup>35</sup> As Julian Young also confirms, Nietzsche's

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nihilism (I will discuss about nihilism in the next section). For details, see Friedrich Nietzsche, "Book One: European Nihilism," in *The Will to Power*, §263, ed. by Walter Kaufmann, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968). Emphasis original. Henceforth, *The Will to Power* will be referred to as *WP*.

<sup>32</sup> John Richardson, "Nietzsche on Life's Ends," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. by Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 770.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Tom Stern, "Against Nietzsche's Theory of Affirmation," in *Nietzsche on Morality and the Affirmation of Life*, 170.

<sup>35</sup> Richardson, "Nietzsche on Life's Ends," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, 765. Emphasis original.

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“interest is clearly confined to *human* life.”<sup>36</sup> His philosophy of affirmation is anchored on his firm belief that human life is of “absolute value.”<sup>37</sup> For this, it has to be affirmed, not denied; appreciated, not depreciated; valued, not devalued; respected, not disrespected; and loved, not hated. “But *what is life?*”<sup>38</sup> Nietzsche himself asked, then offered his own response: “Here we need a new, more definite formulation of the concept of ‘life.’ My formula for it is: Life is will to power.”<sup>39</sup> But what does it mean?

According to Gilles Deleuze, for Nietzsche, the *will to power* “doesn’t mean (or at least doesn’t primarily mean) that the will *wants* power or *wishes* to dominate.”<sup>40</sup> To clarify Nietzsche’s definition of life, Paolo Bolaños further elaborates Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche, saying:

Deleuze understands power not as the object of the will, as it were outside it. According to Deleuze, power is the “motor” of the will and not that which is desired by the will. As the very principle that animates the will, power thus is never separated from willing. Every willing entails a manifestation of power. This means that there is no willing without power, for in the first place it is power which determines whether the moment of willing itself is either affirmative or negative.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, if life itself is *will to power* for Nietzsche, then based on Deleuze’s explanation, it all boils down to two directions: either to the affirmation of life itself, or to its negation. That is to say, you can either live your life affirmatively, embracing its ups and downs, as well as its moments of joys and sufferings; or, you can live your life in a negative—or, to be precise, nihilistic—way, denying life itself any value. Yet for Nietzsche, life itself “is the highest expression of all values—beyond good and evil.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Julian Young, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126. Emphasis original.

<sup>37</sup> *WP*, I, §4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, II, §254. Emphasis original.

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

<sup>40</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 73. Emphasis original.

<sup>41</sup> Paolo A. Bolaños, *On Affirmation and Becoming: A Deleuzian Introduction to Nietzsche’s Ethics and Ontology* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Paolo A. Bolaños, “Nietzsche’s Critique of Nihilism and the Possibility of the Eternal Return as Ethical Imperative,” in *Thought-Pieces: Nietzschean Reflections on Anti-foundationalism, Ethics, and Politics* (Davao City: ALETHEIA Printing and Publishing House, 2021), 72.

Human existence is thus not a problem, but it starts to become problematic when nihilism starts to creep in.<sup>43</sup> Deleuze concisely describes a nihilistic life:

Life takes on the value of nil insofar as it is denied and depreciated. Depreciation always presupposed a fiction: it is by means of fiction that something is opposed to life. The whole of life then becomes unreal, it is represented as appearance, it takes on a value of nil in its entirety. The idea of another world, of a supersensible world in all its forms (God, essence, the good, truth), the idea of values superior to life, is not one example among many but the constitutive element of all fiction.<sup>44</sup>

So, this is the principal basis for Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of all values (*Umwertung aller Werte*): nihilism has already blinded many to the point that they can no longer see the value not only of life but even of this world; they have been glued to the fictional, forgetting that what is right before their eyes is what is real. Hence, as a form of remedy, Nietzsche prescribes his affirmative philosophy, which Bolaños perfectly summarizes in this way: "We have to respond to life — we have to affirm it, come hell or high water!"<sup>45</sup> But does the Nietzschean affirmation of life also presuppose valuing life in the womb?

It might be surprising to some, but in *WP*, Nietzsche actually denounced abortion as "the most fatal kind of megalomania there has ever been on earth."<sup>46</sup> Not only that, but he also further considered abortion as something "cadaverous"<sup>47</sup> and "repellent"<sup>48</sup>—meaning, it is a repugnant act, "full of hatred for the impulses of life, full of mistrust of all that is beautiful and happy in life."<sup>49</sup> Of course, one could argue that Nietzsche here is speaking of abortion in a metaphorical sense. Even so, I would like to think that Nietzsche had an unstated commitment to the unborn; abortion for him

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<sup>43</sup> Dominic Yates provides a succinct description of nihilism. He says: "Nietzsche, though he used various senses of 'nihilism', had two main conceptions: nihilism as the belief that life is meaningless (which I term 'value-nihilism'), and nihilism as negation of life." For details, see Dominic Yates, "Nietzsche on Nihilism," MPhilStud thesis (Birkbeck College, University of London, 2020), 3, <<https://doi.org/10.18743/PUB.00040217>>.

<sup>44</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 147.

<sup>45</sup> Bolaños, "Nietzsche's Critique of Nihilism and the Possibility of the Eternal Return as Ethical Imperative," 83.

<sup>46</sup> *WP*, II, §202.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, §226.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, §239.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, §397.

would have very much qualified “as a *crime against life*.”<sup>50</sup> As he lamented in *WP*, today’s (it was, of course, the today of his time, but what he said still remains valid in our time) valuation of human life “is antibiological ... a fruit of the decadence of life.”<sup>51</sup> This particular lament more than reaffirms that Nietzsche’s “is a life philosophy, one that embraces not merely the actual (i.e. existents) but the *Bios* of the world and organic nature—what in German is bound up with *Naturphilosophie*.”<sup>52</sup> In this sense, Nietzsche can be said to be pro-life,<sup>53</sup> even to life (*Bios*) that is still in the womb. That is why nihilism must be overcome with a solid philosophy of affirmation; it is nothing but “the frustration of, in Nietzsche’s view, the most fundamental of all impulses.”<sup>54</sup>

Speaking of fundamental impulses, one of these—the procreative impulse—is of great significance to the German thinker’s affirmative philosophy. As John Mandalios explains: “Affirmation is linked in various ways by Nietzsche to the procreative impulse in nature.”<sup>55</sup> Why? The answer is that life, as will to power, essentially entails having the power of a creator (*Schaffender*)—a power that is driven by the impulse to procreate, which is what makes it capable to beget.<sup>56</sup> And what is to beget if not “the capacity to give life, to endow through creation the gift of living, thereby bestowing descendants upon the face of the earth.”<sup>57</sup> Nietzsche’s affirmation of life, hence, includes valuing this procreative power, this very capacity to beget new life. These telling lines from *TSZ* support this point: “Where is innocence? Where there is will to beget. And whoever wants to create over and beyond himself, he has the purest will.”<sup>58</sup>

It might be construed as stretching a bit much Nietzsche’s philosophy of affirmation, but I think it can be safely supposed that for Nietzsche, to affirm life also entails allowing our procreative impulse, our inherent power to beget, to function as it should. Otherwise, Nietzsche himself would be reproaching us, saying: “Indeed, you do not love the earth as creators, begetters, and enjoyers of becoming!”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *AC*, §47. Emphasis original.

<sup>51</sup> *WP*, I, §53.

<sup>52</sup> John Mandalios, *Transcendence, the Divine, and Nietzsche* (Newcastle upon Tyre: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023), 120.

<sup>53</sup> See Footnote 31.

<sup>54</sup> Young, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Religion*, 124.

<sup>55</sup> See Mandalios, *Transcendence, the Divine, and Nietzsche*, 150.

<sup>56</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, “On Old and New Tablets,” §11, ed. by Adrian del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, trans. by Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Henceforth, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will be referred to as *TSZ*.

<sup>57</sup> Mandalios, *Transcendence, the Divine, and Nietzsche*, 175.

<sup>58</sup> *TSZ*, II, “On Immaculate Perception.”

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Christian Valuation of Human Life

With his philosophy of affirmation, Nietzsche insists that life must be affirmed and valued at all times. This Nietzschean position, perhaps unbeknownst even to Nietzsche himself, actually perfectly resonates with the Christian doctrine on the value of human life. While today there is no uniform stance across all Christian churches in regard to the value of life, it was not so in Nietzsche's time. Although there were obvious differences in several doctrinal and theological teachings in mainstream Christianity, they had fundamentally the same valuation of human life. As a Catholic priest reveals,

It is a historical fact that no Christian church accepted contraception before 1930. In fact, up until 1930 every Christian church strongly condemned the use of unnatural forms of birth control. It was only in 1930 that the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church first allowed the use of such things in certain select cases. It is a historical fact in the last century, our Protestant legislators passed laws which prohibited, under penalty of law, the purchase and manufacture or even possession of contraceptive devices. It was against the law. Finally the leaders of the Protestant Reformation and in particular, Martin Luther, strongly condemned the use of unnatural forms of birth control. So, we see that at least for nineteen hundred and thirty years of Christianity, contraception was condemned by all Christians and was seen as a great evil.<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, practically every Christian church has already welcomed not only contraception, but also abortion and euthanasia. Only the Catholic Church is left standing, refusing to change its traditional doctrines.<sup>61</sup> Given this fact, I have to refer to official Catholic documents in explaining the Christian valuation of human life as no other Christian church has continued to embrace what all Christian churches used to hold in common.

While Church teachings have remained the same throughout the two millennia of its existence, in Nietzsche's time, there were no official

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<sup>60</sup> Anthony Kopp, O.Praem., "The Church's Moral Teaching on Contraception, Part 1," in Jason T. Adams, *Called to give Life: A Sourcebook on the Blessings of Children and the Harm of Contraception* (Dayton: One More Soul, 2003), 81.

<sup>61</sup> For brevity, the Roman Catholic Church will henceforth be simply referred to as "the Church" or "Church."

documents that elaborated and clarified its perennial position against contraception, abortion, and euthanasia. It was only in recent years that, in response to the spread of anti-life culture across the globe, the Church began to put into writing what it has always taught from the very beginning. The Church's official teaching about the value of human life is, therefore, not something new albeit it did not exist in written form when Nietzsche was alive. This is what the Church says:

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person—among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.<sup>62</sup>

For this reason, abortion is seen as “a grave offense” as it is primarily a “crime against human life.”<sup>63</sup> To further highlight this teaching, the CCC emphasizes: “Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being.”<sup>64</sup> Even before the new CCC was promulgated in the early 1990s, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had already issued an official document, in which it affirmed: “The gift of life which God the Creator and Father has entrusted to man calls him to appreciate the inestimable value of what he has been given and to take responsibility for it.”<sup>65</sup> Then, more than two decades later, the same Vatican Congregation reaffirmed the unchanging nature of the Church's teaching on abortion, saying:

God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of

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<sup>62</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), no. 2270. Henceforth, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be referred to as CCC.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 2272.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 2274.

<sup>65</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Questions of the Day” (22 February 1987), <[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19870222\\_respect-for-human-life\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html)>. This particular document is also commonly known as *Donum Vitae*.

conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes.<sup>66</sup>

So, there is no question that for the Church, life is sacred and, therefore, must be affirmed “especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death.”<sup>67</sup> Yes, even at its very last moments, the Church still considers human life inviolable. That is why, euthanasia, and even more so suicide and capital punishment, are unacceptable.<sup>68</sup> Sadly, despite the clarion call by the Church for humanity, particularly Christians, to do away with any act that deliberately terminates a human life, many are doing the opposite, so that we can now see “the more alarming symptoms of the ‘culture of death’, which is advancing above all in prosperous societies.”<sup>69</sup>

### The Culture of Death as a Form of Nihilism

The so-called “culture of death” that Popes since Paul VI down to Francis have strongly condemned is a relatively new social and cultural phenomenon that has characterized modern society in the last sixty years. Such a “culture” is built upon an anthropological philosophy that says every person has the right to do as they wish with their own life, and this includes the right to terminate it if the person so chooses (either via euthanasia or suicide), not to mention the right to terminate a pregnancy at any stage should the couple involved, especially the woman, choose to do so. This is how this particular philosophy has come to be known as “pro-choice”: because at its core is the person’s liberty to choose what is “best” for their life, even if that should translate into the literal loss of a life.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Clarification on Procured Abortion,” *L’Osservatore Romano* (11 July 2009), <[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20090711\\_aborto-pr\\_ocurato\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090711_aborto-pr_ocurato_en.html)>.

<sup>67</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 18. Henceforth, *Evangelium Vitae* will be referred to as *EV*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 65–66. See also CCC, nos. 2277 (on euthanasia) and 2280 (on suicide). In August 2018, Pope Francis even ordered that the catechism be revised so there would be no room for doubt that capital punishment “is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” See Cindy Wooden, “Pope Revises Catechism to Say Death Penalty is ‘Inadmissible,’” *Catholic News Service* (14 August 2018), <<https://www.archstl.org/pope-revises-catechism-to-say-death-penalty-is-inadmissible-2755>>.

<sup>69</sup> Pope John Paul II, *EV*, no. 64.

<sup>70</sup> A comprehensive and critical study of the pro-life philosophy that I recommend is *Persons, Moral Worth, and Embryos: A Critical Analysis of Pro-Choice Arguments*, ed. by Stephen Napier (London: Springer, 2011).

The pro-choice philosophy, especially following the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade* that legalized abortion across the United States,<sup>71</sup> has since grown to become a vast movement, even becoming “a significant force in American politics.”<sup>72</sup> The pro-choice movement’s growth and subsequent transformation into a prevalent culture, however, has been a cause of major concern for the Church. In the view of the Church, the major problem with the pro-choice philosophy is that it promotes a culture of death. And the culture of death is, in every respect, an anti-life position; as such, it is a form of nihilism.<sup>73</sup> As Dominic Yates explains, nihilism, particularly from Nietzsche’s viewpoint, may be mainly understood in two senses: either “as the belief that life is meaningless” or as the very “negation of life.”<sup>74</sup>

Now if we go back to Nietzsche, he saw nihilism precisely “as a symptom of decay or sickness of what has hitherto been called culture—and by culture, we understand it to be a collective way of thinking—a mode of being or a typology.”<sup>75</sup> It is something pathological<sup>76</sup> that has become prevalent in the present—a pathology which, as if by foresight, Nietzsche correctly foresaw as the “predicament of the modern age.”<sup>77</sup> And, based on how Nietzsche described nihilism, it is all too clear that the culture of death can be categorized as such. For, as Bolaños notes, nihilism “operates whenever one’s sensitivity to life is disparaging, and that life itself is rendered dispensable.”<sup>78</sup> And this is exactly how the culture of death, the pro-choice philosophy, also operates: life is looked upon as something that can be discarded at will; it is dispensable. Given their very close resemblance, I would say that both nihilism and the culture of death can be taken as two sides of the same coin: because whichever side is on display, what you get is the same nemesis of life. Incidentally, Nietzsche has a fitting name for all

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<sup>71</sup> In the middle of 2022, after nearly five decades, the U.S. Supreme Court finally overturned *Roe v. Wade*, declaring that “the [U.S.] Constitution does not confer a right to abortion.” For details, see Nina Totenberg and Sarah McCammon, “Supreme Court Overturns *Roe v. Wade*, Ending Right to Abortion Upheld for Decades,” in *NPR News* (24 June 2022), <<https://www.npr.org/2022/06/24/1102305878/supreme-court-abortion-roe-v-wade-decision-overturn>>.

<sup>72</sup> Suzanne Staggenborg, *The Pro-Choice Movement: Organization and Activism in the Abortion Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 148.

<sup>73</sup> See Columbus Nnamdi Ogbujah, “The Culture of Death and the Crises of Modernity,” in *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 6:8 (2020), 126 <<https://www.acjoi.org/index.php/iaajah/article/view/971>>.

<sup>74</sup> Yates, “Nietzsche on Nihilism,” 3.

<sup>75</sup> Bolaños, *On Affirmation and Becoming*, 9.

<sup>76</sup> *WP*, I, §13.

<sup>77</sup> Bolaños, “Nietzsche’s Critique of Nihilism and the Possibility of the Eternal Return as Ethical Imperative,” 60.

<sup>78</sup> Bolaños, *On Affirmation and Becoming*, 13.

those nihilists who embrace the culture of death: “despisers of life.”<sup>79</sup> And that’s what they really are.

### **The Tenability of a Nietzschean Defense of the Christian Valuation of Human Life**

With how zealously passionate Nietzsche was in his fight against nihilism, it is plausible to think that if he were alive today, he would be as passionate in mounting violent attacks against the prevalent culture of death that characterizes modern society. But the question is: is a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life tenable? As we have seen, there are plenty of “deeper affinities”<sup>80</sup> (to use Kanterian’s words) between Nietzsche’s own valuation of human life and the Christian valuation of human life: Nietzsche considers life as having absolute value, and so does Christianity. However, before answering the question above, let us first make some clarifications.

Nietzsche did not just attack “Christianity”; he accused it of being the very root of nihilism.<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche thought that Christianity’s focus on the afterlife is exaggerated, such that this present life takes on a lesser, if not an altogether zero, value. But is Nietzsche really right in his appreciation and interpretation of the Christian valuation of human life? In this regard, I concur with Georg Simmel that when it comes “to the ultimate meaning of Christian valuation, Nietzsche completely misinterprets Christianity.”<sup>82</sup> Because if we carefully apply a correct hermeneutics of its fundamental doctrines, we will see that it is not true that Christianity is nihilistic. On the contrary, Christianity is on the same page as Nietzsche with regard to the absolute value of human life. In addition, it is also not true that Christianity teaches people to despise this world and the body, as Nietzsche would like us to think; instead, the Church attaches great importance to life on earth, encouraging integral human development,<sup>83</sup> the development of a just society,<sup>84</sup> respect for the dignity of human labor,<sup>85</sup> and responsible stewardship of the environment,<sup>86</sup> among others, in its various official

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<sup>79</sup> See *TSZ*, I, Prologue, §3.

<sup>80</sup> Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial,” 201.

<sup>81</sup> *WP*, I, §1.

<sup>82</sup> Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, 141.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004).

<sup>85</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

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documents. So how come Nietzsche got this all wrong? The answer, according to Simmel—and which I again concur—is due to “a great misunderstanding on Nietzsche’s part”<sup>87</sup> of what Christianity’s true teachings really are. As Patrick Moroney argues, what Nietzsche attacked was not really Christianity but Christendom; what he thought was Christianity was, all along, Christendom.<sup>88</sup>

Certainly, one may argue that Simmel’s views are already passé, especially that his *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche* was first published more than a century ago. However, Kanterian does not think so, claiming that Simmel’s answers remain important for anyone who tries to reconcile Nietzsche’s seemingly conflicting positions about Christianity.<sup>89</sup> Another scholar, Dominika Partyga, likewise has similar thoughts, suggesting that “a more sustained investigation into Simmel’s engagement with Nietzsche ... [still] resonates with contemporary discussions on the ethics [of life].”<sup>90</sup> Thus, it would be unwise to simply dismiss Simmel as obsolete.<sup>91</sup>

Having made the necessary clarifications, let us now return to the question: is a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life tenable? My answer is Yes. Because there are, to borrow from Kanterian again, plenty of “deeper affinities” between how Nietzsche viewed life and what Christianity teaches about the value of life. Both hold life as something extremely precious and too valuable to be just destroyed, denied, or devalued. Nietzsche, very much in congruence with Christianity, maintains that life must be protected and, at all costs, defended. I would even suggest that Nietzsche could be taken as anti-abortion (something that Nietzsche found as repugnant) and anti-contraception (contraception literally stops our procreative impulse). It is obviously in this sense that a Nietzschean defense of the Christian valuation of human life is tenable. Hence, to be able to offer a Nietzschean defense is simply to be able to take the side of life without having to resort to religious doctrines, standing firm that life must be valued at all times and at all costs. It is being able to repeat with Nietzsche these words from Paolo Bolaños: “We should affirm life and preserve the dignity of every human being.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, 140.

<sup>88</sup> Moroney, “Nietzsche: Anti-Christendom, Not Anti-Christian,” 310–312.

<sup>89</sup> Kanterian, “Life’s Affirmation and Denial,” 208.

<sup>90</sup> Dominika Partyga, “Simmel’s Reading of Nietzsche: The Promise of ‘Philosophical Sociology,’” in *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 16:4 (2016), 1, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X16656267>>.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Bolaños, “The Quest for Peace amidst the Death of God: Perspectives on Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Affirmation and Camus’s Ethics of Solidarity,” in *Thought-Pieces*, 139.

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## The Myth of Regional Economies' Homogeneity and Human Wellbeing: John Gray's Analysis of Economic Modernization

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**Abstract:** According to the theory of economic modernization, regional economies will ultimately be harmonized in a global free economy and that this global free market that will ensure the socioeconomic interests of all. Through an inquiry into the development of the free market in the mid-19th century of England, John Gray argues that it is not reasonable to expect that all regional economies will follow the same pattern due to their diverse social and political conditions. For Gray, the idea of homogeneity of regional economies is rooted in enlightenment theory that takes the idea of universal civilization for granted, and he develops a critique of this idea of economic modernization. This paper focuses on his critique and explores how human economic wellbeing through homogeneity of economies is utopic, explaining that fostering mutual cooperation to facilitate regional economic growth is necessary for human economic wellbeing on a global level. Mutual corporation is not possible without legitimate and moral ground, and this paper suggests that a broad-based human values system can serve as this moral ground for mutual cooperation. By constructing an economic system based on this ground, economic wellbeing can be achieved in the true sense.

**Keywords:** economic modernization, global free market, restraint market, broad-based human values

In contemporary political philosophy, it is widely accepted that there is a process of economic evolution associated with the development of technologies through which regional economies will ultimately be harmonized. It is known as the theory of economic modernization. According to this theory, the process of economic evolution will gradually homogenize the regional economies and lead to a single economic culture of a global free

market. The presumption is that the culture of the global free market will ensure human economic wellbeing.

In analyzing this theory, John Gray identifies that the philosophical foundation of the idea of homogeneity of regional economies is provided by Enlightenment thinkers who believed that the diversity of culture would not be a permanent condition of human life and that a universal civilization would become a reality.<sup>1</sup> Enlightenment thought influenced many thinkers to believe in the idea of universal civilization. These thinkers believe that universal civilization will emerge as a single economic culture resulting from the evolution of various economic cultures. This evolution will lead to a free market economy.<sup>2</sup> It is also believed that the merging of economies is not only natural and inevitable, but also beneficial for overall human interest.

The idea of a global free market has its origin in the tradition of liberal philosophy, which regards individual freedom as good in itself and therefore emphasizes the economic liberty of individuals to pursue their economic needs. Most of the discourses of economic liberalism follow the idea that the free market mechanism provides liberty to individuals to pursue their economic interests, which eventually align with the overall economic interest of society on a global level through a natural process of economic evolution.

Gray argues that the global free market does not arise from a natural order or process of “unplanned evolution.” He disputes the presumption that the economic lives of various regions follow the same pattern of evolution that will finally lead us to a free market economy. Gray critically examines the development of the free market in England in the mid-19th century and argues that it was not a natural phenomenon, but rather the political responses to specific social and economic conditions of that time.

This study examines the idea of economic homogeneity through Gray’s criticism of the theory of economic modernization. Here are the following questions that will be thoroughly addressed:

(a) How does economic modernization assume economic homogeneity?

(b) Why don’t economies of different regions have the same growth pattern?

(c) Why is the process of economic evolution not a natural process and beyond planned human interventions?

Through Gray’s critique of the theory of economic modernization, the concepts of economic evolution, economic homogeneity, and global free markets will be analyzed. Through this study, I work out the implications of

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<sup>1</sup> John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta Books, 1998), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

the project of the global free market and explore why achieving human wellbeing through the homogeneity of economies is a utopia. I explain how Gray's analysis leads to the argument that the economic wellbeing of the masses requires a facilitation of local markets, which can only be achieved through mutual interaction and cooperation. Finally, I conclude that different nation-states with diverse cultural backgrounds and heterogeneous economic interests can only cooperate effectively if they have a moral maxim based on a legitimate and moral ground. I suggest that a broad-based human values system can serve as a moral ground for mutual cooperation. If we construct a society based on this ground, true economic wellbeing can be achieved.

### **The Theory of Economic Modernization and Its Weaknesses**

Economic interest is one of the most basic interests of a society. Historically, regional economies have been protecting the common economic interests of their citizens. However, in the contemporary industrial world under the influence of ideas of freedom and individualism of Enlightenment, it is widely believed that economic benefits can only be increased and fairly distributed through a free market mechanism. In the modern political and economic system, this position is commonly referred to as democratic capitalism. In this system, democracy and free market capitalism are seen as interconnected ideas that regard freedom as good in itself.<sup>3</sup> The advocates of this idea argue that the free-market mechanism is the most efficient way to allocate resources. They believe that any restrictions on the free market could result in social stagnation.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of a free market is a fundamental idea in most of the Western economic philosophies that believe in an individual's freedom and non-intervention in economic preferences. For instance, Adam Smith advocates a free market as he believes that it is compatible with human nature which seeks liberty to pursue its own ends. He argues that there is a system of "natural liberty" in the free market mechanism, where an individual's self-economic interest ultimately aligns with the overall economic interest of society.<sup>5</sup> In liberal economic philosophical discourses, it is presumed that the freedom to pursue personal interests ultimately leads to the natural harmony of interests and, as a result, establishes the economic wellbeing of society. However, there is a question about the justification of the economic liberalist

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<sup>3</sup> Lyman Tower Sargent, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 112.

<sup>4</sup> Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Edwin Canaan (New York: Random House, 1937), 423.

principle, that is, how pursuing personal interests ultimately leads to the natural harmony of interests and thus establishes the economic wellbeing of society. Following the economic liberalist principle, democratic capitalism argues that the process of economic modernization ensures the economic wellbeing of human. The supporters of democratic capitalism believe that economic modernization is an evolutionary process through which the regional markets will ultimately merge into a global free market.<sup>6</sup> They believe that universal civilization, which is the goal of Enlightenment, can only be achieved by transforming regional economies into a global free economy.

Gray analyzes democratic capitalism and evaluates the possibility of transformation of regional markets in the global free market. To challenge the idea of transformation of regional economies in the global free market, he develops a critique of the theory of economic modernization. He argues that the idea of economic modernization has the following presumptions:

(i) The economic life of different regions follows a similar pattern of evolution, eventually leading to a free market economy system.<sup>7</sup> In other words, there is uniformity in the evolution of economies of different regions.

(ii) The process of economic evolution is a natural process leading to a free market.<sup>8</sup> (In other words, the theory of economic modernization advocates for “non-interventionist economic evolution.”)

There are two main questions that need to be explored. First, on what ground is it assumed that economies of different regions would have the same pattern of growth? Second, for what reason is it believed that the process of economic evolution is a natural process and is beyond planned human interventions? Gray focuses on these questions and works out its limitations.

### *The Limitation of the Idea of “Uniformity of Economic Evolution”*

As far as the question regarding uniformity of economic evolution is concerned, Gray argues that there is no rational justification for this idea. This idea presumes that the growth of economic life in all regions will inevitably follow the pattern of Western capitalism. It is believed that just as the free market emerged at the peak of Western capitalism in mid-19th century England, following the same pattern of Western capitalism will harmonize the economic dynamics of various regions and, when it reaches its peak, a global free market will necessarily emerge.

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<sup>6</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 2–6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

According to Gray, the dynamics of Western capitalism were the result of the dynamics of the Western society of that time. Since different regions have various regional factors, it is not guaranteed that different societies will undergo the same economic evolutionary process. We can better understand Gray's position by examining the relationship of economic growth with that of the regional factors. For example, Gray cites the United States as an example where the economic dynamics have trended towards a free market due to a weak family structure. Therefore, it is not certain that economic dynamics will have the same pattern in societies with relatively strong family structures.<sup>9</sup> Some empirical research on contemporary economies endorses Gray's viewpoint. Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, in their empirical analysis of economic development of various societies, conclude that economic development is shaped by the cultural heritages of these societies. They doubt that modernization will lead to a uniform world culture.<sup>10</sup>

According to Gray, one of the misconceptions about the transformation of economies in the global free market is the idea of uniformity of capitalism. It is believed that the dynamics of capitalism is a universal phenomenon that will ultimately ensure a free market. However, Gray disagrees with this idea, arguing that the form of capitalism in England in the mid-19th century was a phenomenon of specific time and social condition. Whatever the economic dynamics and achievements in favor of the free market, they were a response to that specific situation. Gray argues that the free market of mid-19th century cannot be reinvented because economic conditions and the form of capitalism have been changed. In favor of his argument, Gray provides an example of how governments in the 1980s and 1990s attempted to implement policies of the mid-19th-century free market, only to fail in achieving many of their objectives. According to Gray, these failures were due to the change in economic conditions and the form of capitalism had been changed.<sup>11</sup>

According to Gray, the dynamics of capitalism and change in economic conditions are not due to a coherent evolutionary process. Rather, they are a response to the consequences of social and political conditions. For instance, the emergence of the post-war economy was not due to a regular or coherent series of reforms, but rather a response to sociopolitical and military conflicts of that time. Therefore, Gray argues that it is unreasonable to believe that the dynamics of capitalism is a universal phenomenon. Since the regional

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<sup>9</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," in *American Sociological Review*, 65:1 (2000), 49, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2657288>>.

<sup>11</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 5.

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factors of a society are not necessarily compatible with another society, it is unreasonable to assume that the economic dynamics of all regions will be the same and eventually adopt a free market economic system. The emergence of the free market in the West was influenced by the consequences of the sociopolitical and economic conditions of Western society of a specific era. It should not be viewed as the peak of so-called economic modernization.

### *The Limitation of the Idea of "Non-Interventionist Economic Evolution"*

There has been a view that the developing free market in the mid-19th century of England was a natural process. This view presumes that economic evolution is a natural process. Gray disagrees with this idea. According to him, the free market in the mid-19th century of England was engineered. He explains that the idea of the free market was itself an idea of a "control economy" based on strategies to secure capital by a specific type of power mechanism. In this way, whatever the idea of a free market had been there, it was engineered, not evolutionary. It was an artifact of power and statecraft.<sup>12</sup>

Bernard E. Harcourt also contends in *The Illusion of Free Market*, that the free market was actually facilitated by the state. He is also skeptical of the idea that the free market is a self-regulating system and believes it is actually a kind of order regulated by state intervention, rather than the result of some kind of natural order. He writes:

In truth, however, the "liberalization" of markets and "privatization" of industries during portions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries merely substituted one set of regulations, often governmental forms of rule-making, with other regulatory systems that merely favored a different set of actors. There is, to be sure, a sensation of liberation that accompanies the "liberalization" of markets. But it is illusory and serves as a cover that simply renders distributional outcomes more natural. It appears to take the government out of the mix and thereby gives the impression that the outcomes are now based entirely on merit or talent. All the while, the state actually facilitates and makes possible the new order.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard E. Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 241.

Both Gray and Harcourt argue that free market is an artifact of power and statecraft. They contend that the economic development toward the free market in the mid-19th century was the result of state intervention, which involved the execution of power-control to protect capital and its successful accumulation. Gray points out that the transformation of common land into private property during the mid-19th century is a clear example of the state intervention of that time. The state of that time engineered the conditions for a free market through the balance of ownership.<sup>14</sup> That was the use of state power against traditional rights of common land. Moreover, the repeal of the Corn Laws of 1815 in 1846 and the repeal of The Poor Law Reform of 1834 were also tactics for the free market conditions.<sup>15</sup> According to Gray, the cancelation of the act of Corn Law opened the door to agricultural free trade, encouraging free market dynamics. The Poor Law Reform of 1834 amended the old Poor Law, shifting the responsibility to providing relief to the poor from the community level to a centralized state. It was intended to reduce the burden on payers, but ultimately weakened the institution of family, thereby contributing to the construction of a free market regime. Gray concludes that the emergence of free market in the mid-19th century of England was not the result of a long process of social evolution, but rather decisions made by a power structure in special circumstances. Gray writes:

The removal of agricultural protection and the establishment of free trade, the reform of poor law with aim of constraining the poor to take work, and the removal of any remaining controls on wages were the three decisive steps in the construction of the free market in mid-nineteenth century Britain. These key measures created out of the market economy of 1830s the unregulated free market of mid-Victorian time that is the model for all subsequent neo-liberal policies.<sup>16</sup>

What follows from Gray's analysis is that the free market came about as a result of state intervention in the mid-19th century market economy of Britain. To get a comparative advantage, the state influenced society with

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<sup>14</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Before 1846, The Corn Law restricted the agricultural trade so that it could maintain the local needs. But by the repelling of this law, the sole purpose of agricultural trade became the accumulation of capital. That was the first step towards free economy. Similarly, before The Poor Law Reforms of 1834, the old act of 1601 restricted to welfare on local economical basis through community system. While the act of 1834 made the welfare system on the basis of centralized wages system.

<sup>16</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 11.

market forces and played a role in transforming traditional society into a market society. The statecraft created a free market mechanism where market values dominated whole life.<sup>17</sup> He points out that in Europe, the several countries had market economy, but their societies were not market societies because they were not brought under control of market forces. Therefore, it is unjustifiable to believe that the free market phenomenon or the emergence of market society is a necessary outcome of the market economy. The free market was constructed in a special context and with specific motives. That is why, as Gray mentions, it was abandoned because of the emergence of new circumstances from 1870 to 1903.<sup>18</sup>

As far as free market policies of 1980s England and others are concerned, Gray points out that they were implemented in response to the social and industrial conflicts arising from British corporatism.<sup>19</sup> The decision to return to the free market system was also a result of political decision making of the power structure of that time rather than a long process of social evolution. He explains that the period of corporatism in England from 1945 to 1980 led to the imposition of regulation, which in turn sparked social and industrial conflicts. That was the drawback of postwar Keynesian economics. Thatcher's Government responded to the problem and adopted the policies of deregulation and marketization. In this perspective, some of the market dynamics of 1980s England were similar to those of the mid-19th century of England. However, due to the social change in 1980s England, reinvention of the free market was more challenging compared to mid-19th century. What Gray makes clear here is that the political stability of free market in the 1980s has been a problem due to the economic inequalities at both national and global levels. The issue of contemporary economic inequalities is the new political context that ultimately requires new policies rather than just free market management.

Gray is skeptical of free market policies because they are artificial. His analysis makes it clear that there is no rational ground on the basis of which the free market can be established as a natural phenomenon. It was not the result of "non-interventionist" economic evolution, but rather of state interventions. There is a convincing ground for Gray that the free market dynamics of the mid-19th century were shaped by the state power and the free market policies of the 1980s were also designed by the power structures in place to address political problems rather than to protect economic needs in the broader sense.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

## Regional Economic Needs and Restraint Markets

When we look at the history of economic life, we can see a trend of protecting regional economic needs. To protect regional economic needs, markets are managed and restraints are imposed. Gray argues that restraint markets, which are regulated based on the needs of society, play a crucial role in protecting regional economic needs. They are natural. He believes that statecraft should limit the markets by considering social evolution as social needs are the result of the process of evolution. These needs should be a criterion for restricting the market. According to him, a restraint market corresponds to the “norm of a society,” which represents the collective needs of a society:

Encumbered markets [restraint markets] are the norm in every society, whereas free markets are a product of artifice, design and political coercion. Laissez-faire [free market] must be centrally planned; regular markets just happen. The free market is not, as New Right thinkers have imagined or claimed a gift of social evolution. It is an end product of social engineering and unyielding political will. It was feasible in nineteenth-century England only because and so long as, functioning democratic institutions were lacking.<sup>20</sup>

What Gray makes clear here is that encumbered or restraint market can properly be called natural because it emerges as a result of the evolution of the social needs of respective regions. In contrast, the global free market is centrally planned and engineered. He explains that due to the incompatibility of social needs of different societies, global free market policies are imposed. However, the possibility of reinvention of a global free market in the contemporary world is far reaching. Gray argues that in the contemporary world, participation in a democratic process is stronger and more effective than that of the West in mid-19th century. Therefore, the construction of a global free market in the contemporary world has failed. The efforts to implement the policies of transnational organizations, which are designed to keep away the rule and regulation of the free market from interventions of democratic deliberations, have been unsuccessful. The effective role of transnational organizations has become problematic due to the intervention of democratic deliberation in the contemporary world.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Gray argues that the reinvention of a free market would require extensive social engineering to create artificial social conditions conducive to such a market. However, it would not be challenging due to the irreversible nature of many social changes and technological advancements.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Gray argues that without a single dominant authoritative institution or nation, worldwide social and political changes cannot be controlled. Therefore, the realization of a global democratic capitalism and a global free market in the contemporary world seems unattainable, as Western institutions no longer hold universal authority in this plural world.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Gray concludes that the global free market is a utopia. Similarly, Kenneth S. Friedman, in *The Myth of Free Market*, points out that a purely free market is just an object of faith and has no reality. No country operates with purely free market dynamics. Each country enacts legislations that serve their own regional social and economic interests.<sup>24</sup> Even the dynamics of the European Union countries' economies, which are thought to accommodate or align to the world's economy as a whole, do not fully align with the principle of economic globalization. Alfred Kleinknecht and Jan ter Wengel, in their investigation, shows that the economic dynamics of European Union countries are more regionally focused than globally connected. The trend of import and export in European Union countries clearly shows it is mainly regional rather than global.<sup>25</sup> This perspective is in line with Gray's viewpoint.

### *Implications of Free Market Policies*

When we consider the implications of free market policies, it becomes clear that these policies have not been effective. They are disintegrating regional economic life. Gray argues that the trade policies and tax reforms of WTO cannot maintain world economic dynamics because they do not align with the reality of regional economies. They impose additional burden on regional economies, ultimately leading to increased poverty at the regional levels. The diversity of cultural and political differences and the differences of social needs make it impossible to harmonize various economies in the global economy. Gray rightly identifies that due to the practical hitches of integrating various political and economic interests, free market policies have created conflicts among sovereign states. As a result, there is now a rise in

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth S. Friedman, *Myths of the Free Market* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Alfred Kleinknecht and Jan ter Wengel, "The Myth of Economic Globalization," in *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 22:5 (1998), 637–647, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23600459>>.

opposition to these policies in different political regions around the world.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, eventually, they could be counterproductive for economic security and social wellbeing.

Some studies on economic globalization also identify this problem. In his discussion of the relationship between globalization and development, Shalmali Guttal supports the view that globalization is a political phenomenon shaped by transnational corporations and international institutions in an effort to bring coherence to the world.<sup>27</sup> However, this is met with resistance from the majority of the world population as it fails to deliver economic wellbeing to all. Free market policies provide legal ground for corporations to expand their profit making, often at the expense of the majority of the population who live below the poverty line. Therefore, the presumption that a free market mechanism will bring about economic wellbeing for all is wrong.<sup>28</sup>

Gray's analysis suggests that achieving global economic wellbeing through a global free market is not possible because the idea of homogeneity of economies is problematic. For Gray, the global market is not a result of homogeneity of regional markets, but rather it occurs because of differences between economies.<sup>29</sup> The global market creates competition among the states that ultimately aim at securing capital for the sake of capital rather than for the wellbeing of the local masses. The free market mechanism is based on the principle of profit-making rather than an urge to meet human economic needs. It does not take on the responsibility for wellbeing of all humans.

Gray's analysis leads us to conclude that the idea of distributing economic benefit through a global free market is not justifiable on rational grounds. This is because it is impossible to achieve homogeneity of economies. Since the goal of homogeneity of economies is intangible, the idea of universal civilization through the evolution of the economy is also inappropriate. Gray's analysis makes it clear that the economic interests are heterogeneous. It demands us to tackle the problem of delocalization of the economy which is caused by the widespread of technologies. Gray proposes that, in order to ensure the economic wellbeing of the masses, we should facilitate local markets. According to Gray, it can only be achieved by helping regional economies to grow through mutual interaction. Through the interaction of regional economies, we can access valuable resources needed by specific regional society.<sup>30</sup> Obviously, through this mutual corporation, we

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<sup>26</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> See Shalmali Guttal, "Globalisation," in *Development in Practice*, 17:4-5 (2007), 352-531, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520701469492>>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 523-529.

<sup>29</sup> Gray, *False Dawn*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

can share technologies and information that will advance mankind. This would lead to a many-centered world, based on the demands of respective cultures, rather than the uni-centered world based on the utopian idea of economic homogeneity.

The question that arises here is why nation-states with different cultural backgrounds and heterogeneous economic interests would cooperate with each other. Without a moral dictum, it is not possible. The moral principle that can motivate us to cooperate with people of various cultures must be one that considers human economic wellbeing by focusing on a broad-based human value system. This system can make us responsible for helping others. We need a human-centered foundation for economic wellbeing.

### **Human-centered Foundation for Economic Wellbeing**

We have observed that economic liberalism places too much emphasis on individual liberty to compete for self-interest. Proponents of this idea believe that if we do not interfere in individual competition in pursuance of their self-interest in the market mechanism, this “natural liberty” ultimately brings about the natural harmony of interest and thus establishes the economic wellbeing of society. However, we have seen how this idea is a myth. The pursuit of self-interest has not been successful for the economic wellbeing of the masses on the global level. Economic wellbeing requires a mutual corporation among people of a many-centered world. Mere motivation for self-interest cannot provide a ground for mutual cooperation. This corporation is achievable if we focus on a positive view of human nature. Melvin Gurtov highlights this positive aspect of human nature and his potential. Explaining the global humanist alternative paradigm of national and international security, he argues that that despite the cultural and ideological differences, humans are by nature “humanists” as they are innately cooperative and compassionate towards each other.<sup>31</sup> Drawing on these human values, humans can pursue mutual interests and needs across different communities, ultimately establishing a new paradigm of international harmony based on humanism.<sup>32</sup> Thus, we can say that by promoting the positive potential of human nature, the human drive for self-interest can be turned into mutual efforts for the overall wellbeing of humans on a global level.

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<sup>31</sup> See Melvin Gurtov, “Realism, Globalism and Global Humanism in U.S. Policy toward the Third World,” in *Asian Perspective*, 7:1 (Spring–Summer 1983), 31–50, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40150793>>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–39.

Those who believe that economic dynamics ultimately results in a harmony between individual interests and bring about the wellbeing of society take market interest as prior and valuable. We see that the interest of the market is based on two basic principles: 1) its self-regulating mechanism for setting prices of goods and 2) the freedom to produce and consume economic goods. However, as Howard Bowen explains, the self-regulating mechanism demands intrinsic “selfishness.”<sup>33</sup> It does not consider the human condition, remaining neutral to human values by focusing solely on the relationship between price, production, and consumption. As a result, in this economic system, some individuals become wealthier at the expense of others becoming worse off. Moreover, this system encourages an individual to use more and more economic resources to gain status and power. However, this comes at others’ expense, leading to a situation where the profit-seeking of some individuals results in losses for others.<sup>34</sup> Obviously, by doing so, more established markets can diminish or overshadow other markets or economies. This raises the question of how the overall economic wellbeing can be achieved in such a system.

To respond to this problem, Bowen argues that human wellbeing and even a minimum standard of economic wellbeing cannot be achieved without considering human relationships and values that the market cannot recognize. He contends that human wellbeing cannot be achieved solely through market values. Bowen contends that human welfare is possible through a “Humanist Economics,” considering human life within the context of human relationship, human freedom, justice, and power dynamics of society.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, there is a need for a human-centered foundation for economic wellbeing. The broad-based human values and positive human potential can provide this foundation. Humans have a positive potential and nature. They are intrinsically cooperative and compassionate. If we promote this aspect of human nature, they can live together by taking care of each other and build a harmonized society. The over-emphasis on striving for self-interest, economic liberty, and free market mechanisms ultimately disintegrates society. This approach constructs an individualistic society where individuals constantly compete and struggle to maximize individual freedom, leading to anxiety and tension. If society is built on the basis of positive human nature and value system, individuals will willingly sacrifice some of their own interests for the sake of others and will experience peace and harmony.

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<sup>33</sup> Howard R. Bowen, “Toward a Humanist Economics,” in *Nebraska Journal of Economics and Business*, 11:4 (Autmn 1972), 9, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40472426>>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

## Conclusion

The above analysis leads us to conclude that the theory of economic modernization is problematic. It is based on a mistaken conception of homogeneity of economies. We see how the global free market is not the result of a coherent economic evolution. Instead, it is a political phenomenon created by transnational corporations and international institutions to secure capital for the sake of capital, rather than for the wellbeing of the local population. The idea of achieving human wellbeing through the homogeneity of economies is a utopia. Gray argues convincingly that the overall comfort of human beings can only be achieved by helping regional economies to grow through mutual interaction. Considering why different nation-states having different cultural backgrounds and heterogeneous economic interests would cooperate with each other, we conclude that without a moral dictum, it cannot happen. This study suggests that a broad-based human values system can provide a moral ground for mutual cooperation. If we construct a society on the basis of this ground, economic wellbeing can be achieved in the true sense.

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## The Philosophical Import of Possible World Fiction: Four Categories

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*Nahum Brown*

**Abstract:** This article contributes to philosophy of literature discussions about possible worlds by presenting “possible world fiction” as a unique sub-branch of fiction, distinct from science fiction. I argue that there are four main categories of possible world fiction—alternative histories, time travel fiction, multiverse fiction, and contradictory possible world fiction—and I uncover core philosophical themes from each category, including insights from the Ancient Greek atomists, Leibniz, and contemporary dialetheism. One of the virtues of possible world fiction is that it predisposes us to think productively about paradoxes and contradiction. I argue that although all four categories predispose us in this way, only the fourth category—contradictory possible world fiction—does this outright.

**Keywords:** Leibniz, possible world fiction, dialetheism, science fiction

Every piece of fiction can be interpreted as a meditation on alternative possible worlds. Whether implicitly or explicitly, fiction distinguishes itself from non-fiction by being about counterfactual possibilities. Most pieces of fiction offer realistic accounts of a world that is similar to our own world, with similar references to historical events, with objects that abide by the same physical laws of nature, etc. But there are also genres of fiction, such as science fiction and fantasy, that come to terms with a broader spectrum of possible worlds. Stories that present worlds with radically different species of creatures, such as aliens in science fiction, or of radically different physical laws, such as magic in fantasy, present fundamentally distinct ways that reality could have been or could become. Underlying these genres is the idea that our fictional accounts of other worlds do not necessarily need to comply with the same basic rules as our own world.

In contrast to realistic fiction, which sets forth a world identical to our own except in events, and to science fiction and fantasy, which introduce

some small portion of the vast quantity of possible worlds—there is also a branch of fiction that is preoccupied with the very nature of possible worlds. This genre is “possible world fiction.” Rather than positing one alternative account of a world and telling a story that functions solely from within that world, possible world fiction explores the interaction *between* worlds. This type of fiction makes use of narration, literary, and film techniques to explicate the variety and limits of possible world theories.

We can further divide possible world fiction into four aesthetic categories, based on underlying philosophical thematics and the extent of the interaction between worlds. There is (1) alternative history, fiction that gives an account of a non-traversable parallel world as a historical alternative to our own. This branch is unique both in its emphasis of history and in its minimalistic interaction between worlds. There is also (2) time travel fiction, fiction that examines temporal travel within a world; (3) multiverse fiction, fiction that probes what it would be like to have spatial travel between alternative possible worlds; and, finally, (4) contradictory possible world fiction, fiction that expresses the contradictory simultaneity of alternative possible worlds. I argue that this last branch of fiction is rare and hard to imagine, that it gains its philosophical import from dialetheism, the philosophical movement that claims that some contradictions exist, and that it is the most elusive of the categories because it attempts to express modal paradoxes that the genre itself predisposes us to contemplate. Although all four categories predispose us in this way, only the fourth category—contradictory possible world fiction—does this explicitly.

Before outlining these categories, there are four points of clarification worth mentioning: first, in this article, I limit the scope of my discussion and the examples that I give to literature and film, but there is no reason to assume that other mediums of art, such as painting, cannot render possible world fiction effectively as well. Second, with the phrase “philosophical import” in the title of the article, I am not claiming that authors and filmmakers who create possible world fiction self-consciously employ philosophical theories. I merely mean that there are underlying, core philosophical themes that help to shape the form of the genres. Third, I realize that I have made choices when presenting the four categories as I have, and that others might analyze the topic differently, either by proposing another set of category distinctions altogether or by describing the categories somewhat differently. For example, I focus on the concept of possible world travel and on what happens when a character meets other iterations of the self, but others might frame the features of the categories variously. And fourth, it is also worth mentioning that these four categories are not mutually exclusive. A piece of fiction can be identified, for example, as both time travel and multiverse fiction, or as an alternative history with an element of possible world travel within it. By examining each

category separately in its pure form, my aim is merely to clarify how each sub-branch contributes to an aesthetic vision of possible worlds, but not to argue for the exclusivity of any one form.

This project is intended for general readers who are interested in the recent popularity of possible worlds as a theme in philosophy, literature, and film. By enumerating the four categories of alternative history, time travel, multiverse, and contradictory possible world fiction, I give readers a catalogue that should help to clarify the origins and consequences of this genre of fiction and also an argument for why this type of fiction should be viewed as partially distinct from science fiction,<sup>1</sup> and, moreover, why possible world fiction is valuable for the broader projects of analyzing the structure of modal reality and for exploring the aesthetics of dialetheism. I also believe that there are discernable philosophical themes that underlie the various branches of possible world fiction, which, when articulated, help to expose the nature of this genre of fiction, especially in terms of the extent to which possible worlds can interact with each other.

### Alternative Histories

Alternative histories begin as non-fictional accounts of history but then insert a counterfactual alternative that causes the path of history to diverge. Reading or viewing alternative histories can help us to think about counterfactual hypotheticals and events, especially of momentous world events, such as alternative victors in a world war. One of its fundamental characteristics is that, of the four categories, alternative histories establish only the most minimal interaction between possible worlds, typically only as an otherwise non-interactive contrast between the counterfactual world and our real world. In its purest form, there is no communication or physical movement between worlds; there is simply the juxtaposition of the alternative history world and our own, marked by the counterfactual historical point-of-divergence.

We might conclude from this that alternative histories are the simplest type of possible world fiction. While this is often the case, because alternative histories induce prediction about counterfactual paths of history, although structurally simple in form, there are, nevertheless, examples of

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<sup>1</sup> Quentin Meillassoux also differentiates a special genre of fiction, “extro-science fiction,” from science fiction in *Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2015), 4–7. Extro-science fiction is a genre that focuses on what it would be like for a world not to have discernable scientific laws. Although possible world fiction does not share the same aims or design as extro-science fiction, my project of distinguishing possible world fiction from science fiction shares the same sentiment of exploring a genre of fiction that has been mislabeled under the category of science fiction.

alternative histories that are quite complicated in content, especially when the alteration of some world event has far reaching consequences. This type of possible world fiction is also, arguably, the most important branch for comparisons with the real world. Often the true goal of an alternative history is to analyze the actual history of our own world. By postulating about how a war could have gone differently, we are thereby able to conceive of concrete possible alternatives. Since concrete possible alternatives aid us in our comprehension and exposition of the events that actually occur, speculation about alternative history offers new perspectives on real history. Obviously, in a literal sense, our actual world contains all and only those events that really happen. But in a broader sense, concrete possible alternatives are part of the constitution of what happens, since they expose the fragile contingency and act as a warning of what could have been and what could still become.

Alternative histories gained in popularity in the 1960's and 1970's, and have continued to be popular today, because of a preoccupation with alternative accounts of World War II. What would history have been like if the Axis powers had won the war instead of the Allies? This question was pivotal for the spirit of the times, especially for the next generation after WWII. There are countless examples of the genre in the form of novels from this period, including Ronald W. Clark's *The Bomb that Failed* (1969), which tells a story about how America commits an amphibious attack on Japan after the trinity test fails in 1945; Archie Roy's *All Evil Shed Away* (1970), where Churchill is assassinated, causing Nazi Germany to enter into a cold war with the Allies after winning WWII; and Yoshio Aramaki's *Konpeki no Kantai* (1992), where WWII ends up lasting for a full 10 years before the Japanese finally defeat the Allies in the Pacific, yet then turn on the Germans and fight alongside the Allies. One of the earliest and best-known alternative histories of WWII is Philip K. Dick's 1962 masterpiece, *The Man in the High Castle*. This novel tells the story of a world where the assassination of Franklin D. Roosevelt prolongs the Great Depression, enabling the Axis to win WWII. The actual story takes place in 1962 in a German-Japanese occupied US after the atomic bombing of Washington D.C. eventually forces the Allies to concede the war.<sup>2</sup>

While alternative histories of WWII make up the most popular theme in the literature, there are also conceptions of alternative histories that are not about war. A unique example of this comes from Dougal Dixon's 1988 *The*

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<sup>2</sup> See Aramaki Yoshio, *Konpeki no Kantai 1* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1992); Ronald William Clark, *The Bomb that Failed* (New York: Morrow, 1969); and Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (London: Vintage Books, 1962); Archie Roy, *All Evil Shed Away* (New York: World Publishing, 1970).

*New Dinosaurs: An Alternative Evolution*.<sup>3</sup> This book describes an alternative history of evolutionary life, where the dinosaurs do not go extinct but continue to dominate the earth. This book conjectures about alternative paths of Darwinian evolution. Most alternative histories are human-centric in that they focus on human society, history, and culture; Dixon's *The New Dinosaurs* carves out its own sub-category of alternative histories by being an alternative history of the developmental processes of life itself.

Let's underscore how Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's (1646–1716) possible world theory can be viewed as a conceptual framework for the alternative history branch.<sup>4</sup> Leibniz proposes that there are infinite possible worlds; moreover, since each world is equally an infinite timeline, modal reality really consists of infinite infinities, in other words, infinite series of infinite worlds, permeating from the actual world. Leibniz's modal vision is mixed together with Christian theology: God brings into actuality the best of all possible worlds—our world—and projects in the house of God's mind every possible alternative as a separate world. Our world is the best of all possible worlds because it is the most perfect balance of simplicity at its origin and complexity in its result. All other worlds diverge from actuality either because the laws that constitute them are too complicated or because what they produce is too simple. These worlds nevertheless subsist in God's mind in a non-traversable non-spatial way as the most magnificent wasteland of counterfactual imperfections, demonstrating God's omnipotence, infinity, and freedom to choose otherwise.<sup>5</sup> From this, we can draw two inter-related theses, which act as an underlying structure for the alternative history genre generally: (1) Leibniz's world-coherence thesis and (2) Leibniz's non-spatial world-separation thesis.

(1) Leibniz claims that every world is coherent with itself and that, because of this, each counterfactual possibility exists within a separate self-coherent world with which it stands connected. This might seem counter-intuitive. From the standpoint of the actual world, we constantly entertain other ways that things could have been. For example, against the simple

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<sup>3</sup> See Dixon, Douglas, *The New Dinosaurs: An Alternative Evolution* (Salem: Salem House, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> We can also view David Lewis' modal realism thesis – the thesis that all possible worlds exist – as an effective philosophical import for alternative histories. I have nevertheless chosen Leibniz's work for its historical significance. David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Because his corpus is made up of scattered essays, letters, and fragments, Leibniz's theory of possible worlds is difficult to locate textually. I have drawn these introductory statements from his claims in "On Freedom and Possibility" (1680–82?), "Discourse on Metaphysics" (1686), "On the Ultimate Origination of Things" (1697), and "The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology" (1714). For a succinct collection of his major work, see Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989).

choice of which shirt I choose to wear today, there are infinite other paths, from alternative shirts that I could have but did not wear to the most absurd far-reaching possibilities of science fiction. Common sense tells us that each momentary possibility is an isolated choice or event and that no division of worlds comes about when we choose one or another. But Leibniz's theory causes us to rethink this assumption. He claims that each world is "all of one piece, like an ocean."<sup>6</sup> Each counterfactual decision carries embedded within it a whole counterfactual world with which it integrally belongs. This means that a whole world comes along with the alteration of a historical event. One might even visualize the novel itself as the frame of this world. Proponents of this genre rely on this principle from Leibniz, often unconsciously, whenever they demonstrate how a counterfactual event synchronizes with the counterfactual world with which it stands together.

(2) Leibniz also claims that possible worlds are absolutely separate from each other.<sup>7</sup> Although every possible world exists together in God's mind, these worlds do not exist in the same space. They are, instead, categorically divided from each other. The only interaction one can have with alternative worlds is mental speculation. One cannot travel from one to another or encounter them in any other way—temporal or spatial—other than through the imagination of hypotheticals. The combination of Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles,<sup>8</sup> his world-coherence thesis, and the law of non-contradiction work together to demonstrate his proof of this. The principle of the identity of indiscernibles tells us that it is impossible for two things to be exactly alike. Hold up two identical-seeming leaves—they are always different in some respect. Apply this principle to the identity of worlds: it is, thus, impossible for two worlds to be exactly alike in every way. That is the real meaning of a counterfactual. Combine this with Leibniz's world-coherence thesis and the law of non-contradiction—that something cannot be both itself and its opposite in the same time, manner, or place—thus Leibniz demonstrates that it is not possible for worlds to exist in the same space.

By presenting worlds as overlapping on each other, time travel, multiverse, and contradictory possible world fiction each in their own way depart from Leibniz's position, either by claiming that temporal or spatial interaction is possible between worlds or by directly undermining the law of

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<sup>6</sup> Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989), 131.

<sup>7</sup> On this point, I am indebted to Nicholas Rescher and his excellent work on Leibniz. Nicholas Rescher, *On Leibniz: Expanded Edition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 10-14. His overview of the history of possible world philosophical theory was also a major influence on my ideas in this article.

<sup>8</sup> Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989), 41–42.

non-contradiction. Only the purest form of alternative history upholds these two theses from Leibniz without compromise or transgression.

### Time Travel Fiction

In contrast to alternative histories, time travel fiction allows for movement, but only for movement between temporal points within the same world. Time travel fiction can be combined with multiverse fiction, as we will see when we examine the third category, to project both spatial movement between worlds and temporal movement within a world, but strictly speaking, the category of time travel fiction allows characters to meet themselves and for alternative possibilities to overlap only through points in time.

There are a multitude of examples of time travel fiction in 20th- and 21st- century popular films and television series. Movies like *Back to the Future* (1985), *Looper* (2012), and the German television series *Dark* (2017–2020) investigate how a timeline within the same world alters when a character moves forward or backward in time, such as in *Back to the Future* when Marty McFly travels back in time to 1955 and endangers his family's future by altering events. There are also stories that play with the limits of possibility in time by exploring what would happen if a character were to wake up repeatedly on the same day and start again, as in *Groundhog Day* (1993). There are even stories, such as the Eric Flint novel *1632* (2000), that contemplate what would happen if a whole community of people along with the town as a place were to be transported in time, rather than a single person or small group.<sup>9</sup>

Like alternative histories, time travel fiction adheres to Leibniz's thesis of world-coherence, but it adheres only partially while at the same time critiques the limits of it. Characters move across past and future coordinates from within one linear timeline. If, for example, a character goes back in time, as when Dana, the protagonist of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* (2004) finds herself transported from 1976 California to Pre-Civil War Maryland, that character experiences the linear trajectory of the past as it occurred in this actual world. Time travel fiction recognizes that a specific path will also occur in the future. A character who encounters the future encounters how things *will be*, not as an open contingency, but as if the future were already determined to be in one way or another. This fits with Leibniz's program,

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Zemeckis, dir., *Back to the Future* (Universal City: Universal Pictures, 1985); Rian Johnson, dir., *Looper* (Burbank: TriStar Pictures, 2012); Baran Bo Odar, dir., *Dark* (Munich: Wiedemann & Berg Television, 2017-2020); Harold Ramis, dir., *Groundhog Day* (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1993). Also, Eric Flint, *1632* (Riverdale: Baen Books, 2000).

since he views each world as one long entelechy of laws, characters, and events.<sup>10</sup>

However, time travel fiction also complicates Leibniz's world-coherence thesis. When a character travels forward or backward within the same world, one could say that this alters the world and makes it into an alternative counterfactual world from our own. This adds complexity to Leibniz's thesis in two senses: (1) Leibniz would no doubt claim that a world that matches our own in past, future, and present, but where a character has the ability to transport him or herself into another frame of the timeline, is, in fact, an altogether different world from our own. From this, one can imagine infinite alternative worlds which are exactly the same as our own in all respects, except that some aspect of that world leaps into a different frame of the time line. (2) Narrations that make use of this technique often explore the idea that if some aspect of a world were to be transported on itself, this could potentially alter the course of events so irrevocably that the world would no longer resemble itself. *Back to the Future* explores this theme. The characters have to be careful not to change the course of events significantly. Marty has to be careful not to change the course of how his mother meets his father, or else he will not be born in the future.

## Multiverse Fiction

Multiverse fiction presents alternative counterfactuals as existing in the same space and as accessible through possible world space travel. While time travel fiction explores temporal possibilities of the self within the same world, multiverse fiction explores the multiplicity or even infinity of identities from within the same space. Lots of popular Hollywood movies and television series can be categorized as multiverse fiction, such as *Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018) and the 2023 academy award for best picture film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022).<sup>11</sup>

Time travel fiction and multiverse fiction are similar to each other, and are distinct from alternative histories, in that they speculate about what it would mean for possible worlds to collide or overlap, while in alternative histories, worlds do not interact but stand merely in mental contrast to each other. And yet, in its purest form, time travel fiction projects only the layering of one singular world upon itself. In this sense, time travel fiction resembles alternative history, and is dissimilar to multiverse fiction, in that both have

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<sup>10</sup> Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, dir., *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (New York: A24, 2022) and Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, and Rodney Rothman, dir., *Spiderman: Into the Spider-verse* (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 2018).

the character of projecting only a minimal quantity of worlds. Even a story that contains multiple points of time travel nevertheless presents one linear entelechy of a world. Even if we interpret each point-of-travel not only as exposing a frame of the world, but as producing an alternative world that goes along with the frame, as would be consistent with Leibniz's world-coherence thesis, still time travel fiction can in no way compete with multiverse fiction in quantity of worlds. Space travel across possible worlds projects infinite opportunities for a character to "meet" alternative iterations of him or herself. Multiverse fiction expands the quantity of layering and overlapping worlds exponentially in this way.

We can trace the philosophical import of multiverse fiction all the way back to the Ancient Greek atomists—to Leucippus, Democritus, and the Epicureans—for whom the existence of possible worlds was demonstrated, quite literally, by looking up at the stars.<sup>12</sup> The atomists thought that every possible alternative world exists in some distant place in outer space. Our planet is only one of the infinite varieties of possible ways that things could be; but out there in the cosmos, there are scattered everywhere all of the other possibilities, resting in the neatly organized compartments of stars and planets. Within one massive, infinite expanse of space, there exist infinite stars and planets, one for every possible way that things could be. Some planets are home to the most minute discrepancy of a tiny detail being otherwise, like choosing the color of a shirt differently. Some planets are home to the most magnificent alterities of weird science fiction. But most planets contain only desolate, lifeless mineral and chemical, such as we bear witness to in our own solar system.

If Leibniz were to have commented on the atomists' conception of possible worlds, he would no doubt have objected that, contrary to their vision of infinite worlds, the atomists' modal design actually contains only one single possible world. It contains an absolutely large, infinitely inclusive world, but a world that is, nonetheless, singular.<sup>13</sup> Consistent with Leibniz, the atomists' massive world would have over against it infinite other worlds, worlds that are exclusive in that they do not contain all worlds within them. There would then be an infinite spectrum of increasingly exclusive worlds that are categorically separate in space. From this, we can see how distinct the atomists' theory of possible worlds is from Leibniz's and, furthermore, why

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<sup>12</sup> See G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, trans., *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 411. Also see Nicholas Rescher, *On Leibniz: Expanded Edition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of how Leibniz would respond to the paradox of an infinitely inclusive world, see Jeffrey K. McDonough, "Leibniz and the Puzzle of Incompossibility: The Packing Strategy" in *Philosophical Review*, 119:2 (2010), 135-163, <<https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-2009-035>>.

one of the main features of Leibniz's theory is that no world can share the same space with another. For Leibniz's theory to remain consistent, he has to recognize that any world that seems to share the same space, such as the massive all-inclusive world of the atomists, is actually only one world with multiple world-like divisions within it.

While this might problematize the underlying modal theory of multiverse fiction, in that we question whether traversable possible worlds are really separate worlds at all, there are also good reasons to defend the atomist's position and view the formal structure of multiverse fiction as coherent and consistent. Multiverse fiction often requires a space travel devise, similar to a portal or time machine in time travel fiction. Such a devise sets up a strong barrier between worlds, while making it only possible to break through to other worlds with the special mechanics of the devise. This has the effect of explaining how possible worlds can be traversable, while also making possible worlds difficult to access. When done correctly, multiverse fiction brings about a strange, nearly paradoxical juxtaposition of counterfactual possibilities that are, at the same time, accessible in actuality. The animated television series *Rick and Morty* serves as an example of this.<sup>14</sup> In this series (which is loosely based on *Back to the Future*), the scientist-grandfather Rick goes on multiverse adventures with his grandson Morty by using a portal gun, which allows them to travel instantaneously from possible world to possible world. They encounter infinite variations of worlds, including worlds that contain other versions of themselves. There is even an episode called the "The Ricklantis Mixup,"<sup>15</sup> where a whole community of Ricks and Mortys co-exist in the same world. This is not fully paradoxical, however, because the portal gun gives the viewer a reasonable explanation for how to visualize a character traveling through multiple possible worlds that overlap on one another. When Rick and Morty meet other Ricks and Mortys, this is not a full-blown contradiction because space individuates each iteration of these characters, much like different people in a non-multiverse world are spatially distinct. It takes another genre of possible world fiction—contradictory possible world fiction—to find an aesthetic expression that fully embraces modal paradox.

### Contradictory Possible World Fiction

The fourth category is a remarkable and difficult to visualize type of fiction that depicts multiple, conflicting possibilities as all happening

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<sup>14</sup> Justin Roiland and Dan Harmon, dir., *Rick and Morty* (Burbank: Warner Bros. Television Studios, 2013-2024).

<sup>15</sup> Season 3, episode 7 is also called "Tales from the Citadel."

simultaneously within the same actuality. When done correctly, it plays with the limits of the law of non-contradiction in terms of possibility. Aristotle articulates the logical version of the law of non-contradiction in *The Metaphysics* when he claims that “it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be ... [the law of non-contradiction] is the most indisputable of all principles.”<sup>16</sup> There is a specifically non-logical modal version of this law, which states that even though there are many possible outcomes or many possible worlds, at the point of actualization only one possibility can become actual while all of the other possibilities remain merely possible. It makes sense to articulate the modal version of the law of non-contradiction alongside the logical version because the concept of unactualized possibility contains within it a variety of alternative outcomes, which often conflict with one another and would lead to a contradiction if they were to all emerge in a single actualization. Fiction normally observes this modal version of the law of non-contradiction. In most fiction, while many possibilities are projected as a multiplicity, only one becomes actual while all others withdraw. Certainly, all realist fiction observes the modal law of non-contradiction but most science fiction observes this as well, since these genres typically adhere to meaningful individuation and express one or another actualized plot at the expense of other possible outcomes.

Since possible world fiction is, generally, about the projection and interplay of possible worlds, this genre of fiction naturally predisposes us to thoughts about the modal nature of contradiction. Possible world fiction is distinct from other forms of science fiction in this way. By distinguishing contradictory possible world fiction as its own separate category, I claim that of the four categories, only possible world fiction directly allows us to speculate about contradictory outcomes in the same actuality. Although the other three categories indirectly help us to think modal paradox, each ultimately assumes the modal law of non-contradiction and thus reverts to normal, linear narrations. Alternative histories typically project only two non-traversable worlds. The reader is given a meaningful contrast between these worlds, but since they do not collide or overlap, we are not put in the position of visualizing paradox. While collision and overlap do occur in time travel and multiverse fiction and thus bring us closer to the genuine thought of the contradiction that possible world fiction predisposes us to think, they nevertheless fall short of fully realizing contradictory outcomes. In time travel fiction, it is possible for the same character to interact with older or younger iterations of him or herself, which might sound paradoxical, but is easily explained away through the literary device of the time travel machine, which,

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<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1006a2-5, 1588.

in turn, causes the iterations of the self to be temporally distinct and thus non-contradictory. Multiverse fiction magnifies the quantity of iterations of the self by projecting possible worlds spatially. This brings us even closer to the paradox that conflicting possible outcomes could be expressed as one actuality. But since multiverse fiction uses spatially separating literary devices, such as Rick's portal gun in *Rick and Morty*, or simply the scaffolding of spread-out, traversable possible worlds, the vast multiplicity of iterations of the self might seem overwhelming and complex but the spatial distinction still effectively allows us to avoid the full expression of contradiction.

In contrast, contradictory possible world fiction challenges its audience to reflect on the traditional prejudice that contradictions are bad, produce only meaningless indistinctness, and that, from the terms of aesthetics, are impossible to express. It aligns with the philosophical commitments of Graham Priest's (1948–present) dialetheism and has this as its import. Priest defines dialetheism as a logical and metaphysical theory built from the principle that at least some contradictions exist.<sup>17</sup> Against a long-standing tradition that views contradictions to be abhorrent, Priest argues that contradictions help to constitute the structure of reality.

There is a debate in the contemporary analytic philosophy of aesthetics about whether it is possible for fiction to render contradictory positions meaningfully, or whether holding the image of a contradiction in a genuine sense is fundamentally impossible. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and Italo Calvino's *The Nonexistent Knight* (1959) are two popular examples of fiction that present the reader with the task of imagining a contradiction. In a recent article, "Imagining Fictional contradictions," Michel-Antoine Xhignesse argues that these examples of contradictory fiction fail to render contradiction meaningfully because it is impossible to think or express contradiction.<sup>18</sup> Xhignesse cites the traditional law of non-contradiction and appeals to our common sense understanding of meaningful individuation. Propositions and things can only be identical to themselves and cannot both be themselves and their opposites without some reasonable explanation (temporal, spatial, or otherwise). However, on the other side of this debate are proponents of dialetheist aesthetics, who claim not only that some contradictions exist, but that aesthetic expression is an effective means for thinking the existence of contradiction. In his 2016 essay

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<sup>17</sup> For his introductory statements about dialetheism, see Graham Priest, "What is so Bad about Contradictions?," in *The Journal of Philosophy* 95:8 (1998), 410–426, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2564636>>. Also see Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Michel-Antoine Xhignesse, "Imagining fictional contradictions" in *Synthese* 199:4 (2020), 3169–3188, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229020029290>>.

“Thinking the Impossible,” Priest argues that because some contradictions exist, it is possible to think contradictions in meaningful ways. Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and Calvino’s *The Nonexistent Knight* offer two non-modal examples that induce our contemplation of contradiction. Proponents of aesthetic dialetheism believe that the artist has the power to represent contradiction through art, even if only as an image of the disappearing, sheer withdrawal of contradiction directly in thought.<sup>19</sup>

Contradictory possible world fiction offers a modal aesthetics of dialetheism. It is a sub-branch of contradictory fiction generally. It focuses on possible worlds where the interaction is so close that contradiction arises. While the other categories of possible world fiction dissolve the paradox of multiple possibilities in one actuality, contradictory possible world fiction embraces the paradox and tries to express it, without relying on temporal or spatial distinctions. For example, the multiple iterations of a character meeting his or herself by traveling through time exist spontaneously and immanently without any distinction of time in contradictory possible world fiction. There is a similar case to be made with space. Think multiverse fiction without any spatial distinction, where characters encounter infinite iterations of themselves but where there is no distance, where all iterations are folded perfectly on themselves. Only then do we have contradictory world fiction. Critics, such as Xhignesse, claim that it is not possible to think this relation in any genuine sense. To think it requires individuation but this requires non-contradiction. Enthusiasts of modal aesthetic dialetheism, on the other hand, think that it is both possible and productive to contemplate the paradox of a narration where, instead of one event or plot happening at the expense of others, everything happens and happens over on top of itself.

One of the best and only examples of contradictory possible world fiction to date is Jorge Luis Borges’ short story “The Garden of Forking Paths” (1941).<sup>20</sup> At first glance, “The Garden of Forking Paths” looks like a strangely non-linear espionage story set during World War I that portrays the events that led up to the fictional assassination of the sinologist Dr. Stephen Albert. However, hidden within the outer story is a description of a contradictory possible world novel that Dr. Albert is in possession of, written by the narrator’s great grandfather, Ts’ui Pên. Borges claims that this book contains every possible outcome within it. “In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the impossible to disentangle work of Ts’ui Pên, he chooses—

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<sup>19</sup> See Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Boston: Branden Books, 2000) and Italo Calvino, *The Nonexistent Knight & The Cloven Viscount* (New York: Random House, 1962).

<sup>20</sup> For further analysis of Borges’ story as a piece of contradictory possible world fiction, see Nahum Brown, “Borges on Possible Worlds” in *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 53:3 (2020), 39–55, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/mos.2020.0026>>.

simultaneously—all of them.”<sup>21</sup> This rare form of fiction separates itself from all other fiction simply by expressing everything all at once, by letting characters take every action. “Fang,” Borges writes, “has a secret; a stranger knocks at his door; Fang decides to kill him. Naturally, there are various possible outcomes—Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they can both live, they can both be killed, and so on. In Ts’ui Pen’s novel, all the outcomes in fact occur; each is the starting point for further bifurcations.”<sup>22</sup> Borges thus presents a novel filled with the actualization of conflicting possibilities and thereby induces the thought of modal contradiction for his reader.

### Concluding Remarks

By outlining of these four categories, I argue that possible world fiction is partially distinct from science fiction. It is only partially distinct because it incorporates science fiction themes, such as time travel or possible world space travel through scientifically-advanced technology. But it is also distinct from science fiction in that it describes a type of fiction that is preoccupied with the interaction between possible worlds and that, because of this, places its audience in the unique position of contemplating modal paradox. In other words, possible world fiction sets itself apart from most science fiction by focusing on the interaction between worlds, rather than on the exploration of future or counterfactual scientific developments. I argue, furthermore, that the first three categories of possible world fiction only indirectly place their audience in the position of contemplating modal paradox while at the same time attempt to ward it away through the explanation of world-separation (alternative histories), temporal distinctness (time travel fiction), or spatial distance (multiverse fiction). Only the fourth category, contradictory possible world fiction, explicitly places its audience in the position of contemplating modal paradox, where a multiplicity of possible worlds emerge, inexplicably, as one actuality. In this sense, contradictory possible world fiction makes up a specifically modal sub-branch of contradictory fiction, and thereby helps to defend the existence of contradictory fiction from critics who claim that the aesthetic expression of contradiction is impossible.

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<sup>21</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1962), 37.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

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## ***Capital-as-presence and Space-as-absence: The Language of Neoliberalism and the Narrative of Capital in Glenn Diaz's *The Quiet Ones****

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**Rogelio Braga**

**Abstract:** Glenn Diaz's *The Quiet Ones* explores people's lives in the labor force created by a global market system. Work, public services, geography, identities, production, and consumption are generally shaped and directed by the flow of boundary-less foreign capital investments from developed countries. The novel presents characters as workers in the business process outsourcing industry in the Philippines, expatriates as highly skilled workers who migrated to the country to look for better economic and social capital opportunities, and the various relationships with people surrounding these workers. This paper charts the terrain, nature, and the systemic movements of capital through (1) *capital-as-presence* in the text, framing or creating work patterns, human relationships, consumption behavior, and (2) *space-as-absence* that mediates relationships between states, citizens, and the State (represented by the law and state authorities), between citizens as workers, between citizens as workers and their cities. The paper concludes that the neoliberal economic agenda in/of globalization created a language where capital is deeply embedded in a textual negotiation of/in meanings that legitimizes the power structure that perpetuates, supports, enables, and reinforces an oppressive elite, imperialist, and capitalist economic market system as the only alternative in rendering a concrete livable world.

**Keywords:** capitalism, reification, capital-as-presence, space-as-absence

**T**exts that critique the excesses of capitalism or overtly criticize neoliberalism face the challenge of demonstrating how capital has shaped the language of neoliberalism. In a systemic process typical of capitalism, this language legitimizes capital and the neoliberal economic

agenda through commodification, the reification of consciousness, deterritorialization, and consumerism. Glenn Diaz's novel *The Quiet Ones*<sup>1</sup> rises to this challenge, initiating a more public discussion on the effects of the neoliberal economic agenda on labor, work patterns, and the lives of workers in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in the Philippines. This paper aims to demonstrate the power structure that supports and perpetuates the language of neoliberalism and then position *The Quiet Ones* as a text critical of the neoliberal agenda on work, labor, and the "worlding" of the world of work in times where capital moves easily anywhere as labor power remains constant in definite and singular space and time.

Silence itself is a language; and neither does absence necessarily mean void nor the "non-presence" signify outright that something or an object does not exist. Western episteme renders the world as a phenomenon framed in dialectical reasoning: history as a constant unfolding of contradictions and tensions leading to a predetermined and logical end as the beginning of another dialectical process. Adorno raised the limitation of the very foundation of Western philosophy as the "negation of the negation" will also reveal a truth as logical as the identities in the dialectical process. Adorno writes: "As early as Plato, dialectics meant to achieve something positive using negation; the thought figure of a 'negation of negation' later became a succinct term. The book seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits without reducing its determinacy."<sup>2</sup>

The negation of the negation as the site of another dialectical process or a complimentary of the existing and dominant dialectical process is an epistemological problem that needs to be explored or revisited, especially in the time when truth (and truth-telling) can be subjected to manipulation of the dominant ideology that even the position of resistance or a critical stance legitimizes the object of its criticism or the power structure that needs to be dismantled. The language of neoliberalism, the dominant ideology of post-World War II up to now, can be explored perhaps in Adorno's negative dialectics: to reveal the structure of its language formation, and how it renders the world through this language is the first step of a conscientious criticism to the ideology and the power structure that sustains it. This paper explores this language formation and structure in Diaz's novel *The Quiet Ones* through the nature of neoliberalism's language through dialectical reasoning: *capital-as-presence* and *space-as-absence*.

One of the most common ways to look at literary production and consumption in the Philippines is that it is driven by market demands: who to publish, target readers, and the types of books and narratives that sell and

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<sup>1</sup> Glenn Diaz, *The Quiet Ones* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1973), xix.

sustain the business. However, readership has been moving on a plateau for a decade,<sup>3</sup> and the competition among publishers is stiff as the readership market is limited. With this situation in the Philippine publishing industry, looking at literary production and consumption as driven by the invisible hand of the market will have its limitations: First, it will not give us a picture of how capital can influence reading and writing on the part of literary producers. Second, it blinds our critical assessment to the most insidious project of literary production and consumption in the Philippines in the absence of a viable market: that literary production and consumption serves the interests of the ruling class, the elites, by legitimizing its power structure where the economic and political systems of the country are beholden to a language perpetuated by the country's literary production and consumption.

*The Quiet Ones* was published by a premier Catholic university that caters education for the offspring of the country's elite. It was written in the former colonizer's language, and the novel's narrative received a "stamp of approval" from the country's literary canon-maker, the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature.<sup>4</sup> It will invite criticisms, but it will never lead the discourse to reveal the more extensive system that creates the readings and meanings of the novel: the language of *The Quiet Ones* as a text. To critique the novel on its location in the Philippines' literary production and consumption is a form of a disavowal of the presence of a neoliberal language; it also invites suspicion of the act's complicity in keeping the language of neoliberalism from public criticism and intellectual discussions. Criticism or resistance is part of the logic that legitimizes the hegemony of the ideology as it uses the language where neoliberalism is comfortably perpetuating itself as a power structure.

*The Quiet Ones* reveals a world created by the neoliberal economic system where capital moves across nation-states while labor remains constant and immobile in a specific space and time. The novel explores the world of workers in the Philippine's BPO industry during its boom in the Macapagal-Arroyo administration (2001–2010)<sup>5</sup> and the movement of knowledge workers from developed countries to the Philippines. The novel's success perhaps lies in its almost accurate rendition of the workers in the industry

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<sup>3</sup> Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines, "The Hope of the Philippine Book Publishing Industry amid Stagnant Readership" (23 April 2020), <<https://www.ipophil.gov.ph/news/the-hope-of-the-philippine-book-publishing-industry-amid-stagnant-readership/>>.

<sup>4</sup> DLS Pineda, "Familiar Alienations in Diaz's 'The Quiet Ones,'" in *PhilStar Global* (20 October 2017), <<https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/supreme/2017/10/20/1750775/familiar-alienations-diazs-the-quiet-ones>>.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Greenlees, "Filipinos Are Taking More Calls in Outsourcing Boom," in *The New York Times* (24 November 2006), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/24/business/worldbusiness/24call.html>>.

and the various relationships and encounters navigating around these workers in the BPO industry. The novel's narrative is revealed through Alvin, a call center employee planning an escape from authorities after committing the fraud of siphoning funds from his customers' accounts in the United States to his bank account in the Philippines. As the story progresses, the novel's narrative reveals Alvin is in connivance with co-workers in the crime: the couples Eric and Philip, and Karen and Brock. The novel demonstrates how the lives of these characters are shaped by their work and the industry where they render their labor and how these "lives" intersect with the lives of other characters outside the industry: the couple Reynaldo and Carolina, and Alvin's American lover, Scott. The novel's narrative follows a non-linear timeline that deflects the focus of the readers from the plot to the characters' internal and external struggles; the novel refuses to adhere to the tradition of the genre where it should belong, and this narrative strategy also renders the "timelessness" and the "placelessness" of the lives of workers in the BPO industry as revealed in the text.

However, the success of *The Quiet Ones* in form does not necessarily mean that it successfully engaged and eventually revealed the object of its criticism: the dehumanization of workers in the offshoring industry through reification and the commodification of life, consciousness, and subjectivity as capital moves freely in a neoliberal economy, a contradiction in form and substance in positive dialectical reasoning, to the immobility of labor.

There are two discursive engagements in approaching the text of *The Quiet Ones* to critically assess its engagement with the object of criticism and the location of its narrative in the critical discourse of excesses and limitations of neoliberalism as the hegemonic ideology of the free market economy:

(a) The first step is to reveal the power structure that creates and sustains the language of the text, and this would also entail a conscious decision to historicize the formation of this language as part of the investigation.

(b) The second is the easiest, as the discourse is revealed in the novel's form, surface, and structure as it reveals itself to the reader.

The language of *The Quiet Ones* is a compendium of consciousness that may pose a contradiction to the object of its criticism. However, if we historicize this language, it will reveal a dialectical process seemingly in contradiction and predetermined to create a synthesis. But this dialectical process is framed by a power structure that renders the entire process not as a contradiction but as a "talkback session" on the system on how to improve itself and move forward carrying this contradiction. This "compendium of consciousness" is a product of how language is formed in adherence to neoliberalism's project to render a world based on its preferred modality that will sustain its objectives: a free-market economy where economic control is

left on the market's invisible hands while reducing state intervention. How this language renders meanings on signifiers, such as "opening," "globalized," "protectionism," "privatization," "just contractualization," "war on freedom," and "terrorists," will reveal how the process of neoliberal language formation creates its internal contradiction to justify not the product of the dialectical synthesis but of the process itself where contradiction and endless synthesis is present.

### Neoliberal Conditions

*The Quiet Ones* reveals the conditions of subjectivity and identity in a world rendered by neoliberal orthodoxy: from modern societies as a society of discipline to postmodern societies as a society of control. How the subject within these societies is reproduced within the complex mechanisms of neoliberalism reveals not just the world it tries to create but also the values, politics, and even the creation of the opposition to its legitimacy as an encompassing ideological structure.

Jodie Dean argues that neoliberalism deploys fantasies on the political imaginary to legitimize (and to function efficiently) its hegemony in the modern world. These fantasies include the concepts of abundance, participation, and wholeness with the aid of what she calls "communicative capitalism," where corporate information technology infrastructure, such as social media and the Internet in general, reproduce subjects through their active participation in circulating data stream where messages "are contributions to circulating content, not actions to elicit responses. The exchange value of messages overtakes their use value. So, a message is no longer primarily a message from a sender to a receiver."<sup>6</sup>

The fantasies also render a modern society that could only be experienced through social acceleration.<sup>7</sup> Hartmut Rosa described three types of acceleration in modern society: technological, social change, and pace of life. These processes gave rise to a condition called "dynamic stabilization": "the condition that the modern social order can only be maintained through the logic of incessant growth and escalation."<sup>8</sup> Rosa describes the modern subjects in a neoliberal world in a "frenetic standstill": the feeling that one must continue advancing and striving harder, at an ever faster rate, and

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<sup>6</sup> Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2009), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A Theory of Modernity*, trans. by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Darío Montero and Felipe Torres, "Acceleration, Alienation, and Resonance. Reconstructing Hartmut Rosa's Theory of Modernity," in *Pléyade (Santiago)*, 25 (2020), 8, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0719-36962020000100155>>.

preferably faster than others, without feeling that one is really going anywhere.<sup>9</sup>

To map the genealogy of neoliberalism, one must begin with classical liberalism's trifecta of the relationship between private property, the market, and the individual. John F. Henry summed up the argument of classical liberalism to map its progression to neoliberalism in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the development of private property, individuals being freed from the despotic rule of authority, an individual becoming now free to make decisions based on their interests and the capacity to advance those interests within a "contest" (which is held in "the market") with other individuals winning through intelligence, better work effort, and greater efficiency.<sup>10</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberalism was challenged by the rise of socialist movements worldwide and the concentration of power of the trade unions that challenged the market economy as "non-competitive, oligopolistic structures as the prevailing form of organization."<sup>11</sup> The birth of neoliberalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was propelled by the need for a cogent response to save liberalism from its demise due to the rise of people's collective movements that centered the interests of the working class, seen as atavistic to the expansion of individual freedom and to maintain an efficient capitalist social order that could abandon the Keynesian interventionism, the spread of socialism, and Marxism.<sup>12</sup>

Neoliberal discourses rose in the intervening years between the two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>13</sup> with Mises and Hayek's political and moral economies radicalizing capitalism as an efficient economic model. Mises and Hayek centered the discourse on the state's role in market society: that there should be a clear line between the state and the market as the "social system of the division of labor under private ownership of the means of production."<sup>14</sup> David Harvey summed up neoliberalism as "the theory of economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade"<sup>15</sup> and at the center of the state's function is

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>10</sup> John F. Henry, "The Historic Roots of the Neoliberal Program," in *Journal of Economic Issues*, 44:2 (2010), 544, <<https://doi.org/10.2753/JEI0021-3624440227>>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey calls this "neoliberal turn": "To ensure domestic peace and tranquillity, some sort of class compromise between capital and labour had to be constructed." *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> João Rodrigues, "The Political and Moral Economies of Neoliberalism: Mises and Hayek," in *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 37:5 (2013), 1004, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bes091>>.

<sup>15</sup> Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

money. The state<sup>16</sup> should build apparatus around it, such as the military, police, and “legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of the market.”<sup>17</sup>

In the Philippines, neoliberalism came as a response to the economic debacle brought by the Marcos dictatorship during the Martial Law years (1972–1981) and in the last three years of his administration. Walden Bello described the entry of neoliberalism in the Philippines through the structural adjustment program imposed by the World Bank in the early 1980s, an intervention to strengthen the country’s economy to pay its massive external debts.<sup>18</sup> Freedom and state intervention are concepts worth exploring to describe the post-Marcos period after the dictator’s ouster in 1986. Freedom from the dictatorship paved the way for neoliberalism, which Bello describes as having “triumphed by default”<sup>19</sup> during the Aquino government (1986–1992). After the Marcos regime, the people’s experiences of widespread corruption in government led to skepticism about state intervention in economic activities. Neoliberalism reached its most influential phase in the Philippines during the administration of Fidel Ramos (1992–1996) as the hegemonic economic doctrine gathered critical mass support, and the economy was fully opened to the capital influx from abroad.<sup>20</sup> During this period, the Philippines became what Harvey calls a “neoliberal state,” where the freedom it embodies “reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital.”<sup>21</sup>

### Placelessness: Non-linearity and Fragmentation

The world rendered by *The Quiet Ones* is the world of work in the language of neoliberalism. This language is characterized by non-linearity, fragmentation, deterritorialization, and internal contradiction in violence.

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<sup>16</sup> Harvey calls this a “neoliberal state” where the freedoms it embodies reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital. *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Walden Bello, “Neoliberalism as Hegemonic Ideology in the Philippines: Rise, Apogee, and Crisis,” in *Philippine Sociological Review*, 57 (2009), 10.

<sup>19</sup> During the Aquino administration, neoliberalism became the hegemonic ideological economic system in the Philippines. Bello further described that “the new government was run by bureaucrats and intellectuals greatly influenced by Thatcher and Reagan, ‘crony capitalism’ as a prevalent corruption practice during the Marcos dictatorship was used as a strong argument against the Keynesian developmentalism as a source of inefficiency in favor the dominant Thatcherism and Reaganism free market ideology, and the effects of Marcos dictatorship was weaponised as an argument against state intervention.” *Ibid.*, 10–11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–15.

<sup>21</sup> Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 7.

This violence should have challenged the hegemony *within* a predetermined and positive dialectical process in language formation but created more spaces for contradiction.

Non-linearity and fragmentation are neoliberalism's epistemological response to Marxist historical dialectical materialism. Non-linearity and fragmentation deliberately dismantle the power structure, legitimizing history's concrete, positive, and evolutionary development as a class struggle. Non-linearity and fragmentation reveal small silenced (and erased) spaces and pockets of resistance and histories at the expense of a grand narrative of class resistance to the status quo. However, the object of non-linearity and fragmentation is not to reveal spaces, pockets of resistance, and histories but non-linearity and fragmentation as the constant state of resistance; the aim is to dismantle the power that critically engages the status quo.

The narrative design of *The Quiet Ones* is a vertical rendering of the lives of characters, fragmented. Their past was created only to justify their present conditions and actions, and their future, either erased or provisional, only to justify, again, their present condition and actions in the vertical rendering of their lives as the narrative design of the novel. The conversation between Scott and Alvin on "placelessness" and "Kilometro Zero" reveals the limitations of non-linearity and fragmentation in the language of neoliberalism as present in the novel.

Scott and Alvin argued on the concept of Kilometro Zero on one of their dates in downtown Manila. Kilometro Zero is the concrete location marked by a structure in Manila City against which all the distance in the country is measured. Scott, an American scholar sent to the country on scholarship and specialized in urban placelessness, debunked the idea of Kilometro Zero as the center: "Remember, modern Manila has no *real* center...Fluid population. Contrast and inequality. Shrinking private spaces. It's what's happening to Manila. There's a vacuum. And no administrative footprint will change that."<sup>22</sup> Scott's reference comes from the argument that the city has no center, and power is distributed unevenly. However, Scott's "de-centered" city soon met its inconsistency as there's a "fluid population" but also a "contrast and inequality" and private places are shrinking, descriptions that defeat the diffused power from the center and a population capable of movement and transfer. And then Scott, after the inconsistency, declared that the state's legitimate political will to control, manage, and execute urban planning—as represented by the "administrative footprint"—was rendered powerless. Alvin was quizzical and dismissive of Scott's argument as the latter declared that the city is *its* inhabitants:

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<sup>22</sup> Diaz, *The Quiet Ones*, 47–48.

“What is a city without inhabitants? You see? Nothing but plains and hills and rivers. Of flood plains and esteros. But look at me. I’ve been living in Manila for, what, three years? I won’t feel at home in Seattle if I return. I will probably not return, to be perfectly honest. You see? The city is not a place. It is a social,” he paused, “arrangement. Defined by concession. By Consensus. It is us. A city ends when there are no longer people to define it.”<sup>23</sup>

Scott’s argument comes from the non-linearity of the city’s evolution from the destruction of capitalist intrusion on urban planning and the fragmentation of the city as a concrete reality, a positive space and time, as it is now dependent on the perceived agency of the inhabitants to create it. Scott’s argument reveals a contradiction, seemingly a process of dialectics, but in reality, at the negative, what it does include and eventually reveal is the truth that neoliberalism through capital restructures the city, limits the power of the state in urban planning and execution while creating a language that could conceal and reveal the project at the same time. Scott’s “concession” and “consensus” here are the “freedoms” and “democracy” preached by the neoliberal fantasy that everybody playing in the competition system wins.<sup>24</sup> These concepts stand on false premises that power is evenly distributed among the population members and that the economic elite is “non-existent” and, therefore, incapable of manipulating and subjugating people through capital.

However, the location and position of the novel introduce Alvin’s “counter-argument” to Scott’s. The novel does not detail Alvin’s exact opposition to Scott’s argument. Alvin agreed with Scott’s anti-Kilometro Zero stance when he observed and experienced passing through the EDSA and Shaw Boulevard intersections that reminded him of “suffocating concrete, the city’s dregs”<sup>25</sup> that the city is almost inhabitable. Alvin’s opposition to Scott’s anti-Kilometro Zero was unclear, bordering on racial prejudice and insecurities when it comes to access to “American taxpayers’ money.” How the novel’s narrative handled the trajectory from Scott’s anti-Kilometro Zero in Alvin to suddenly as a struggle of placelessness as expressed through loneliness demonstrates what Tatiana Panfilova calls the “problem of

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*, 57.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

identity" under rapid market expansion due to globalization: the loss of subjectivity.<sup>26</sup>

Placelessness here is a response from these characters as their subjectivity disintegrates within neoliberalism's complex spatial restructuring of spaces to accommodate the resurgence of struggles and social ills that needed attention within the subject's perceived capacity for engagement to a rapidly accelerating world their bodies and consciousness occupy. Peter V. Zima explored subjectivity and its location in postmodern and highly advanced capitalistic societies. Zima described the decline of modern subjectivity through "subjugation" and "disintegration" due to the rapid structural changes in societies because of the expeditious expansion of capital and capitalism as a dominant ideology.<sup>27</sup> Zima proposed a dialogic theory of subjectivity where the dialectic between the subject's individuality and identity is not in a pre-determined and positive synthesis. The modern subject is "marked by ambivalence and negation, dialogism and alterity, reflexivity, narrativity and identity construction."<sup>28</sup>

Fragmentation is a dominant theme that is both present in modern and postmodern identity construction in various social movements beginning in the late 1960s called "identity politics" as the term "characterizing those movements in which membership in oppressed and marginalized groups provides the basis of a common identity for the making of political claims."<sup>29</sup> Robert G. Dunn further argues that fragmentation is an inherent structure present in the logic of what he calls "commodity form" where the growing consumer society in capitalism leads to the multiplication of products and the growing plurality of the market that pushes product differentiation of a variety of consumable objects and images and this "commodity form" also functions to ensure consumers experience the "visual and semiotic fragmentation in numerous ways" that the rapid and nonstop reproduction of consumer goods in the marketplace contributes "to the intensification of sensory experience, while their temporal deployment produces a sense of discontinuity and disunity in daily existence as products, styles, and fashions change rapidly."<sup>30</sup>

In Alvin's conversation with his sister, placelessness was suddenly about loneliness, of moving from one place to another, reducing relationships as temporary, fragmented, and disposable. The sister asks Alvin if this

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<sup>26</sup> Tatiana Panfilova, "Identity as a Problem of Today," in *Fromm Forum*, 14 (2010), <[https://fromm-gesellschaft.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Panfilova\\_T\\_2010.pdf](https://fromm-gesellschaft.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Panfilova_T_2010.pdf)>.

<sup>27</sup> Peter V. Zima, *Subjectivity and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 202.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>29</sup> Robert G. Dunn, *Identity Crises: A Social Critique of Postmodernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

placelessness is from Scott, implying his anti-Kilometro Zero, where people's movement is fluid. What is disturbing is how the sister justifies the movement of anti-Kilometro Zero to placelessness and to workplace alienation as created by the painful abandonment of a lover: "Until someone leaves you and then you have to work as a toll booth operator in the middle of SLEX at 3 o'clock in the morning, you don't know—you have absolutely no clue—how it feels to be lonely."<sup>31</sup> How the anti-Kilometro Zero suddenly becomes a personal struggle is just a reiteration of the city made by the people, which is personal, subjective and fragmented. However, the danger of this movement will appear several pages later when Alvin talks about a novella, *Reunion*, "about two boys in 1930s Stuttgart. It has the usual: anti-Semitism, the rise of Nazi Germany, looming world war. That sort of things that put problems like placelessness and insomnia in proper perspectives"<sup>32</sup> just as the struggle of anti-Kilometro Zero that becomes placelessness could be reduced into an escape to another struggle so remote and closer to the subject—but still a struggle.

### Deterritorialization

Contrary to non-linearity and fragmentation as a strategy of rendering a world through the language of neoliberalism, the BPO industry has a concrete and positive historical evolution. In the Philippines, call centers arrived at the end of the 1990s; a decade later, the country was dubbed the "call center capital of the world," taking over India following the boom of BPO companies in the country and worker population in the industry.<sup>33</sup>

Call centers are a product of the "new" global capitalism that can be traced back to the "Golden Era" of post-war capitalism, where production and consumption increased. Ronaldo Munck charted the evolution of "new" global capitalism from the "Golden Era" of post-war capitalism.<sup>34</sup> Fordism was the most scientific method to manage assembly lines efficiently in manufacturing companies, specifically automobiles. With their work patterns and the structure of entire work processes, call centers follow Fordism's systematic segmentation and specialization of skills and activities.<sup>35</sup> Munck furthers that globalization, with the technology and easier movement of

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<sup>31</sup> Diaz, *The Quiet Ones*, 60.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>33</sup> Alinaya Fabros, *Outsourceable Selves: An Ethnography of Call Center Work in a Global Economy of Signs and Selves* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>34</sup> See Ronaldo Munck, *Globalization and Labor: The New Great Transformation* (Manila: Ibon Books, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Seumas Milne, "Comeuppance Calling," in *The Guardian* (26 November 1999), <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1999/nov/26/guardiananalysispage>>.

capital, created a new labor–capital relation, reducing the power of the state to regulate and control capital, specifically those that came from foreign investors. Munck writes:

Globalization, in the shape of its prime economic agent the great corporation, does indeed cut across political frontiers in a way which leads to *deterritorialization*. While corporations have headquarters in particular nation-states, they are effectively disembedded from these societies by their economic logic.<sup>36</sup>

*Deterritorialization* is not a product of colonialism or located in the struggle of postcolonial subjects on their identities and cultures; it is a product of the continued evolution of capitalism and labor-capital relations in an era where capital movements are made easier because of technology. The arrival of call centers, or offshore operations, was predicted in the early 1980s as economic decolonization impacted a sudden shift in financial activities and created new labor and work patterns. Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye<sup>37</sup> argued for a “new international division of labor” as “the traditional colonial division of labour in which the Third World was relegated to the production of raw materials began to change in the 1960s. Decolonization, and then the ‘economic imperialism’ of the post-war period, began to generate pressures for change.”<sup>38</sup>

The advent of the BPO industry in the Philippines is part of the more extensive historical evolution of the capitalist mode of production worldwide; call centers are part of a new international division of labor. Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye enumerated the essential preconditions were required for this to happen,<sup>39</sup> and BPO is part of this evolution:

1. The breakdown of traditional social, economic structures in the Third World, which led to the emergence of a vast pool of cheap available labor;
2. The fragmentation of the industrial production process, which allowed unskilled sub-processes to relocate to the Third World; and
3. The development of cheap international transport and communications technology, which made this relocation possible.

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<sup>36</sup> Munck, *Globalization and Labor*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> See Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye, *The New International Division of Labour: Structural Unemployment in Industrialised Countries and Industrialisation in Developing Countries*, trans. by Pete Burgess (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

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

*The Quiet Ones* centers the narrative of workers' oppression in the BPO industry on postcolonial identity discourse without acknowledging the historical evolution of capitalist modes of production and consumption as the environment that created this industry in the first place. Identity and cultural clashes are accidents in this evolution of capitalist modes of production and consumption. To examine how workers are dehumanized and reified in the industry, one must begin to look at the historical evolution of this industry.

The novel's framing of the narratives of BPO workers' oppression at the workplace in postcolonialist/post-structuralist discourse made *The Quiet Ones* unable to identify the real sources of the problem; it was unable to locate the enemy and the necessity of violence to a more viable dialectical reasoning to build the novel's intellectual capacity to engage neoliberalism and its language in discourse. The instances of internal contradictions in the novel (as we can see later in the discussion on the form through the characters) are devoid of violence. These contradictions should aim at challenging the hegemony for positive and pre-determined dialectical reasoning but will always end up aiming at creating more spaces for contradiction.

Violence should have been a necessity in *The Quiet Ones*; however, the text's language permitted some of the significant conflicts in the novel to end up in abandonment as a resolution. Call centers and the BPO industry are a product of globalization, and the state and non-state economic actors play an essential role in the sustainability of this industry. Violence as language is necessary as there is a need to challenge the status quo and several institutions as purveyors of globalization of capital and its ideologies. Abandonment is a defeatist choice, but it is an informed decision in the text. Structural adjustments imposed on the country by lending institutions such as the IMF and World Bank created an economic environment where it was easier for floating investments to enter and leave the country. Like in other developing countries, these structural adjustments changed the Philippines' economic, political, cultural, and social institutions; also, it has created a language that can justify "elements" of globalization in the local labor market. Among these elements were the use of temporary, part-time, seasonal, and hourly contractuels—contractualization and labor-only contracting.<sup>40</sup> The language of these elements is deeply embedded in several discourses on the Philippine labor market. Moreover, the IMF and World Bank pushed the country to trade and capital liberalization, a concrete example of a non-democratic, non-participatory, free-market economic system. While the activities of the IMF and World Bank are in developing countries, they are led

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<sup>40</sup> Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN), *Structural Adjustment: The SAPRI Report. The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis, Poverty, and Inequality* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 102.

by representatives from industrialized nations (IMF is always Europeans; while World Bank, Americans), and they were chosen behind closed doors, making these institutions not representative of the country they serve.<sup>41</sup>

The power structure that supports the language that justifies the neoliberal agenda as present in the novel will require a more powerful counter-language that can balance the power or a violent language that can shatter the entire structure. Violence is considered a linguistic-narrative project that identifies the root of the power structure that renders the language and endeavors to challenge that power structure to eventually collapse the language. Either the text will yield to the power and embrace the language, or it will ultimately challenge the language and determine the power relations afterwards.

### **Restructures, Relations**

The second discursive engagement of the novel to critically assess its success in engaging its object of criticism and the location of its narrative in the critical discourse on the excesses and limitations of neoliberalism as an ideology of the market economy is revealed in the form, as how the novel reveals itself to the reader.

The novel's structure is designed vertically based on exploring each character and their respective relationships and how these relationships shaped their worlds and, eventually, the world of the entire novel. The design of *The Quiet Ones* enables the text to explore issues of workers in the BPO industry related to work patterns, irregular work schedules, access to transportation, disjointed employee–employer relations, and the social costs of working for this industry that outweigh its economic benefits (as the call center agents are paid higher than the usual workers say teachers and other professionals in the labor market). Also, the character-driven narrative of the text enables it to dramatize the recurring themes of the novel, themes that can only be explored internally in the characters and externally with their relations to other characters; recurring themes such as loyalty, the commodification of work, life, relationships, including specific struggles and movements within a community such as the LGBTQ+ and social movements against the ruling class and structural poverty.

The text could be accessed through the characters' relationships: Alvin and Scott, Philip and Eric, Karen and Brock, and Carolina and Reynaldo. The first three pairs are workers in the BPO industry. Fabros described the work patterns and the lives of workers in the industry in three

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2003), 19.

words: *restructuring*, *relocation*, and *standardization*. The restructuring would entail changing several aspects of the worker's life to accommodate the demands of working for a call center. Since the agent's clients are in the US, living in a different time zone, and from another culture, the schedules, language, and the self (including morals and identity) should be adjusted to meet the demands of the production floor. Sleep patterns were disjointed, eating habits changed, consumption and spending habits formed according to the culture perpetuated by the company and the new purchasing power, and relationships with people outside the industry were adjusted for the call center workers. Agents are subjected to what Fabros called "temporal cycles of others," where "[s]ince services are exchanged in real-time across temporal distances, call center production requires agents to reorder their day-to-day routines according to the cycles of the time zones they service."<sup>42</sup> Characters such as Alvin, Philip, Eric, and Karen experienced "temporal cycles of others" within the operations area, and their worlds adjusted as soon as they left the office. Contrasted with workers from other countries, such as Scott and Carolina, who physically moved to the Philippines, did not suffer in adjusting their "cycles" as they moved and lived physically in the country according to their conveniences.

Relocation, on the other hand, is the confusion of places. Like the novel's characters, agents were told they were centrally located in the United States. The confusion on places would entail agents changing their names, studying and performing the American culture. The workplace transforms/transport the workers to a temporal/temporary "United States." However, in situations like this, negotiation of identities and culture is impossible as the distribution of power is wholly asymmetrical between the cultures and identities of the agents and the culture and identities of their master/employer/customer, as negotiation is only possible if both cultures have equal access to the power distribution.<sup>43</sup> In the novel, characters working for the call center, including Reynaldo, did not reach and perform a negotiated identity due to their engagement with another more dominant culture and identity. As postcolonial subjects, these characters just performed their previously negotiated selves in front of their former colonial masters in this master-slave relationship.

Offshoring of business processes would entail standardizing practices and procedures to control production processes and manage service quality. Since agents are considered "front-liners," they *become* the company they represent. As they handle human beings as customers, languages, call-

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<sup>42</sup> Fabros, *Outsourceable Selves*, 35.

<sup>43</sup> See Homi K. Bhabha's exploration of negotiation in the opening essay "The Commitment to Theory" in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 37-45.

handling skills, and even human emotions are standardized across all production sites scattered across the globe. In the novel, there is a recurring reference to UtelCo's manual of operations whenever characters are in a situation where they need to resolve specific real-life challenges. The characters' selves, as Fabros puts it, have become the "arena of outsourcing":

Produced, consumed and exchanged within a globally fragmented production system, outsourceable selves are defined by circumstances and imperatives *outside* their direct control and local, personal context. The factors that determine the call center agent's work extend beyond her immediate setting. In this view, *sourced out* means that the outsourceable self is directed by a host of actors other than the worker herself, derived from exigencies that straddle global spaces, company objectives, management demands, client targets, and customer expectations that are rooted elsewhere. Most of these imperatives may not readily coincide with the worker's everyday practice and her sense of self, yet these heavily structure day-to-day realities and performances at work. Where outsourcing of services requires the *outside* sourcing of selves, the worker becomes disciplined by exigencies of hyperproduction and defined by varied interests and relations that are separated and redefined by a growing global distance. As she is contextualized by both convergences and disparities of transnational service operations, the performance of such outsourceable selves also produces the context that makes such global exchanges possible.<sup>44</sup>

Master-and-slave is the dominant relationship among the characters in *The Quiet Ones*, a kind of relationship borne out of being an outsourceable self in the industry. However, the master-slave relationship among these characters varies depending on the capital movements between the two parties. Alvin and Scott, as the former has a constant supply of money coming from the American company, and the latter, an American scholar, became dependent sucking out resources from a call center worker. Here, capital is demonstrated as non-moving: it comes from the Americans and eventually ends up with an American. Meanwhile, with Karen and Brock, the former was reduced to being an object, as an agent on the operations floor, a

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<sup>44</sup> Fabros, *Outsourceable Selves*, 233.

necessary tool for Brock's success as the operations manager and the success of the company's business. Carolina and Reynaldo's relationship, on the other hand, can be characterized by the mutual decision to reduce each other into an object, a tacit agreement between the couple, out of their feelings, to get what they want from each other: for Carolina, survival so that she can function well as a high-paid expat knowledge worker, and for Reynaldo, the access to resources that his relationship can provide with Carolina. However, the "castration" of Reynaldo signifies that the capital should move to and stay with Carolina; Reynaldo's attempt to control the transaction was presented by the novel's text as an attempt to impose patriarchy (that needs to be castrated) rather than the total control of the transactions. The "enslavement" between Eric and Philip, however, is not between the two as they are both "enslaved" by their consumerist lifestyle, the purchasing power that they got from defrauding the company as well as from their class privileges.

### Reification

*The Quiet Ones* poses several challenges and questions on the formation and nature of the language of neoliberalism as a free-market ideology where privatization, deregulation, and the removal of state interventions are its primary goals. If we are to follow Barthes, the construction of language carries the same structure as the consumption of text, where meanings are perpetually "about to arrive" and meanings through the act of experiencing the text (as in the reading) is a relentless negotiation in systems of intertextuality.<sup>45</sup> However, the Barthesian system of language and meaning formation can only provide a limited debate on the role of power structure and power relations as capital dictates—a power structure that shapes, commands, reinforces, and silences meanings that eventually influence reading.

In *The Quiet Ones*, it is necessary to examine the novel as a language to carefully explore its location and position against the object of its criticism. Analyzing the text's internal logic may be daunting, but the form can provide clues on where we can begin a discursive interrogation of the text's language. Capital and its movement within the text, a movement that impacts the deployment of meanings, is a platform where we can begin examining the language of the text.

Central to the critique of capital are the concepts of "commodity" and its "use value" and "exchange value" as the fundamental unit of capitalism. Commodities are objects that satisfy a person's needs and wants. The

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<sup>45</sup> See Roland Barthes's essay "From Work to Text," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155–164.

commodity has its use value intrinsic or the utility of the object, while its exchange value is the quantitative relations of the commodity to other commodities in exchange situations such as barter and buying/selling.<sup>46</sup> Marx further argues that commodities have social dimensions because production has social dimensions: labor is added to the commodities exchange value. Surplus value, for Marx, is the labor power added to the exchange value, and this is where the exploitation of the working class took place: as the Capitalist will extract more surplus value, i.e., extending working hours of the workers so that more money can be extracted in labor within this oppressive system. Capital is money obtained from this oppressive system of capitalism. As characters in *The Quiet Ones*, call center agents are reduced to commodities as outsourceable selves, and globalization has created an environment where this conversion can be possible. As Fabros succinctly puts it:

Outsourceable Selves highlights a fundamental aspect of global service outsourcing in call centers that is quite obvious yet remains so implicit and taken-for-granted: agents, recomposed workers, not services, are the industry's main product. Reflected in concurring hiring, training, monitoring, deployment, and turnover cycles, the continuous production of outsourceable agents makes up the primary function of the third party, offshore call center.<sup>47</sup>

Alvin, Philip, Karen, Eric, and Reynaldo are human beings reduced to commodities. As their company and clients exploit their labor, Scott and Carolina, represented by Western industrialized countries and former colonial masters of the Filipinos, also took advantage of exploiting the fruits of these workers' labor.

Reading the text, we can conclude that the narrative attempts to critically engage neoliberalism and the excesses of capitalism in a discussion. However, if we look closely at how the text justifies meanings, we can experience another level of reading of *The Quiet Ones*. The recurring abandonment in the text, the casual reducibility of class struggle to a mere expansion of civil liberties, the privileging of identities and cultural clashes over class conflict—we know that it is not enough that the text articulated the seeming exploitation of labor. Still, the text also participates in forming a specific language, the language of neoliberalism.

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<sup>46</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: Vol. 1* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1967), 36.

<sup>47</sup> Fabros, *Outsourceable Selves*, 233.

Reification is a recurring theme in the novel, objectifying subjective consciousness and *vice versa*. Reification is present in the bourgeois class consciousness where commodity fetishism is the culture, and human beings are reduced to consumers or objects for transactions and exchange:

The fetishistic illusions enveloping all phenomena in capitalist society succeed in concealing reality, but more is concealed than the historical, i.e. transitory, ephemeral nature of phenomena. This concealment is made possible by the fact that in capitalist society man's environment, and especially the categories of economics, appear to him immediately and necessarily in forms of objectivity which conceal the fact that they are the categories of the relations of men with each other. Instead, they appear as things and the relations of things with each other. Therefore, when the dialectical method destroys the fiction of the immortality of the categories it also destroys their reified character and clears the way to a knowledge of reality.<sup>48</sup>

Lukács argues the necessity of dialectics in addressing the problem of reification: the process of reification is subjecting the conscious self to the modes of production of the capitalist as the creator, a crisis in a bourgeois society where reality can no longer be separated from the fantasy and commodity fetishism, and the presence of the proletariat negates this form of life.<sup>49</sup> However, in the textual deployment of reification, the process of Marxist dialectical materialism seems to be anachronistic as the language being utilized is the language of neoliberalism, which has its way of using its version of dialectical reasoning. The proletariat in the novel performs the crisis of the bourgeois society; the performances would entail abandonment, reduction of the conflict of class struggle to an expansion of civil liberties, and the privileging of postcolonial interrogation of identities and cultural clash over class conflict.

Marxist historical dialectical materialism can be utilized if there is a clear distinction between the two opposing classes, where the language being used is at least outside the language of neoliberalism or objectively the language devoid of any neoliberal agenda. In the case of our time, in the novel itself, where the class distinction has already been blurred, and class struggle

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<sup>48</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971), 14.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

has been relentlessly repressed, what form of dialectical reasoning can be applied so we can come up with a more viable critic of neoliberalism while either utilizing its language or rejecting it outright? How can the language of neoliberalism be understood in the first place, as its presence is omniscient and omnipresent and has self-sustaining logic? How can we map the process of neoliberalism's language, legitimacy, and limitations?

Neoliberalism's language can be mapped in the two present processes: *capital-as-presence* and *space-as-absence*. On the one hand, capital-as-presence is the omniscient and omnipresent nature of capital as signs, symbols, meanings, and, to a certain extent, as textual engagement in the form of consumption of meanings. On the other hand, space-as-absence is the negative and non-identity of identity and the non-identity itself. Space-as-absence is Adorno's process in negative dialectics only that it is always premised on capital-as-presence. Space-as-absence is a process, a product of tension and contradiction but, internally, its tension and contradiction mirror the positive dialectics, which is its shadow. Therefore, space-as-absence is related to a positive/objective being (what is present) created by capital. The language of neoliberalism and its nature could be accessed then in the discursive linguistic discourse on power relations, power structures, and the movements of capital, including its absence.

Suppose we focus on the concluding resolution of all the relationships (built and reinforced by capital) of the various characters in the novel. Can we describe if the language of *The Quiet Ones* made a critical position against the reification and commodification of work, relationships, identities, cities, senses, etc., through the text's formal elements, such as characterization, resolution, and plot structure? Are the "quiet ones" the actual location of a critical position of resistance or counter-narrative, or is it just a space-as-absence specter of capital's negative presence?

## Conclusion

*Capital-as-presence reveals the power structure in capitalist power relations.* If power structure is the terrain where two opposing forces or concepts are negotiating (provided that the power distribution is symmetrical), where is the location of capital-as-presence in the novel's text: (1) work (2) public services (3) geography (4) identities (5) production and consumption, or (6) various relationships?

Capital-as-presence in the text is either morphed into social, political, intellectual (as in the case of Scott), or capital as money. To locate the capital-as-presence in the novel's text, several questions could serve as a guide: Who holds and controls the capital? Who is the commodity in the power relations? And how does the commodity in the power relation resist, talkbacks, and

struggle to change positions with the one holding the capital? These questions locate the movement of capital in the power relations while identifying the nature of transactions and those involved in engagement. Take, for example, the various relationships revealed in the text. The text has four relationships: Alvin and Scott, Carolina and Reynaldo, Karen and Brock, and Philip and Eric. Capital-as-presence moves several times in these relationships, depending on the situation and the power distribution between the couple. One must first establish the relationships in the power relations: at work, between employer and employee, or agents and customers; in public service, between the representatives of the authority and the citizens; in geography, between locals and the foreign utilizing spaces; and identities, between the dominant and less powerful, or identities at the periphery whether it is cultural, religious, or ethnic identity. Capital as the money used to obtain more money (in the Marxist discourse: M-C-M or money-commodity-money) can perform itself as a presence, omnipresent and omniscient.

*Space-as-absence is a negative presence, dependent on the positive existence/presence.* Capital creates, erases, and then legitimizes a world based on the systemic nature of capitalism of uncontrolled wealth accumulation by those who control the modes of production. Negative presence is the binary opposition of “what-is-present” created by capital. To demonstrate the negative presences/spaces-as-absence created by capital and how it mediates relationships in the novel’s text: (1) between states, (2) citizens and the State (represented by the law and state authorities), (3) between citizens as workers, (4) between citizens as workers and their cities?

To locate space-as-absence, these questions can guide the process: What is the description of the power relations? That is, is it master and slave, or is the power evenly distributed between the two parties? Identify the categories under each party and look for categories that converge and diverge. Lastly, search for a negotiation between the two parties, provided the power is distributed evenly, such as between nation-states in the novel. The two nation-states had a master-slave relationship, as the Philippines was a former colony of the United States. The contradiction and tension between the two states are passed on even to their respective categories as nation-states, which either converge or diverge: economic ideology, history of colonial domination and subjugation, language, identities, cultures, etc. In the novel, the engagement of the two states has created a negotiated space: the call center as a workplace, and for the characters in the novels, the extension of their lives. *What-is-present* here or a positive existence is the call center; however, the call center is also a product of an engagement between two previously identified elements: nation and state. The lives and universe of the characters in the novel were produced by their engagement with the call center as what-is-present is the space-as-absence. Through this, tension and

contradiction are also present to create and then legitimize it as a new what-is-present and create another space-as-absence, the process will continue *ad infinitum*. This process, together with the movement of capital-as-presence in the different levels of space-as-absence, is how the language of neoliberalism works, and this is the cartography of its linguistic process that renders a world that perpetuates and legitimates, at the same time, the dictum that the world has no alternative to neoliberalism.

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## Reassessing the Ethics of *Utang na Loob*

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**Abstract:** One of the most widely acknowledged Filipino cultural values is *utang na loob*. Sometimes translated as “debt of gratitude,” it refers to an informal form of reciprocal social obligation that arises when a person is significantly assisted by another during a difficult time. As it touches on the Filipino sense of human dignity and social responsibility, *utang na loob* is one critical theme in most research investigating the characteristics of the Filipino psyche, culture, and social behavior. Explaining the nature and occurrence of *utang na loob*, however, has its challenges, foremost of which is how to appropriately account for its negative or morally problematic instantiations. This essay examines how some approaches that regard *utang na loob* as a moral virtue handle this challenge. After identifying several difficulties with these approaches, the essay argues for an alternative approach that maintains the status of *utang na loob* as a cultural value whose instantiating actions are subject to moral evaluation.

**Keywords:** *utang na loob*, reciprocity, Filipino values, Filipino cultural traits

*Utang na loob*, sometimes translated as “debt of gratitude,”<sup>1</sup> refers to a widely recognized Filipino cultural value in which one is obliged to reciprocate a significant assistance received in times of great need. It is deeply entrenched in the consciousness of most Filipinos, and since it touches on their sense of human dignity and social responsibility, it has

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<sup>1</sup> Other translations include “gratitude,” “debt of volition,” “debt of good will,” “debt of prime obligation,” “sense of obligation,” “debt stemming from personal volition,” and “debt of the inside.” See Mary Hollnsteiner, “Reciprocity in Lowland Philippines,” in *Four Readings on Philippine Values*, ed. by F. Lynch and A.D. Guzman II (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University), 69–92; Charles Kaut, “Utang na Loob: A System of Contractual Obligations among Tagalogs,” in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 17:3 (1961), 256–272, <<https://doi.org/10.1086/soutjanth.17.3.3629045>>; Leonardo de Castro, “Debts of Good Will and Interpersonal Justice,” in *The Paeideia Archive: Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, 24 (1988), 21–26, <<https://doi.org/10.5840/wcp20-paideia199824413>>.

become a standard topic for researchers investigating the nature of the Filipino psyche, culture, and social behavior.<sup>2</sup> Explaining the nature and occurrence of *utang na loob*, however, has its challenges. One main challenge concerns its so-called *ambivalent nature*, referring to its feature of having both positive and negative, or morally desirable and undesirable, instantiations.<sup>3</sup>

Having a sense of *utang na loob* is a highly valued positive trait among Filipinos, such that its absence in the character of Filipinos puts their humanity and life direction into question. Aside from being regarded as shameless (*walang hiya*) and brutish (*asal-hayop*), those without it or who do not honor it are said to be bound to fail in reaching their goals in life (*hindi makakarating sa paroroonan*). However, it is also said to be one of the root causes of wrongdoing and social evil. Having a sense of it is said to incline people to evil deeds such as condoning unethical behaviors and practices, participating in collective wrongdoings, and supporting corrupt officials. Furthermore, it makes people vulnerable to the manipulation of ill-intentioned individuals, such as forcing them to give in to morally compromising demands.<sup>4</sup>

The challenge, in particular, is how to appropriately account for the negative or morally problematic instantiations of *utang na loob*. This essay examines how some approaches that regard *utang na loob* as a moral virtue handle this challenge. After identifying several difficulties with these approaches, the essay argues for an alternative approach that maintains the status of *utang na loob* as a cultural value whose instantiating actions are subject to moral evaluation. The essay is divided into three sections. The first provides an overview of *utang na loob* and introduces some main controversies regarding its nature. The second discusses the key contentions of approaches that regard *utang na loob* as a moral virtue, accounting for the ambivalent nature of *utang na loob*. The third identifies several difficulties

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Roberto Javier, "Parang Pag-ibig, Ibinigay ang Walang Kapital! Utang na Loob-Ugnayan, Unawa, at Ugali," in *Diwa E-Journal*, 5 (2017), 74–92, <<https://www.pssp.org.ph/diwa/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/4-Artikulo-Javier.pdf>>; Angelo Miguel P. Gundran, John Rovin J. Manalo, Pauline Anne S. Soriano, Rance Louise O. Cagsawa, and Geselle C. Manguiat, "The Concept of Utang na Loob in the Philippines: Utang na Loob Scale," in *Antorcha*, 8:1-12 (2021), 1–2, <<https://research-manila.letran.edu.ph/read/183>>; Teresita Rungduin, Darwin C. Rungduin, Joshua G. Aninacion, Renato B. Catindig, Jr., Lemuel S. Gallo, "The Filipino Character Strength of Utang na Loob: Exploring Contextual Associations with Gratitude," in *International Journal of Research Studies in Psychology*, 5:1 (2016), 13–23, <<https://doi.org/10.5861/IJRSP.2015.1322>>.

<sup>3</sup> Emerita Quito, "The Ambivalence of Filipino Traits and Values," in *Values in Philippine Culture and Education*, ed. by Manuel Dy (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 51–54.

<sup>4</sup> See *Ibid.* Also, Florentino Timbreza, *Sariling Wika at Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, Inc., 2008), 109–110.

with these approaches and advances an alternative one that avoids these difficulties.

## Overview and Issues

For a general understanding of *utang na loob* and how it operates in human relations, let us examine the central findings of the pioneering studies done on the subject by Kaut<sup>5</sup> and Hollnsteiner.<sup>6</sup> To identify the adequate conditions for the occurrence of *utang na loob*, Kaut and Hollnsteiner investigate how *utang na loob* operates in some selected Filipino communities.

To better understand their discussions, it will be helpful to first clarify the linguistic framework that they are using to talk about the various features of *utang na loob*. It shall be observed that Kaut and Hollnsteiner (and other scholars as well) use the linguistic framework of *debt* and *contract*. In this light, “debt” refers to benefit or assistance one has received and which one needs or feels obligated to reciprocate; “debtor” refers to the beneficiary of an assistance and the one bearing the reciprocal obligation; “creditor” refers to the benefactor or provider of an assistance and to whom the beneficiary has a reciprocal obligation; and “contract” refers to the system of reciprocal obligations entered into by people the moment they become benefactors and/or beneficiaries of some significant assistance or benefit.

Kaut and Hollnsteiner share the understanding that *utang na loob* is a Filipino cultural value generally referring to an informal kind of reciprocal social obligation that is created when a person in great need receives valuable assistance from another.<sup>7</sup> Out of gratitude, the beneficiary of the assistance feels obligated to someday be able to significantly assist the benefactor when the latter is the one in great need. This obligation is social, for it is interpersonal and operates within a system of social relations. An integral part of this system is the shame-based sanction the society inflicts on those not honoring this obligation. And it is informal, for unlike formal contracts, there are no clear guidelines that will indicate whether the obligation has been fully satisfied (or whether the received assistance has been fully reciprocated).

It is the specific focus of their investigations to bring out the peculiar features of *utang na loob* that differentiate their findings. Kaut focuses on the kind of social system in which *utang na loob* operates. For Kaut, *utang na loob* is not an isolated phenomenon for it operates within a social system, which he describes as “a system of social sentiments of deep and strong affective

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<sup>5</sup> Kaut, “Utang na Loob: A System of Contractual Obligations among Tagalogs.”

<sup>6</sup> Hollnsteiner, “Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines.”

<sup>7</sup> See also De Castro, “Debts of Good Will and Interpersonal Justice,” 21.

nature.”<sup>8</sup> He identifies four interrelated principles governing this system: the principles of gift, acceptance, repayment, and need and surplus.

First, *utang na loob* differs from a simple debt, for the latter results from a loan, whereas the former from a gift. In this sense, *utang na loob* arises when the assistance given is neither requested nor demanded by the recipient and stems from the free will of the benefactor.

Second, as one accepts the gift, the giver and the recipient enter into a virtual contract in which the recipient is expected to commit to fulfilling the request of the giver sometime in the future. As Kaut explains, “Once he has accepted, he is committed to the fulfillment of the request or requests of the donor.”<sup>9</sup> Given this, if one does not want to enter into this contract, the gift should not be accepted. However, there is usually some pressure to accept the gift. Not accepting it may result in strained relationships for it may be taken as a personal attack against the person offering the gift.<sup>10</sup>

Third, the repayment of *utang na loob* cannot be treated in the same way one treats any commercial transaction. The repayment for *utang na loob*, unlike those for commercial debts, has no definite form. This cultural belief is implied by the Filipino proverb stating that *utang na loob* cannot be paid with money (*hindi mababayaran ng salapi*).<sup>11</sup> It is unclear how to fully repay a gift. This is mainly because it is also not clear what is expected from the receiver of the gift. The giving of a gift may or may not be done with a specific return in mind. Sometimes the repayment is also expected to be something more valuable than the gift given. As Kaut illustrates: “the gift (or investment) of a bunch of bananas may entail reciprocation in the form of a pig, a chicken, a job on the municipal police force, a vote, etc.”<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, *utang na loob* obligations operate on the principle of need and surplus.<sup>13</sup> In general, one can only ask for assistance from someone if the former is recognized to have a need and the latter is recognized to have a surplus. This creates a restriction on what benefactors can demand from beneficiaries as repayment of *utang na loob*. Benefactors can only demand something of which they have a recognized need, and which beneficiaries are recognized to have the ability to meet or satisfy given their surplus of what is needed.

To bring out the unique features of *utang na loob*, Hollnsteiner focuses on the differences between the kind of reciprocity involved in *utang na loob* and the other kinds. She defines reciprocity as “that principle of behavior

<sup>8</sup> Kaut, “Utang na Loob: A System of Contractual Obligations among Tagalogs,” 258.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

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

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

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

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

wherein every service received, solicited or not, demands a return, the nature and proportion of the return determined by the relative statuses of the parties involved and the kind of exchange at issue.”<sup>14</sup> She presents a three-fold classification of reciprocity: *contractual reciprocity*, *quasi-contractual reciprocity*, and *utang na loob reciprocity*.

A reciprocal exchange is classified as contractual if the people involved come up with a voluntary agreement to behave toward one another in a specified way for a specified time in the future. In contrast, in quasi-contractual reciprocity, the terms of repayment or fulfilling reciprocal obligations are not explicitly expressed before agreeing to a contract. The terms of the contract are merely implicitly defined, given the nature of the situation and the background culture. Nonetheless, both types of reciprocity are characterized by the following: (a) the expected payment for a debt is clear, in which the payment is generally equivalent to the amount of debt, (b) emotions or affective sentiments between parties involved are minimal or generally insignificant, (c) it is clear when the contract has ended or when the reciprocal obligation has been satisfied (though while in the contractual form it is already dead, in the quasi-contractual form it is only dormant), and (d) the inability to satisfy the reciprocal obligation brings about shame.<sup>15</sup>

Hollnsteiner considers the third classification, *utang na loob* reciprocity, as an ancient Filipino operating principle. Given that Filipinos normally want to get along with others (or maintain so-called *smooth interpersonal relations*), showing one’s gratitude by expressing some form of repayment for a benefit received is highly valued in Filipino communities. She writes: “Every Filipino is expected to possess *utang na loob*; that is, he should be aware of his obligations to those from whom he receives favors and should repay them in an acceptable manner.”<sup>16</sup>

It is impossible to quantify the debt incurred in *utang na loob*, and so its reciprocity implies the uncertainty of repaying the debt. As Hollnsteiner explains: “Since *utang na loob* invariably stems from a service rendered, even though a material gift may be involved, quantification is impossible. One cannot actually measure the repayment but can attempt to make it.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, even when the recipient of an aid believes she has already repaid the debt (or satisfied her reciprocal obligation) with interest, it is not certain whether the other party shares this belief. Unlike in the contractual and quasi-contractual forms, *utang na loob* reciprocity binds the relationship between the debtor and creditor indefinitely.

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<sup>14</sup> Hollnsteiner, “Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines,” 69.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

In sum, in *utang na loob* reciprocity, the repayment of a debt is not equivalent to the debt. When the debtor and creditor are generally of the same socio-economic status (the coordinate case), the debt is paid with interest. But when the creditor is of a higher socio-economic status than the debtor (the superordinate–subordinate case), the debt is only paid partially or incompletely. Generally, there is no agreement on the terms of the contract, and so it is uncertain when the debt has been fully settled, and thus the contract usually remains alive. Emotions are significant (but more so in the coordinate case). And unwillingness to pay results in shame.<sup>18</sup> Shame, in this regard, is the universal sanction for the inability to honor one’s reciprocal obligations in all three forms.

Having seen some of the salient features of *utang na loob* in the eyes of Kaut and Hollnsteiner, let us now briefly examine some disagreements among scholars on the nature of *utang na loob*. Two major points of such disagreements are the following. The first concerns whether *utang na loob* is a cultural value or trait that is unique to Filipinos. Some argue that it is. Dancel, for instance, writes: “*utang na loob* stands out among the many virtues that define a Filipino ... that the Filipino can call uniquely his own.”<sup>19</sup> Agaton concurs: “*Utang na loob* is a unique Filipino trait that should be perceived and practiced in its original intent.”<sup>20</sup> However, this is contested by other scholars, including Kaut, Hollnsteiner, and Gorospe. Kaut believes that the practice of *utang na loob* can also be found in other places.<sup>21</sup> Hollnsteiner contends that while some of the manifestations of *utang na loob* are peculiar to the Philippines, the principle as work in these manifestations are common to all societies.<sup>22</sup> Gorospe concurs: “First of all, when we speak of ‘traditional Filipino values’ such as *bahala na*, *utang na loob*, *pakikisama*, *hiya*, we do not claim that they are peculiar to the Philippines. Although these values may manifest themselves differently in the Philippines, they are universal human values.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>19</sup> Francis Dancel, “Utang na Loob [Debt of Goodwill]: A Philosophical Analysis,” in *Filipino Cultural Traits: Claro R. Ceniza Lectures*, ed. by Rolando Gripaldo (Washington DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 110.

<sup>20</sup> Sheldon Ives Agaton, “Vantage Points of Utang na Loob,” in *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 3:1 (2017), 63, <<https://ses-journal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Vantage-Points-of-Utang-na-Loob.pdf>>.

<sup>21</sup> Kaut, “Utang na Loob: A System of Contractual Obligations among Tagalogs,” 256.

<sup>22</sup> Hollnsteiner, “Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines,” 84.

<sup>23</sup> Vitaliano Gorospe, “Christian Renewal of Philippine Values,” in *Philippine Studies*, 14:2 (1996), 207, <<https://ojs.philippinestudies.net/index.php/ps/article/view/2397/4519>>.

To bring out the uniquely Filipino features of *utang na loob*, some explore a concept of *loob* that is believed to be indigenous to Filipinos.<sup>24</sup> The studies made by Rafael on how Filipinos have come to understand certain Filipino concepts like *loob*, however, cast doubt on the feasibility of this project.<sup>25</sup> Rafael, in particular, argues that the Filipino understanding of *loob*, which, for example, is sometimes translated as “soul,” “will,” or “conscience,” actually results from the deliberate translations of some key Tagalog or Filipino terms by early Spanish missionaries to further advance their objective of Christianizing the Filipino consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

The second is concerned with how to properly handle the apparent character of *utang na loob* of having both positive (or morally desirable) and negative (or morally undesirable) instantiations. As Cleofas writes: “*Utang-na-loob* is a Filipino practice that is associated with good and bad actions.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Dancel observes that “in some instances, it is something altogether positive, whereas in others, it is something completely negative.”<sup>28</sup> We shall refer to the assertion of the truth or reality of this feature of *utang na loob* as the “ambivalence hypothesis” and its problematization as the “ambivalence issue.” A number of scholars, including Gorospe<sup>29</sup> and Quito,<sup>30</sup> take the ambivalence hypothesis as a matter of fact. Some, however, dispute it. Jiolito, for instance, considers it “erroneous and problematic” in light of his understanding of Filipino values as Aristotelian moral virtues.<sup>31</sup> De Castro, consequently, rejects it when he translates *utang na loob* as “debt of good will” and regards the alleged negative instances of *utang na loob* as *debts of ill will*.<sup>32</sup>

We shall, in this essay, focus on the ambivalence issue. In the following sections, we shall critically examine some approaches to this issue, that is, approaches that perceive *utang na loob* as a moral virtue or value.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Albert Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy! Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversation in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>27</sup> Jacklyn Cleofas, “Towards a Practical and Empirically Grounded Account of Utang-na-Loob as a Filipino Virtue,” in *Kritika Kultura*, 33 (2019), 157–159.

<sup>28</sup> Dancel, “Utang na Loob [Debt of Goodwill]: A Philosophical Analysis,” 124.

<sup>29</sup> Gorospe, “Christian Renewal of Philippine Values.”

<sup>30</sup> Quito, “Ambivalence of Filipino Traits and Values.”

<sup>31</sup> Benitez Jiolito, “In Defense of Filipino Values and Norms: Debunking the Ambivalence Theory,” in *HCMCOUJS-Social Sciences* 12:1 (2022), 131, <<https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.12.1.2215.2022>>.

<sup>32</sup> De Castro, “Debts of Good Will and Interpersonal Justice.”

## Virtue and Ambivalence

Some scholars contend that *utang na loob* is more than just a cultural value. For them, it is primarily a moral value or virtue, or a form of moral excellence. We shall, for our purposes, call this approach to the nature of *utang na loob* the *virtue approach*. Its major proponents include De Castro,<sup>33</sup> Jiolito,<sup>34</sup> Cleofas,<sup>35</sup> and Dancel.<sup>36</sup> This approach has two ways of handling the ambivalence issue. One simply rejects the ambivalence hypothesis by claiming that *utang na loob* does not really have negative instantiations. The second, however, accommodates the hypothesis by accounting for the negative instantiations of *utang na loob* in terms of the absence of a supplementing virtue.

We can refer to the first way—in virtue of its assumption that *utang na loob* as a moral virtue can stand by itself, without need of supplementation—as the *full virtue approach*. In contrast, we can refer to the second way—in virtue of its assumption that *utang na loob* as a moral virtue cannot stand by itself, needing supplementation—as the *partial virtue approach*. For the full virtue approach, we shall examine the views of Jiolito and De Castro, whereas for the partial virtue approach, we shall examine those of Cleofas.

De Castro translates *utang na loob* as “debt of good will” mainly because he believes that there is an important aspect of *utang na loob* that is not captured by the translation “debt of gratitude.” This aspect refers to the alleged fact that in *utang na loob*, one is indebted not only to the actual benefit or assistance received but also to the benefactor’s good will.<sup>37</sup> Using the construal of *utang na loob* as debt of good will as his framework, De Castro then spells out what for him *utang* and *loob* mean. What De Castro says about *utang* or debt is basically no different from what Kaut and Hollnsteiner have already articulated in more detail about the phenomenon, that is, that the *debt* in *utang na loob* is different from formal debts, such as monetary debts or those incurred with banks. Accordingly, there are no clear guidelines as to how and when this debt can be fully repaid.

Meanwhile, with *loob*, De Castro takes it as a mere shorthand for the Filipino ethical concept of *kagandahang loob*, which translates as “good will.” *Utang na loob*, in this light, is actually *utang ng kagandahang loob*, which precisely translates to “debt of good will.” Timbreza, interestingly, shares this view: “*Ang pagkakaloob ng magandang kalooban ay siyang lilikha o magtatatag ng*

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

<sup>34</sup> Jiolito, “In Defense of Filipino Values and Norms.”

<sup>35</sup> Cleofas, “Towards a Practical and Empirically Grounded Account of Utang-na-Loob.”

<sup>36</sup> Dancel, “Utang na Loob [Debt of Goodwill]: A Philosophical Analysis.”

<sup>37</sup> De Castro, “Debts of Good Will and Interpersonal Justice,” 21.

*utang na loob ... Kaya, tinawag itong utang ng kagandahang loob na dapat bayaran din ng kapwa kagandahang loob.*"<sup>38</sup>

De Castro specifies four conditions for the occurrence of good will in the context of a debt of good will.<sup>39</sup> First, this good will should be freely conveyed by its agents; that is, these agents should not be under external compulsion to convey their good will through the assistance they provide to a person in need. Second, these agents should be motivated by positive feelings like charity, love, and sympathy towards the beneficiary. Third, these agents should not be motivated by the prospect of a reward. Fourth, the beneficiaries' sense of reciprocal obligation should be self-imposed. This last condition is De Castro's response to a puzzle created by his first three conditions. That is, if said agents are not compelled by external forces and motivated by positive feelings towards the beneficiaries without the prospect of a reward, why should they feel obligated to reciprocate the good will of their benefactors? Where does this sense of obligation come from? De Castro simply responds that this obligation is imposed by these agents upon themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Consequently, all these conditions constitute the adequate conditions for the occurrence of *utang na loob* or debt of good will. But what happens now to the alleged negative or morally problematic instantiations of *utang na loob*? For De Castro, these instances are not really instantiations of *utang na loob*. Rather, they are instantiations of what he calls *debt of ill will*. He writes:

When a person deliberately manipulates circumstances in order to establish enslaving relationships of indebtedness, what he truly creates are 'debts of ill will.' If debts of good will are characterized in terms of *kagandahang loob* conveyed by the benefactor, debts of ill will are marked by the ill will of scheming manipulators.<sup>41</sup>

A debt of ill will is thus a kind of indebtedness that violates any of the conditions for the occurrence of a debt of good will. For instance, if the assistance provided is either definite in terms of repayment, not freely given, not motivated by positive feelings, or motivated by the expectation of a reward, then there won't arise a debt of good will. There will be no *utang na loob*. Now, as *utang na loob* is debt of good will, and does not include debts of

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<sup>38</sup> Timbreza, *Sariling Wika at Pilosopiyang Filipino*, 109. Unlike De Castro, Timbreza does not reject the ambivalence hypothesis.

<sup>39</sup> De Castro, "Debts of Good Will and Interpersonal Justice," 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

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

ill will, it follows from De Castro's perspective that *utang na loob* has no negative or morally undesirable instantiations. This clearly rejects the ambivalence hypothesis.

Jiolito strongly argues that the ambivalence hypothesis is a grave mistake because it is not supported by sociological and psychological theories about the phenomenon of ambivalence and by the Aristotelian concept of virtue.<sup>42</sup> First, ambivalence, for Jiolito, is a sociological and psychological phenomenon that "does not apply to values, norms, and character traits because it pertains to the social actors' experiences under certain sociological and psychological conditions."<sup>43</sup> Consequently, for Jiolito, Filipino values such as *utang na loob* cannot be ambivalent, for it is only the people practicing them who can be ambivalent.

Second, as moral virtues in the Aristotelian sense, Filipino values such as *utang na loob* are "always right, good, and positive."<sup>44</sup> The ambivalent hypothesis, in this regard, is inconsistent with the Aristotelian notion of virtue as excellence understood as moderation—being in the middle between the vices of excess and deficiency. For Jiolito, *utang na loob* as a moral virtue is a kind of indebtedness that is always practiced in moderation. Instances of indebtedness excessively or deficiently practiced, in this regard, are not real instances of *utang na loob*. In this light, *utang na loob* is deemed to have no negative or morally problematic instantiations.

De Castro and Jiolito reject the ambivalence hypothesis for their virtue approach contradicts the hypothesis. Cleofas, however, tries to compromise the virtue approach and the ambivalence hypothesis. She accepts the fact that *utang na loob* (which she translates, following De Castro, as "debt of good will") has morally problematic instantiations that she finds seriously worrying.<sup>45</sup> To demonstrate her point, she elaborates on some of Hollnsteiner's own illustrations of *utang na loob* reciprocity—in which *utang na loob* is used to take advantage of people in need of employment, medical care, money, and livelihood.<sup>46</sup> Cleofas, however, also takes *utang na loob* as a moral virtue in the Aristotelian sense of moral excellence (which, as seen through Nussbaum's neo-Aristotelian framework, "contributes to inclusive communal flourishing"<sup>47</sup>). She intends to argue for "a better account of *utang-*

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<sup>42</sup> Jiolito, "In Defense of Filipino Values and Norms," 139.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>45</sup> Cleofas, "Towards a Practical and Empirically Grounded Account of Utang na Loob as a Filipino Virtue," 160.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 160–164.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

*na-loob* as a Filipino virtue,” whereby “virtue” is “a form of moral excellence.”<sup>48</sup>

Cleofas argues that the practice of *utang na loob* requires the observance of justice. Among the kinds of justice (namely, the retributive, compensatory, distributive, and procedural kinds), she specifically means the distributive kind (which concerns fair distributions of resources), which she grounds in the allegedly Filipino concept of “*katarungan*” as expounded by Diokno.<sup>49</sup> In her perspective, it is when the practice of *utang na loob* involves an injustice that makes such practice morally problematic. To further clarify her point, she refers to the case cited by Reyes. The case involves Pedro who felt an *utang na loob* toward his friend Juan, who was then doing well in his profession, for helping him with the finances of his studies. Later on, when Juan lost his job, Pedro, who eventually became a company manager, went the extra mile, “pulling strings along the way,” to secure a good position for Juan in his company. Cleofas sees this as a morally repugnant case of *utang na loob* because it could result in an injustice wherein individuals who should have been in Juan’s position are misplaced.<sup>50</sup>

Cleofas, thus, accounts for the moral ambivalence of *utang na loob* in terms of the presence or absence of justice in the practice of *utang na loob*. The morally desirable instantiations of *utang na loob* are instances where *utang na loob* is practiced with justice, whereas the morally undesirable ones are those practiced without it. She summarizes her main point as follows: “At a bare minimum, repaying a debt of good will can only be considered a form of moral excellence if it is sensitive to considerations of fairness, in the sense of not depriving some people of access to resources and opportunities.”<sup>51</sup>

## Challenges and Resolution

It is unclear on what grounds the view that takes *utang na loob* as a moral value or virtue is based. Is it something extrapolated from some empirical study of how Filipinos, or some selected groups of Filipinos, actually use the expression? The empirical studies of Kaut and Hollnsteiner in this regard did not acknowledge *utang na loob* as a moral virtue or value. The conclusions reached by some relatively recent empirical research on *utang na loob*, such as those conducted by Javier,<sup>52</sup> Rungduin et al.,<sup>53</sup> and

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 168–169.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>52</sup> Javier, “Parang Pag-ibig, Ibinigay nang Walang Kapital! Utang na Loob-Ugnayan, Unawa, at Ugali.”

<sup>53</sup> Rungduin et al., “Filipino Character Strength of Utang na Loob.”

Gundran et al.,<sup>54</sup> merely emphasize the fact that *utang na loob* is a cultural value that is deeply entrenched in the consciousness of most Filipinos. In any case, the virtue approach, in the various forms that we have presented above, faces some challenges.

De Castro claims that the expression “debt of gratitude” does not capture the good will that goes with the actual provision of benefits in *utang na loob* instances. This claim forms the basis for his preferred translation of *utang na loob* as “debt of good will.” The claim, however, is contentious. Why can’t gratitude involve good will? As much as we can be grateful for the actual benefits we receive, we can surely also be grateful for the good will or kindness shown to us by other people. We are grateful, for instance, when people, especially those close to us, wish us good luck or pray for the success of our endeavors.

One problem with adopting De Castro’s translation, without qualification, is that one may run into conceptual confusion or incoherence when talking about the various instances of *utang na loob*. Take the case of Cleofas, who does so. She, for instance, writes: “Hollnsteiner notes that politicians who understand the dynamics of *utang-na-loob* deliberately cultivate debts of goodwill towards themselves so that when election time comes, they can rely on votes being cast in their favor.”<sup>55</sup> For Cleofas, these debts of good will are not morally good instantiations of *utang na loob*. If we substitute “debt of good will” for “*utang na loob*,” the latter statement runs thus: “These debts of good will are not morally good instantiations of debt of good will.” We have here something good that is said to be not good, which gives rise to an apparent incoherence. The problem is that De Castro’s translation carries with it a perspective that rejects the ambivalence hypothesis, which is not shared by Cleofas. To recall, for De Castro, such morally bad instances of *utang na loob* that Cleofas refers to are actually not debts of good will but debts of ill will. And debts of ill will are not instances of *utang na loob*. Notice that the said incoherence will disappear if Cleofas will use the expression “debt of gratitude” instead; thus: “These debts of gratitude are not morally good instances of debt of gratitude.”

Furthermore, for De Castro, the obligation of *utang na loob* should be self-imposed. This renders the reciprocal obligation of *utang na loob* purely subjective or personal, contradicting the social and cultural characteristics of *utang na loob* emphasized by Kaut and Hollnsteiner. To recall, for Kaut, the acceptance of a gift freely offered during a difficult time will create an *utang na loob* obligation. This creation occurs within a given socio-cultural

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<sup>54</sup> Gundran et al., “Concept of Utang na Loob in the Philippines.”

<sup>55</sup> Cleofas, “Towards a Practical and Empirically Grounded Account of Utang-na-Loob as a Filipino Virtue,” 161.

background. Hollnsteiner, to recall, speaks of the sanction of shame when not honoring one's reciprocal obligations. While we can feel shame in relation to ourselves, shame is basically *other-regarding* (and is thus social) in that we basically feel shame in relation to or in consideration of other people. In De Castro's view, shame does not seem to have any place. More importantly, in the absence of external standards, we do not have any basis to judge whether someone should or should not impose an *utang na loob* obligation on themselves, making the obligation purely arbitrary.

Jiolito claims that ambivalence as a psychological and sociological phenomenon applies only to people and never to values. This, however, does not warrant the conclusion that values cannot be ambivalent. One reason is that ambivalence can take various forms, and the ambivalence that we are talking about in relation to values is of the ethical kind. We are, more specifically, talking about moral ambivalence, not psychological or sociological ambivalence. Still, we are talking about the fact that practices of cultural values can be morally good or bad. And there are good reasons to contend that ethical issues are not reducible to psychological or sociological issues. Another is that values can be of various kinds. Jiolito will be correct if we understand values as moral values, for we cannot speak of moral values as either morally good or bad. But if we are talking about cultural values, there is no contradiction to speak of them as either morally good or bad.

Jiolito goes on to claim that *utang na loob*, as a form of moral excellence in the Aristotelian sense, is always an instance of moderation or is necessarily manifested by actions taken in moderation. Consequently, the so-called negative instantiations of *utang na loob* are excessive or deficient forms of indebtedness and thus are not real instances of *utang na loob*. The question here is, what will count as a moderate practice of *utang na loob*, or better yet, what will be its standard, given that its conditions of satisfaction (that is, the conditions under which we can say that the indebtedness of *utang na loob* has been fully satisfied) are indefinite and/or uncertain. Now, he can say that *utang na loob* is taken to the extremes when its practices violate moral standards. However, if this were the case, then what really accounts for the moral desirability of its practices is not that *utang na loob* is here practiced in moderation but that these practices adhere to the relevant moral standards.

For Cleofas, the morally problematic instances of *utang na loob* are those where justice (understood in the distributive sense) is not observed, whereas the morally desirable ones are those where justice is observed. But is the morality of *utang na loob* instantiations limited to the consideration of distributive justice? Do we not have cases where they also involve other forms of justice and other moral principles? Surely, there are instances of *utang na loob* that are not morally desirable because they involve procedural injustice (where procedures are unfairly implemented to favor the interests of an

individual), retributive injustice (where someone is not given due punishment for his wrongdoing), disrespect of moral rights (such as the right not to be unnecessarily harmed, right to autonomy, and others), non-maximization of aggregate welfare (when one only promotes one's own interests), and non-cultivation of caring relationships (when one refuses to care for a loved one).

Another difficulty concerns the very consistency of Cleofas's position, which claims that, as a virtue, *utang na loob* is a form of moral excellence. She elaborates that "virtue is a morally desirable character trait or disposition that involves excellent patterns of choice, motivation, and behavior in some specific aspect of human life."<sup>56</sup> If *utang na loob* is already a form of moral excellence and its possessor is already disposed to make excellent patterns of choice, why would *utang na loob* still need to be supplemented by a further moral virtue such as justice? How can something that is lacking in something essential be regarded as excellent? If *utang na loob* still requires something essential to function in morally appropriate ways, it is logical to think that it is not a form of moral excellence.

These difficulties can be sidestepped by simply maintaining that *utang na loob* is just a Filipino cultural value and not a moral virtue or value. Having a sense of this value is a desirable Filipino cultural trait. But as with any cultural value, trait, or practice, the actions manifesting *utang na loob* are subject to a moral evaluation. As its manifestations are subject to an evaluation using moral standards, it is not by itself a moral standard. Consequently, it is when we subject its instantiating actions to such an evaluation that we distinguish between morally desirable and morally undesirable instantiations of this cultural value. The moral standards that we can use for our moral evaluations surely will involve justice, but they are certainly not limited to it. Among others, we can also use the moral principles of respect for moral rights, maximizing aggregate welfare, developing good character traits, and cultivating caring relationships.

As values serve as standards for what is desirable and good, it is contradictory that they have negative instantiations. In this regard, they indeed cannot be ambivalent. However, a contradiction only occurs when something is taken as both true and false at the same time in the same respect. Thus, if values are taken to be ambivalent in a meaningful (or non-contradictory) way, this can only be because their ambivalence is taken in a respect different from the one assumed in which they are taken to be non-ambivalent. From our perspective, this is because we distinguish between cultural values and moral values, or between cultural standards and moral standards.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

Cultural values cannot be culturally ambivalent, in that they cannot be both desirable and undesirable within the same cultural system. Likewise, moral values cannot be morally ambivalent in that they cannot be both desirable and undesirable within the same ethical system. There is, however, no contradiction in saying that a cultural value can be either morally good or bad, or, better yet, that what is culturally desirable may not be morally desirable.

There is, of course, the view of *moral relativism*, which, in its less problematic form, equates moral standards with cultural ones. (The more problematic form equates moral standards with personal ones.) Bowie puts it thus: "Moral relativism is the claim that what is really right or wrong is what the culture says is right or wrong."<sup>57</sup> The reasons for rejecting this view, however, are stronger than those for accepting it. For one, accepting moral relativism will make moral criticism of cultural practices impossible. Another, it will justify cultural practices that are clearly morally questionable as they violate moral rights and lead to injustices, such as slavery, gender and racial discrimination, and rituals involving animal and human sacrifices.<sup>58</sup> Given that moral standards are higher than (and are not reducible to) cultural standards, the practices of cultural values, such as *utang na loob*, can thus be either morally good or bad.

To synthesize our findings, we can maintain "debt of gratitude" as a morally neutral translation of *utang na loob* regarded as a cultural value. We can adopt De Castro's terminologies (but with modifications on the significations he attaches to them) to distinguish between the morally desirable form of debt of gratitude, which we can thus call "debt of good will," from the morally undesirable form, which we can thus call "debt of ill will." Another way of putting this is that *utang na loob* is a cultural value whose morally good form is *utang ng kagandahang loob* while its morally bad form is *utang ng kasamaang loob*. In our signification, "debt of good will" is not *utang na loob* but the morally good form of *utang na loob*. In this light, to equate *utang na loob* to debt of good will is a category mistake.

Now, debts of good will are morally desirable because they are practiced in conformity with moral principles, whereas debts of ill will are morally undesirable because they are practiced otherwise. Consequently, having a sense of debt of good will (understood in our light) is a form of moral excellence and thus is a moral virtue. It is not *utang na loob* per se that is the moral virtue, but the morally desirable form of *utang na loob*.

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<sup>57</sup> Norman Bowie, "Relativism, Cultural and Moral," in *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management*, ed. by Cary Cooper (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2014), 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

The relationship between debt of gratitude and debt of good will (understood in our sense) can be further explained using Ross's distinction between *prima facie* and actual duties.<sup>59</sup> Generally, our *prima facie* duties are the duties that we immediately recognize given a particular situation. For instance, if we make a promise, we have the *prima facie* duty to keep it; if we have wronged someone, we have the *prima facie* duty to make reparations for the injury we have caused the person; and if we receive some benefits or assistance from someone, we have the *prima facie* duty to be grateful to this person.

In contrast, actual duties are the duties that we are actually obliged to perform. If a *prima facie* duty is unchallenged by another *prima facie* duty, it automatically becomes the actual duty. When confronted with a competing *prima facie* duty, we must determine which is the stronger duty (in terms of imperativeness) by weighing morally relevant factors, and the one that proves to be stronger is the actual duty. If, for instance, our *prima facie* duty to help a person in need is stronger than our *prima facie* duty to keep our promise, then the former duty is our actual duty.

Ross identifies the duty of gratitude as one of our *prima facie* duties. For our purposes, we can extend its scope to include the *duty to repay debts of gratitude*. Thus, if this duty is not in conflict with another and higher *prima facie* duty or if it proves to be more imperative than a competing *prima facie* duty, it then becomes our actual duty. In this regard, we need to repay our debts of gratitude or fulfill our reciprocal obligations. But if a competing *prima facie* duty, say, the duty to promote justice, proves to be more compelling, then it is this competing duty that becomes our actual duty. Another, if repaying our debt of gratitude to someone will, for instance, put our family in grave danger, then our actual duty is to protect our family and not to repay this debt of gratitude. In such cases, it is not our moral duty to repay our debt of gratitude or fulfill our reciprocal obligation. If repaying a debt of gratitude is an actual duty, then this debt of gratitude is a case of debt of good will, which we are morally obligated to reciprocate. If otherwise, it is a case of debt of ill will, which we are *not* morally obligated to reciprocate.

## Conclusion

Our investigations have shown that the virtue approach, which regards *utang na loob* as a moral virtue, is problematic in several ways. Its foundation has not been clearly established, and its two versions, which we have called the *full virtue approach* and the *partial virtue approach*, lead to

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<sup>59</sup> William David Ross, *The Right and the Good*, ed. by Stratton-Lake (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

difficulties. Our alternative is to maintain the status of *utang na loob* as a cultural value whose (moral) ambivalence is brought about by the subjection of its instantiating actions to the higher standards of morality. It is when these actions are morally evaluated that they are either morally good or bad.

As a cultural value, *utang na loob* is culturally desirable to practice or culturally obligatory to have a sense of. But given the difference between cultural standards and moral standards, *utang na loob*, in certain situations, may not be morally desirable to practice or morally obligatory to have a sense of. Finally, it is, in fact, when people equate or confuse their cultural standards or values with moral standards or values that they become vulnerable to the manipulations of ill-intentioned individuals. It is because they may wrongly think that it is their moral obligation to *always* practice their cultural obligations.

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Book Review

**Beullens, Pieter,  
*The Friar and the Philosopher: William of  
Moerbeke and the Rise of Aristotle's  
Science in Medieval Europe*<sup>1</sup>**

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**Jovito V. Cariño**

Part of the appeal of the intellectual tradition of the high middle ages (a.k.a. scholasticism), at least to the interested, is its corporate approach to philosophic practice. The priority for learning as a collective engagement finds its organic embodiment in the so-called *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, roughly translated as “community of teachers and students,” or the *university* that we call today. This is not to say that philosophy as a communitarian undertaking was peculiar only to the medieval culture. One may observe that the same communitarian features which make philosophy what it is, then and now, hark back to the blueprint introduced by its ancient exponents who, even before the establishment of Plato’s *Academy* or Aristotle’s *Lyceum*, had known the necessity and advantage of coming together for the common pursuit of wisdom. Plato’s and Aristotle’s schools in fact were the evolved versions of this more ancient communal philosophic experiment represented by the community of Pythagoreans, named after Pythagoras himself, the very figure credited by tradition as the originator of the word “philosophy” and a pioneer of its advancement as an interactive undertaking. This Pythagorean paradigm was carried on by Hellenistic communities and duplicated, after the fall of Rome, by kingly courts, monasteries, and cathedral schools until it was adopted by the *studia* of the later medieval ages. It is with this collectivist lens that I wish to frame my reading of the legacy of William Moerbeke as recounted by Peter Beullens in his book, *The Friar and the Philosopher: William of Moerbeke and the Rise of Aristotle’s Science in Medieval Europe*. Most readers are familiar with Aquinas’ scholarly affinity with Aristotle but very few are cognizant of the crucial role in such kinship of the literary mediation of Aquinas’ backstage

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<sup>1</sup> London: Routledge, 2023, 160pp.

collaborator and fellow Dominican friar, William of Moerbeke. William was considered one of the most prolific translators of the 13<sup>th</sup> century owing both to the volume and quality of his outputs which counted among others the entirety of Aristotle's body of works and some of the known authoritative Aristotelian commentaries;<sup>2</sup> an apocryphal Aristotelian text, *Liber de Bona Fortuna* (Book of Good Fortune);<sup>3</sup> Archimedes' works on physics and mathematics (along with their commentaries);<sup>4</sup> Hero of Alexandria's book on optics, *On Mirrors*;<sup>5</sup> and Galen's *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*.<sup>6</sup> William was also reported to have thought of translating the works of Hippocrates though, as Beullens acknowledged, the plan did not seem to materialize. In the surface, it would appear as if translation work during the Middle Ages was a mere solitary project pursued by a scholar committed to his craft all by his lonesome. Such was the case of the early Italian translators like Gerard of Cremona,<sup>7</sup> James of Venice,<sup>8</sup> Burgundio of Pisa,<sup>9</sup> as well as the English linguists like Michael Scot and Robert Grosseteste.<sup>10</sup> But as Beullens attested, all medieval translation initiatives actually emanated from a larger network of needs and institutional arrangements which were themselves facilitated by the participation and cooperation of various agents such as emperors, bishops, abbots, librarians, copyists, students, professors, and including book merchants. William occupied an important place at the center of this medieval network due to his exceptional productivity. Part of William's widely acknowledged reputation was his ability to do Latin translation from the original Greek. Other translators worked on their manuscripts either from Arabic (e.g., Michael Scot)<sup>11</sup> or Castilian (e.g., Dominicus Gundissalinus),<sup>12</sup> but William was one of those rare medieval scribes who could read and write their way to Latin from Aristotle's native language. William's talent to render more than one version of a translated work or to update and revise existing ones was another genuine proof of his outstanding industry. The whole stretch from 1260 to 1270 saw William at the height of prodigious literary activity. And yet despite his sterling portfolio, admittedly, very little biographical facts are known about William, who is invariably cited in

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<sup>2</sup> Pieter Beullens, *The Friar and the Philosopher: William of Moerbeke and the Rise of Aristotle's Science in Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2023), 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–90.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

medieval documents as “William the Fleming”<sup>13</sup> or “William of Brabant.”<sup>14</sup> His name was mentioned by Roger Bacon (mainly to discredit his works)<sup>15</sup> and by a fellow Dominican Henry of Herford (who recorded William’s demise and noted positively his accomplishments);<sup>16</sup> he was also honored by the Polish scientist Vitello with a dedication in the preface to his book *Perspectiva* (based on William’s translation of Hero of Alexandria’s *On Mirrors*);<sup>17</sup> an important recognition was also accorded him (along with another conciliar *peritus*, the Franciscan John of Constantinople) in the chronicle of the Council of Lyons.<sup>18</sup> But apart from these references, William’s name remained hidden beneath the transcripts of his translated texts. Despite the seeming absence of a more pronounced public acclaim, William’s legacy no doubt was secured by his silent omnipresence in the texts used and commented on by his fellow friar and arguably, the most important theologian of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Aquinas. While the celebrated collaboration between the two Dominicans has been the subject of disputes among scholars,<sup>19</sup> experts do recognize William’s imprint in several of Aquinas’ works: the *Summa Contra Gentiles*; his last two polemical works in Paris (*On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists* and *On the Eternity of the World*); his commentary of the Neo-platonic text *On the Book of Causes*; as well as the Aristotelian commentaries which Aquinas undertook as an apostolate for the University of Paris’s Faculty of the Arts. Thanks to William’s translation, Aquinas managed to trace the late Neo-platonic philosopher Proclus as the real author of the *Book of Causes* which in previous times had been erroneously attributed to Aristotle.<sup>20</sup> To some extent, the William-Aquinas connection may be seen as an extension of an earlier, organic collaboration between Albert the Great and Thomas of Cantimpré in the area of zoology. Buellens pointed out that collaboration of this kind was rooted in the Dominicans’ approach to intellectual ministry which he described as “collective”<sup>21</sup> in spirit.

As a friar scholar and professional translator, William thrived in doing his projects under the radar. This disposition towards working in the most hidden environment possible partly explains the aura of near anonymity surrounding his persona. The only revealing mark identifiable

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 46.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

with William would probably be his own colophon in the parchments he had worked on, but this traditional medieval insignia was more symbolic than biographical. His personal history is so obscure that scholars today remain clueless as to the particulars of either his birth or death. Beullens attempted to provide a reconstructive account of William's origins in Chapter 6 though much of its content, as he admitted, is a mere patchwork of "conjecture and extrapolation."<sup>22</sup> As it turned out, the only episodes of William's life that one can pin down with some degree of certainty were his engagements "unrelated" to his translation activities: these were his appointment as *penitentiarius* (confessor on behalf of the pope)<sup>23</sup> and his elevation to the bishopric of Corinth.<sup>24</sup> He spent almost his entire adult life rendering difficult ancient texts in Latin but in the end, what we know of the man *historically* was what he did when he was detached from his wordy pursuits. Beullens' book then may be read as an important corrective to the lacuna of information surrounding William's distinguished albeit unsung literary career. One may find in it something akin to William's veritable intellectual portrait framed no less by the re-invention of Europe during the high Middle Ages and the advent of the unearthed Aristotelian texts and other manuscripts from the ancient world. If the medieval period, to paraphrase Bernard of Chartres, were a civilization of dwarves standing on the shoulder of the giants,<sup>25</sup> Beullens, in this book, threw the spotlight on the indispensable role of a translator like William who served as "the stable and durable ladder" which linked the dwarves to the giants in one phenomenal ascent.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

Book Review

## **Mikkonen, Jukka, *Philosophy, Literature and Understanding: On Reading and Cognition*<sup>1</sup>**

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**Rym Lina Mohammed-Azizi**

Jukka Mikkonen's *Philosophy, Literature, and Understanding* endeavors to illuminate the unique epistemic significance of literature. In the introductory section of the book, Mikkonen provides a preview of the ideas to be explored in the subsequent four chapters. The author posits that in an era dominated by digital media and easily accessible information, it becomes crucial to identify the distinctive cognitive contributions of reading fiction. While information and knowledge can be obtained from various sources, Mikkonen contends that literature offers a unique mode of understanding, which warrants deeper exploration. This inquiry arises against the backdrop of the crisis facing the humanities and the ascendancy of the cognitive sciences in the 1990s. In essence, Mikkonen not only illuminates the special role of literature in the learning process, considering that knowledge can be acquired from diverse sources, but also underscores its significance in fostering understanding. In order to defend the cognitive worth of literature and the immersive involvement with narrative fiction, the author proposes four cognitive models: imagination, narrative, cognition, and evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Mikkonen introduces the reader to the first chapter by tackling the concept of 'Imagination,' where he carefully distinguishes between imagination and fantasy.<sup>3</sup> This distinction, as discussed by theorists like Kendall Walton and Peter Lamarque, has sparked much debate within literary theory. Walton argues that imagination is rooted in the author's clues, while fantasy is driven by the reader's own state of mind, an approach Mikkonen engages with critically.<sup>4</sup> In turn, Mikkonen suggests that these

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<sup>1</sup> London: Bloomsbury, 2021, 180pp.

<sup>2</sup> Jukka Mikkonen, *Philosophy, Literature and Understanding: On Reading and Cognition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 9.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>4</sup> See *Ibid.*, 24.

rigid boundaries may oversimplify the complex interaction between reader and text, an argument he further explores in the next chapter.

In 'Narrative,' the book's focus shifts from imagination to a broader discussion of how narratives function as cognitive tools.<sup>5</sup> Drawing from both the hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions, Mikkonen challenges skeptics like Daniel Dennett, who question whether selfhood can be adequately captured through stories. Mikkonen seems to uphold this by framing how "we are all virtuoso novelists" and that our lives are structured like a story (autobiography) with a central character being the self.<sup>6</sup> This analogy implies a coherent narrative structure. However, Mikkonen's following arguments seem to critique this notion by suggesting that such a structured view of narrative may overlook the complexity and diversity of individual experiences. He states, "a related concern in literary studies is that narrative imperialism reduces all the diversity and polyphony of literature into ideal models, schemas, and stereotypes," indicating that a rigid adherence to narrative structures can flatten the richness of lived experiences.<sup>7</sup> Mikkonen not only defends the epistemic value of narratives but also transcends the traditional critique by proposing that narratives, rather than merely recording events, construct reality through the reader's engagement with the text. This idea, which ties back to his earlier discussion on imagination, suggests that literature is not just a reflection of the world but a means of understanding it.

He does this through several points. First, he emphasizes the importance and role of narrative. Being a crucial factor in processing, organizing, and communicating information, the cognitivist Mark Turner states that most of what we have experienced, what we know, or even what we think about are composed of stories, being the very means to convey our thoughts.<sup>8</sup> Many researchers and scientists share this opinion (e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre, Daniel Dennett, Jerome Bruner, and many others). Second, the chapter outlines the main criticisms of the importance of narrative in the social sciences and the skepticism engendered in analytic philosophy about its 'explanatory power.' Critics are doubtful that the self can be described by stories, and literary narratologists have been disappointed by the broad and superficial use of the concept of narrative in the social sciences. The criticism associated to this is that authors have spoken of "narrative hegemony" (Martin Kreiswirth) and "narrative imperialism" (James Phelan), yet both are viewed negatively.<sup>9</sup> Third, the author develops the thesis that from a

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<sup>5</sup> See *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> See *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

postmodern conception of the narrative, as well as from the hermeneutic and phenomenological tradition, we can solve the problem of the cognition of the narrative by the concept of understanding. When considering a post-modern or post-structuralist perspective, one may find greater alignment between life and narrative by focusing on their inherent complexities, such as margins, breaks, and discontinuities. This view suggests that narratives reflect the messy and incoherent nature of lived experiences, which directly challenges the notion of a unified narrative structure.<sup>10</sup> However, this perspective also raises questions about the limitations of traditional narrative forms in capturing the full spectrum of human experience.

Moreover, while some scholars argue that the epistemic value of narratives lies primarily in their ability to record events, approaching narratives as vehicles for understanding shifts this discussion significantly. In narrative theory informed by the hermeneutic and phenomenological tradition, self-narration is not merely a process of reconstruction; it is a creative act of construction. This perspective emphasizes that narratives actively shape our interpretation of reality rather than merely mirroring it. By recognizing narratives as dynamic constructs, Mikkonen invites a reevaluation of how we engage with literature, highlighting its potential to foster deeper understanding in an increasingly fragmented world. These aspects, processuality and artificiality, are key to understanding how narratives are not mere reflections of reality but active constructions that help us interpret the world.<sup>11</sup> In the following chapter, Mikkonen expands on this idea by considering how narratives contribute not only to knowledge but to cognitive development, particularly in the context of modernist literature, through our engagement with literary narratives and our exploration of literary narratives as fabrications.

After exploring the role of imagination in the reading process in the second chapter, the third chapter was devoted to an examination of narrative's role as a cognitive tool. There he broadened the discussion, showing how narratives not only structure personal experiences but also shape our broader understanding of the world. Building on this, the fourth chapter, titled 'Cognition,' shifts the focus to how literature fosters cognitive development, delving deeper into the epistemic contributions of literary narratives. Mikkonen explores the cognitive value of literary narratives in terms of knowledge, understanding, and cognitive skills.<sup>12</sup> He proposes a shift in epistemology from knowledge to understanding to promote a positive interpretation of literature in cognitive terms. Can reading modernist

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<sup>10</sup> See *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> See *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>12</sup> See *Ibid.*, 59.

narratives, for example, provide insight into the workings of the mind? Or can literary narratives challenge and confuse our thinking in a valuable way? Skeptics call for a methodological discussion and request evidence that readers actually learn from literature.

First, the assumption that we interpret literary minds similarly to how we interpret people in our everyday encounters is a standard belief in cognitive approaches to literature. The theory of mind has been influential in explaining our engagement with literary narratives, suggesting that our ability to attribute mental states—like beliefs, desires, and intentions—plays a central role in how we process stories. Mikkonen elaborates on this idea by noting,

Looking for minds in literature is not an odd enterprise. After all, many authors definitely put great effort into the psychological interest (or plausibility) of their works ... How about minds in literature? We will run into difficult epistemological problems if we limit ourselves to the mimetic approach. ... Of course, literary works may offer great insights into the human mind, but sometimes an insight may be an impression only.<sup>13</sup>

He challenges this simplified view by emphasizing the complexity of interpreting fictional minds, which often involves multiple layers of abstraction and imaginative engagement beyond everyday cognition. This opens up a critical space where the book interrogates whether the theory of mind alone is sufficient for explaining our intricate relationship with literature.

Second, narrative perspective refers to the features that determine how a story is told and what is revealed, which includes the narrator's point of view, the reliability of the narration, and the emotional involvement of characters. These features shape not only the narrative perspective but also the reader's understanding of the text. Mikkonen highlights how cognitive approaches may overlook the importance of these narrative mechanisms by focusing too heavily on cognition, thereby risking the reduction of literary complexity to mere interpretive formulas. He notes that although understanding a literary work often demands of the reader to amend one's cognitive apparatus, "it is unknown if the conceptual modifications required in the interpretation of the work carry over the literary experience and affect the reader's actual cognitive mechanisms."<sup>14</sup> This critical stance raises

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

questions about whether cognitive theories adequately account for the richness of narrative structures or if they flatten the complexity that literature inherently offers.

Third, cognitivists often rely on unconventional concepts of truth, such as insight, revelation, expanded understanding, artistic truth, poetic truth, and literary truth.<sup>15</sup> While Mikkonen does not entirely reject these ideas, he engages with them critically by questioning their applicability across all literary experiences. By transcending the debate between cognitivists and anti-cognitivists, Mikkonen opens up the possibility that literature may not always aim to deliver truth in the conventional sense but instead offer *understanding*, which allows for a broader and more flexible interpretation of what literature can achieve.

In addition, many contemporary aestheticians argue that the cognitive value of literature lies not in imparting new knowledge to readers, but in promoting understanding. These theories often use the term “understanding” without endorsing a particular epistemology. Mikkonen refers to this idea by drawing on David Novitz’s claim that literary works might help readers “notice conceptual relationships we have not thought of before,” allowing them to ‘rearrange’ or ‘remodel’ their world.”<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Noël Carroll’s theory of clarificationism emphasizes how literature can deepen readers’ moral understanding by rehearsing their existing moral knowledge and emotions. Carroll suggests that in interpreting a work, readers “access and mobilize their cognitive, emotive and moral repertoire,”<sup>17</sup> and through this engagement, they may explore and augment their understanding. Thus, literature serves as an occasion for readers to exercise and refine knowledge they already possess, further reinforcing the idea that its value lies in fostering deeper insight rather than merely delivering new information.

Furthermore, the study of the cognitive value of literature should extend beyond discussions of truth and knowledge. Mikkonen argues that literature can also engender confusion and doubt, which may have significant cognitive value.<sup>18</sup> Here, he departs from the common assumption that literature’s cognitive value lies solely in its clarity and insight and introduces the idea that the disorientation or ambiguity experienced by readers can provoke deeper reflection, offering an alternative way of thinking about how literature contributes to cognitive development. However, not all confusion is valuable. Mikkonen critiques certain cognitive theories for failing to

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<sup>15</sup> See *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See *Ibid.*, 77ff.

distinguish between productive confusion—one that challenges readers to think more deeply—and confusion that merely obstructs understanding. This argument reflects Mikkonen’s commitment to refining and extending the debates within cognitive literary theory.

Additionally, he critiques the assumption that confusion in understanding fictional events influences the reader’s understanding of reality. While some cognitivists argue that literary experiences impact real-world cognition, Mikkonen is more cautious, suggesting that while literature can shape thought, it may not always translate into tangible changes in the reader’s worldview. This skepticism offers a balanced perspective on the cognitive value of literature, acknowledging both its potential and its limitations. His analysis transcends traditional debates by proposing that the real value of literary narratives lies in their capacity to expand the reader’s cognitive frameworks, rather than simply offering a reflection of reality.

In the last chapter, titled ‘Evidence,’ the author tackles the empirical side of the debate by examining the claims made by cognitivists that literary reading produces cognitive benefits, such as improved inferential skills. Here, he carefully weighs the evidence presented by psychologists and philosophers. Some studies claim that reading literature improves inferential skills and empathy, but Mikkonen critiques their methodological limitations. For example, he highlights issues such as unclear distinctions between cognitive gains directly linked to literary reading and those arising from broader educational contexts. Furthermore, many studies fail to account for the symbolic complexity of literary works, which makes it difficult to isolate specific cognitive benefits from broader interpretive skills. Mikkonen further argues that the reliance on empirical data in this field is not always reliable, as it often fails to capture the complexity of how literature influences thought. By critiquing both the traditional armchair method and the empirical approach, Mikkonen calls for a more nuanced understanding of literary cognition—one that neither depends solely on intuition nor reductive scientific measures.

Gregory Currie’s anti-cognitivist stance, which argues that short-term improvements in literary reading do not significantly affect long-term dispositions, presents another critical challenge. As Currie states, “Cognitivists’ claims about the educative function of literature are empirical claims with no self-validating power; the function cannot be known in advance of seeing what sorts of behavioural changes exposure to the narrative in question leads to.”<sup>19</sup> Mikkonen engages with this argument by suggesting that the benefits of reading may be subtler, operating on both conscious and unconscious levels, and may manifest over longer periods in

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<sup>19</sup> See *Ibid.*, 91.

perception, thoughts, and behavior. However, the empirical evidence for these claims remains contentious, leading Mikkonen to question whether these cognitive benefits can be consistently demonstrated through scientific measures alone. He critiques these studies for often neglecting the role of the reader's personal motivations and contexts, thus overlooking a key variable in understanding literature's cognitive impact.

Finally, Mikkonen identifies weaknesses in sociological studies that attempt to measure the cognitive effects of reading through surveys, pointing out that these often produce biased or superficial answers. He argues that personal interviews or qualitative research would yield more authentic insights into readers' experiences, thus offering a more grounded approach to understanding the cognitive effects of literature. Mikkonen also warns against over-reliance on reader testimonies, suggesting that post-reading epiphanies may be unreliable due to cognitive biases. These "illusions of understanding" are framed as affective results rather than genuine cognitive insights.<sup>20</sup> This critical analysis underscores the limitations of current empirical approaches, and Mikkonen's work calls for a more comprehensive exploration of the unique cognitive features of literature.

*Philosophy, Literature, and Understanding: On Reading and Cognition* is a substantial and thoughtful contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding the cognitive value of literature. The author skillfully navigates between the views of cognitivists and anti-cognitivists, providing a balanced analysis that invites readers to rethink the role of literature in fostering understanding rather than merely imparting knowledge. His approach, which blends philosophical analysis with literary theory, opens a rich dialogue on how fiction shapes our cognitive frameworks, particularly through its emphasis on imagination, narrative, and cognitive engagement.

While the book offers a thorough and nuanced discussion, there are areas where it might benefit from further exploration. For example, while it effectively identifies flaws in empirical studies, such as methodological ambiguities and biases, it leaves room for further exploration of potential, robust alternatives. The call for more qualitative methods, such as personal interviews, is a step in the right direction, yet the book could have engaged more deeply with potential interdisciplinary approaches that might offer fresh perspectives on how literature influences cognition. The focus on the cognitive effects of literature also occasionally overlooks the affective dimensions of literary engagement, which might complicate the cognitive claims discussed.

Moreover, while the critique of over-reliance on post-reading epiphanies and 'illusions of understanding' is valid, it could have been

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

extended further. The unique experiential quality of literature—its ability to evoke both confusion and clarity—does not easily lend itself to traditional forms of validation. Mikkonen acknowledges this, yet the conversation could have been pushed by exploring more radical theoretical frameworks that challenge the very premise of measuring cognitive effects in literature. Similarly, early chapters, where the book navigates complex debates on imagination and narrative, provide significant insights that might have benefitted from more integration into later critique of cognitive literary theory.

Despite these shortcomings, *Philosophy, Literature, and Understanding: On Reading and Cognition* offers an excellent overview and deep engagement with key philosophical questions, making it a thought-provoking and indispensable text for scholars in both philosophy and literary studies. Its strengths far outweigh its limitations, even as these limitations invite further debate and inquiry.

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Mikkonen, Jukka. *Philosophy, Literature and Understanding: On Reading and Cognition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

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