

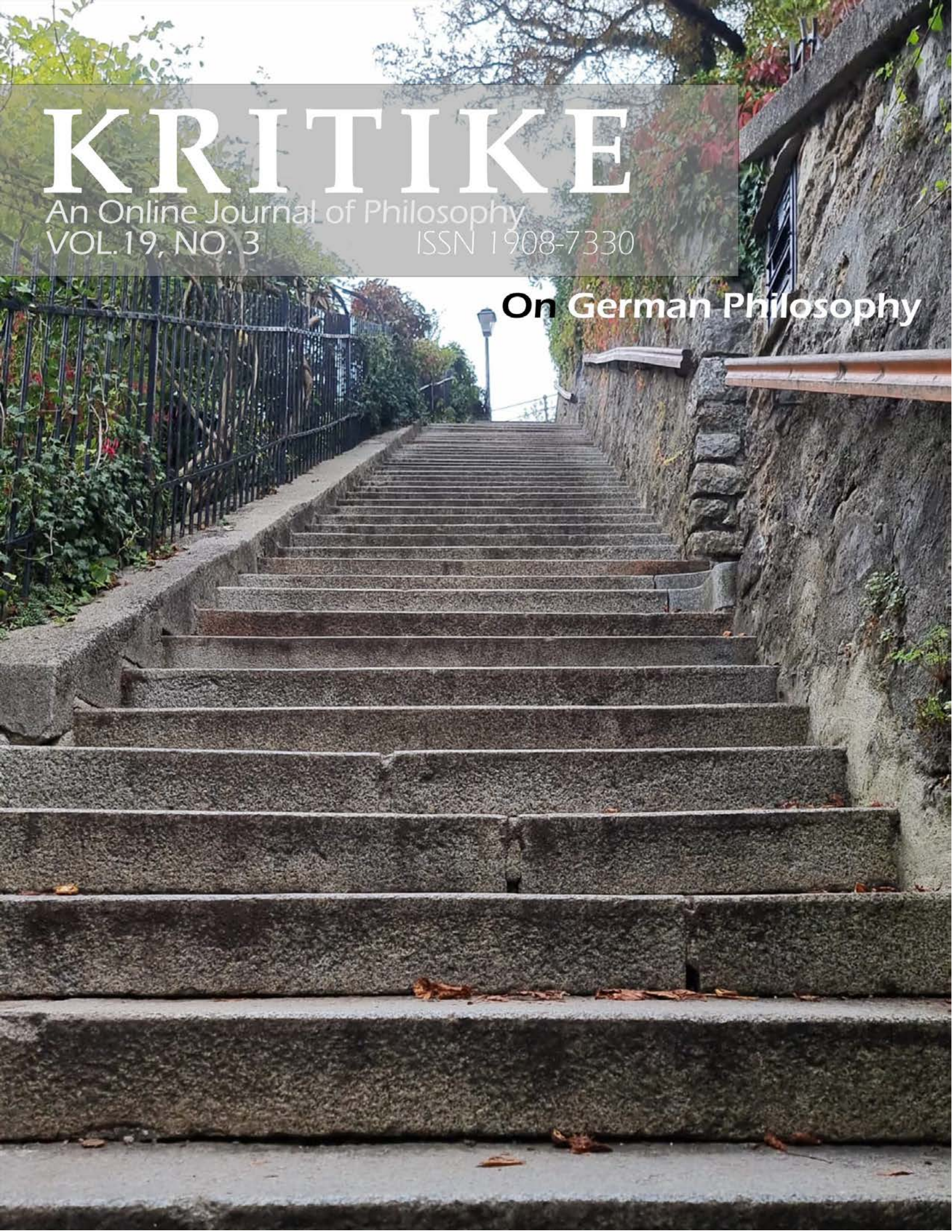
KRITIKE

An Online Journal of Philosophy

VOL. 19, NO. 3

ISSN 1908-7330

On German Philosophy



K R I T I K E

An Online Journal of Philosophy

Volume 19, Number 3

January 2026, Special Issue

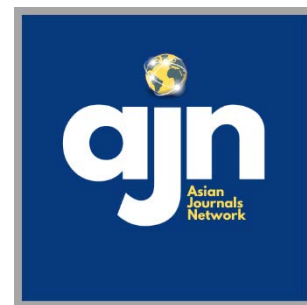
ISSN 1908-7330

Special Issue Editors

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

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ABOUT THE COVER



“Steep Ascent”

The photograph is a perspective along the Imbergstiege, the ascent toward the Capuchin monastery (Kapuzinerkloster) in Salzburg, Austria. It is a meditative hike from Steingasse, through the back of houses, past a chapel, and this final stretch. This passage’s end is a plateau from which the whole city may be observed. While tourists today flock to Salzburg as part of a dynamic tour of Austria, one could only imagine a time when the whole city stood still—a city nestled between the military might of the Festung Hohensalzburg and spiritual ascendancy of the Kapuzinerkloster. While having a glimpse of the city from the summit is indeed the ascent’s goal, the journey itself offers a valuable opportunity to reassess one’s decisions, be it physically (in actually attempting this hike) or life in general. The steep ascent makes one contemplate arriving and departing; *is this all just a risk or a mistake?* Descending from above, one keeps to heart not just the panoramic view of the beautiful city but above all how a minute climb can offer a moment of contemplation.

KRITIKE: An Online Journal of Philosophy
19:3 (January 2026)

Photograph by Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland, 2025
Layout and caption by Kritike Editorial Board

About the Journal

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

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

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

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

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K R I T I K E

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Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue on German Philosophy

Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland and Paolo A. Bolaños

German Philosophy in the University of Santo Tomas

It is ironic that the Department of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas, which was only formally established in May 2010 as an offshoot of the defunct Department of Humanities of the Faculty of Arts and Letters, runs the oldest philosophy program in the Philippines. The *Facultad de Filosofia y Letras*, founded in 1896 and was renamed Faculty of Arts and Letters in 1964, is the first liberal arts college in the country and offered the first civil degree in philosophy. The UST Department of Philosophy to date remains the flagship academic department of the Faculty of Arts and Letters. Now on its sixteenth year, as it continues the tradition of teaching “philosophy and letters” to its students, the UST Department of Philosophy prides itself on teaching and research strengths in Thomism, Filipino philosophy, Oriental philosophy, East-West comparative philosophy, French philosophy, German philosophy, social and political philosophy, critical theory, critical pedagogy, philosophy for children, as well as budding interest in areas, such as, feminism and gender studies, philosophy and psychology, philosophy of ageing, philosophy of the city, and bioethics. Without question, despite the evolution of teaching and research interests among the faculty members,¹ the study of the writings of Thomas Aquinas—the eponym of the university—is a longstanding strength, not only in the Department of Philosophy, but also in the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy.²

¹ The development of these teaching and research interests organically occurred thanks to the influx of Filipino scholars who studied overseas in the 1960s. Cf. Marella Ada Mancenido-Bolaños, Gian Carla D. Agbisit, and Jessie Joshua Z. Lino, “Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue on French Philosophy,” in *Kritike*, 18:4 (February 2025), 1–9, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/18.4.ed>>.

² A detailed discussion of Thomism in the country and its academic study in the university is found in Felix F. delos Reyes, Jr., O.P., “The University of Santo Tomas and the Emergence of Thomism in the Far East,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, LX:181 (January–April 2025), 11–

2 INTRODUCTION

The professionalization of academic units was made possible through the efforts of the Office of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs during the time of its former head, Clarita D. Carillo. This meant the establishment of university-wide academic departments that will manage both general education and professional courses. When the Department of Philosophy was established in May 2010, with Alfredo P. Co as its first chair, the various philosophy teachers erstwhile hired by college deans were brought together under one professional academic unit. Co was succeeded by Paolo A. Bolaños as chair in June 2011 the following year.³ It was during the watch of Bolaños when the department finally revised its Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy curriculum, offered at the Faculty of Arts and Letters, and the philosophy Master's and Doctorate programs, offered at the Graduate School. It is important to note, moreover, that during this period, the department also consciously fortified its efforts in research and publication. The research culture cultivated over the course of a decade and a half has made the UST Department of Philosophy one of the most prolific academic units in the university in terms of research outputs. Perhaps, it is important to mention here that enhancements in the undergraduate and graduate curricula include emphasis on philosophical trends, such as German and French critical theory, feminism, Filipino philosophy, and philosophy of education (especially, critical pedagogy and philosophy for children). It is not accidental that because of Bolaños' background in Friedrich Nietzsche and Frankfurt School critical theory the study of German philosophy was given more attention. This is evidenced by the fact that more students have chosen to write their theses on German philosophers. This strength in German philosophy remains up to the present. But while this is the case, it is, nevertheless, interesting to inquire whether the study of German philosophy could, indeed, be considered a legacy (or one of the legacies) in the University of Santo Tomas.

Perhaps, a good starting point for recounting legacy is to revisit the initial attempts of Thomasian academics in exploring the works of philosophical traditions beyond Scholasticism and Thomism. One of the early engagements with German philosophy by a Thomasian is Salvador Roxas Gonzales' "What is Communism?" (1956), where Gonzales provides a textbook account and critique of Karl Marx's communistic ideas.⁴ It was, however, Emerita S. Quito who caused a shock wave within the silo of

33, <<https://doi.org/10.55997/1001pslx181a1>>. Conversely, insights on the link between Thomism in the university and its impact on Philippine society are articulated in Jovito V. Cariño, "For the Love of (Local) Wisdom: University, Thomism, and Filipino Thought," in *Kritike*, 18:1 (March 2024), 88–114, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/18.1.a4>>.

³ The Department of Philosophy has had four different chairs since its establishment: Prof. Em. Dr. Alfredo P. Co (2010-2011), Prof. Dr. Paolo A. Bolaños (2011-2019), Prof. Dr. Jovito V. Cariño (2019-2022), and Prof. Dr. Marella Ada M. Bolaños (2022-present)

⁴ Salvador Roxas Gonzales, "What is Communism?," in *Unitas*, 29:2 (1956), 360-365.

Scholasticism and Thomism in UST when she returned from the *Univerité de Fribourg* in 1965. Armed with newly acquired knowledge in existentialism and phenomenology, Quito was the lone intrepid soul discussing in her classes and in public forums the ideas of German thinkers, like GWF Hegel, Karl Marx, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and even Herbert Marcuse. In 1967, she delivered an inaugural address which was later published as a monograph, titled *A New Concept of Philosophy*, where she proposes an alternative philosophical praxis inspired by Husserl, Heidegger, and Jaspers.⁵ In 1970, Quito's *Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Society* was published by the UST Press.⁶ Quito was also responsible for mentoring talented students in UST during the 60s to early 70s—students who became renowned Filipino philosophers in their own right, namely, Magdalena Villaba, Alfredo P. Co, Josephine Pasricha, and Romualdo E. Abulad. Among these, Pasricha and Abulad could be considered to have continued the legacy of German philosophy in UST. Pasricha taught aesthetics and hermeneutics in the Faculty of Arts and Letters, where the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Hans-Georg Gadamer were extensively discussed. Meanwhile, Abulad, after returning from his postdoctoral studies in *Universität Hamburg* in 1981, became the most prolific Filipino Kantian scholar. To date, the number of essays he wrote on Immanuel Kant is still unparalleled. Abulad also published on Friedrich Nietzsche, Heidegger, and George Simmel.⁷ His graduate courses on Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer were sought after by graduate students. There is no doubt that in UST, the foremost Kantian scholar was Abulad, who did not only introduced Kant but also had a peculiar way of reading Kant. Abulad presented Kant as a critical philosopher whose wealth of conceptual tools could be used to critique Philippine society.⁸ This served as an inspiration for gathering the articles included in this special issue of *Kritike*—German philosophy against the backdrop of social issues.

Going back to the question regarding the place of German philosophy in UST, it is one thing to study and write on thinkers that belong

⁵ Emerita S Quito, *A New Concept of Philosophy*, in *A Life of Philosophy: Festschrift in Honor of Emerita S. Quito* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1990), 5-39.

⁶ Emerita S. Quito, *Marcuse and Contemporary Society* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1970).

⁷ See Paolo A. Bolaños, "Introduction to the Special Tribute Section: Abulad, Philosophy, and Intellectual Generosity," in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 1–15, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.e.1>>

⁸ This is identified throughout the writings of Abulad, especially in his discussions on Philippine society. A good example is Romualdo E. Abulad, "Filipino Postmodernity: *Quo Vadis?*," in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 37–59, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.a.2>>. A discussion of this view of Abulad is better illustrated in Fleurdeliz R. Altez-Albela, "Abulad's Postmodern Eyes," in *Kritike*, 13:2 (December 2019), 60–64, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/13.2.a.3>>.

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to the tradition, yet another to keep this very tradition alive. This becomes a pernicious question when the identity of this type of philosophizing is tied simply to the question of nationality—since Nietzsche despised being German, Kant was East Prussian (not specifically German), Arendt was stripped off her German citizenship (because of her Jewish ancestry leading toward the Second World War), and Marx died stateless. Alongside this, just reading the very appellation of a “German” way of philosophizing is enough to send shivers down a person’s (particularly a German) spine, especially in light of the “German guilt.”⁹ Moreover, it might be awkwardly presumptuous to claim that a philosophical tradition honed by the complexity and depth of the German language itself is being declared a strength, let alone a legacy, of a philosophy department in the Philippines, where only very few read, speak, or understand the German language. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these limitations, the viability of a tradition that is alive may perhaps be articulated by an active discourse of critical philosophizing—a discourse that utilizes the conceptual tools from German philosophy as a viable critique of contemporary society. Perhaps, we could learn from the story of the Frankfurt School tradition, whose relevance persists because of sustained discussions.¹⁰ If German philosophy is, indeed, a strength of the UST Department of Philosophy, then it will manifest precisely as the critique of the affairs of society. Although, quite frankly, this is an endeavor that is yet to be fully realized.¹¹ Above all, benefitting from the

⁹ See Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage. Von der politischen Haftung Deutschlands* (München: Pieper, 1987). However, the question of “guilt” was not something only discussed after the Second World War but also was a topic after the previous one. See Max Weber, “Zum Thema der »Kriegsschuld«,” in *Frankfurter Zeitung* (17 January 1919), <<http://www.zeno.org/Soziologie/M/Weber,+Max/Schriften+zur+Politik/Zum+Thema+der+%C2%BBKriegsschuld%C2%AB#N3284>>. On the topic of German guilt, an interesting debate emerged between Peter Sloterdijk and Jürgen Habermas, the former taking a more progressive position of going beyond the topic’s taboo. See Norman Schultz, “The Controversy about Sloterdijk’s “Rules for the Human Zoo”: Between Continental-Analytic Philosophy and Tropological Thinking,” in *Philosophy Today*, 64:1 (Winter 2020), 221–238, <<https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday2020413329>> and Eric Brown, “The Dilemmas of German Bioethics,” in *The New Atlantis*, 5 (Spring 2004), 37–53, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43152100>>.

¹⁰ See Mark Peacock, “Philosophical Rumblings in the German Republic: Der Philosophenstreit,” in *Philosophy Now*, 26 (2000), <https://philosophynow.org/issues/26/Philosophical_Rumblings_in_the_German_Republic_Der_Philosophenstreit>.

¹¹ However, one must acknowledge the efforts already undertaken by some of the department’s members: Rene Luis Tadle, “[OPINION] UST and the scourge of clericalism,” in *Rappler* (28 February 2024), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/imho/opinion-university-santo-tomas-scourge-clericalism/>>; Rene Luis Tadle, “[OPINION] Who is missing from EDCOM 2? The voices of teachers, students, and parents,” in *Rappler* (7 June 2023), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-who-missing-edcom-voices-teachers-students-parents/>>; Jovito V. Cariño, “[OPINION] Kung bakit mas radikal ang magmahal,” in *Rappler* (15 May 2022), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-why-loving-more-radical/>>; Aguas, Jove Jim S. Aguas, Paolo A. Bolaños, and

influence of Abulad, the cry of this specific tradition ought to be the recognition of philosophy as a way of critically theorizing society.¹² And precisely this is what this issue optimistically puts forward. This special issue is an articulation of how the tradition identified as German philosophy finds its place in the University of Santo Tomas, not simply as a stated research thrust but as a lived experience of discourse. Given this, what this special issue is hopeful about is the possibility of further discourses as a testament to this type of philosophizing that is a mainstay in the UST Department of Philosophy.

Continental Philosophy Symposium II: Deutsche Philosophie

Last 12-13 November 2024, the UST Department of Philosophy organized a two-day symposium on German Philosophy with the theme “Reframing Enlightenment in an Alienated World” as the second of a multi-year symposium on continental philosophy. The 2024 symposium sought to feature members of the department whose research interests are related to German philosophy (following the 2023 symposium on French philosophy), with a particular bent on social critique. The legacy of Abulad, as already intimated above, was the inspiration of the theme. Serendipitously, the year 2024 also marked the 240th anniversary of the publication of Kant’s “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” and the 180th year of Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. These two important texts might seem unrelated, yet both contribute to the development of what we call German philosophy and social critique. While Kant is commonly

Jovito V. Cariño, “The Spectre of Terror: Philippine Democracy and the Threat of the New (Ab)normal,” in *Interfere Journal Blog* (28 August 2020), <<https://interferejournal.org/2020/08/28/the-spectre-of-terror/>>; Jovito V. Cariño, “[OPINYON] The politics of dissent,” in *Rappler* (11 June 2020), <<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/263492-opinion-politics-dissent-anti-terror-bill/>>; Jove Jim S. Aguas, “CRITICAL THINKING IN THIS TIME OF GLOBAL PANDEMIC,” in *Philosophia*, 21:2 (June 2020), <<https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.21.2.c.1>>; Paolo A. Bolaños, “Speed and its impact on education,” in *Inquirer* (30 October 2019), <<https://opinion.inquirer.net/124900/speed-and-its-impact-on-education>>.

¹² This may be articulated as a critical form of theorizing society articulated in Ranilo B. Hermida, “Towards a Critical Theory of Philippine Society,” in *Kritike*, 12:3 (April 2019), 22–42, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/12.3.a2>>. This article is part of special issue published by the journal as a result of the first *Kritike* Conference on 1–2 December 2017 in celebration of the journal’s 10th anniversary. With the theme “Critical Theory at the Margins,” the conference and the succeeding special issue sought to critically reflect on Philippine society. See Paolo A. Bolaños, “Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue: Critical Theory at the Margins,” in *Kritike*, 12:3 (April 2019), 22–42, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/12.3.ed>>. After this, the journal spearheaded the 2nd *Kritike* conference on the theme “From Wisdom’s Special Workshop to Factories of Knowledge: The Place of University in Culture and Society” last February 2021. See “Kritike hosts online conference on place of university in culture, society,” in *Academia* (25 March 2021), <<https://www.ust.edu.ph/kritike-hosts-online-conference-on-place-of-university-in-culture-society/>>.

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.ed>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/rennesland&bolanos_january2026.pdf
 ISSN 1908-7330



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associated with transcendental philosophy in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, his essay on the Enlightenment profoundly shaped the way the concept of Enlightenment has been construed in Western philosophy—something that Marx, himself, was influenced by and later on criticized. Meanwhile, while Marx is remembered as the author of *Das Kapital*, his critique of alienated labor in the 1844 manuscripts is the basis for his critique of society. Thus, reframing the question of Enlightenment today requires a reassessment of our own respective degrees of alienation or social discontent. The extent to which we find ourselves alienated in today's advanced societies renders us “enlightened false consciousnesses”: the greater the degree of self-consciousness, the greater the realization of experiences of alienation. Tying Kant's critical inquiry with Marx's political insight underscores both a theoretical and social approach to what critique is.

In the following, with the exception of one article and two book reviews, selected papers presented in the German philosophy symposium are featured. Noticeable in the featured articles is the diversity of responses to the symposium theme. Nevertheless, the question of Enlightenment—that is to say, of modern life—is tackled by each author, ranging from discussions on the theoretical engagements with philosophical themes to alternative readings of select theorists or themes, to more pronounced political inquiries beyond the confines of Europe.

This special issue begins with Ramon Guillermo's “*Kretinismus: Kaliwanagan at ang Wasak na Utak ng Indio*,” the keynote lecture in the symposium. Guillermo gives form to the theme of the symposium by bringing together the Enlightenment and the deplorable state of being a Filipino. He contextualizes the role of the Filipino's consciousness vis-à-vis Kant and Marx. His contextualization brings the Western tradition closer to our locality in the Philippines, providing tensions between a colonial past and a quasi-colonized present. Such a presentation Guillermo does by pointing out our use of language as a representation of thinking—or perhaps our difficulty to bear the Enlightenment task of thinking for ourselves without reference to another (language).

The following three articles demonstrate a more theoretical approach to German philosophy—more specifically, on the themes of normativity, language, and ethics. Roland Theuas D.S. Pada's “Normativity as Autopoiesis” offers a Luhmannian reading of Honneth's recognition theory that sheds light on systems and how systems overlap. Pada argues that normative systems are autopoietic.

Meanwhile, “Language and the Recovery of Experience: The Role of the Body in Nietzsche and Adorno” by Paolo A. Bolaños is an attempt to articulate an ethics of thinking based on the insights of Friedrich Nietzsche and Theodor Adorno regarding the dialectical relation between language and

experience. Bolaños emphasizes the materialist origin of human reason by revisiting the role of the body in the development of human rationality.

For his part, Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland offers, in “Nietzsche’s Ethics of Danger,” an reinterpretation of Nietzsche’s ethics by providing new translations of some keywords in *Gay Science* 341. Rennesland juxtaposes the centrality of danger and even of vulnerability to the importance of affirmation in Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche. This entails an alternative reading of the eternal return passage and framing Nietzsche’s ethical challenge in the context of *Redlichkeit*.

The succeeding articles engage with various German thinkers against the backdrop of pressing social and political issues, such as, populism, the culture of positivity, feminism, violence, and life in the post-truth era. Jovito V. Cariño’s “Tungkol sa Intelektwalismo at Demokrasya: Isang Alternatibong Pagbása sa Pilosopiya ni Edith Stein” levels a critique against the tendency of the notion of Enlightenment evinced by Kant to regress to a dangerous kind of liberalist populism. Against this populism, Cariño proposes that Edith Stein’s theory of empathy is a viable alternative to the culture of populism. Cariño claims that Stein’s political stance, while associated with the Catholic Church’s mystical tradition, offers a return to one’s community against the problem of anti-intellectualism in contemporary democracy.

In “Byung-Chul Han’s Theory of Negative Politics,” Raniel S.M. Reyes brings to light the pathological condition of contemporary society via Byung-Chul Han’s critical assessment of the “culture of positivity” and the violence within the continental philosophical tradition, symptomatic of neoliberalism’s total violent structure in the guise of positivity and affirmation. Reyes highlights Han’s “negative politics” in opposition to society’s cult of positivity.

The article “A Feminist Re-reading of Hannah Arendt’s notion of Space of Appearances” by Kriedge Chlaire C. Alba provides a feminist re-reading of Arendt’s space of appearances as that which makes the public realm authentic in relation to feminist discourse. Despite views of Arendt’s philosophy in relation to the contrary, Alba situates in this essay how the insights of Arendt are indeed viable for feminism.

Allison Cruyff V F. Ladero’s “Herbert Marcuse’s Visit to Israel: Rethinking Israel’s Military Aggression in Palestine” posits Marcuse’s view of Israel and how it may make sense of the longstanding Israeli occupation in Palestine. Ladero explains the geopolitical situation of the area and Marcuse’s critical insights of Israeli occupation. This allows him to analyze the plight of the Palestinians tied to the possibilities for radical resistance in the face of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Ladero emphasizes that Marcuse’s notion of radical imagination invokes not a praise of Israel’s activities but a sensibility of Palestinian suffering.

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In Ian Pacquing's "Emotions as Freedom: Automodern Life in the Post-Truth Era," although not directly dealing with a German philosopher, the legacy of the Frankfurt School is carried on, particularly in problematizing the relationship between the contemporary (postmodern) society and subjectivity. Pacquing draws on Robert Samuels theory of automodernity, enacting a critical theory inspired by but goes beyond the usual concerns of the Frankfurt School. Pacquing ventures in providing an alternative framework to understand subjectivity vis-à-vis the digital sphere.

The German philosophy symposium was also an occasion to celebrate the life and legacy of Romualdo E. Abulad whose work on Kant, as pointed out above, was the inspiration for the theme of the symposium. Tribute essays were presented in the symposium and a couple of them are now included in this special issue. Maria Majorie R. Purino provides a reflection on the life and legacy of Abulad with insights from Kant, while Mariefe B. Cruz presents a reconstruction of Abulad's philosophy, particularly his contribution to the development of critical Filipino philosophy.

Finally, this edition culminates in two book reviews. Jeffry Oca's *Critical Theory at the Margins: Applying Herbert Marcuse's Model of Critical Social Theory to the Philippines* is reviewed by Allison Cruyff V F. Ladero. Based on Marcuse's critical theory, Oca's book, the winner of the best philosophy book in the 42nd National Book Awards sponsored by the National Book Development Board, is not simply a theorization, but, rather, is a tangible example of demonstrating the practical dimension of philosophy. Meanwhile, Jovito V. Cariño shares his reading of *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources: Medieval Science between Inheritance and Emergence*, edited by Katja Krause and Richard C. Taylor. Albertus Magnus was a German Dominican friar, philosopher, and scientist. Cariño presents Albertus Magnus as part of the development of German philosophy and demonstrates how Medieval thinkers could be fecund sources of insights that could help us respond to our contemporary tribulations.

Despite the hurdles in organizing the symposium and editing this edition, we now offer to the public the *Kritike* special issue on German philosophy. We acknowledge the support of the people who helped in the success of the symposium, especially colleagues from the UST Department of Philosophy. We are also grateful to the institutional support of the UST Department of Philosophy, the Faculty of Arts and Letters, and the Research Center for Culture, Arts, and Humanities.

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Featured Article

Kretinismus: Kaliwanagan at ang Wasak na Utak ng Indio¹

Ramon G. Guillermo

Abstract: The Immanuel Kant (1784-1804) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) juxtaposition is adequate one inasmuch as they are the two great thinkers of European Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). They both envisioned a human future where individuals can think freely for themselves. Despite the fact that they lived several decades apart, they both existed in a period in history when a large portion of humanity was under the rule of European colonialism. It is the aim of this essay to present a rereading of Marx's "1844 Paris Manuscripts" from the standpoint of the subjugated "Indio" and how the Indio's ability to think independently was destroyed and continues to be destroyed.

Keywords: Marx, *Kretinismus*, kaliwanagan, kamalayan

Tampok sa *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844* (*Mga Manuskritong Ekonomiko-Pilosopiko ng 1844*) ni Karl Marx ang kategorya ng "alyenasyon" at konsepto ng "alyenadong paggawa" sa ilalim ng sistemang kapitalista. Pinakamadulas gamitin ni Marx sa partikular na mga tekstong ito ang mga terminong *Entfremdung* at *Entäußerung*.² Ang una ay may salitang ugat na *fremd* na nangangahulugang "banyaga," "dayuhan," "kakaiba," "hindi kilala." Nangangahulugan sa gayon ang *Entfremdung* na ang isang bagay, halimbawa, ang produkto ng paggawa ng isang manggagawa, ay nagiging hiwalay sa kanya, isang bagay na hindi na niya makilala bilang sariling produkto, nagiging pag-aari ng iba. Ang ikalawa naman ay may kaugnayan sa salitang *außen* na nangangahulugan ng

¹ Binasa ang papel na ito bilang susing-pananalita sa symposium tungkol sa *Deutsche Philosophie* na may temang "Reframing Enlightenment in an Alienated World" ng UST Department of Philosophy (12 Nobyembre 2024). Ang dagdag na "Postscript" ay nirebisang bersyon ng reaksyon na binasa sa webinar na "Bisa at Kapangyarihan ng Sariling Wika sa Produksiyon ng Kaalaman" (13 Agosto 2025) sa pagtataguyod ng UP Aliguyon at Tanggol Unang Wika.

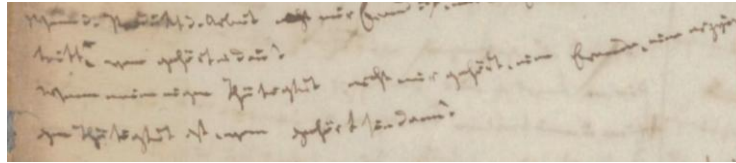
² Tingnan Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte. Kommentar von Michael Quante* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009).

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“labas,” kung kaya’t ang *Entäußerung* ay maaaring mangahulugan ng pagtungo ng dating nasa loob papalabas na tila paglalarawan ng isang proseso ng “eksternalisasyon.” Sinubukan ko nang isalin ito sa ibang mga pagkakataon bilang “pagbuhos ng loob.”³

Karaniwan nang nababanggit sa mga pagtalakay sa akdang ito ni Marx ang “alyenasyon” ng “produkto” (*Produkt*) ng paggawa ng manggagawa sa pakahulugan na nagiging pag-aari ito ng kapitalista, ngunit ang isang aspekto na hindi madalas nabibigyan ng karampatang pansin ay ang konsepto ni Marx na ang “pagkilos” (*Tätigkeit*) mismo ng manggagawa sa proseso ng paggawa ay nahihwalay o nailalayo din sa kanya. Maaaring sabihin sa gayon na, para kay Marx, hindi lamang ang produkto kundi ang proseso mismo ng paglikha ng produkto ay nagiging alyenado.

Maaaring magbigay ng halimbawang pangungusap sa anyo ng isang tanong mula sa manuskrito ni Marx:



Larawan 1: Sulat-kamay ni Karl Marx ng Pangungusap Hinggil sa “Alyenasyon ng Sariling Pagkilos” (International Institute of Social History)⁴

Wenn meine eigne Tätigkeit nicht mir gehört, eine fremde, eine erzwungne Tätigkeit ist, wem gehört sie dann?

(Kung hindi sa akin ang aking sariling pagkilos, isang wala sa loob, isang sapilitang pagkilos, kaninong pagkilos ito sa gayon?)

Subukan nating palalimin pa ang ating salin ng pangungusap na ito. Tinatanong ni Marx dito kung kanino ang pagkilos na ito kung hindi ito sariling pagkilos. Makikita sa pandiwang German na *gehören*, na nangangahulugan ng “pag-aari,” ang isang posibleng interpretasyon. Sinasabi na ang salitang ugat nito ay ang pandiwang *hören* na ang

³ Ramon Guillermo, *Pook at Paninindigan: Kritika ng Pantayong Pananaw* (Lungsod Quezon: UP Press, 2009).

⁴ Karl Marx, *Heft I: Arbeitslohn, Profit des Kapitals, Grundrente, Entfremdete Arbeit, 1844* (Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, n.d.), <https://access.iisg.amsterdam/universalviewer/#?manifest=https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH00860.A_7?locatt=view:manifes>.

pakahulugan ay “marinig.” Mahihinuha sa gayon na ang bagay na inaari ay isang “bagay” na nakikinig o nakakarinig sa nagmamay-ari rito. Maaari sa gayong tumukoy ito sa alipin o sa hayop na pangtrabaho, tulad ng kalabaw o kabayo, na nakikinig sa kanyang amo o panginoon. Hindi nakikinig ang alipin sa utos ng iba kundi sa kanyang panginoon lamang. Kung ganito ang ating pagpapakahulugan, ang pagkilos ng alipin ay hindi maaaring makinig sa kanyang sariling utos bilang alipin, kundi nakikinig lamang sa utos ng kanyang panginoon. Ang utos na naririnig ay hindi mula sa loob kundi mula sa labas. Lumilitaw sa gayon ang kontradiktoryong kalagayan na ang kanyang sariling pagkilos (*eigne Tätigkeit*) ay hindi niya pala talaga sariling pagkilos. Dapat linawin agad dito na ang paggamit ng mga kategoryang “alipin” (o “tagasunod,” na mas eksaktong salin ng *Knecht* na gamit ni Hegel) at “panginoon” (*Herr*) dito ay umaayon sa higit na pilosopikal na pakahulugang Hegelyano kaysa sa literal o historikal na pagka-alipin.

Maidaragdag pa sa pagpapakahulugang ito ang pangyayari na sa wikang German ay hindi lamang maituturing ang *Tätigkeit* bilang pagkilos ng katawan. Pati ang pagkilos ng isipan ay matatawag na *Denktätigkeit*. Maisasagawa natin sa gayon ang isang maliit na rebisyon sa pangungusap ni Marx:

Wenn meine eigne Denktätigkeit nicht mir gehört, eine fremde, eine erzwungne Denktätigkeit ist, wem gehört sie dann?

(Kung hindi sa akin ang pagkilos ng sariling isipan, isang wala sa loob, isang sapilitang pagkilos, kaninong kaisipan ang kumikilos sa gayon?)

Sa mas malalim na antas, hindi lamang ang pagkilos ng katawan ng alipin ang nakikinig at sumusunod sa utos ng kanyang panginoon kundi pati ang pagkilos ng kanyang kaisipan. Ang kanyang pag-iisip, kasama ang mga pinahihintulatang hangganan ng kanyang pagmumuni-muni, ay nauutusan at natatakdaan. Pero ano ba ang tinutukoy rito na kaisipan? Ayon nga kina Marx at Engels sa kanilang akdang *Deutsche Ideologie (Ideolohiyang German, 1845-46)*, ang “tuwirang anyo ng pag-iral ng kaisipan ay ang wika” (*die unmittelbare Wirklichkeit des Gedankens ist die Sprache*). Para sa kanila ay walang posibleng kaisipan sa labas ng wika.

Dulot nito’y lumilitaw ang ilang interesanteng kumplikasyon sa paglalapat ng pagsusuri ni Marx sa kolonyal na sitwasyon. Kung nakikinig nga ang alipin, o sa pangkasaysayang kaso natin, ang *Indio*, sa kanyang panginoon, paano kaya kung ang wika ng pag-uutos ng panginoong Europeo, halimbawa, ay hindi lamang “wika ng iba” kundi *ibang wika*? Paano

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makasusunod ang alipin kung hindi siya nakakaunawa ng wikang pang-utos ng panginoon? Paano niya maiintindihan ang mga utos? Sa isang banda, pwedeng magkaroon ng mga tagasalin na nagpapaabot ng mga utos ng panginoon sa wika ng alipin. Tulad ng dati nang pinansin ng historyador na si Zeus Salazar, naging mahalaga ang papel ng mga tagasalin at tagapamagitan na ito sa isang kolonyal na lipunan.⁵ Maaaring maging kalahi ng alipin na kasabwat ng mananakop o kalahi ng mismong panginoon ang mga tagasalin na ito. Ngunit dito ay mas importante tingnan ang mga kalahi ng alipin na nagsisilbing mga tagapamagitan.

May dalawang anyo ng diyalektika ng pagkakakilanlan (*Dialektik der Anerkennung*) sa pakahulugang Hegelyano na makikita rito.⁶ Ang una ay ang makaisang panig (*einseitig*) na pagkakakilanlan na makikita sa ugnayan ng Indio sa kanyang panginoon. Bilang isang purong obheto ng pagsasamantala na nakiking lamang at hindi pinakikinggan ay hindi maaaring maghangad ang Indio, bilang *Indio*, ng pagkakakilanlan mula sa kanyang panginoon. Makaisang-panig ito dahil kinikilala ng Indio ang makapangyarihang kalooban ng panginoon ngunit hindi kinikilala ng panginoon ang kanyang kalooban. Wala siyang loob. Ang ikalawang anyo naman ng pagkakakilanlan ay ang hindi-pantay (*ungleich*) na pagkakakilanlan. Ito ang kapalaran ng mga kalahing tagapamagitan ng Indio at ng ordinaryong Indio mismo kapag natutunan na niyang gamitin ang wika ng pag-uutos ng panginoon. Ang paggamit niya ng wika ng panginoon ay hindi nangangahulugan na nagiging panginoon at taga-utos na rin siya kahit pa posibleng magka-ilusyon siya ng ganito. Sa katunaya'y nangangahulugan ito ng lalo pang pagsasailalim at pagpapasakop sa kanyang sarili. Gayumpaman, tumutubo na rito sa kalooban ng Indio ang masugid na paghahangad na kilalanin siya ng panginoon kahit pa sa paraang hindi pantay. Sapat na ang “kahit kaunting pagtingin.” Paglaon ay tatawagin ng Indiong naghahangad ng pagkakakilanlang ito ang kanyang sariling bilang “Filipino.” Malalim ang pagkakalubog ng binansagang Filipino sa diyalektika ng pagkakakilanlan.

Ngayong naririnig na siya ng panginoon ay naghahangad na rin ang dating Indio, na ngayon ay Filipino, ng pagkakakilanlan mula sa panginoon. Tila ito pa nga ang kanyang nagiging tunay at pinakamataas na katuparan. Ngunit paano matitiyak ng pobrang Indio na maiintindihan siya ng kanyang tinitingala? Tama kaya ang kanyang paggamit sa wika ng panginoon? Natatakot siyang magkamali. Tinatanong niya ang kanyang sarili: “Ganito nga ba ang kanilang pananalita tulad ng pananalita ko ngayon?”; “Narinig ko na bang sinabi nila ang mga sinasabi ko ngayon?”; “Ganito ba ang tamang

⁵ Tingnan Zeus Salazar, “Ang Pantayong Pananaw Bilang Diskursong Pangkabihasnan,” in *Daluyan: Journal ng Wikang Filipino Espesyal na Isyu*, 1 (2015), 55–78.

⁶ Tingnan Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986).

pagbigkas ng salitang ito?"; "Nabasa ko na ba ang ganitong pagwiwika sa kanilang mga sulatin?" Pinakamabisang garantiya ng pagkawasto ang pinakatapat na panggagaya. Sa gayo'y nabubuhay ang Indio, tulad ng sinabi ni Immanuel Kant, sa daigdig ng tuyot na mga "alituntunin at pormula" (*Satzung und Formeln*) sa kanyang pananalita, na ayon nga sa kanya ay mga "panggapos sa mga paa" (*Fußschellen*) para hindi makalakad sa sarili ang kaisipan ng tao.⁷ Sa kasong ito ay mas mahalaga kung tama ang paraan ng pagkakasabi kaysa sa mismong sinasabi. Ang bawat pahayag ng alipin ay hindi sinusukat ayon sa lohika o kahulugan kundi sa katapatan at tagumpay nitong nakamit sa panggagaya sa mga pahayag ng panginoon. Kahit ang posibleng pagbigkas ng Indio ng hindi pa kailanman nasasabi ng kahit sinuman sa wika ng panginoon ay nasa anino pa rin lagi ng lahat ng nasabi na ng panginoong Europeo sa kanyang wika. Higit na deretsahan ang sinabi ng tauhang Simoun sa nobela ni Rizal na *El Filibusterismo* na ang paggamit ng wika ng mananakop ay mangangahulugan lamang ng "pagpatay sa sariling orihinalidad" (*matar vuestra originalidad*) at walang katapusang "pagpapailalim ng iyong kaisipan sa ibang mga utak" (*subordinar vuestros pensamientos á otros cerebros*).⁸

Kahit pa umuwi na sa kanyang pinanggalingan ang kolonyal na panginoon, umaalingawngaw pa rin sa tainga ng Indiong alipin ang wika ng pag-utos bilang wika ng panginoon, sapagkat naitanim na ito sa kanyang kaloob-looban ng mga dantaon ng pandarahas at brutalisasyon. Nanuot na sa kanyang buong isip at katawan ang pagka-alipin. Ang kanyang sariling pagkilos ay nakikinig pa rin sa utos ng iba sa wika ng iba. Kapag inuutusan niya ang kanyang sarili ay tila iba pa rin ang nang-uutos sa kanya. Hindi pa rin nakikinig ang kanyang sariling pagkilos sa kanyang sariling kalooban. Wala pa rin siya sa sarili. Wala sa loob ang kanyang pagkilos. Ang pagkilos na wala sa loob ay pagkilos na wala rin sa isip. Ibig sabihin, hindi talaga pinapagana at sinasanay ng ganitong uri ng pagkilos ang utak. Sinulat nga minsan ng French na pilosoper na si Henri Bergson na, halimbawa, kapag wala sa loob (*demi-volonté*) mong sinara ang isang bintana, nangangahulugan ito na hindi mo talaga pinag-isipan ang aksyong ito, at dahil dito'y madalas na hindi mo rin matiyak (*demi-certitude*) kung talagang sinara mo nga ang bintana o hindi.⁹ Babalikan mo pa tuloy ang bintana para makita kung talagang sarado ito. Sa madaling salita, may awtomatismo sa pagkilos nang wala sa loob. Walang tumitimo. Walang natutunan. Walang lumalalim.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, "Was ist Aufklärung?," in *UTOPIE kreativ*, 159 (January 2004), 5–10, <https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/159_kant.pdf>.

⁸ José Rizal, *El filibusterismo: Novela filipina* (Gent: Boekdrukkerij F. Meyer-Van Loo, 1891).

⁹ Tingnan Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant. Essais et conférences* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1969).

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Ibang-iba ang sitwasyon kung tayo-tayo ang nag-uusap sa ating sariling mga wika. Magtatanungan tayo: “Tama ba ang aking pananalita?”; “Tama ba ang aking pananagalog, pagbi-Bisaya, pag-i-Ilokano?”; “Wasto ba ang ating pangangatwiran sa ating mga pinag-uusapan sa ating mga wika?”; “Ano-ano na nga ba itong ating mga natutuklasan o naiimbento?”; “Tama at malinaw ba ang ating lohika?”; “Tumpak ba ang ating mga kalkulasyon?” Tayo ang pinakaunang makakasagot sa mga tanong na ito dahil tayo ang nagkakaintindihan. Tiyak na mas may awtoridad pang sumagot sa mga usaping ito ang isang drayber ng jeep kaysa isang Amerikano na may PhD sa isang Ivy League na unibersidad na Ingles lamang ang wikang sinasalita. Bakit tayo nag-aalangan sa ganitong posibilidad? Hindi ba ganito naman ang ginagawa ng ibang mga bansa? Bakit tayo natatakot mag-isip para sa ating mga sarili? Ayaw ba nating magkaroon ng tiwala sa sarili at sa sariling atin? Maaalala muli rito ang panawagan ni Simoun sa *El Fili* na, “imbes na kaisipang nakapailalim sa iba” ay mainam sana na magsulong tayo ng “kaisipang nagsasarili” (*en vez de pensamientos subordinados, pensamientos independientes*) sa pamamagitan ng pagpapayaman at pagpapalawak ng sariling mga wika.

Hindi naman dito sinasabi na wala tayong nagagawa o magagawang makabuluhan o kahit dakila pa nga sa alinmang banyagang wika. Dapat nga ay nag-aaral tayo ng marami pang ibang wika at hindi lamang ang wikang Ingles. Hindi lahat ng nararapat malaman sa daigdig ay nakasulat sa Ingles. Gayumpaman, iba ang ating ugnayan sa wika ng panginoon. Habang hindi natin naiigpawan ang ganitong uri ng ugnayan ay nangangahulugan ito na hindi pa natin nakakamit ang katatagan at tiwala sa sarili na maaaring maging batayan ng higit na malawakang pag-unlad ng sarili nating bansa sa pangmatagalan. Napakalalim ng pagkakatanim sa ating kalooban ng utos ng panginoon na ipinapahayag niya sa kanyang wika. Tulad ng panginoon na hindi nakikinig sa atin ay bingi rin tayo sa ating mga sarili. Hindi tayo nagpapahalaga sa binibigkas natin sa isa’t isa. Hanggang ngayo’y wala pa rin tayong tiwala sa ating sarili.

Halimbawa’y kapag nag-aral tayo ng ibang wika, kahit aling wika pa ito, ang isa sa unang ipapasaulo sa atin ay ang pagbibilang. Ito’y sapagkat walang halos magagawa na pang-araw-araw na aktibidad sa ibang mga bansa kung hindi ka marunong magbilang sa kanilang wika. Ngunit subukan ninyo kahit saan dito sa Pilipinas. Bumili kayo halimbawa ng gamot sa isang drugstore. Sabihin ninyo sa tindero na bibili kayo ng dalawampu’t dalawang piraso ng aspirin. Halos tiyak na uulitin sa iyo ang mga numerong ito sa wikang Ingles. Mangyayari pa rin ito kahit gaanong kalinaw ang iyong pagbigkas ng mga numero. Kikilos lamang ang tindero kapag kinumpirma mong, “Opo, twenty-two pieces nga.” Sinasabi ng iba na mahirap gamitin ang mga numero sa ating wika. Masasabi lamang iyan ng hindi nag-aral

magbilang sa German, French o iba pang mga wika. Marahil ay Ingles lamang ang nalalaman ng may ganyang opinyon. Sapagkat sanayan lang naman talaga ang pagbibilang sa kahit anumang wika. Sa katunaya’y wala namang problema ang mga Indonesian at Malaysian, sa kanilang higit na malaking ekonomiya kumpara sa atin, sa kanilang mga numero na malapit at kahawig ng ating sariling sistema. Sa kasamaang palad ay wala tayong tiwala kahit sa ating sariling mga numero.

Isa pang halimbawa ang mababanggit. Kapag may nag-aaral ng ibang wika, kahit aling wika pa ito, napakahalaga ng pagkakaroon ng diksyunaryo na nagbibigay sa mga salita sa banyagang wika ng katumbas sa wikang kinagisnan ng mag-aaral. Ngunit tila balintuna dito na kapag magtanong tayo kung ano ang ibig sabihin ng isang salita sa Tagalog o alin pa mang wika sa Pilipinas, halimbawa, “pusa,” ang madalas na isasagot ay hindi ang depinisyon ng ganitong uri ng hayop kundi ang kaisa-isang salitang Ingles na “cat.” Tapos nito ay tatango na ang nakarinig at hindi na hihingi ng dagdag pang paliwanag. Tila ipinapakita nito na wala tayong tiwala sa ating sariling salitang “pusa” sapagkat nagkakaroon lamang ng katiyakan at kaliwanagan ang bagay na ito kapag binanggit ang salitang “cat.” Bakit kaya nagsasalin tayo sa Ingles kapag hinihingan tayo ng depinisyon? Malinaw naman na magkaibang gawain ang pagsasalin at pagbibigay-depinisyon. Marahil dahil ipinapalagay natin na titigil na ang paghingi ng depinisyon kapag may nagbanggit ng salitang Ingles. Kapag may nagtanong ng, “Ano ba ito?” Sapat na ang pagsabi ng salitang Ingles para tumigil na ang pagtatanong at para huminto na rin ang pagiging mapagtanong.

Ang pagbibigay ng depinisyon ay isa ring pagtatakda kaya tila mas nababagay rito ang wika ng pag-utos. Ito rin marahil ang dahilan kung bakit ang ating mga batas mismo ay hindi nasa ating mga wika na mas maiintindihan ng nakararami kundi nasa wika ng panginoon. Sa ating palagay ay walang sapat na kapangyarihan ang ating wika para magbigay ng mga depinisyon kahit sa sariling mga salita nito. Hindi nito kayang tumindig sa kanyang sarili. Ang wika natin ay likas na binibigyan ng depinisyon at hindi nagbibigay ng depinisyon. Ang awtoridad nito ay nanggagaling mula sa labas.

Ngunit pundasyon ng lahat-lahat ng syensya ang maingat na pagbubuo ng mga depinisyon tungkol sa mga bagay-bagay sa ating uniberso. Nakapagpapatalas, nakapagsasanay at nakapagpapalinaw ng isipan ang pagbabalangkas ng mga depinisyon. Sa kabilang banda naman, labis na nakakapilay ng utak ng Indio ang ganitong nakasanayang ugali ng pagsasalin sa Ingles imbes ng pagbibigay ng depinisyon. Tagatanggap lamang tayo ng mga depinisyon. Wala tayong lakas ng loob na lumikha ng sariling mga depinisyon. Ang pagbubuo ng depinisyon ay paglikha ng mga

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daigdig. Hindi tayo makalikha ng sariling mga daigdig. Sa kasamaang palad, wala tayong tiwala kahit sa sarili nating mga salita.

Ginamit ni Marx ang salitang *Kretinismus* sa kanyang akda na ipinapaksa natin ngayon. Hiniram ito mula sa salitang *crétin* na French na nalalaman natin sa Ingles bilang *cretin*. Para kay Marx, ang *Kretinismus* ay bunga, o mas eksakto, produkto ng pagkilos ng tao nang wala sa loob at wala sa sarili, dulot ng pangyayari na ang pagkilos ng isip at katawan ng alipin ay hindi ang kanyang sariling pagkilos kundi pagkilos ng iba. Ito marahil ang pinapatungkulan ni Ferriols sa kanyang sinulat na:

Kung may tao sa aklatan, at sinusubukan niyang mamilosopiya sa isang wika na ibang di hamak sa sinasalita ng mga nagmamaneho ng dyipni, nagwawalis-tingting sa mga kalsada, nagsisilbi sa mga turo-turo, masasabi kaya na ang taong iyon ay gumagalaw sa katotohanan?¹⁰

Ang sinasabi niya ritong “paggalaw sa katotohanan” ay hindi lamang tumutukoy sa pagkilala sa katotohanan ng mga taong nakapaligid sa iyo, ang “katotohanang” tinutukoy rito ay ang pamimilosopiya bilang “pangkaisipang paggalaw” na may loob at may sarili, nasa loob at nasa sarili.

Sa ganang ito, tama nga si Kant na hindi kailanman maglalakas-loob ang tao na mag-isip para sa kanyang sarili, o maging *Selbstdenkende*, kung wala siyang “makatwirang pagpapahalaga sa kanyang sarili” (*einer vernünftigen Schätzung des eigenen Werts*). Gayumpaman, para kay Marx ay hindi lamang ito kwestyon ng “katapangan” o *Mut* sa salita ni Kant, na igiit ang malayang paggamit ng sariling katwiran. Ipinapalagay ni Marx na ang pinakamalaking hadlang sa pagtataguyod ng makatwirang pagpapahalaga na ito ay ang sistemang pamproduksyong umiiral sa lipunan kung saan nagiging mala-makina ang mayorya ng mga tao. Sa madaling salita, istruktural ang suliranin at hindi lamang indibidwal. Sa kasalukuyang halimbawa ay pinalawig pa nga ang pagsusuri ni Marx hinggil sa “alyenasyon” sa sistemang kolonyal.

May dalawahang panig na produksyon na lumilitaw sa proseso ng produksyong alyenado na tuwirang mailalapat sa kontekstong kolonyal. Sa ganitong mga kondisyon, samantalang pinahahalagahan ng alipin ang panginoon ay nawawalan naman ng halaga ang kanyang sarili. Ang produksyon ng halaga ng panginoon ay sabay na produksyon ng kawalang-halaga ng alipin. Samantalang iniaangat ng Indio sa lupalop ng kagandahan

¹⁰ Tingnan Franz Giuseppe F. Cortez, “The Linguistic Turn as a Political Act: Another Look at the Thoughts of Roque Ferriols,” in *Kritike*, 8:1 (2014), 45–77, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/8.1.a.3>>.

ang lahat-lahat ng katangian ng panginoon, ang lahat naman ng sa kanya ay itinuturing na pangit, kulang-kulang, madungis at walang dangal. Ang produksyon ng kagandahan ng panginoon ay sabay na produksyon ng kapangitan ng alipin. Samantalang sumusulog ang pagkasibilisado ng panginoon ay nalulugmok naman sa barbarismo ang alipin. Ang produksyon ng sibilisasyon ng panginoon ay sabay na produksyon ng barbarismo ng alipin. Samantalang umu-oo siya sa panginoon ay hinihindian naman niya ang kanyang sarili. Samantalang umuunlad ang talino ng panginoon, nabubulok naman ang kaisipan ng Indio at nalulugmok sa *Kretinismus*. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit minsan nang sinabi ni Rizal na habang ipinagdiriwang sa Kanluran ang progreso at Kaliwanagan ay binubulag, pinupundi at pinadidilim naman dito ang milyon-milyong mga utak ng mga kabataan. Samantalang umuunlad ang *Geist* o kaisipan ng panginoong mananakop, ang *Geist*, ang mismong utak ng *Indio* ay nawawasak (*ein ruiniertes Geist*). Ang produksyon ng katalinuhan sa isang banda ay ang sabay na produksyon ng kabobohan sa kabilang banda.

Kitang-kita ang dalawahang-panig na produksyon na ito sa kaso ng ating mga wika na ipinapalagay ng marami sa atin, kumpara sa dakilang mga wika ng ating mga panginoong Europeo, bilang mababa, walang dangal, kulang-kulang, pangit, barbariko at mga wika ng mga bobo at hindi edukado. May mga naniniwala pa nga na hindi nababagay ang mga wika natin para sa matayog na pag-iisip tulad ng pamimilosopiya. Hindi ito wikang Griyego. Hindi ito karapat-dapat. Kung ganito ang naging pag-iisip ng mga German noong ika-18 dantaon ay hindi magkakaroon ng *Deutsche Philosophie*, hindi lilitaw ang mga Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Marx at Nietzsche (si Leibniz mismo ay sa mga wikang Latin lamang at French nagsulat). Kaya kung babalikan natin ang tanong ni Kant, “Was ist Aufklärung?” (Ano ang Kaliwanagan?), ang masasabi lamang natin ay hindi pa mahahanap ng Indio ang kanyang sariling Kaliwanagan hanggang hindi niya ito mabibigkas sa kanyang sariling mga salita.

Sinikap na ito dating gawin ni Andres Bonifacio sa kanyang sanaysay na “Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog” (1896).¹¹ Doon ay hinikayat niya tayo na “imulat” at “idilat” ang ating “bulag na kaisipan.” Kapansin-pansin dito ang dalawang salitang “mulat” at “dilat” na kapwa tumutukoy sa pagbukas ng mata upang makatanggap ito ng liwanag. Bagama’t hindi niya noon ipinag-iba ang dalawang ito ay masasabing nagtataglay ng higit na panloob at pangkamalayan na pakahulugan ang salitang “mulat” samantalang ang “dilat” ay mas nahihinggil na sa panlabas o pisikal na pagbukas ng mata. Kapansin-pansin na sa wikang German at iba pang mga

¹¹ Jim Richardson, *The Light of Liberty. Documents and Studies on the Katipunan, 1892-1897* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013).

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wikang Europeo ay walang alinmang espesyal na pandiwa para lamang sa pagbubukas ng mata. Inalay ni Bonifacio ang kanyang buhay at panulat para mamulat ang Inangbayan ngunit magpahanggang ngayon ay kapos pa rin ang pagpapahalaga ng mga Pilipino sa kanyang mga salita. *Hindi pa rin natin siya naririnig.*

POSTSCRIPT

Pinag-iisipan ko kung bakit, kahit marunong naman akong mag-Ingles ay hindi ako mapakali sa laging paggamit ng Ingles sa lahat ng pagkakataon? Bakit kaya hindi ako makuntento sa wikang Ingles na lamang bilang wikang panturo, wika ng pag-iisip, at wika ng talastasan dito sa atin? Mayroon namang nakukuntento at kumportable rito dito sa atin. Parang naisipan ko ang sagot sa aking pagkabalisa nang may nagsabi sa akin ng pariralang, “Nagkaalaman na!” Natural, madalas patawa ang pagsabi nito na may kinalaman sa pagbubunyag ng mga sinisikreto. Ngunit nakapag-isip-isip ako sa ibig sabihin nito. Ano ang ibig sabihin ng “ka-alaman” dito? Katulad ng salitang “kaalamán,” may mga panlapi itong “ka-” sa unahan at “-an” sa hulihan pero iba ang paraan ng pagkakabigkas at iba rin ang ibig sabihin ng parehong mga panlapi. Sinasabing ang salitang ugat ng nalalaman nating karaniwang salitang “kaalaman” ay mula sa “alam” ng Bahasa Melayu na mula naman sa Arabic na nagangahulugang “daigdig,” “uniberso” o “kalikasan” na rin. Ang mas kilala nating anyo ng “kaalamán” ay tumutukoy sa abstraktong ideya ng pagkakabatid sa pangkalahatan o hinggil sa pagkakaroon ng impormasyon.

Kaugnay ngunit naiiba ang ibig sabihin nito sa “kaalaman” sa pariralang “nagkaalaman na.” Ang mga panlaping “ka- ... -an” dito ay pumapatungkol sa mga taong nagpapalitan ng bagay na tinutukoy ng salitang ugat (i.e., kaalamán). Malinaw ito sa mga sumusunod na halimbawa:

Kabiruan (Nagpapalitan ng mga biro);

Kasulatan (Nagpapalitan ng mga sulat);

Kaibigan (Nagpapalitan ng pag-ibig).

Ano sa gayon ang “kaalaman” sa salitang “nagkaalaman”? Tila nangangahulugan ang “nag-kaalaman” na may nalaman ang mga nagkaalaman na naging kaalaman na ng lahat ng mga sangkot sa naturang pagkakaalaman. May mga pagpapalitan o resiprokalidad ng pagpapalitang kaalaman na nangyayari (kahit pa madalas ay iisa lamang ang pinanggalingan ng bagay na nalaman). Interesante ang ganitong ideya dahil ipinapakita nito na mahalaga sa “kaalamán” ang “pagkakaalaman” sa

resiprokal nitong anyo. Halimbawa nito’y kapag may nagsabi na, “Ilabas na natin ang ating mga hinanakit nang sa gayo’y magkaalaman na tayo.”

Hindi umiiral, sa ganitong paraan, ang kaalamán sa mga magkakahiwalay at magkakabukod lamang na mga kamalayan. Pagbabahaginan ito. Samakatwid, upang maging ganap na kaalamán ay dapat nagkakaalaman ang mga magkakaugnay at nagpapalitang mga kamalayan. Dito nagiging mahalaga ang wika. Kapag tinanggap natin na magkakaugnay ang kaalamán at ka-alam-an, magiging napakahalaga ng wika ng pagkaka-alam-an sa mismong kaalamán. Lumilitaw na ang wika ng kaalamán ay ang wika rin ng pag-aalam-an. Kinakailangan ang wikang pangmadla, na laging may kolektibong katangian, sa pagkaka-alam-an ng kaalamán. Kapag wala o mahina ang batayang pangwika sa pagitan ng dalawa o higit pang tao, hindi mapag-aalaman-an ng bawat isa ang pinapatungkulang kaalamán.

Sinasalungguhitan dito na hindi unidireksyonal ang transmisyong ng kaalamán sa pag-aalam-an. Ang pag-aalam-an ay pagpapalitang kaalamán sa dalawa o higit pang direksyon. Dulot nito’y nagkakahugis ang kaalamán sa proseso ng pagpapalitang-kaalaman. Hindi isahang-bigkas o “monolohikal” ang kaalaman sa ganitong paglalarawan. Hindi rin ito nangangahulugan na walang mga tunggalian o salungatan sa pagpapalitang ito. Sa katunaya’y bahagi mismo ng proseso ng “pag-aalam” ng bawat isa ang tunggalian at tagisan pa nga ng mga “nag-aalaman.” Hindi ito nagsisimula sa ganap na kaisahan at hindi rin nagtatapos sa ganap na kaisahan.

Lumilitaw sa gayon ang problema kapag ang wika na ginagamit sa transmisyong ng kaalamán ay isang wikang hindi gamay ng mga nagpapalitang-kaalaman. Hindi nabubuo rito ang dalawahang-bigkas o “diyalohikal” na katangian ng kaalamán. Ang maaaring mailipat sa umaalam sa ganitong kaso ay ang kaalamáng hindi nabigyang hugis ng isang orihinal at masalimuot na proseso ng pag-aalam-an. Samakatwid, kung may kaalamán man na maililipat, isa itong monolohikal na ugnayan, na pagsasaulo, o pagsasaibang-ulo, lamang ng nasa ulo na ng iba. Nananatiling kaalamán ng iba ang kanyang nalalaman at hindi nagiging kanyang sariling kaalamán.

Magkabilaang-panig ang nabubuonang ka-mangmang-an sa ganitong paraan. Ganito ang nangyayari kapag isang hindi gagap na wikang banyaga ang ginagamit sa paglipat ng kabatiran o impormasyon ng dalawa o higit pang tao. Parehong hindi nagiging kanila ang kaalamán sapagkat hindi ito nabigyang hugis ng pag-aalam-an sa wika ng pag-alam. Nawawasak ang mabisang ugnayang guro at mag-aaral sa paggamit ng hindi gagap na wikang banyaga bilang wikang panturo. Ang pag-aalam ay hindi pagsasaulo ng kaalamang nanggaling sa ulo ng ibang tao.

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Sa mas maliit na antas, masasabing nagkakaalaman tayo sa isang pamayanan ng kaalaman. Sa komunidad na ito nagkakahugis ang mga kaalaman sa kanilang pagkakaunawaan at pagtatagisan. Dito tumutubo ang mga kaalaman ng ating komunidad. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit napakalahaga ng wika, at kung ano ang ginagamit nating wika, sa pag-unlad ng ating mga kaalamán. Ang ka-alam-an ay isang pamayanan na binubuo natin at ng ating mga kapwa “ka-alam.”

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Normativity as Autopoiesis

Roland Theuas D.S. Pada

Abstract: This project intends to provide a systems theory approach to extracting a sociological theory from Honneth's recognition theory as a movement further away from a linear reading of the latter. The main convergence of this paper is to argue that normativity is autopoietic in the sense that it is a self-reproducing product of interaction between the systems of personal relations, market economy, and democracy. I argue in this project that the language of critical theory from Honneth's work will benefit from a Luhmannian rethinking of concepts, which will expand the nuances of Honneth's moral vocabulary and address the concerns of his critics. This paper aims to articulate a "sociology of recognition" which looks at social pathologies from the perspective of entropy, negentropy, functional differentiation, and perturbation of other systems.

Keywords: Luhmann, Honneth, systems theory, recognition theory

Communications have recently been a problem attributed to the exponential growth in connectivity in our contemporary times. Issues of misinformation occur in communications, such as fake news, generative AI content, and information campaigns. The understanding of communication serves as a remedy to the current proclivity of society to rely on assumed conventions of meaning. Luhmann's communication theory provides a sound epistemological counterpoint to these issues by setting expectations of the variability of outcomes since it assumes functional distinction of systems. This systems theory-based perspective provides a nuanced understanding of Honneth's recognition theory. A consolidated theory derived from Honneth's oeuvre shows that Honneth identifies three systems differentiated by their functions. For Honneth, society functions through three spheres: personal relations, market economy, and democracy. Society maintains its functionality by relying on the normative resources provided by these spheres. I propose to establish an observational construct to depict these spheres as systems that communicate their needs to other systems.

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Using Luhmann's vocabulary avoids the communicative issues that Honneth faces with his concepts of normativity, disrespect, and social pathology. My take on this matter is to modify the language using Luhmann's morally agnostic concepts. This eliminates the sense of moral judgment when Honneth uses the concept of normativity to denote cooperation and mutual recognition in society. With Luhmann, it is possible to articulate the system's functionality via its need to avoid entropy or to maintain its continuity. I see this compatibility when Honneth mentions in *Freedom's Right* that the market economy is amoral, which translates well when viewed from Luhmann's idea of functional differentiation and negentropy.

This paper provides a systems theory approach to extracting a sociological theory from Honneth's recognition theory. The main contention of this paper is to argue that normativity is autopoietic, in the sense that it is a self-reproducing product of interaction between the systems of personal relations, market economy, and democracy. The final proposal of this paper is to articulate a "sociology of recognition" which looks at social pathologies from the perspective of entropy, negentropy, functional differentiation, and perturbation of other systems. This will be done in three parts. The first part will discuss and rehearse Honneth's recognition theory from the perspective of a system. A detailed discussion of this is also covered in my previous work, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition*.¹ The second part of this paper will cover some of Luhmann's concepts on systems theory, communications, and entropy. The final part of this paper will explore the possibility of a sociology of recognition.

The System of Recognition

Axel Honneth's recognition theory is based on the basic assumption that human societies are motivated by love, rights, and esteem. The core concepts of his theory can be found in *The Struggle for Recognition*.² As elaborated in this work, the developmental process of mutual recognition, including its pathological tendencies, begins with love, which will evolve into rights, and is expressed further in the form of esteem. *The Struggle for Recognition* follows up on Hegel's observations on crime and how it seamlessly involves the recognition of both a violation of law and, perhaps, the possibility that the subjectivity of the criminal is a misrecognized subject.³ Honneth, in this work, further adopts George Herbert Mead's sociology, specifically the relationship between the concept of the "I" and "Me," where

¹ See Roland Theuas Pada, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

² See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

³ See *Ibid.*, 12.

the “I” realizes that in its dialectical relationship with a generalized other, it begins to understand that the “Me” is an ongoing transformative process. This becomes Honneth’s basis for the spheres of recognition. From a developmental perspective, love is the initial dialectical encounter where the subject experiences care and concern unreciprocated by the subject to the other. An example of this case is when a mother or a caregiver provides for the infant’s needs without demanding anything from the infant. This becomes the starting point for recognition. The infant begins to recognize that, insofar as it is treated as a subject deserving of love, the caregiver is also worthy of love.⁴ On the other hand, rights are realized when the subject’s social environment becomes more complex.⁵ The realization that subjects are expected to be recipients of love (or at least care or concern) means that the general public fundamentally possesses the same expectation, leading to an understanding of the importance of norms and laws. As the highest developmental phase, esteem occurs with the realization that individual contributions to society are valued and encouraged through exchange values and reciprocity.⁶ These spheres of recognition signify an “operating” system where the preservation of normative expectations and practices is circulated to society. However, recognition theory acknowledges that the possibility of misrecognition is a constant in these spheres or phases. For example, the abuse of a child could generate pathologies of social relations since racial discrimination and economic exploitation of laborers are also pathological.

Honneth’s motive for the development of this theory dates back to an early paper he wrote entitled “Atomism and Ethical Life: On Hegel’s Critique of the French Revolution.”⁷ His first major work, *The Critique of Power*, establishes his differentiation from the Frankfurt School and continues Habermas’ critical theory.⁸ Scholars often prefer Honneth’s earlier works since they contain core principles of Honneth’s brand of critical theory that provide a sociological and moral vocabulary to understand and provide critical avenues for social issues. The local scholarship on Honneth usually prefers this route. Pilapil, for example, find Honneth’s theoretical perspective useful in the Moro struggles in Muslim Mindanao.⁹ Bolaños, on the theoretical side, explores the theoretical prospects of Honneth’s critical theory in his essay, “The ethics of recognition and the normativity of social

⁴ See *Ibid.*, 103–104.

⁵ See *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶ See *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷ Axel Honneth, “Atomism and Ethical Life: On Hegel’s Critique of the French Revolution,” in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 14:3-4 (1988), 359–368.

⁸ See Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, trans. by K. Baynes (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991).

⁹ See Renante Pilapil, *Recognition: Examining Identity Struggles* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015).

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relations”¹⁰ while also addressing Ricoeur’s premature criticisms of recognition theory in “Between Struggle and Peaceful Dialogue: An Overture to Honneth and Ricoeur on Recognition.”¹¹ Loquias, a recent Honneth scholar in the Philippines, uses Honneth’s critical theory to unpack social issues, such as the relationship between pedagogy and globalization¹² and environmental ethics.¹³

Later developments in Honneth’s theory address some of his critics’ concerns. His refinement of recognition theory could be seen in works such as *Reification*, which hints at his theory’s non-linear or cyclical articulation.¹⁴ Honneth’s full implementation of recognition theory’s critical potential would later be found in *Freedom’s Right*, where he attempted a systematic rendition of Hegel’s concept of the *Sittlichkeit* in the context of modern democratic societies.¹⁵ Criticisms such as Deranty’s observation of recognition theory’s apolitical nature,¹⁶ Fraser’s critique of esteem,¹⁷ and Kompridis’ commentary on the ambiguity of recognition¹⁸ were addressed in *Freedom’s Right*, albeit, indirectly. For example, the apolitical nature of Honneth’s recognition theory could be understood in *Freedom’s Right* as a necessity for developing political discourse and political culture. Likewise, the division of labor, in the case of Fraser, could be remedied by the recognition of subjects that deserve esteem. In the case of Kompridis, the ambiguity of recognition lies in its sphere or function in a specific system. Love involves personal relations, rights refer to the development and cultivation of a political culture in democracies, and esteem is dependent on the participation of individuals in the market economy as laborers, consumers, and investors (capitalists). Few attempts were made to establish Honneth’s continuity of theory in his oeuvre. Zurn’s *Axel Honneth*, for

¹⁰ See Paolo Bolaños, “The Ethics of Recognition and the Normativity of Social Relations,” in *Suri*, 1:1 (2012), 15–24.

¹¹ See Paolo Bolaños, “Between Struggle and Peaceful Dialogue: An Overture to Honneth and Ricoeur on Recognition” in *Budhi*, 20:2 (2016).

¹² See Victor Loquias, “Axel Honneth’s Critical Pedagogy for a Renewed Socialist-Global Society,” in *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 5:1 (2019), 99–140.

¹³ See Victor Loquias, “Axel Honneth on Social Justice and the Environment as a Moral-Practical Concern” in *Eubios: Journal of Asian International Bioethics*, 30:5 (2020), 264–272.

¹⁴ See Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ See Axel Honneth, *Freedom’s Right*, trans. by J. Ganahl (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 2–4 and 7–8.

¹⁶ See Jean-Philippe Derranty, “Politicizing Honneth’s Ethics of Recognition,” in *Thesis Eleven*, 88:1 (2007), 92–111.

¹⁷ See Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition* (New York: Verso, 2003).

¹⁸ See Nikolas Kompridis, “From Reason to Self-Realisation,” in *Critical Horizons*, 5:1 (2000), 23–47 and Nikolas Kompridis, “Struggling over the meaning of recognition: A matter of identity, justice, or freedom?,” in *European Journal of Political Theory*, 6:3 (2007), 277–289.

example, traces the development of Honneth's theory from *The Critique of Power to Freedom's Right*.¹⁹ Another example is my attempt in *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition* to articulate the relationship between the spheres of social interaction in the context of the three forms of recognition and the place of antecedent recognition to provide feedback loops for the systems to adjust their norms.²⁰ In this current manuscript, I add to this by attempting to discuss recognition theory as a system, bringing Luhmann into the discussion.

Modelling a system out of Honneth's recognition theory requires readers to view recognition areas as interconnected systems with inherent dependencies that can create stable or pathological conditions. An apt analogy is to recall the interdependence of Plato's ideal republic through its myth of metals in which bronze, silver, and gold each have their own contribution to the state.²¹ The myth of metal eschews social mobility because the metals are refined to perform only a specific purpose. Likewise, in the case of Honneth's recognition theory, the spheres of recognition provide specific normative resources to maintain the homeostasis of a modern democratic society. The "metals" in recognition theory are love, right, and esteem.

Love is the primary motive for function in societies. They do not only provide the initial training for socialisation, but they also open new avenues and possibilities for existing individuals. Families provide socialisation training, friendships provide variations on how individuals can self-actualise, and intimate relations provide purpose for subjects. Love requires regulation by semi-permanent rules and, at the same time, the material resources to sustain relationships. Since love could be exploited, it depends on the regulative function of rights. Esteem, on the other hand, provides the material resources to sustain relationships. Love, in the context of modern democratic societies, also contributes to the reproduction of subjects.

Rights serve as a regulative mechanism for love and esteem. Rights are derived from the consistency of productive social relations. While rights are semi-permanent, they are subject to procedural augmentation and modification. We see the immediate importance of rights in the legal system, and laws are passed, modified, and repealed. Likewise, the legal system usually consists of representatives of other members of society mediating the creation, modification, and removal of laws. This regulative system is maintained by discourse among citizens and subjects of society, thus aligning

¹⁹ See Christopher Zurn, *Axel Honneth* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

²⁰ See Pada, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition*.

²¹ See Plato, *The Republic*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 and 6, trans. by Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1969), Book III 413ff., <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0059.tlg030.perseus-eng1>>.

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the goals of laws generated by the sphere of rights with the goals of society, or at least its majority. Rights require resources and, most importantly, people with varying motives and interests in society that contribute to its functions.

Esteem is the source of material resources in society. Esteem is rewarded for contributing to societal needs, specifically, economic remuneration. Monetary resources can be expended, traded, and invested as a form of remuneration. People participate in this economy of trading, generating, and investing resources in the sphere of esteem. Since the market economy is self-interested, its characteristics are amoral and require law regulation. Moreover, people participate in the interactions of the market economy because it is essential for the continuity of personal relations (love) and democratic deliberations (rights). The force of the market economy, however, is significant enough to influence the sphere of love and rights so much to the point that it takes a consolidated effort from both to regulate the market economy's own goals.

The intention of depicting these spheres of recognition as interdependent units, much like Plato's myth of metals, is to demonstrate that normativity for these three spheres is self-adjusting and self-regulating. In an earlier paper, I have noted the limitations of reading Honneth's recognition theory solely on a linear progression based on the development of norms from love, rights, to esteem.²² A linear reading of the progression from love, rights, and esteem will give the impression that the normative products of recognition are a rigid normative outcome that determines and prescribes future social interactions. My assertion, at least in my reading of Honneth, is that the linear reading presented in *The Struggle for Recognition* was from a developmental perspective akin to similar theories from Freud, Piaget, and Erikson. The developmental perspective from Honneth's recognition theory, however, does not necessarily mean that recognition is linear, progressive, and fixed. On the contrary, both of the earlier and later works of Honneth emphasize that the intention of recognition theory is not linear but systemic. The earlier references to the reconstruction of Hegel's project of the system of ethical life or the *Sittlichkeit* inform us that Honneth's recognition theory is more concerned about the process than the outcome. The bud is also given more emphasis over the rose in Honneth's *Reification: A New Look at An Old Idea*, particularly the inclusion of antecedent recognition, i.e., Marcelo's interview essay,²³ and the publication of *Freedom's Right*. These materials point out that Honneth's project was not merely a call for a revolutionary movement towards recognition, rather, it was a systematic project that depicted the progress and setbacks of modern democratic societies.

²² See Pada, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition*, 84.

²³ See Goncalo Marcelo, "Recognition and Critical Theory Today: An Interview with Axel Honneth," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 39:2 (2013), 209–221.

Honneth's depiction of modern democratic societies, however, was a productive one despite the modest goal of description as opposed to a more flamboyant and sponsor grabbing promise of transforming society.

Honneth's critical theory is a peculiar one, and at this juncture, it is in the approach that observation and description create a form of critique that is epistemically grounded in the limitations of observation. This limitation implies that it is more grounded in the possibility of an erroneous observation that means that the theory can adapt, make new observations, and try alternate possibilities for instigating internal forms of emancipation. I find this preferable over transcendental and universal truths that cannot bend themselves over for imperfections in reality because they think that their theory is bulletproof. Honneth's recognition theory recognizes complexity. This is evident in the alternatives that he depicts from normativity and social pathologies. Moreover, the recognition of complexity as an additional layer of nuance to Honneth's theory makes his pronouncement of finding societal learning instances out of social pathologies even more compelling than a traditional revolutionary movement. I see this affinity towards a complex and dynamic social theory as an important dynamic that is missed by Honneth's critics. The fixation on Honneth's progressive depiction of society's transformative norms does not make Honneth "Pollyanish" or overly optimistic about society's ability to self-regulate and self-correct. Rather, the point of highlighting progress is to underscore the fact that such progress is only made possible through a complex dialectical engagement of various systems working in concert (or, in most cases, a lack of concert) to produce the effect of what we observe as "democracy."

Luhmann's System Theory

Niklas Luhmann was a German sociologist renowned for adapting systems theory into social theory. Luhmann's works were distinct in that his engagement with philosophy was exceptional. Like Jürgen Habermas, Luhmann was also a recipient of the Hegel Prize in 1988. One of Luhmann's interests was developing a "Theory of Society" where sociology is refined to understand the nuances and complexities of the idea of society. His critique of sociology aims to reach this objective:

Sociology must understand its relationship with society as one of learning, not instruction. It must analyze the problems it discovers, possibly postpone tackling them, and possibly declare them insoluble, albeit without knowing how to proffer "scientifically proven

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solutions.” All this requires a theoretically grounded description of modern society.²⁴

Luhmann’s intention for refining the theory of society lies in how and what we observe, which comprises our understanding of society. For Luhmann, the paradox of social observations is rooted in communications. Communication is the only observable phenomenon generated by society, and, for him, the only way to observe society is through communication. Thus, the paradox is that while we can observe society through its communications, our observations are likewise muddled by the processes involved in communicating our observations. Moreover, claiming certainty over the communication of observation is bound to reproduce communicative problems in claims that insist on consistent or functional outcomes in immanent instances and are dependent on complex factors not covered by a limited observation. A common recurrence of this phenomenon is the assumption of cultural biases that we have with certain cultures. Assuming, for example, that all African Americans love fried chicken or gold jewelry is as erroneous as claiming that all Filipinos love eating rice, adobo, and Jollibee’s *Chickenjoy*, and also believe in *utang na loob* [debt of gratitude]. We do not know every African American and their preference for food or ornaments, neither could we possibly know each Filipino’s preference towards adobo, *Chickenjoy*, and the practice of *utang na loob*. Correcting for these possibilities offers a nuanced perspective to an often functive reduction of concepts also referred to as stereotypes.

Luhmann offers complexity as opposed to suspicion. Equally, this presents a path of critique seen in critical theory without the moralistic condemnation of domination and the promise of emancipation. Complexity offers an insight into causal possibilities without resorting to functions since systems theory demands a refined method of observation; society as a system must be dissected through its internal systems and interactions with other systems. The systems within society generate varying observable effects which Luhmann refers to as communications. These systems are self-enclosed to maintain its distinct homeostasis. Communications offer the possibility of relaying the intentions of a system to another system, but because of their enclosed nature, the responses that they generate are emergent. The system of a country’s economics can merely irritate the systems of private relations to either spend or save their money, economics cannot dictate the spending behavior of the systems of private relations but can irritate them to a degree that it will elicit a response from the system of private relations. Systems

²⁴ Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, Vol. 1, trans. by R. Barrett (California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 5.

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.a1>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/pada_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330



generate communication in as much as currency communicates a value that makes us understand that 100 USD is more valuable than 100 PhP. While we know the value, we do not exactly know its value until we see a report on current exchange rates. In the same manner, we might have an idea of what is beautiful in a pageant, but it is not necessarily a correct prediction of the outcome.

Moreover, while communication remains the only observable product of systems within systems and society as a system of its own, our observations, too, are likewise communication and are subject to communicative expectations in as much as we expect that a fluctuation of the USD will affect the overall value of PHP or that the winner of a beauty pageant will be beautiful. This generates somewhat relatively stable but also emergent outcomes. Stable and emergent effects are observed partly because systems are operationally closed from each other and can only affect other systems externally in irritation. That is why the economy, as a system, will strive to function despite legal impediments but will nonetheless be affected by regulations such as taxes and tariffs. Luhmann further adds:

As far as this is possible in the system itself, it guarantees the autopoiesis of societal communication by transforming it into the freedom to say yes or no with far-reaching consequences to everything that has been determined. In complex societies, what therefore evolves are not obligations for consensus but symbolically generalized communication media.²⁵

This insight explains, continuing with a different example, why a box of ammunition from Federal costs more than that of Armscor's in the Philippines, and that while the price is higher, this product is still sold in the Philippine market. Consumer interest, in this example, is not necessarily dictated by price. Still, rather than an operationally closed system, it is irritated by external factors and thus tries to adapt by observing how observations are made. One can imagine plausible outcomes of the preference for Federal brand ammunition as perhaps being more friendly to the environment since the EPA in the USA is more stringent than the Philippine's DENR (which, for the sake of assumption, is an observation of an observation of its own).²⁶ This is what Luhmann remarks as a "self-conditioning" of the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

²⁶ DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) has regulations for governing the use of lead in paints, fuel additives, water pipes, toys, cosmetics, school supplies, and food packaging through its *Administrative Order No. 2013-24*. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), in its CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) No. 302.6, specifies the

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system that allows them to take account of the possibility of success and failure as a reaction to the environment.²⁷

Irritation is the preferred descriptor here since it neither affects the system directly nor creates a point of stimuli to warrant the possibility of a reaction. Reaction is contingent on various other stimuli that affect the system; hence, if all other stimuli are not known or not observed properly, the outcome is emergent. This is why, despite the protests for the cessation of the use of petroleum-based products, its appeal for its negative effects on humans, and even the absurd lengths to which the “Just Stop Oil” tries to communicate its message, oil continues to flow. We are reminded of an analogous concept from Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, that the attempt to deter crime through public punishment and executions is not necessarily a direct communication to society to stop committing crime.²⁸ The irritation is merely a stimulus for society to react, not necessarily from the intended outcome by governments and institutions. What Foucault observes is that the irritation led to a reaction contingent on the emergent behavior of the populace. They communicated a spectacle instead of complying with the state’s intended communication.

The best way to explain complexity in Luhmann’s system theory is to look at biological organisms as an analogy for society. Much like how we could remember Ryle’s explanation of a “mind,” we ought to look at society as an emergent effect of various systems, irritating each other in a concerted and unconcerted effort to generate the observable effect of a communicating “mind.” Systems as “organisms” operate for the fulfilment of their function and the maintenance of their homeostasis. The sphere of economics, for example, has to fulfil the need to maintain profitability and the necessary resources to continue its operation. In other words, systems avoid entropy and seek *negentropy*.

As a distinct system, an organism seeks to maintain its existence and function despite external irritations from other systems. As a functionally distinct organism, other systems cannot directly control or compel a system to function outside its homeostatic parameters. Luhmann notes that the threat of entropy creates conditions on how systems can attain negentropy.²⁹ However, despite the lack of direct control over another system, a system can irritate another system and have effects contingent on its need for

requirements for handling, disposing of, and recycling spent lead from expended ammunition. The Philippines’ DENR does not have any provision for regulating lead use, recycling, and handling; hence, there is no regulatory pressure on ammunition manufacturers in the Philippines to reduce lead use and dispersal.

²⁷ Luhmann, *Theory of Society* Vol. 1, 138.

²⁸ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. by A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 7.

²⁹ See Luhmann, *Theory of Society* Vol. 1, 252.

negentropy. For example, a ban on advanced semiconductors in China can lead to the PRC manufacturing its semiconductors, or a ban on gambling in China could trigger other systems to conduct gambling operations outside of the PRC as an online activity. Contingency here means that there would be a response to the irritation if it warrants a reaction. However, the kind of reaction elicited by these irritations depends on various circumstances and even the intensity of the irritation. Moeller notes that the concept of contingency in Luhmann is dependent on occurring events, but it also depicts non-necessity and probability.³⁰ Contingency refers to the uncertainty of outcomes that, despite an agent's intentionality (or lack thereof) in a system, the effects of the outcome are not necessarily guaranteed. Contingency refers to a system's attempt to create an effect to either stimulate or irritate a system. If I called Taiwan the real China, the irritation to the PRC would be negligible and insignificant. However, a different degree of irritation is expected if the United Nations begins referring to Taiwan as legitimate China and PRC as fascist China. Irritation, negentropy, and functional differentiation affect the system's response to another system. The system generates its response out of its own accord, or as Luhmann puts it, an autopoiesis:

Autopoietic systems are systems that themselves produce not only their structures but also the elements of which they consist in the network of these same elements. The elements consist in the network of these same elements. The elements (which from a temporal point of view are operations) that constitute autopoietic systems have no independent existence. They do not simply come together. They are not simply connected. It is only in the system that they are produced. They are produced (on whatever energy and material basis) by being made use of as distinctions.³¹

Autopoiesis is the response generated by a system to various irritations, its need for homeostasis or negentropy, and its maintenance of its functional differentiation. This does not necessarily mean that change is impossible; however, effective communication or targeted irritation can elicit other systems to generate their autopoietic responses. An urban environment with a poor public transportation system will either increase the number of private vehicles or alternative commercial forms of transportation. In some cases, migration would be an option to make up for the contingencies of a

³⁰ See Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Radical Luhmann* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 56–57.

³¹ Luhmann, *Theory of Society* Vol. 1, 32.

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commute. The response of subjects reacting to a system will vary. The beauty of system theory is that its norms are autopoietic; they are generated as a response to the different forms of irritations, along with the need for different systems' requirements for negentropy. The outcomes, however, are also autopoietic too. They are not guaranteed, nor are they going to create predictable outcomes. Despite this, understanding autopoietic responses does not necessarily preclude random outcomes, instead, the opposite is true that the outcomes are relatively stable despite the uncertainty.

My point is that autopoiesis provides a guiding principle for normativity despite its claim for uncertainty. While reactions from irritations from different systems might be deemed emergent, the reaction has always been coming from informed prognostications. Despite this safety blanket (or lack thereof) of relatively stable outcomes, the Luhmannian take on system theory takes the route of modesty instead of absolute certainty.³² That is why, as Moeller observes, Luhmann does not make moral prescriptions that are rooted in privileged and unequivocal conclusions rooted in observations.³³ Luhmann's systems theory does not account for absolute certainty of outcomes, nor does he make the same moral judgment. I argue a similar tendency in Honneth's recognition theory, that in the attempt to depict the tendency of normativity, Honneth's recognition theory must appeal to emergent outcomes on the position of emergence, rather than absolute certainty.

Recognition and Systems Theory

Normativity is an autopoietic communication that intends to inform sustainability in a system and between systems. It does not follow the aesthetic criteria of good or evil, rather, it follows the principles of entropy and negentropy. In a system, normativity maintains homeostasis and seeks negentropy. As a *system of systems*, social systems are constantly seeking collective, collaborative, and autopoietic norms to maintain homeostasis. In the case of recognition theory, there is an individualistic effort from personal relations, market economy, and democracy to generate the effect of maintaining homeostasis as a subject that operates within these systems. As a system, society is contingent on the effects of various participation of individuals in different systems. There is a constellation of contingencies that occur within a society's sub-systems, and Honneth's recognition theory offers a conceptual framework for understanding functionally differentiated systems pursuing negentropy. What I find fascinating in this perspective is

³² Moeller, *The Radical Luhmann*, 120.

³³ *Ibid.*, 79–80.

that these functionally differentiated systems are also co-dependent on the persistence of the other system's negentropy. This co-dependent tendency is further seen in instances where the entropy of one system leads to the generation of another system to replace the entropic system. For example, Argentina's economy and its low valuation of pesos led to the country's adoption of the USD as a substitute for economic transactions,³⁴ replacing an entropic economic system with a system that can maintain negentropy. The process of substitution is autopoietic. People who have realized the turbulent and fluctuating value of the Argentine Peso opted to resort to a stable economic system to avoid entropy.

One could say that this avoidance of entropy leads to contingent systemic changes, shifts from fossil fuel to green and sustainable energy has been influenced by these constellations of contingent forces and systems in as much as there is a shift from supporting Jews as victims of genocide to the perpetrators of genocide.³⁵ However, this observation's purpose is not to place value judgment or express support or condemnation for these observations. Instead, these examples demonstrate that normativity is as fungible as viral trends in TikTok, *memes*, or web series such as *Skibidi Toilet*.³⁶ If anything, these examples demonstrate that there should be no long-term indignation towards using words such as norms or normativity since they are temporary despite their relative stability. Systems are contingent on the fickle irritations that elicit their unique and emergent autopoietic responses. In the recent 2024 United States election, the consistently liberal-leaning media outlet *The Washington Post* decided to abjure from its usual practice of endorsing a political candidate.³⁷ The normative expectation that they would endorse a democrat instead of a republican candidate is an autopoietic decision that is contingent on its own constellation of systems, notwithstanding the fact that it is merely one of the irritations that stimulates a contingent reaction from the American voters. In other words, normativity is not permanent, oppressive, or, as some would say, progressive. It is amoral since it merely wants to preserve the system's homeostasis. That is to say that a capitalist system is subject to its distinct functional operation since a traffic rule-violating jeepney is motivated to keep on violating traffic safety rules to

³⁴ See Robert Plummer, "How Argentina learned to love the US dollar," in *BBC* (10 April 2024), <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-66507826>>.

³⁵ See Matt Egan and Donald Judd, "Harvard, Penn and MIT presidents under fire over 'despicable' testimony on antisemitism and genocide," in *CNN* (6 December 2023), <<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/06/investing/bill-ackman-harvard-penn-antisemitism>>.

³⁶ See Lisa Respers, "Skibidi Toilet: If you don't know what it is, you will," in *CNN* (25 July 2024), <<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/25/entertainment/skibidi-toilet-explainer>>.

³⁷ See Manuel Roig-Franzia, and Laura Wagner, "The Washington Post will not endorse a candidate for president," in *Washington Post* (25 October 2024), <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/media/2024/10/25/washington-post-endorsement-president/>>.

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survive and feed its family. The difference is merely aesthetic. We pity the jeepney driver more than the capitalist corporation that employs over a thousand employees with their own respective families and responsibilities for avoiding entropy.

While this might draw ire and condemnation from popular and dominating intellectual circles, my contention is that systems are amoral. The contingency of moral judgment from the public is a matter of aesthetics; it is a contest and competition between those who look more pathetic than the other party. That, too, is subject to the contingencies of second-order observations and prevailing communicative trends. Any expectation of change is contingent on the prevailing trends and irritation of trends derived from second-order observations. For example, there would be more backlash for me if I accidentally ran over a window washer-beggar along Lacson Ave. than the backlash that a jeepney driver would have if they had driven over my entire family. This public expectation is normative; however, it is not permanent. It is contingent on the constellation of systems' irritation, the communication they produce, and the second-order observations they create as an effect of autopoiesis.

While I hope that I do not run over a window-washer-beggar along Lacson Ave. in as much as I do not wish that a tired 18-hour shift jeepney driver to maul my entire family, the moral decisions and condemnation from these actions are as fungible as the trends of fashion or the value of cryptocurrency against contemporary money laundering laws. Moving forward, the insight that we should pick from this point is that normativity is neither a negative nor a positive concept. Normativity is autopoietic, generated by forces that influence a constellation of irritation of systems pursuing their respective functional differentiation and negentropy. In the same manner, Honneth's characterization of the areas of recognition, namely, personal relations, market economy, and democracy, ought to be perceived in an amoral negentropic pursuit of maintaining societal homeostasis.

If Kompridis was complaining about the ambiguity of recognition, the complaint was apt in the sense that there is never truly a fixed and overarching category or concept for recognition, other than the fact that it is guided by the autopoietic necessity of democratic systems to pursue negentropy. A shift from the language of moral judgment augments the language of recognition to take into account the autopoietic nature of systems responsible for society's homeostasis. I think this was the original intention of Honneth's appropriation of Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*, wherein the perspective of progress is only attained through the dialectical relations elicited by various systems pursuing their respective homeostasis.

In this regard, a brief excursus would articulate the codependent nature of personal relations, market economy, and democracy. To begin with,

personal relations are the fundamental motive force for individuals to participate in all of the other spheres of recognition. Market economy provides material resources, and the sphere of democracy provides the regulative element to limit the amoral tendencies of personal relations and market economy. These three spheres of recognition irritate each other, creating contingent effects that we could observe as a society. The consonance, or for the most part, the dissonance of these three spheres is autopoietic. That is why Filipinos working in foreign countries is a good example of a norm that comes out of Philippine society's autopoietic dissonance (or consonance, if you benefit from the influx of foreign currency). Filipinos who do not have the benefit of generational wealth are compelled to work for foreign currency because the market economy in the Philippines does not support the possibility of sustainable and progressive economic growth. The family of the exported laborer is held hostage. At the same time, the government takes credit for the economic growth brought by the greater spending power of the OFW's family. In this example, our point of critique does not have to revolve around the moral condemnation of any of the spheres in their pursuit of negentropy. The foreign worker works and inevitably sacrifices his or her relationship with their family to maintain the homeostasis of their personal relations. The market economy in the Philippines, likewise, must maintain its own need for homeostasis by maintaining profitability at the cost of the participants of its system. In the case of democracy's system, political continuity must be maintained, be it for the sake of the politician or the country.

The emergent effect generated by these systems brings us to the sober realization that these systems aim to attain homeostasis and negentropy. While it seems easy to condemn the use of fossil fuel as a further exacerbation of climate change, it also presents some challenges to the condemnation of a developing country that has yet to achieve the economic capital to afford environmentally conscientious solutions to climate change. We do not expect that most Filipinos could shift to electric or hybrid vehicles when they could barely afford to keep their finances afloat or have enough resources to own their own land and have a roof over their heads in the same manner that we are unable to be morally indignant with the influx of illegal immigration from various countries to more developed countries because of their home countries' oppressive and unsustainable governance. Systems are motivated by the need to avoid entropy; moral indignation does not help and only assists one's improvement of second-order observations from other systems. This is also a preferred outcome for any system pursuing negentropy. Hence, moral indignation is merely lip-service for one's curation of profile, knowing the functional motive of a system provides a more nuanced critique:

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Functional differentiation has affected the concept of world even independently of this development. Modern society regulates its own extent, the modern world as well. Modern society can only change itself and is therefore prone to constant self-critique. It is a self-substitute order; the modern world, likewise. It, too, can change only in the world.³⁸

Functional differentiation, therefore, provides a nuanced understanding of a system's emergent responses to communication, or, for the most part, irritations from other systems. Knowing that a system's main proclivity is to pursue its function, maintain its existence, and avoid entropy. This perspective synchronizes well with Honneth's recognition theory since the spheres of recognition are functionally differentiated systems. However, despite their functional differences, the systems within society (namely personal relations, market economy, and democracy) are also required to maintain the homeostasis of a *society*. This leads to emergent solutions, and often, a self-correcting and self-aligning outcome maintains homeostasis. This is what we ought to understand as *normativity* elicited from the autopoietic convergence of various systems that are functionally differentiated.

So, how does this autopoietic reaction mesh with the idea of social pathologies? Social pathologies are likewise emergent reactions to the irritation from various systems. The difference, however, is that social pathologies lead to the system's impeding entropy. For example, poverty is functionally an impediment to the self-actualization of individuals and their respective personal relations. Poverty itself is not a crime nor an evil that should be eradicated. However, we must recognize that it can have entropic effects on different systems. Crime, too, is a social pathology because it threatens the homeostasis of other systems. California's Penal Code §459.5 is an interesting example of how social pathologies could lead to entropy. The law states that shoplifting is treated as a misdemeanor if the value of the stolen goods or merchandise is below 1000 USD.³⁹ This creates an environment of entropy for businesses; if operating within California is no longer profitable, stores and other business establishments may relocate to safer and more profitable areas. Social pathologies indicate that the functional differentiation of the system and its homeostasis are no longer viable. This is the reason why the sales of mechanical typewriters are no longer as prevalent today as they were during the 20th century, or a video rental store where the latest titles could be viewed in the glorious resolution offered by the VHS

³⁸ Luhmann, *Theory of Society* Vol.1, 91.

³⁹ See State of California, Penal Code §459.5, <https://california.public.law/codes/penal_code_section_459.5>.

format. These industries, as systems, have already heard their death knells when personal computers became ubiquitous and when DVD (which also had its death knell) replaced the media consumption format.

In recognition theory, social pathologies are often considered learning instances for systems to tweak their responses. This does not guarantee an optimal response, nor does it mean that there is an “optimal” response. What matters is that the response maintains homeostasis and avoids entropy. Like DVDs, Blu-Rays, and video streaming services, the systems under media consumption are subject to entropy if a much more efficient and effective solution is available to the greater system. That is why illegal immigration seems to appear as the right solution if the condition of the system can support the demand of immigration. But suppose country A is the wealthiest in the world, and 80% of the world population decides to migrate there through legal or illegal means, the solution no longer becomes viable and could, in turn, cause entropy in a few systems. This is a point that I have raised in my earlier work on normativity as a resource that is shared, generated, and distributed in society,⁴⁰ a deficit in the expected resource from a sphere of recognition can cause pathologies, in extreme circumstances, even the replacement of a system could happen. If there is any concern towards Honneth’s optimism, my contention is that perhaps he understands that societal systems are motivated to pursue their function and avoid entropy. This means that the survival and maintenance of the function of the system prevail despite the possibility of entropy. To a certain degree, we can expect that negentropy prevails, and we merely have to communicate this possibility of entropy in the most efficient way possible. Only then could we at least attempt to safeguard the salvation of the system from its entropy.

Conclusion

Normativity is autopoietic. It is an emergent product of multiple systems working to irritate and elicit various responses required by different systems. What ties these systems together is their common desire to maintain functional differentiation and negentropy. Normativity, in as much as I dislike this observation, is subject to trends and momentary epistemic convictions. The only way to validate this conviction is to see its actual effect upon its implementation. While this is ideal, the resources required to implement and validate the solutions to social pathologies are a risk that ought to be weighed carefully. Solutions today are created with the most expedient and swift communications possible. Some systems have also been created to hasten communications. Technology has enabled contemporary

⁴⁰ See Pada, *Axel Honneth’s Social Philosophy of Recognition*, 162–163.

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society to witness rapid changes without the foresight of the possibility of failure. Disruption has been the trophy of innovation, and what makes this horrific is that we are willing to take the risk of entropy for the sake of radical change and the titular obsession with disruptions. We do this at the risk of unforeseen catastrophes. This is the kind of stuff that stock market crashes are made of and is the situation where we are willing to burn physical resources for an imaginary resource (cryptocurrency) for the sake of radicality or at least the appearance of one. My Luhmannian reading of Honneth's recognition theory offers us the caution that we are all intertwined in multiple systems, some of which we do not even know we are a part of, which elicits the need for prudence. The call for radical change is as urgent as the demand Schwab's call for an on-demand economy. Neither is tested for long-term effects, nor are they proven to provide sustainable and progressive societal change. All our responses are autopoietic. However, autopoietic responses can be normative, and while systems desire to avoid negentropy, the response might actually lead to entropy.

When exaggerated to the level of a dystopian future, the haste for communication can lead systems to a state where they are between entropy and negentropy. A good example of this state is the so-called "dead internet" theory.⁴¹ Dead Internet theory refers to the phenomenon where content creation in various media and social media platforms is generated by large language model systems (LLMs) or the ubiquitous "AI." Part of this system relies on views and feedback from audiences and media consumers, which ironically, could also be performed by bots using LLMs, thereby validating the function and negentropy of the system. When stretched to a certain point in our imagination, we could foresee an internet where no one creates content, save for bots and AI, where no one consumes this content either, save for bots and AI. A much closer dystopian example from my concoction is the "dead university theory." With the proliferation of university rankings, lobbied by technology companies who insist on including artificial intelligence products, universities are compelled to conform to the requirements of university ranking companies. Teachers are required to use AI-generated content for teaching or scholarship, while students must also use AI-generated content for their assessment tasks. The teachers also use AI to check the assessment tasks. The teachers can spend their entire time playing basketball and

⁴¹ See Kaitlyn Tiffany, "Maybe You Missed It, but the Internet 'Died' Five Years Ago," in *The Atlantic* (31 August 2021), <<https://web.archive.org/web/20230306110843/https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/08/dead-internet-theory-wrong-but-feels-true/619937/>>.

watching K-drama, while the students could play Valorant until they earn their degrees.⁴²

On the brighter side of possibilities, systems theory allows critical and recognition theories to be specific and more targeted and persuasive with their critique. Arguing for the contingent effects on various systems interacting together can offer a compelling path to critique if the parties involved are aware of their role and its consequences for their homeostasis. If a medium-sized cookery, for example, keeps dumping oil in the sewer system of a residential area, it would be more persuasive to inform them that various parasites and vermin will contaminate their food, attracted to the oils they generate. As opposed to vehemently condemning them on social media platforms or confronting them with threats, system theory will create a much more conducive dialectical engagement for all parties involved.

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⁴² Admittedly, this is my variation of Slavoj Zizek's "Synthetic Sex and Being Yourself," in *Big Think* (8 June 2015), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xYO-VMZUGo>>.

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Language and the Recovery of Experience: The Role of the Body in Nietzsche and Adorno

Paolo A. Bolaños

Abstract: This article engages with the respective philosophies of language of Friedrich Nietzsche and Theodor Adorno in order to outline the ethical struggle of thinking, in general, and philosophical thinking, in particular. This ethical struggle results from philosophy's recognition of its epistemic vulnerability. First, a reconstruction of Nietzsche's critique of conceptual reification is provided, revolving around the metonymic-metaphorical structure of language and cognition. Second, Adorno's account of the pathogenesis of human reason is provided in order to outline the mimetic origin of human reason, presented by Adorno via his critique of subject-object relation. Third, given the critique of conceptual reification and the pathogenesis of human reason, the possibility of conceiving an "ethics of thinking" is explored. This ethics of thinking is framed as the recovery of experience resulting from thinking's reorientation back to its material origin. Finally, thinking's discovery of its ethical dimension via the recognition of its very own vulnerability brings the "body" back to the center stage of the recovery of experience.

Keywords: Adorno, Nietzsche, language, recovery of experience

Friedrich Nietzsche and Theodor Adorno both construe history as a locale of human experience. Historical experience, in this context, means receptivity to the material conditions of life that involves our conceptual apparatus. Nietzsche and Adorno, moreover, point out that within the same historical-experiential sphere our conceptual apparatus could become perverted, repressing our receptivity to objects of experience. This happens when objects of experience are reduced to reified concepts, a moment when concepts become "more real" than material objects and, in effect, we forget the "nonidentical" character of these objects. This forgetfulness is the pathogenesis of reification, human reason's amnesiac attitude towards its material origin. Human reason's insensitivity to its

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.a2>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/bolanos_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330



material origin renders thinking's very own inability to overcome its obsession with identitarian concepts, such as, order, universality, or purity. In the current form of society, this obsession of reason manifests in the stratification or standardization of practices or behavior—a form of necrosis of the vitality of human relations which, in its extreme form, results in oppression and violence towards both human and non-human others. This forgetfulness of the material origin of thought is also symptomatic of philosophy, that is why Nietzsche and Adorno emphasize the vulnerability of philosophy. This vulnerability is philosophy's failure to self-reflexively evaluate its very own language, thereby a failure to enact the ethical character of thinking.

Based on Nietzsche- and Adorno's philosophical engagement with language, I will attempt to outline the ethical struggle of thinking by articulating the vulnerability of philosophical thinking. Firstly, I will provide a reconstruction of Nietzsche's critique of conceptual reification based on his reading of language as essentially metonymic in character. Secondly, I will discuss Adorno's account of the pathogenesis of human reason which is related to what Adorno calls the mimetic character of the subject-object relation. Thirdly, informed by the critique of conceptual reification and the emphasis on the mimetic character of the subject and object, I will gesture towards the possibility of conceiving an "ethics of thinking" inspired by Adorno's reconciliatory dialectic of the subject and object. This I refer to below as the "recovery of experience." Fourthly, I rehearse, once again, the ethical call of philosophy's vulnerability by putting the body at the center stage of the recovery of experience—I argue that such recovery is the reaffirmation of the mimetic dimension of thinking.

Metonymy and the Origins of Conceptual Reification

Ascertaining Nietzsche's critique of conceptual reification means that we have to understand his general critical attitude towards the language of metaphysics. As a purely conceptual language, metaphysics, according to Nietzsche, conceals the material origin and mediatory nature of thinking. More specifically, metaphysics isolates itself from its social, interpretative, and metaphorical character—which are material conditions that constitute thinking or human reason. This dissimulation of the material origin of metaphysical language hides behind the epistemological assumption that human reason is capable of accurately mirroring reality. Nietzsche calls this assumption the "truth drive" that underlies the traditional language of philosophy. By construing its language as educing truth, metaphysics (or the traditional language of philosophy) is somewhat oblivious to the tensional relation between its pragmatic origin (its material origin) and the role that

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metaphysics plays within society, a role made possible by ignoring precisely such pragmatic-material origin.¹ As such, a “rational world” is only conceivable when we make official a metanarrative of the world whose epistemic justification is the abandonment of its very own social and material constitution. Nietzsche describes this as the invention of the metaphysical origin of the world or what I simply call metaphysical bias.

Apart from the disclosure of the concealed material origin of thinking (or truth valuation), another aspect of Nietzsche’s critique of conceptual reification is the recovery or orientation back to thinking’s material origin. Inasmuch as the manifestation of the truth drive is done through language, Nietzsche contends that the recovery of the material origin of truth valuation requires a reevaluation of the normative foundations of language. As such Nietzsche begins this inquiry with a question regarding the nature of the “word.” He does this in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” where he provides a definition of the “word”:

It is a copy in sound of a nerve stimulus. But the further inference from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside of us is already the result of a false and unjustifiable application of the principle of sufficient reason. If truth alone had been the deciding factor in the genesis of language, and if the standpoint of certainty had been decisive for designations, then how could we still dare to say “the stone is hard,” as if “hard” were something otherwise familiar to us, and not merely a totally subjective stimulation!²

The “word,” Nietzsche contends, is a derivative of a physiological process. What the nerve stimulus entails is the presence of an external referent and the word is the expression in sound — that is to say, an indirect expression of the referent. For Nietzsche, this process is not only linguistic but also “metonymic” inasmuch as the word is a substitute for the physical referent. Nietzsche notes that metonymy is “the placement of one noun for another” or “the substitution of cause and effect.”³ It is also important to mention that, by calling the word metonymic, Nietzsche hints on his critical stance towards

¹ Cf. Wayne Klein, *Nietzsche and the Promise of Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 65.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Breazeale (New York: Humanities Press International, 1990), I, 81-82.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Description of Ancient Rhetoric,” in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), III, 25 and VII, 59.

the “correspondence theory” of truth where a proposition is considered a direct and accurate representation of a matter of fact. In contrast, Nietzsche argues that any linguistic expression is metonymic; more importantly, that metonymic expressions are grounded in the physiological origin of cognition. Nietzsche questions the dissimulation of this physiological origin and, hence, the transcendental bias in truth-claims. The example he uses in the above passage, “the stone is hard,” illustrates the process of conceptual reification wherein the statement, “the stone is hard,” is imposed upon a physical referent. Conventionally, we call this physical referent “stone,” and the physical encounter with this referent is the “subjective stimulation” that we describe via the predicate “hard.” The predicate “hard” is another word that we use to describe the sensation or subjective stimulation that occurs upon encountering the physical object we call stone: “hard” is how we perceive the object. For Nietzsche, this is not simply a passive reception of the “in itself” of the object, but, rather, an active or creative naming of the object. According to Nietzsche, we are not aware of this active and creative process; we are mistaken to think that we are passive receivers of truth. He says, “It is only by means of forgetfulness that man can ever reach the point of fancying himself to possess a ‘truth’.”⁴ Since we are forgetful of the physiological-active-creative nature of language and the truth drive, we become passive users of language and believe that words have a transcendental source. On the contrary, we are participants in the active creation of truths which Nietzsche describes as an “aesthetic” engagement with the world: “between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression; there is, at most, an *aesthetic* relation ... a freely intermediate sphere and mediating force.”⁵ This mediatory character of our language use is the metonymic dimension of knowledge formation. In his “Description of Ancient Rhetoric,” Nietzsche further elaborates on the metonymic dimension of knowledge formation:

... it is not the things that pass over into consciousness, but the manner in which we stand toward them The full essence of things will never be grasped. Our utterances by no means wait until our perception and experience have provided us with a many-sided, somehow respectable knowledge of things; they result immediately when the impulse is perceived. Instead of a thing, the sensation takes in only a sign.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 81.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 86.

⁶ Nietzsche, “Description of Ancient Rhetoric,” III, 23.

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The phrase the “manner in which we stand toward” things does not necessarily mean, for Nietzsche, the Kantian a priori categories of understanding. Rather, Nietzsche is simply describing the dynamism between language and human reason. However, very similar to Kant, Nietzsche maintains that the “full essence of things will never be grasped.” This is not a denial of the material world, but a recognition of the limitations of human intellect. Nietzsche is pointing out here the mediatory and, perhaps, haphazard nature of language—he says, our “utterances by no means wait until our perception and experience have provided us with a many-sided ... knowledge of things.” Nietzsche, moreover, adds that “language never expresses something completely, but displays only a characteristic which appears to be prominent”⁷ This brings us back to the “hard stone” example; “hardness” does not describe the entirety of the stone. The description, “the stone is hard,” is merely metaphoric. Nietzsche explains that this process involves two metaphoric moments: “a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor.”⁸ Our experience of things in the world is conditioned by these two metaphoric moments. Nietzsche is claiming that we do not possess knowledge of the essences of things, but, rather, we merely possess metaphors that, at best, offer indirect and incomplete descriptions of things. The hypostatization of a description—a word or a concept—results in conceptual reification, that is to say, when an “effect” (the “abstracta”) becomes more real than the “cause” (the actual physical object). For example, when “hardness” is mistakenly construed as the essence of the stone. A reversal of cause and effect. Paul de Man has an apt description of this phenomenon:

The outer, objective event in the world was supposed to determine the inner, conscious event as cause determines effect. It turns out however that what was assumed to be the objective, external cause is itself the result of an internal effect. What had been considered to be a cause, is, in fact, the effect of an effect, and what had been considered to be an effect can in its turn seem to function as the cause of its own cause.⁹

As such, there is no such thing as literal use of language since language, at its core, is metaphorical. Nietzsche further points out that, “that

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies,” I, 82.

⁹ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 107.

the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors” and take “them to be the things themselves.”¹⁰ Another word for the metaphorical reversal of cause and effect is metonymy. The “stone is hard” is a metonymic statement because there is a reversal of cause (the actual stone) and effect (hardness). For Nietzsche, this is not a simple linguistic embellishment or a conscious use of style (e.g., rhetoric) on our part. Rather, metonymy is constitutive of how we conceive the material world. Nerve stimuli are neither Platonic ideas nor unbridled representations of things, but, rather, they result from our active and creative (hence, non-corresponding) reception of things. If we forget this active-creative aspect of our cognition and the metonymic-metaphoric structure of language, then we become blind to the uniqueness and particularness of experience. If we subsume particularities under the concept, then individual differences are discarded. For Nietzsche, the metonymic structure of language is the transference from the material object to the abstract concept, thereby dispensing with the particularities of the original experience. This results in the confusion of cause and effect or simply reification.

Nietzsche is pointing to us a crucial aspect of our experience of the world—its linguistic constitution. Yes, there exists an external material world, but one that we can only comprehend via the mediation of language. This mediatory experience of the world is viewed by Nietzsche as an aesthetic relationship because, as has been pointed out, it involves our active creation of concepts. Therefore, this aesthetic relation is the basis of Nietzsche’s epistemology, countering traditional representationalist epistemologies. Nietzsche’s epistemology is “world-disclosive” and “perspectival-creative.” Moreover, it is not farfetched to describe this epistemology as a form of materialist epistemology because it pays attention to the role of the body in the formation of knowledge. Hence, this aesthetic relation with the world is essentially a somatic relation. Through this materialist epistemology, Nietzsche highlights the historical dimension of human experience and how experience interplays with language and our truth drive. By disclosing what has been dissimulated in the reification of our conceptual apparatus, Nietzsche counters the traditional view that knowledge is a neutral representation of the world.

Mimesis and the Pathogenesis of Human Reason

Adorno shares with Nietzsche a critical attitude towards language and its relation to our cognitive apparatus. For one, like Nietzsche, Adorno also begins his critical philosophy of language with a genealogical account of

¹⁰ Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies,” I, 86.

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conceptual reification which is also an occasion for the “revaluation of the language of philosophy.” Philosophy’s revaluation of its very own language becomes, for Adorno, a *conditio sine qua non* for philosophizing, that is to say, philosophy from now on is only possible, first and foremost, as self-reflexive critique. “All philosophical critique,” Adorno declares, “is today possible as the critique of language.”¹¹ This implies that philosophy, in a radical way, is a linguistic process and, hence, thinking is a linguistic process. As such, it is incumbent upon the praxis of philosophy to be a critique of itself. Moreover, since philosophy/thinking is radically linguistic, any philosophical discourse is conditioned by the normative limitations of language. Recognizing that philosophy cannot escape the limitations of language, Adorno’s declaration also implies that the self-critique of philosophy is philosophy’s self-awareness of its tendency towards conceptual reification.

Like Nietzsche, Adorno calls out traditional philosophy’s naïve assumption that words and objects are ontologically connected. This naïve assumption downplays the complexity of the language-thinking relation, simply taking for granted that philosophical ideas could be communicated straightforwardly. Adorno, disagrees with this naïve assumption, he says, “The intended communicability of philosophical language is today to be unveiled in all aspects as fraud.”¹² We could construe this critique of philosophy as a deconstruction of the history of Western philosophy, where traditional philosophy is “understood as a metanarrative of forgetting and, by extension, reification, insofar as philosophy has translated the ‘non-identical’ into a static, representational relation between subject and object.”¹³ Adorno’s deconstruction of Western philosophy is reminiscent of Martin Heidegger’s own deconstruction of the history of ontology, a history marked, according to Heidegger, by the forgetfulness of the meaning of Being.¹⁴ However, in contrast to Heidegger, Adorno understands the predicament of Western of philosophy from a materialist standpoint as he points out that what is being forgotten is the visceral dimension of human thinking, hence of philosophy. Adorno remarks:

Thinking as a subjective act must initially surrender
itself to the subject matter, even when, as Kant and the
Idealists taught, thinking constitutes or indeed even

¹¹ Theodor Adorno, “Theses on the Language of the Philosopher”, in *Adorno and the Need in Thinking: New Critical Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), thesis 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, thesis 5.

¹³ Samir Gandesha, “The ‘Aesthetic Dignity of Words’: Adorno’s Philosophy of Language”, in *New German Critique*, 97 (Winter 2006), 141.

¹⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 19.

produces its subject matter. Thinking still depends on the subject matter even when the concept of a subject matter is problematic and thinking alleges that it first establishes it.¹⁵

The above passage speaks about the groundedness of thinking in material reality, wherein material objects are the “subject matters” of thought. This is what Western philosophy forgets, thinking’s material groundedness in things. This is also how Adorno construes “objectivity,” as the objectivity of the material object. Interestingly enough, Adorno understands our visceral engagement with material objects as a form of “interruption” by the other of thought: “To think ... means as much as to think intermittences, to be interrupted by that which is not the thought itself.”¹⁶ The material, as opposed to the transcendental, world is the ontological basis of thinking. The role of language is to mediate, as Nietzsche already pointed out, world and thought. I mentioned in my discussion of Nietzsche above, the inversion of cause and effect—the metaphysical mistake of giving priority to the effect—in Adorno, we find a reorientation back to the cause, that is, the material object. In other words, the “primacy of the object”: “There is hardly a stronger argument for the fragile primacy of the object and for its being conceivable only in the reciprocal mediation of subject and object than that thinking must snuggle up to an object, even when it does not yet have such an object, even intends to produce it.”¹⁷ Adorno’s primacy of the object argument reminds us of Immanuel Kant’s main epistemological premise, “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”¹⁸ What undergirds this premise, according to Adorno, is the primacy of the object.¹⁹ However, Adorno is wary of Kant’s possible psychologism because of the latter’s overemphasis on the role of human reason that tends towards a form of mentalism or idealism.²⁰ Against this psychologism, Adorno insists that, “Thinking is a mode of comportment” and “the subject matter with which it comports itself is indispensable.”²¹

In Adorno’s essay titled “Subject and Object,” he expounds on the relationship between the “subject” and the “object.” In this context, the thinking mind is the subject, while the object is the subject matter of the

¹⁵ Theodor Adorno, “Notes on Philosophical Thinking,” in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 129.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), A51/B75.

¹⁹ See Adorno, “Notes on Philosophical Thinking,” 129.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

²¹ *Ibid.*

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thinking mind or material reality itself. The relationship between subject and object is dialectical, a relationship characterized by provisionality as opposed to absolute ontological conditions. Adorno highlights the tensional or aporetic relation between thinking and material reality, thereby gesturing towards the preservation of the primacy of the object. By highlighting the aporetic relation of subject and object, Adorno, in effect, is also emphasizing their inextricable relation. Human consciousness, Adorno claims, is a byproduct of the symbiotic, albeit tensional, interaction between subject and object.²² Adorno also refers to this symbiotic relation as the “mimetic” relation. Mimesis is the dialectical encounter between the subject (thinking) and its other (material reality). This encounter is described in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as an anthropological phenomenon: the human experience of encountering “outer nature.” It is important to note that the mimetic moment presupposes an encounter between subject and object; therefore, mimesis is neither with the subject nor with the object, but, rather, is the process of encounter itself. Through this narrative of the mimetic encounter, Adorno is effectively offering an alternative philosophical anthropology, that is to say, a genealogical account of the normative conditions for the formation of human subjectivity. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is, of course, Adorno- and Max Horkheimer’s attempt at a genealogy of human rationality which is, for them, a history of that tragically culminates in the rise of a domineering relationship with nature and its objects: how “humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.”²³ This could be further dramatized through at least five scenarios which basically arise from a cognitive process grounded in fear: 1) the sorcerer and the demon, 2) the myth-making hero, 3) the rationalizing libertine, 4) the deluded consumer, and 5) the furious fascist.²⁴ By telling a story about the barbaric propensity of human rationality to dominate nature, Adorno and Horkheimer indicate that the primitive mimetic encounter of early humans with nature reemerges in modern society in the form of repressive ideologies—not just fascistic ideologies (e.g., Bolshevism or Nazism), but also systems such as capitalism.

With the above, we could read the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as an account of the pathogenesis of human domination which manifests today, I wish to add, in various systems of standardization (e.g., the tyranny of metrics), control (biopolitics), rabid populism, and contemporary forms of political tyranny. All these pathological conditions happening against the

²² See Theodor Adorno, “Subject and Object,” in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. by Brian O’Connor (MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 138-151.

²³ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (California: Stanford University Press, 2002), xiv.

²⁴ Cf. Karla L. Schultz, *Mimesis on the Move: Theodor W. Adorno’s Concept of Imitation* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1990), 15-59.

backdrop of the capitalist or neoliberal society—a society, Adorno and Horkheimer lament, “ruled by equivalence,” wherein dissimilar things are reduced “to abstract quantities.”²⁵ Society is profoundly reified, a condition rooted in the predominance of a technology of the self snafued by a pathological relation with the material world: a forgetfulness of the mimetic (somatic) origin of human reason. This forgetfulness, Adorno observes, is a form of usurpation of reason, “of something absolutely independent – which it is not; its claim of independence heralds the claim of dominance. Once radically parted from the object, the subject reduces it to its own measure; the subject swallows the object, forgetting how much it is an object itself.”²⁶ Adorno bemoans the fact that traditional philosophy—call either metaphysics or positivism—is guilty of this forgetfulness. Instead of the primacy of the object, traditional philosophy valorizes the “primacy of human reason.” Adorno insists that the only way philosophy could redeem itself is by a revaluation of its own language. Such revaluation, Adorno hopes, should bring philosophy to the utopian vision of “the state of distinctness without domination, with the distinct participating in each other.”²⁷ Adorno’s account of the subject-object dialectic demonstrates the occurrence of reification that results from the encounter between reason (language) and the non-identical material world.

The material (objective) world is the point of departure of Nietzsche and Adorno’s respective philosophies of language. Both philosophers reject the traditional epistemological claim that our cognitive apparatus has direct access to material reality. Rather, our cognitive link with material reality is merely mediatory, only possible through a metonymic (Nietzsche) or mimetic (Adorno) process. As such, the dynamics between worldview (subject) and world (object) is complex. Our forgetfulness of this complexity results in the reification of our cognitive apparatus, an outcome of what Adorno calls identity thinking. Reification or identity thinking is forgetful of the material-visceral foundation of human cognition, forgetful of the fact that our conceptualizations are based on our sensuous experiences.

The Ethics of Thinking and the Recovery of Experience

The “ethics of thinking” is a “kind of thinking that is receptive to the nonidentical character of the world of human and nonhuman objects.”²⁸ It is an emphatic rejection of the reificatory character of conceptual thinking.

²⁵ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4.

²⁶ Adorno, “Subject and Object,” 139-140.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁸ Paolo A. Bolaños, *Nietzsche and Adorno on Philosophical Praxis, Language, and Reconciliation: Towards and Ethics of Thinking* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 146.

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Roger Foster describes the overall thrust of Adorno's philosophical project as the "recovery of experience." The recovery of experience is a radical recovery from "the everyday work of habitual classification."²⁹ Foster further remarks:

... the recovery of experience must take the form of a type of process that uses the subject to 'break out' of the confinement that the role of the subject in cognition has come to resemble. Through the recovery of experience ... Adorno in fact claims to be able to reveal the truth about the constituting subject, that is, its origin in the self-constriction of the subject, which leads to the social-historical condition of disenchantment. In this way, the subject is able to come to a reflection on its own conditionedness.³⁰

Adorno describes conceptual reification as a form of "internalized captivity" wherein "the individual is no less imprisoned in himself than in the universal, in society."³¹ This internalized captivity is an impoverishment of experience, referred to by Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* as the "spell" of "the subjective form of the world spirit, the internal reinforcement of its primacy ... in its perversion, as impotent individualization ... the particular is dictated by the principle of perverted universality."³² This is the binding spell of the primacy of subject over the object, a perverted image of the subject's separation from material nature. Adorno further laments that this separation

... threatens the life of the species as much as it disavows the spell cast over the whole, the false identity of subject and object. The universal that compresses the particular until it splinters, like a torture instrument, is working against itself, for its substance is the life of the particular; without the particular, the universal declines to an abstract, separate, eradicable form.³³

²⁹ Roger Foster, *The Recovery of Experience* (New York: University of New York Press, 2007), 149, 151.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Adorno, "Subject and Object," 145.

³² Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1999), 244.

³³ *Ibid.*, 346.

This self-inwardization of subjectivity is the hostile attitude of humanity towards humanity, that is to say, “a denial of nature in the human being for the sake of mastery over extrahuman nature and over the other human beings.”³⁴ As discussed above, this is the story that Adorno and Horkheimer tell in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the story of the subterranean history of instrumental reason that began with the mimetic encounter with nature. However, the recovery of experience is not a return to our pre-mimetic state, but, rather, the renunciation of the virulent character of human reason via reason’s acknowledgment that it does not act entirely rationally every time. As Adorno points out: “The irrationality of the particularly realized *ratio* within the social totality is not extraneous to the *ratio*, not solely due to its application. Rather it is immanent to it. Measured by complete reason, the prevailing one unveils itself as being polarized and thus irrational even in itself, according to its principle.”³⁵ The irrationality of reason manifests, interestingly enough, in science, philosophy, and even politics. These are the spheres where the imperialism of reason reigns. Quite ironically, reason’s abdication from its irrationality is only possible when it begins to own its own irrationality. For Adorno, reason’s recognition of its own self-contradictoriness is the key in acknowledging the nonidentical character of things in the world; it is the recovery of experience because it discloses—albeit only metonymically or mimetically, “the utopian particular that has been buried underneath the universal.”³⁶ The disclosure of the utopian particular or acknowledging the primacy of the object is not the abandonment of reason; it is, rather, the reconciliation of reason with its material constitution, thereby making reason more robust. Adorno understands this reconciliation as the reorientation of reason back to the nonidentical givenness of the material object, but it is also the openness of the material object to concept since the “object, too, is mediated; but according to its own concept.”³⁷ In other words, the object too needs the subject because if “the object lacked the moment of subjectivity, its own objectivity would become nonsensical.”³⁸ “Cognitive utopia” is another description that Adorno uses to refer to the reconciliation of subject and object: the “use of concepts to unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal.”³⁹ Through cognitive utopia, the recovery of experience becomes more viable. More specifically, the recovery means giving back to the object its nonidentical integrity—a cognition via concepts sans the hypostatization of

³⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 42.

³⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 317.

³⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 318.

³⁷ Adorno, “Subject and Object,” 143.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 10.

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concepts. At this point, we could already say that the recovery of experience presupposes the mimetic conceptualization of the material world. The dynamo of experience is mimesis but, as shown above, the same dynamo could result in reification and, thus, arresting instead of empowering experience.

Epilogue: The Body and the Vulnerability of Philosophy

The body is the material basis for the reconciliatory dialectic between subject and object. The creation of a worldview is only possible through the body because we are situated within the world—spatiality and temporally—via our bodies. This is also the moment when Nietzsche and Adorno converge, as they both understand that consciousness proceeds from a unity of somatic forces. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche remarks that there “could be no judgments at all if a kind of equalization were not practiced within sensations ... Before judgment occurs, the process of assimilation must already have taken place ... as pain does as a consequence of a wound.”⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Adorno maintains that “body and mind are abstractions of their experience All mental things are modified physical impulses”⁴¹ Once again, both Nietzsche and Adorno reprove the idealist for neglecting the radically material origin of consciousness. As opposed to the idealist, Nietzsche and Adorno emphasize the primacy of the body (primacy of the object or the material world) over the mind. The mind is a byproduct of our dialectical encounter of the material world. Metaphysics or identity thinking separates the mind from its material origin, that is, from its bodily origin. Adorno frames this separation as a kind of alienation and, as such, as a forgetfulness of the mind’s somatic origin, it is the reason for of the mind’s “unhappiness.” Nevertheless, it is precisely this sense of alienation that becomes a reminder for the mind of the need for reconciling with its own materiality. In this sense, thinking or philosophy becomes self-reflexive. In other words, philosophy’s recognition of its very own vulnerability is key in redeeming its lost dignity. However, philosophy only remains dignified if it, indeed, becomes a constant struggle with itself, that is to say, a constant struggle with the possibility of conceptual reification.

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⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 352.

⁴¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 202-203.

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Nietzsche's Ethics of Danger¹

Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland

Abstract: In this paper, I elucidate Friedrich Nietzsche's ethics of danger as a development from an ethics of affirmation to posit a practical reading of his ethical theory. *Gay Science* 341 contains the hypothetical scenario of the eternal return, and the way this is interpreted redirects one's total reading of Nietzsche's philosophy. My argument is that there is a vulnerability latent in identifying one's response to the eternal return through exposing oneself to the danger implicit in this return; from simply affirming it, a more appropriate reaction I argue is the rage that is made explicit. This paper begins with the backdrop of our contemporary situation from the insights of Peter Sloterdijk and Nietzsche, followed by a review of Deleuze's ethics of affirmation. I present the latter to situate the difficulty of articulating its practicality in the face of such a cynical condition. The last section develops Nietzsche's ethics of danger. This I directly borrow from Tobias Kuehne, which I expound via other insights from Nietzsche's philosophy. As a whole, my discussion of his ethics of danger is my attempt to articulate his ethical theory in a practical sense, away from the probable security offered by affirmation.

Keywords: Nietzsche, eternal return, ethics of danger, vulnerability

Ethics is Nietzsche's most sustained philosophical contribution, not just due to his critique of morality but his overarching project of a reevaluation of values.² How this reevaluation is understood and to what

¹ Originally entitled "Nietzsche's Ethics of Danger and the Last Human's Cynicality," this manuscript is a revised version of my presentation during the *Continental Philosophy Symposium II: Deutsche Philosophie* of the UST Department of Philosophy last 12–13 November 2024. As a disclosure, part of this paper was previously published in Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland, "Humanity as the Will to Power: Affirmation and Danger in the Eternal Return," in *InCircolo - Rivista di Filosofia e Culture* 10 (2020), monographic issue on "Nietzsche the Humanist," 118–137, <<http://www.incolorivistafilesofica.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/InCircolo-n.10-6-Rennesland.pdf>>. However, the fuller arguments are found in this current manuscript since the previous manuscript contained only an overview of my assertions concerning how Nietzsche's philosophy may be read.

² See Simon Robertson, "Nietzsche's Ethical Reevaluation," in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 37 (Spring 2009), 66–90.

it is tied tremendously differs among commentators. Obvious though is the importance of traditional notions of God, truth, and virtue among others as these form the basis of his critique.³ Agreeing with Nietzsche that the eternal return is nihilism's most extreme form,⁴ the challenge that follows is for each to confront ourselves. This is central to Nietzsche's philosophy since, for Ansell-Pearson, life seeks not its preservation but overcoming.⁵ Walter Kaufmann states that the eternal return may be identified in four separate passages,⁶ and I would like to stress that the way the eternal return is interpreted within Nietzsche's philosophy, sheds light on how the entirety of his philosophy is read.

The connection between reading the eternal return and the rest of his philosophy is quite prominent in a number of thinkers. Some examples are as follows. Martin Heidegger is quite noted for framing the eternal return as a metaphysical doctrine that allowed people "to rethink Nietzsche's critical approach to the metaphysical question of being in light of temporality, becoming and difference."⁷ Doing so, Heidegger created an imprint of Being on the animated reality of becoming.⁸ Pierre Klossowski provides a different direction, emphasizing the necessity of willing therein.⁹ The subject for Klossowski necessarily wills not the present but all the choices that he

³ See Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (Hereinafter cited as NF) 1886,5[71], <[http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1886,5\[7\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1886,5[7])>.

⁵ See Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 49 and 109.

⁶ See Walter Kaufmann, Translator's Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 14. The four passages are: (1) GS III:109 "Let us beware. — [...] Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. [...] But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to "naturalize" humanity in terms of a pure newly discovered, newly redeemed nature? [...]"; (2) GS III:233: "The most dangerous point of view. — What I do or do not do now is as important for everything that is yet to come as is the greatest event of the past: in this tremendous perspective of effectiveness all actions appear equally great and small." (3) GS IV:285: "Excelsior. — [...] you resist any ultimate peace; you will the eternal recurrence of war and peace: you man of renunciation, all this you wish to renounce? Who will give you the strength for that? Nobody yet has had this strength! [...]" (4) GS IV:341: *The greatest weight*. (This passage I explain in the succeeding section.

⁷ Sang Won Lee, "Facing the Lively Unity of Difference: Heidegger's Thoughts on Nietzsche's Philosophy of Eternal Return and the Self-Overcoming Power of Thinking," in *Human Studies*, 45 (2022), 223–241, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-022-09620-y>>.

⁸ See Bevis E. McNeil, "Heidegger's Interpretation of Nietzsche's Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence," in *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55296-1_3>.

⁹ See Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Cycle*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 57.

formerly embraced to bring oneself to that point of the return, and tied to this is the importance of forgetting both the event and the return to allow the movement's circular nature to essentially occur. Gilles Deleuze argues the imperative nature of the return akin to a practical rule of reason in the manner of Kant's own moral imperative.¹⁰ Affirmation is important in Deleuze's reading as a fundamental aspect required to overcome the reactivity of forces.¹¹ It comes therefore as no surprise that an individual's creativity takes center stage in the eventual readings of Nietzsche's ethics and the entirety of his philosophy.¹²

These different readings provide an idea of the conflicting interpretations of Nietzsche's ethics (and philosophy as a whole) and conversely such theoretical discussions suggest neither the possibility for a personal adherence nor a practical application. However, what I see vital is a way to understand Nietzsche's ethical challenge—as how I would like to frame it—in the context of how we may make sense of it not as a theoretical musing but as an existential and practical consideration.

What I intend in this paper is to provide a different reading of Nietzsche's ethics grounded on the very experience of danger, arguing that such a disposition is ultimately what is enclosed in the eternal return passage. This paper begins with the backdrop of our contemporary situation from the insights of Peter Sloterdijk and Friedrich Nietzsche, followed by a review of Deleuze's ethics of affirmation. I present this view of Nietzsche's ethics to show the difficulty of articulating its practicality in the face of such a cynical condition. The last section then develops Nietzsche's ethics of danger. I directly borrow this from Tobias Kuehne, yet my discussion expounds this via other insights from Nietzsche's philosophy. As a whole, my discussion of his ethics of danger is my attempt to articulate his ethical theory in a practical sense.

An Ethics of Affirmation in Our Current Predicament

I begin this paper with a characterization of our contemporary culture, forming the backdrop for testing Nietzsche's ethical theory:

¹⁰ See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum Press, 1983), 68.

¹¹ See Michael Chiddo, "Unwritten Futures: Deleuze, Affirmation, and Creative Becoming," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 36:1 (2022), 87–104, <<https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.36.1.0087>>.

¹² See Alessandro Tomasi, "Nihilism and Creativity in the Philosophy of Nietzsche," in *Minerva: An Internet Journal of Philosophy*, 11 (2007), 153–183, <<http://www.minerva.mic.ul.ie/vol11/Nietzsche.pdf>> and Philip John Puszczalowski, "Creativity, Culture, and Genius: Nietzsche's Ethics of the Creative Life" (PhD Dissertation, University of Calgary, Canada, 2016).

What could in fact expire now, what deserves to come to an end, is the period in which a certain rationalist skepticism was able to emerge as a dogmatic power. Under its reign, there was an abundant multiplication of metaphysically unmusical and religiously illiterate people, cooped up in the prefabricated constructions of despiritualization. Unfortunately today we must often count the universities, too, among these constructions— together with their philosophy departments.¹³

Peter Sloterdijk illustrates here our society's cynicism. I wish to read his words in relation to Nietzsche's own insight, telling us that "if modern man had any courage or resolution at all, if he were not merely a subjective creature even in his enmities, he would banish philosophy[.]"¹⁴ Reading these two passages together, one may surmise how Nietzsche's words gain an imperative stature against the backdrop of Sloterdijk's characterization. There is a latent danger if the institutions that that ought to spark critical thought might be the very peddlers that hinder the cultivation of such.¹⁵ The danger that presses upon us is that perhaps behind the guise of a theory that is critical of society, we are in fact further promulgating society's decadent conditions. I propose a viable way forward using Nietzsche's philosophy. He notes the German hostility toward the Enlightenment, outlining their emphasis on primitive sensibilities as they "sought to restore the idea of a divine or diabolical nature suffused with ethical and symbolic significance."¹⁶ What Nietzsche identifies here is the emphasis given to emotion (instead of reason) as a reaction to the Enlightenment. Similarly, against the backdrop of a society that seems to have usurped the critical role of reason, an ethical view viable for our context today takes a similar route.

To discuss this further, I draw attention to the last man's condition of which Zarathustra provides a caricature. I agree with Haroon Sheikh's reading, following Francis Fukuyama, that the last man is a figure of the

¹³ Peter Sloterdijk, *After God*, trans. by Ian Alexander Moore (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 206

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazealy, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 85.

¹⁵ In another piece, I dwelt on this more and provided a polemic on how there are certain conditions, particularly within the Philippine academe, that might hinder the flourishing of critical thought in the non-Western context. See Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland, "The Challenge of Non-Western Discourse in Education: A Polemic on Alternative Discourses," in *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 26:3, Special Issue on Philosophy and Education (October 2025): 541–560, <<https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.26.3.a.10>>.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 117.

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thymotic drive's absence.¹⁷ The last man in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a personification of a life of utmost bliss, however, his happiness is forged due to a nonchalant experience of modernity. Mark Alfano aptly captures this:

[The last human] has no sense of wonder or curiosity to transfix him with rapt attention; instead, even his inquiries into love, creation, longing and the universe are accompanied by 'blinking'. The last man is overly familiar with people, things and concepts that should only be approached with reverence and terror.¹⁸

The last human trivializes events that ought to have been moments for a reevaluation. This is what is meant by promoting the virtue that makes small.¹⁹ This type of existence in fact is a return to the cynical condition with which I began this section; the last man "blinks, passively going along with life" just as "the easygoing modern individual who spends his time watching television, chatting with friends, and clocking into his job. His life may not be thrilling, but it's also not horrific."²⁰ He does so as a product of cowardice propelled by resentment and brands it as a virtue, fostering a life of mediocrity and envy. This affective experience (or the actual lack thereof) makes life's deep moments shallow and produces lukewarm individuals in the face of the passions. Reading Nietzsche's characterization of the last man, what is striking is the latter's repetitive blinking. Such an action may be considered as an escape from the tragic and a desire to speed up the necessary dialectic movements in life. The last human's repetition is manufactured and not organic. This individual stands as reason's inability to properly act according to one's environment, simply opting for damage control than attempting serious change or, better put, the absence of a *natural* engagement with one's situation. It is a life that has effaced the confrontation of forces within, that has silenced the various drives, that has resigned to "a new small happiness" with the word *new* simply an embellishment for the present just masked to *seem* new.²¹ This last human stands as a reminder of the comforts offered by maintaining the status quo, far from the vulnerability of what life

¹⁷ See Haroon Sheikh, "Nietzsche and the Neoconservatives: Fukuyama's Reply to the Last Man," in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 35/36 (Spring–Autumn 2008), 31.

¹⁸ Mark Alfano, "A Schooling in Contempt: Emotions and the Pathos of Distance," in Paul Katsafanas (ed.), *The Nietzschean Mind* (London: Routledge, 2018), 126.

¹⁹ See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 133–137.

²⁰ Paul Katsafanas, "The Fanatic and the Last Man," in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 53:2 (Autumn 2022), 146.

²¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 135.

entails, of the dangers latent in the eternal return. Life is affirmed yet under the pretext of the modern, cynical condition.

Against this backdrop, I intend to make sense of Nietzsche's ethics, particularly of the possibility of putting his thoughts into action, something I find more viable in my presentation of his ethics of danger in contradistinction to the ethics of affirmation. Yet, necessary first is a review of this reading. Gilles Deleuze maintains a poststructuralist reading of Nietzsche's philosophy, and this way of reading the thinker had a lasting effect upon his own way of philosophizing, something evident even in his later works.²² What is prominent in his Nietzschean reading is the importance of the quantity of forces and the active and reactive qualities.²³ The active force or drive is the desiring of power not in the social Darwinian sense but as the creation of the conditions that affirm existence most expressed in Nietzsche's eternal return.²⁴ In fact, life's perspectival consideration is ultimately brought to the fore when Deleuze equates the human person to that of affirmation.²⁵ The role of affirmation here is the avoidance of "the chain of negation and reproduction through opposition"²⁶ to *ressentiment* and nihilism as opposed to nihilism and is the very experience of the transvaluation of values qua the will to power.²⁷

For Deleuze—supposedly following the theme of philosophizing from Hegel onward—anthropology and ontology form an admixture that cannot easily be separated, and reading his work on Nietzsche leaves one a bit perplexed with how the human person (and Nietzsche's philosophy for that matter) seems to be that open to the role of gambling or wagering. Deleuze cites Nietzsche's own usage of a dice throw to illustrate the outcome of the eternal return.²⁸ Highlighted playfully by Deleuze, the subject of Nietzsche's eternal return is a gambler, and the wage is how life is lived and is to be lived. To win this gamble means not to predict the winning combination but to affirm such a throw. To further explain this, it would be best to turn our attention to the eternal return, better illustrated through

²² See James Mollison, "Deleuze's Nietzschean Mutations: From the Will to Power and the Overman to Desiring-Production and Nomadism," in *Deleuze and Guattari Studies*, 16:3 (2022): 428–453, <<https://doi.org/10.3366/dlgs.2022.0485>>.

²³ See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 40ff. and Petra Perry, "Deleuze's Nietzsche," in *boundary 2*, 20:1 (Spring 1993), 175, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/303181>>.

²⁴ Deleuze (and Guattari) brings together Nietzsche and Bergson in his own philosophy later on. Desire becomes a central concern for Deleuze that serves as an indication of what ought to be selected in the return and is created. See Perry, "Deleuze's Nietzsche," 188.

²⁵ See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 183.

²⁶ Perry, "Deleuze's Nietzsche," 179. *Ressentiment* is taken here in its ability to frame elements in reactive oppositional pairs akin to the valuation of the slaves in opposition to that of the masters in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*.

²⁷ See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 71.

²⁸ See *Ibid.*, footnote 23, 202.

Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* since according to the author himself the elementary idea of this very book is the eternal return.²⁹ The eternal return may be likened to the return of chance; we are left with a choice to throw the dice once more, and this throw affirms the necessity. And Deleuze's reference is Zarathustra, who expresses his love for those who play fairly: "I love the one who is ashamed when the dice fall to his fortune and who then asks: am I a cheater?—For he wants to perish."³⁰ The experience that Zarathustra emphasizes here is not the glory of winning but the very embarrassment when one suddenly does since Zarathustra is not like a scholar who plays with "loaded dice" that always favor the individual.³¹ Rather he is a player who opens himself to every possibility of the dice throw.

Deleuze elaborates this further by saying, "It will be replied, in vain, that thrown to chance, the dice do not necessarily produce the winning combination, the double six which brings back the dice throw. This is true, but only insofar as the player did not know how to *affirm* chance from the outset."³² Indeed, players have no knowledge of the outcome of any throw and knowing such invalidates the entire process. Affirmation enters in the very selection of affirming the *chance* of that specific potential outcome. The specificity given to chance is identical in any illustration: the result of the dice throw (craps or hazard), the highest combination of five cards (poker), a hand's proximity to 21 (blackjack) or to nine (baccarat), which pocket the ball falls into (roulette), or ultimately the possible combinations on the screen (slots). For this reason, Zarathustra praises the player who does not rejoice when fortune has favored him. *Maybe the game is rigged?* This is a question that might come one way when suddenly a win is achieved or when a series of wins is experienced.

The reason behind this argument is that winning without doubt resembles the lack of a struggle. Tragedy must necessarily arise in order to create opportunities for nihilism to flourish amidst destructive and creative forces. Returning to Deleuze, affirmation is understood from another perspective:

To affirm is still to evaluate, but to evaluate from the
perspective of a will which enjoys its own difference in
life instead of suffering the pains of the opposition to this

²⁹ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What you Are*, 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), 123.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, trans. by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

³² Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 26.

life that it has itself inspired. *To affirm is not to take responsibility for, to take on the burden of what is, but to release, to set free what lives.* To affirm is to unburden: not to load life with the weight of higher values, but *to create* new values which are those of life, which make life light and active. There is creation, properly speaking, only insofar as we make use of excess in order to invent new forms of life rather than separating life from what it can do.³³

The human individual for him affirms oneself, similar to the child's affirmation of life in Nietzsche's three metamorphoses. It is the child that takes central stage and not the other characters since the camel rushes into the desert (affirmation in the serve of negation) and the lion negates itself (negation as a power of affirmation).³⁴ The child stands out because of its capability to embody the Dionysian *Yes* and its ability to remain open to struggle and to create. What is ultimately affirmed in the return is that of an active life, and Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche constructs an ethical test of character whether to affirm life and to what degree of affirmation. As I have pointed out, both the camel and the lion affirm, the former though a caricature of what the latter does yet both lack the creative capacity of the child. In sum, the eternal return in the form of life's affirmation takes place at two distinct tables with their respective dice throws: "The dice which are thrown once are the affirmation of *chance*, the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of *necessity*."³⁵ Deleuze thus brings together chance and necessity in reading Nietzsche's ethics.

A difficulty in this reading of Nietzsche's ethics is contained by the very idea of Nietzsche's eternal return as "the selection of the active life, leaving behind the reactive life" since in "the 'thought' of the eternal return, the one who is 'able to will' wills or 'selects' life[.]"³⁶ Against the backdrop of contemporary society, as figured above, it is quite challenging to simply have the outlook of life's affirmation. Although Nietzsche's ethics is widely regarded as a view that centers on power and strength, the very practicality of this purview of affirmation is obvious in that it only is appropriate to those who have the capacity to select or to will, those whose spirit is strong enough to affirm necessity and chance. Yet, honestly, we ought to consider the situation in which we do not possess such a disposition: is Nietzsche's ethics

³³ *Ibid.*, 185.

³⁴ See *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁵ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 26.

³⁶ Paolo A. Bolaños, *On Affirmation and Becoming: A Deleuzian Introduction to Nietzsche's Ethics and Ontology* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 46.

still worth considering? I want to answer this positively, but doing so seems unfeasible via an ethics of affirmation.

Ethics of danger

Coming from the reading above, this section moves beyond it by focusing on the importance of danger for a more practical understanding of Nietzsche's ethics. The way I want to frame Nietzsche's ethics is through the danger that is present in our lives, something that Tobias Kuehne identifies in Nietzsche's philosophy. Kuehne attempts to construct a coherent reading of Nietzsche's ethics around the idea of danger. This he identifies in the early works in Nietzsche's confrontation with tragedy and the creation of seeming archetypes (the Rousseauian, the Goethean, and the Schopenhauerian) of the danger of succumbing to shortcomings or achieving one's full potential.³⁷ Likewise, the free spirit in the middle works embodies danger in relation to "established dogmas by incessantly trying to dismantle metaphysics" and also "their underlying assumptions of constancy (*HH* I:21), the applicability of generals to particulars (*HH* I:19), the separateness of identities (*HH* I:1), and truth as correspondence (*HH* I:11)."³⁸ What is essential to this reading of Nietzsche's ethics is danger's significance, which Kuehne identifies as an understudied aspect of his philosophy.

To better understand this, it is imperative to ascertain the role of danger here. Danger is the "threat of unexpected decline, dissolution, or the destruction of a previously stable structure[,] and that "it is only in this dangerous space that a *genuine* ethics can even emerge for him."³⁹ On the one hand, Kuehne characterizes the experience of nihilism in which the very structure of one's own valuation devalues itself, leaving the individual in a desperate state of exhaustion;⁴⁰ while on the other, an intimation of Nietzschean philosophy in spatial term is suggested through the *dangerous space* he describes from which ethics may emerge. These two aspects I identify in the fourth instance of the eternal return:

The heaviest weight. — What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you

³⁷ See Tobias Kuehne, "Nietzsche's Ethics of Danger," in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 49:1 (Spring 2018), 87, <<https://doi.org/10.5325/jnietstud.49.1.0078>>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

⁴⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. by Rüdiger Bittner, trans. by Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 146 and Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 11.

will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?⁴¹

As I mentioned in the introduction, the way the eternal return passage is interpreted directs how one reads the entirety of Nietzsche’s philosophy. What must be immediately clear in reading this passage is that Nietzsche presents the eternal return not to soothe the distress caused by nihilism but the very obverse. An understandable consequence of this is the experience of nihilism, and it is precisely because of this that Nietzsche presents the eternal return to exacerbate it in the hope not of an absolute affirmation—which might be the expected or assumed outcome—but actually to constantly expose oneself to this vital realization.⁴² He seeks to

⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. by Bernard Williams, trans. by Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 193–194.

⁴² Above, I mentioned how Deleuze has a binary reading of life between affirmation and negation, manifested respectively as active and reactive forces. However, there is a need to go beyond this binary distinction (See Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), note 24, 154). For Deleuze, it is solely the masters who were affirmative in the proper sense through their descriptive valuation while the slaves were reactive, inverting the valuations from descriptive (good-bad) to evaluative (good-evil). Yet, in this mythical account, Nietzsche suggests an interbreeding among nobles and slaves, making life a constant tug between active and reactive forces, which he penned elsewhere as the “hybrid mixed man of Europe” as the person of modern ideas and dressed up in a classical or Christian attire. See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 87 and 113–114. Any sense of the pureness of valuation is impossible, and tied to this, an impossibility of a consistent Deleuzian reading of Nietzsche’s

aggravate such an emotion by forcing us to confront ourselves, seeking not the experience's preservation but its overcoming.⁴³ Aligned to this is Kuehne's characterization of nihilism that locates the individual in a desperate state of exhaustion. The eternal return is a terrifying idea—the section aptly titled *the heaviest weight*—as we understand the gravity of this idea more. The return is revealed to no other person but our very self; the return's success rests ultimately on one's capacity to make sense of it and to pay attention to what indeed returns eternally—especially those that are most trivial.⁴⁴ It is not simply the return of spectacular events but even those that are most mundane.

Anyone reading this passage of the eternal return might immediately focus on the first half, i.e., the demon's message, but I argue that more attention should be given to the remaining part of the passage. Nietzsche illustrates here two specific responses to the eternal return's message. The first is when the individual would “throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon” while the second is an answer to the demon, “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine!” I contend that the more appropriate response is the first in that the second presents a latent form of veneration not of the eternal return's very message but of the messenger. The thought of the return changes or destroys an individual, and if one ought to realize the destruction of one's own hollow ideas, the proper response is not to treat the messenger as a new deity but rather to be enraged by this greatest weight of departing from one's own godhead.

For this reason, I position this enraged attitude further away from the reading of Nietzsche's ethics as one of affirmation and more properly as an ethics of danger or of being vulnerable to such. The reason is quite straightforward: *affirmation* today is a buzzword in popular culture, engulfed by contemporary slogans such as *#DailyAffirmation* that proliferate on social media. Affirmation is taken on as motivational, a manifestation (in the sense of the word's current usage in social media) of better things, falsely equated to sheer bliss and the eradication of pain that reduces affirmation to a static

philosophy vis-à-vis actual lived experiences. For Deleuze, Nietzsche challenges each to become affirmative in facing life since the contrary is what characterizes the current nihilistic and decadent age and what is more common. Instead of affirmation, the forces' reactivity abounds, caused not through the power of the reactive will but due to the will's contagion and the triumph of reactivity over activity with life's reduction to adaptation and regulation (See Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: MIT Press, 2001), 75).

⁴³ See Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 116–121 and Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 49 and 109.

⁴⁴ See Henri Lefebvre, *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, or, The Realm of Shadows*, trans. by David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2020), 173–174. I find this insight from Lefebvre quite remarkable, obvious in Nietzsche's mention of “this spider and this moonlight between the trees” and the shift of the message to “and even this moment and I myself.”

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.a3>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/rennesland_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330



state. Yet, Nietzsche reminds us that life is most dangerous when things go easy for us,⁴⁵ and I add, when we want things to just be easy for us. I argue that this wrong sense of equivalence totalizes entertainment as society's defining character.⁴⁶ This causes the eternal return to be a caricature of self-help pamphlets that unknowingly reiterate Nietzsche's very words—"What doesn't kill me makes me stronger."⁴⁷—and invokes a cynical approach akin to moderation than a surplus of indulgence.⁴⁸ I argue that Nietzsche presents the eternal return to exacerbate any idols remaining in one's mind, not to throw humanity into despair but to push toward an embrace of danger.

Turning to the second aspect, the spatial dimension is disclosed as the eternal return begins with the demon chasing one to his loneliest loneliness. This depiction that brings together emotion and space is the stillest hour when the demon announces the noontide of the idols' de-deification and where that individual is most vulnerable. The experience of vulnerability signifies a missing aspect of our lives or something unfulfilled.⁴⁹ Vulnerability is an essential aspect of an ethics of danger, and the eternal return makes one vulnerable to the past—to the inability to change what has transpired—yet it also makes one vulnerable to the future, to what still *can* and *will* happen. This futural vulnerability opens us to the possibility of changing ourselves in a radical sense to the point that "we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we have to misunderstand ourselves."⁵⁰ This vulnerability ought to make us strangers to ourselves instead of merely affirming who we are since the futural aspect makes us realize the impossibility to return to antique virtue as reigning morality is proven false.⁵¹ One is chased by the demon toward one's utmost solitude, wherein we are strangers to ourselves. It is here where we confront ourselves of who we are and how we have been living. As a consequence of this encounter, the

⁴⁵ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), §266, 276

⁴⁶ See Byung-Chul Han, *Good Entertainment: A Deconstruction of the Western Passion Narrative*, trans. by Adrian Nathan West (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019), §10.

⁴⁷ Cf. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 157 and Doug Waterman, "The Story Behind the Song: Kelly Clarkson, "Stronger"," in *American Songwriter* (updated 18 October 2021), <<https://americansongwriter.com/stronger-kelly-clarkson-behind-the-song/>>.

⁴⁸ See Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time: A Psychopolitical Investigation*, trans. by Mario Wenning (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 16.

⁴⁹ See Justin Remhof, "Nietzsche on Loneliness, Self-Transformation, and the Eternal Recurrence," in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 49:2 (2018), 195, <<https://philarchive.org/archive/REMNOL>>.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morality*, 3.

⁵¹ See Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 67–72.

individual is compelled to “grow more *honest towards oneself*.”⁵² Honesty might be considered a peculiar trait in Nietzschean philosophy, considering the enormous premium given to questioning truth, yet this is providentially a key aspect in Kuehne's reading of Nietzsche's ethics.

Kuehne underscores the connection between the free spirit's experience of danger and its “defining characteristic is his unswerving commitment to intellectual honesty (*Redlichkeit*), that is, his commitment not to deceive others or himself.”⁵³ An individual's honesty is tied to the truth about oneself as a human person away from its own animality⁵⁴ that is believed in or communicated. Yet what is the message that one ought to be honest about? I answer this by turning to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in which Nietzsche says “was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, dass er ein Übergang und ein Untergang ist.”⁵⁵ This sentence has been rendered differently in the English publications, primarily depending on how the pairs *Übergang/Übergehen* and *Untergang/Untergehen* are translated. What can be loved in man is that he is “a *transition* and a *destruction*” (Alexander Tille, 1896), “an over-going and a down-going” (Thomas Common in 1909), “an overture and a going under” (Walter Kaufmann, 1954), “a going-across and a down-going” (R.J. Hollingdale in 1961), “a transition and a sunset” (Stanley Appelbaum in 2004), “an over-going and a going under” (Clancy Martin in 2005), “a going-over and a going-under” (Graham Parkes in 2005), and “a *crossing over* and a *going under*” (Adrian del Caro in 2006).⁵⁶

The more poetic renditions of *Übergang* as Kaufmann's *overture*, Tille's and Appelbaum's *transition* and *Untergang* as Tille's *destruction* exhibit more the tensions within the human person. Each individual, in all of one's

⁵² 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), 102–103.

⁵³ Kuehne, “Nietzsche's Ethics of Danger,” 92.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche suggests a rupture between the human person and its evolutionary past (§31), associating our errors in moral judgement to such an animal past (§102) and suggests the human person's ultimate deanimalization (§106). See Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 23, 59, and 107.

⁵⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), 12.

⁵⁶ Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Alexander Tille (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), <<https://archive.org/details/thusspakezaralt00nietuoft/page/n4/mode/2up>>; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Thomas Common (Munich: Doppeltext, 1909); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1966); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Classics, 1961); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Stanley Appelbaum (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Clancy Martin (New York: Barnes&Nobles Classics, 2005); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). All emphases maintained.

greatness, is a crossing-over similar to a rope tied between animal and the *Übermensch*.⁵⁷ An individual person is a going across, a crossing over, a transition to reach the *Übermensch*. *Übergang* literally translates as above-going—going beyond/across or passing by or over—thus signifying a form of transition or migration, a crosswalk or even a checkpoint. The human person is a wanderer who tackles nature experimentally.⁵⁸ We ourselves are inklings of the greatness to come—an introduction to this future, an invitation to become it, and an opening to its eventual realization. We travel to realize this, and the journey requires a form of ignorance that requires a need to forget or to set certain things aside that would hinder such a voyage.

Conversely, *Untergang* is literally translated as under- or down going that conveys destruction, decline, and ruin through the symbolism of the setting sun. It is the dusk that anticipates not just twilight but also the eventual daybreak. It is against this backdrop that we ought to understand how the metaphorical translations of Tille and Appelbaum, either as *destruction* or *sunset*, convey the sense of being one's very own cause of destruction, and destruction is necessary to create a new type of morality and to transition to higher states. While the above translation would point to how the human person is ultimately an overture of one's capacities, one realizes at the same time that this likewise discloses our very failures and weaknesses. The terror that awaits each at the noontide of morality's revaluation is this very realization of the truth of who we are. We are inklings of the greatness to come but also of our ultimate destruction depending on how we react to the conditions we find ourselves in.⁵⁹

I assert that this is the realization when one is in that loneliest loneliness. It is where and when one fathoms how one is one's own destruction. To put it in spatial terms, the realization of the death of any reactive ontology is the realization of the emptiness of the person's interior. It is an emptiness in lieu of the presence of a dogmatic center or directive ideal. This emptiness causes an individual's life journey to constantly experience further threats of any value's sudden decline or devaluation. At the same time, however, this realization of destruction is likewise an overture of greatness: the individual has the capacity to live as a free spirit, having broken free from nihilism and striving not to be subjected by any imposing ideal. This condition is what is offered by the child at the end of the

⁵⁷ See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 7.

⁵⁸ See Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 185.

⁵⁹ A provocative idea Nietzsche provides in §452 of *Daybreak*. He figures how impatience leads both the active and contemplative individual to act, leading them to a terrain antithetical to their original position. The journey changes the individual, and an initial defect makes them into a genius. See Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 190.

metamorphosis,⁶⁰ embodying an innocence to play the game of life anew. Through such an ordeal, one is led to actively forget the present and embrace a second innocence of becoming by accepting the whole of reality albeit maintaining a healthy skepticism of the whole.⁶¹ The challenge of the eternal return stands as a test of a sort for this sort of practice allowing a view of what it means to be fully human without any dichotomy.⁶² It is a challenge to become a child of second innocence and to love the world anew, seeing the world afresh similar to Zarathustra's perilous descent from the cave.

Concluding Remarks

In discussing the last man, Paul Katsafanas raises a thought-provoking question, "Why not simply go along with things and enjoy what life brings to you? Why not take it easy?"⁶³ This is the persistent question in our society today. My argument is that what we ultimately need is not simply an affirmation of life but a realization of how replete with danger it is. The shift from affirmation to danger in this paper is to further an understanding of goodness in Nietzsche's philosophy as not a teleological end but "is expressed through the movement of becoming itself."⁶⁴ The eventual test of strength in Nietzsche's philosophy is not the degree to which we are able to fashion our own ideals and live in peace but our capacity to bear the unfortunate experiences that are experienced alongside the favorable ones — and to will their return. One gains strength not through the avoidance of these errors but through their confrontation. The failure of Nietzsche's ethics is when an individual is unable to overcome the experience of the return or, to follow Deleuze's image earlier, fails to learn how to play the game. Yet, one's focus is not simply of the affirmation of chance and necessity but how these experiences make one precisely vulnerable.

In face of the crudest form of nihilism through the eternal return, Nietzsche situates the experience when one is compelled to confront oneself and makes the decision: Am I willing to play this game again? Am I willing to lose? What am I willing to give up to play again if it is to return? Lastly, if the Eternal Return is indeed to be taken seriously, one ought to become someone entirely new because of the dangers one is exposed to in such a game. The game is the same but entirely new, and one constantly needs to

⁶⁰ See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 16–17.

⁶¹ See Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 109.

⁶² See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 267–269 and *Daybreak*, 304.

⁶³ Katsafanas, "The Fanatic and the Last Man," 146.

⁶⁴ Alex Obrigewitsch, "Nietzsche's Ethics of the Future: Creative Valuation and the Life of Self-Development," in *The Agonist*, 13:1–2 (Fall 2019), 88, <<https://doi.org/10.33182/agon.v13i2.1667>>.

open up to the dangers associated with this wager. To be open to the dangers laid out is not something one should shy away from but should accept fully—after all, we get our complete bliss when we are in most danger.⁶⁵

Against the backdrop of a society that seems to embrace if not further strengthen its cynical condition, Nietzsche's ethics of danger stands as a viable way forward. What is more fruitful is to learn how to make oneself more vulnerable to the return, rather than a mere affirmation of the experience presented to us by the eternal return. The challenge of the eternal return ought to make us more truthful to ourselves of how either our destruction or perfection lies in our own hands, and how we respond in the face of this return—either by affirming this new deity or the affective display of rage—determines how vulnerable we have made ourselves to the challenge. My argument in this paper was through the specific realization of how the ultimate challenge of the return is the experience of vulnerability, and that the ethical challenge serves its purpose when it allows us to experience what it means to become vulnerable to our previous actions and make us vulnerable to any further ones. In a practical sense, society's cynicism proliferates because of the lack of any sense of vulnerability and our constant truth-telling activity. This translates to the need to experience the rage prompted by realizing how our decadent conditions are caused by none other than ourselves. Yet at the same time, its change lies in our hands. Instead of simply affirming my condition, allowing myself to experience how vulnerable I am to what is happening creates a clearer situation in which I am drawn to select and act for myself and my overcoming.

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⁶⁵ See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 116.

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Tungkol sa Intelektwalismo at Demokrasya: Isang Alternatibong Pagbása sa Pilosopiya ni Edith Stein

Jovito V. Cariño

Abstract: Immanuel Kant's *What is Enlightenment?* is well known for its challenge to the reading public to dare to think. Contrary to Kant's expectations, however, the same intellectual autonomy he advocated would itself become a contributing factor to the crisis of intellectualism which plagues democracy today. Once detached from its moorings in the dynamics of community life and reduced to mere expression of individual preference, thinking on one's own could, in the long run, turn against itself and unwittingly sow the seeds of thoughtlessness. The contemporary phenomenon of populism has these pathological features. In a way, populism may be traced to the culture of liberalism espoused by Kant and Enlightenment with their insistence on thinking as a fundamentally individual undertaking. When members of a society recognize no other norm for thinking except their particular whims or biases, the result is a populist environment with its attendant malaise, that is, anti-intellectualism or the failure of an individual to reckon the larger context of thinking practice. This paper addresses this problem via Edith Stein's theory of empathy. It argues that empathy could provide an alternative paradigm for thinking which could mitigate the problem of anti-intellectualism in contemporary democracy.

Keywords: Stein, anti-intellectualism, democracy, populism

Dalawang uri ng repleksyon ang inihahain ng papel na ito. Una, ang politikal na repleksyon sa pilosopiya ni Edith Stein kaugnay ng intelektwalismo; pangalawa, ang pilosopikal na repleksyon sa kasalukuyang politikal na kalagayan ng bansâ gamit ang ilang ideya ni Stein. Magsisimulâ ang repleksyong ito sa palagay na bagaman malaki ang naging ambag sa modernang politika ng Ilustrasyon na itinampok ni Immanuel Kant, may kinalaman din ito sa pag-usbong ng mga patolohiyang patuloy na nagpapahinà dito. Isa sa patolohiyaang bibigyan ko ng pansin ay walâng iba

kundî ang penomenon ng anti-intelektwalismo. Tinutukoy ko sa salitang “anti-intelektwalismo” ang lumulubhang pagbabâ, kung hindi man tuloyang pagkawalâ ng makabulohang pampublikong diskurso sa pagitan ng mga pangunahing ahente ng politika, ang mga mamamayan. Sa kanyang panahon, sinubokang tugonan ni Kant ang problema ng anti-intelektwalismo sa pamamagitan ng kanyang panawagan na “mangahas mag-isip” na mababâsa sa sanaysay na *What is Enlightenment?*¹ Itinuturing ang nasabing sanaysay bilang manifesto para sa indibidwal na kalayâan ng tao na siyang sentro ng modernong politika at modernong etika na kinakatawan ng terminong “liberalismo.” Liberalismo ang naging marka ng kanluraning politika mulâ ikalabingwalong siglo hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Liberalismo rin ang tinitingnang dinamo ng sistemang politikal na kilala natin sa tawag na “demokrasya.” Dahil sa liberalismo, mas naitanyag ang kalayâan ng tao na magsalitâ sampû ng iba pang mga karapatang pantao, partikular ang karapatan na pumili at maghalal ng mga mamumunò sa gobyerno. Unang pumasok ang ideyolohiya ng liberalismo sa bansâ noong ikalabingsiyam na siglo sa pamamagitan ng mga sulatin ng mga tagapagsulong ng Ilustrasyon, ang mga ilustrado, sa pangunguna ni Jose Rizal.² Sa mga ilustrado, si Rizal ang masasabing may pinakamalinaw at pinakamalapit na kaugnayan sa intelektwal na kultura ng mga Aleman,³ dahilan kung bakit sa kanyang pangalawang pagbalik sa bansâ, pinaghinalaan pa si Rizal ng mga frayle at gobyernong Kastilâ na isang espiya ng Alemanya.⁴ Gayonman, sa kabilâ ng pagsisikap ni Rizal, hindi nagbunga ang politika ng liberalismo na kanyang ikinampanya. Mababâsa kay Hegel ang paliwanag kung bakit. Ayon sa kanyang akdang *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, tunay na magiging malayâ raw ang isang indibidwal sa loob lámang ng isang matatag na estado.⁵ Ang

¹ Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*, trans. by Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992), <https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/kant_what_is_enlightenment.pdf>.

² Tingnan Lisandro E. Claudio, *Jose Rizal: Liberalism and the Paradox of Coloniality* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

³ Itinuturing ni Rizal ang Aleman bilang “my scientific mother country.” Tingnan Resil B. Mojares, “Jose Rizal and the Birth of the Social Sciences in the Philippines,” in *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*, 16:2, (2012), 30–41. Tingnan din Ramon Guillermo, *Translation and Revolution: A Study of Jose Rizal’s Guillermo Tell* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009); Nathaniel Parker Weston, *Specters of Germany: Colonial Rivalry and Scholarship in the Philippine Reform Movement and Revolution* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2021), 157–190.

⁴ Jose Rizal, “Rizal’s Letter to Blumentritt (54), Calamba, 5 September 1887,” sa *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence, Volume I* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 135–136. Tingnan din Bryan Anthony C. Paraiso, “Jose Rizal, suspected spy, deciphered,” in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (22 May 2011), <<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/7951/jose-rizal-suspected-spy-deciphered>>.

⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by T.M. Knox (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 235–236.

problema natin sa Pilipinas, mulâ nang dumating ang modernong politika sa bansâ noong ikalabingsiyam ng siglo hanggang sa kasalukuyan, hindi pa natin nasasaksihan o nararanasan kung paano magkaroon ng isang tunay na estado, ibig sabihin, isang estado na matatag at tunay na may soberenya.⁶ Nakarating nga sa atin ang modernong politika ng Ilustrasyon ngunit ang ating mismong politikal na kamalayan ay nanatiling nakakulong sa mga bakod ng kanya-kanyang barangay, tribo, angkan at rehiyon. Kasaysayan na ang nagpatunay sa atin na ang liberalismong hindi nakaangkla sa isang matibay na estado ay nagiging punlâan lámang ng populismo.⁷ Ang populismo ay hindi pruweba ng demokrasya kundî patolohiya ng demokrasya at ang lunas dito, gaya ng ipinapanukalâ nitong papel, ay hindi radikalisyong demokrasya kundî radikalisyong ng mismong politika. Pinili kong sipatin ang isa sa pinakamalinaw na manipestasyon ng patolohikal na demokrasya, ang anti-intelektwalismo, upang gamiting batayan ng sinasabi kong radikalisyong ng politika. Kung ang anti-intelektwalismo ay pagbabâ o pagkawalâ ng makabuluhang diskurso sa arenang politikal, ito naman ang inaadhikâ kong pasiglahin sa pamamagitan ng sinasabi kong radikalisyong ng politika na hahalawin ko sa pilosopiya ni Edith Stein. Ihahain ko ang panukalang ito sa tatlong hakbang: una, babalikan ko ang liberalismong bilang isang politikal at pilosopikal na problema sa loob mismo ng tradisyong ng Ilustrasyon; pangalawa, ihahayag ko ang politikal na kaisipan ni Stein bilang pangsagot sa problema ng liberalismong, partikular sa aspekto ng anti-intelektwalismo; pangatlo, gagamitin ko ang pilosopiya ni Stein sa isang pilosopikal na repleksyon sa kalagayang politikal ng bansâ at sa paglalalag ng alternatibong interbensyon sa mga patolohiya ng ating domestikong politika.

Si Kant, Liberalismo at Intelektwalismo

Nabanggit ko si Kant at ang halaga ng kanyang sanaysay na *What is Enlightenment?* sa pagpupunlâ ng kultura ng intelektwalismo at politika ng liberalismong. Pinangarap ni Kant na mangahas mag-isip ang tao nang mag-isa at hindi na umasa sa tradisyong at mga institusyong; ang pangangahas na ito ang nakikita niyang susi ng isang awtentikong kalayàan.⁸ Sa isang panahon

⁶ Tingnan Alfred McCoy ed., *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2005); Philip Bowring, *The Making of the Modern Philippines: Pieces of a Jigsaw State* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

⁷ Francisco A. Magno, "Contemporary Populism and Democratic Challenges in the Philippines," in Sook Jong Lee et al. eds., *Populism in Asian Democracies: Features, Structures, and Impacts* (Boston: Brill, 2020), 61–79.

⁸ Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*, §§3–4.

na ang indibidwal na pag-iisip ay hindî normatibo o kayâ itinuturing ng mga may-kapangyarihan na isang urî ng pagsuway, masasabi na tunay na rebolusyonaro ang panukalâ ni Kant. Ang pagtataguyod sa kakayanan ng indibidwal na tumindig at manindigan sa sariling paa, pati na ang maniwala at sumunod sa sariling pasya ang siyang kinakatawan ng sanaysay ni Kant na *What is Enlightenment?* Ito rin ang primerong pamantayan ng liberalismo at kalakip nitong intelektwalismo. Sa kanilang batayan, ang lipunang binubuò ng mga mamamayang may kani-kanyang indibidwal na kalayàang mag-isip at humusga kung ano ang makabubuti sa kanila ay isang lipunang tunay na malayà. Ito ang pangunahing katangian ng isang modernong liberal na demokrasya⁹ na kinakatawan ng liberalismo at kalakip nitong intelektwalismo. Itinatampok ng liberalismo ang kalayàan ng tao bílang indibidwal; tumutukoy naman ang intelektwalismo sa kakayanan ng tao na mag-isip at magpasyang mag-isa.¹⁰ Para sa mga tagatangkilik ng liberal na politika, parehong kailangan ang dalawa upang manatiling masigla ang demokrasya. Gayonman, mahalagang sabihin na hindî mismong si Kant ang nagpasimulâ ng pagsusulong ng liberalismo at ang katuwang nitong intelektwalismo. Sa katunayan, isa lámang si Kant sa mahabang hanay ng mga intelektwal at pilosoper na may pagkiling sa etikal, maging ontolohikal na prayoridad ng indibidwal. Kabilang sa pangkat na ito ang mga gaya nina Rogelio Bacon at Guillermo ng Ockham noong edad medya na siyang sinundan pagdating ng panahong moderna ng mga tulad nina Martin Luther at Juan Calvin. Si Luther, na isa ring Aleman, ay naniniwalâ na ang relihiyon at pananampalatayâ ay dapat maging indibidwal, gayon rin ang pagbâsa at interpretasyon ng mga turò ng Bibliya. Káya raw mangusap ng Diyos sa indibidwal na tao at káya rin nitong matutonan nang mag-isa kung ano ang inihahayag sa kanya ng Diyos sa Banal na Kasulatan. Para din kay Luther, sapat na ang Banal na Kasulatan para magbigay ng kaliwanagang hinahanap ng tao. Hindî na raw kailangan ang pamamagitan ng isang institusyon gaya ng simbahan o kayâ ng mga pastor o ministro para isiwalat sa tao ang mga katotohanang gagabay sa kanya.¹¹ Ibang-iba ito sa sinasabi ni San Agustin o ni Santo Tomas na ang pagkatuto, lalò na sa larang ng pananampalatayâ, ay

⁹ Tingnan John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 29–35.

¹⁰ Robert S. Taylor, “The Progress of Absolutism in Kant’s Essay ‘What Is Enlightenment?’,” in Elizabeth Ellis, *Kant’s Political Theory: Interpretations and Applications* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 137–140.

¹¹ Tingnan Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works* (1520), <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/418/418-h/418-h.htm#treatise>>; tingnan din Richard Rex, “Martin Luther is the patron saint of individualism,” in *The Spectator* (31 October 2017), <<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/martin-luther-is-the-patron-saint-of-individualism/>>.

nakakamit sa tulong ng iba.¹² Sa panig ni Luther, pribadong bagay ang relihiyon kayâ walâng ibang taong sangkot dito kundî ang indibidwal na sumasampalatayà. Mababakás ang simpatya ni Kant sa ganitong paniniwalà nang kanyang sabihin sa *What is Enlightenment?* na pribado ang relihiyon at hindî kagaya ng katwirang pampubliko.¹³ Anomang pagpasyahan ng isang indibidwal tungkol sa kanyang relihiyon ay maituturing na pribadong rason at hindî mapanghihimasukan ng iba. Hindî ito pwedeng pagtalonan o kayâ salàin ng iba't ibang pananaw. Tangìng sa dominyo ng pampublikong katwiran maaaring mangyaring ito.¹⁴ Ang pampublikong katwiran ang pamantayan ng mga pagtatalo, argumento at diskurso ng mga táong may sapat na kalayàan at kakayanan na mag-isip mag-isa. Dalawang bagay ang kaagad mapapansin sa posisyon ni Kant: una, ang kanyang paghihiwalay sa relihiyon at pampublikong katwiran; at pangalawa, ang pagturing sa pagiisip bílang isang indibidwal na praktika. Sa unang tingin, mistulang magkaiba ang dalawa ngunit sa malapitang sipat, makikita na ang tíla magkahiwalay, sa katotohanan, ay dalawang pisngi ng iisang mukhâ ng liberalismo na pinapaboran ni Kant. Ang tao para kay Kant ay lagìng nag-iisa, sa pananampalatayà man o sa pangangatwiran. Isa siyang indibidwal na bagaman sumasamba sa Diyos ay dapat na magtaguyod ng pampublikong katwiran. Ang publiko na tinutukoy ni Kant sa sanaysay na *What is Enlightenment?* ay hindî pagtitipon ng mga indibidwal na nagkakaisa kundî mga indibidwal na dayohan sa isa't isa.

Mahalaga ang sinabi ni Kant tungkol sa indibidwal, sa relihiyon at sa pampublikong katwiran ngunit hindî siya lámang ang pilosoper na naghain ng pananaw tungkol sa ilustrasyon. Isa pang iskolar na Aleman, si Moses Mendelssohn, ang nagtangkâ ring sagotin ang kaparehong tanong na “What is Enlightenment?” bagaman may pagkakaiba ang tugon niya sa sagot na ibinigay ni Kant. Sa tingin ko, mas inklusibo ang perspektibo ni Mendelssohn dahil sa paggigiit niya na ang ilustrasyon ay tumutukoy sa iisang tadhanà ng tao. Sa halip tutokan ang tagisan ng pribado at pampublikong katwiran, tinukoy niya ang pangangailangan ng balanse sa pagitan ng pilosopiya at kultura alang-alang sa hinahanap na kaliwanagan ng tao.¹⁵ Sa madalìng salitâ, hindî nakikita ni Mendelssohn ang relihiyon na sagabal sa pagtanggap sa isip ng tao. Sinasangayonan ang pananaw na ito ng isa pang Alemang iskolar at kaibigan ni Mendelssohn na si Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Sa

¹² Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. by R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 35–37; Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 11.1, <<https://isidore.co/aquinas/QDdeVer11.htm#1>>.

¹³ Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*, §5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Moses Mendelssohn, “On Enlightening the Mind,” posted by James Schmidt (18 March 2014), <<https://persistentenlightenment.com/2014/03/18/moses-mendelssohn-on-enlightening-the-mind/>>.

kanyang mga akdâ, partikular sa *The Education of the Human Race*, tinukoy ni Lessing ang papel ng kultura, pati ng relihiyon, sa posibilidad ng samasamang pagkumulat ng tao sa iisang katotohanan na magbibigkis sa kanila.¹⁶

Sa kabilâ ng tinuran ni Mendelssohn at Lessing, higit pa ring mananaig sa isip ng marami ang pangalan at itinurò ni Kant, lalò na sa kanyang obrang *Critique of Pure Reason*. Masasabing ang aklat na ito ang rurok ng posisyon ni Kant tungkol sa paghiwalay sa tradisyon at pangangatwiran. Sa naturang akdâ, pinulâan ni Kant ang klasikal na tradisyon na nagsasabing may natura raw ang mga bagay at sa halip nito, itinanyag niya ang mismong isip ng tao bílang tagapaghayag ng kondisyon ng posibilidad ng “realidad.” Hindî natura o esensya ang dapat alamin ng isip ayon kay Kant kundî ang mga sarili nitong kategorya na siyang tanging may kakayanan na pangalanan ang karanasan ng tao.¹⁷ Sadyâng walâ tayong alam o hindî natin malalaman kung ano talaga ang mga bagay na ating nakikita.¹⁸ Ang kaalaman ay depende hindî sa kung ano ang mga bagay kundî kung ano ang tingin natin sa kanila.¹⁹ Ang epistemolohikal na doktrinang ito (na posibleng tawagin na Kantyanong perspektibismo) ang magpapalawig sa prinsipyo ng liberalismo na inihayag ni Kant sa *What is Enlightenment?* Mapagpalayà ito sa simulâ ngunit sa katagalan ay pagmumulan ng isang seryosong krisis, hindî lámang sa pilosopiya, kundî pati na rin sa politika at demokrasya.

Ang Bersyon ng Intelektwalismo ni Edith Stein

Inihayag sa katatapos lámang ang pagpapasinayà ni Kant ng intelektwalismo ng Ilustrasyon. Gaya ng nabanggit, kinakatawan ng intelektwalismong ito ang uri ng pag-iisip na una nang iminungkahi ni Kant sa sanaysay na *What is Enlightenment?* at mas pinalawig pa sa kanyang obra na *Critique of Pure Reason*. Pinapaboran ng ganitong tipo ng intelektwalismo ang pagiging-indibidwal ng pag-iisip at ang prayoridad ng kategorya ng indibidwal na katwiran. Tinatanggihan ni Kant ang pagturing sa natura; hindî raw kailanman malalaman ito. Higit pang pagtitibayin ang ideyang ito ng iba pang mga Alemang pilosoper gaya ni Friedrich Nietzsche²⁰ at Martin

¹⁶ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, “The education of the human race,” in *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, ed. and trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 217–240.

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 400–403.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 414–415.

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by William Kaufmann and Richard Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 272–276.

Heidegger²¹ na tumatangkilik sa kaparehong prinsipyo sa kani-kanyang pilosopiya. Marami pang Alemang iskolar ang sumunod sa yapak at nagpalawig sa sinimulang intelektwalismo ni Kant²² bagaman mayroon ding ilan na lumihis sa kanya. Ilan sa mga naglakas-loob na sumalungat kay Kant ay ang propesor na si Franz Brentano. Ayon kay Brentano, partikular sa kanyang *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, ang mundo ay laging sangkot sa isip ng tao o ang isip ng tao sa mundo.²³ Karaniwang tinatawag ang likas na ugnayang ito na intensyonalidad.²⁴ Taliwas ito sa sinasabi ni Kant na nagsabing may hindî matatawid na pagitan ang mundo at isip kayâ walâng ibang posibleng maaabot ang isip ng tao kundî ang mga kategorya nito. Sa pamamagitan ng teorya ng intensyonalidad, pinanumbalik ni Brentano ang pagkilala sa dugtongan ng isip ng tao at mundo na nauna nang nilansag ni Kant. Naging daan ang teorya ng intensyonalidad, na hiniram ni Brentano kay Aristoteles, Aquino at iskolatisismo, upang mulîng mapanariwà ang pagtukoy sa ugnayan ng tao at mundo ng kontemporaryong pilosopiya.²⁵ Isa sa mga unang yumakap sa teoryang ito ang estudyante ni Brentano na si Edmund Husserl. Sa simula ng kanyang karera, pinagtuonan ng pansin ni Husserl ang higit pang pagpapalinalaw sa ugnayan ng tao at mundo, ng suheto at obheto, at nanindigan siya na posible ang kaalaman dahil sa pagiging magkalakip ng dalawa. Sa inpluwensya ni Brentano, nahimok si Husserl na higit pang pag-aralan ang laman ng pag-iisip sa pamamagitan ng sistemang kritikal na tatawagin niyang penomenolohiya.²⁶ Makikita sa kanyang *Logical Investigations* ang pagsisikap ni Husserl na linawin ang kanyang pagunawà sa intensyonalidad pati na ang ugnayan nito sa lohika at lenggwahe.²⁷ Ngunit sa pagkalathala noong 1913 ng *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* o mas kilala sa mas maikling, *Ideas*, napalitan na ang pokus ni Husserl sa intensyonalidad, ibig sabihin, sa ugnayan ng suheto at obheto, ng kanyang

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 32–33.

²² Tingnan Anthony O’Hear ed., *German Philosophy since Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993); Frederick C. Beiser, *The Genesis of Neo-Kantianism, 1796-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²³ Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. by Linda L. McAlister et al. (London: Routledge, 2009), 119.

²⁴ Mahalagang sabihin na hindî ginamit ni Brentano ang mismong terminong intensyonalidad kundî ang mga kawangis nitong konsepto sa pagtalakay ng kanyang posisyong epistemolohikal. Tingnan *Ibid.*, xvii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii–xviii.

²⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. by Lee Hardy (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2010), 19.

²⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. by J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 2001), 28–39.

interes sa mismong suhetibong kamalayan o purong ego.²⁸ Kung dáting inakalà ni Husserl na lagìng kasangkot ng isip ng tao ang mundo, sa akdàng *Ideas* mas naniniwalà siya na ano mang kaalaman o karanasan sa mundo ay nakasalalay sa paglilinaw ng ideyang huhusgahan ng isip ng tao. Mas dapat, samakatuwid, unahing pag-aralan kung ano ang meron at kung ano ang káyang abotin ng isip. Sa maniobrang ito, hindî man niya inamin agad, mulîng ibinalik ni Husserl sa eksena si Kant.²⁹

Ang pagbwelta ni Husserl kay Kant ang siyang dahilan ng pagkabigó at paglihis ng marami niyang estudyante sa kanyang transendental na penomenolohiya.³⁰ Sa halip na sundan ang direksyon ng kanilang maestro, nagpasya ang mga dismayadong estudyanteng ito na magkanya-kanya na lámang sa pagpapayabong ng penomenolohiya na una nilang natutunan sa kanya.³¹ Isa sa mga estudyanteng humiwalay sa landasing transendental ni Husserl ay si Edith Stein.³² Ang intelektwalismo samakatuwid na tinutukoy dito sa papel ay isang tugon ni Stein na maaaring ipukol hindî lámang kay Kant kundî pati na rin sa pagkiling kay Kant ng kanyang mastrong si Husserl. Gayonman, bagaman lumihis, hindî masasabing ganap na humiwalay si Stein lalò pa't marami sa kanyang mga ideya ay hangò rin lámang sa kanyang dáting propesor.³³ Pangunahin sa mga minana ni Stein

²⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 118–126.

²⁹ Roman Ingarden, *On the Motives which led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism*, trans. by Arnor P. Hannibalsson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 21.

³⁰ Tingnan Rodney K.B. Parker ed., *The Idealism-Realism Debate Among Edmund Husserl's Early Followers and Critics* (Switzerland: Springer, 2021).

³¹ Tingnan Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction. Volume I (Second Edition)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 218–227.

³² Kumplikado ang pilosopikal na relasyon ni Stein kay Husserl. Sa unang banda, tutol siya sa transendentalismo ni Husserl ngunit sa isang banda, nanatili siyang tapat sa metodikong paggamit ng penomonolohiyang natutunan niya kay Husserl. Tingnan Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. by Walraut Stein (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1989), 3–6; Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans. by Mary Catherine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000), 5–8.

³³ Nanatiling malapit si Stein kay Husserl kahit nagbitiw siya sa pagiging sekretarya ng hulí at sa kalauna'y pumasok sa kumbento ng mga Carmelita kasunod ng kanyang konbersyon sa pananampalatayang Katoliko. Patunay ng kanyang personal na debosyon kay Husserl ang akdàng, "Husserl and Aquinas: A Comparison," isang pagaaral tungkol sa posibilidad ng pagkakasundô ng penomenolohiya at Tomismo na isinulat ni Stein para kay Husserl sa okasyon ng ikapitumpông kaarawan nito. Patuloy din na ipinapanalangin si Husserl ni Stein noong ito'y naging madre na sa pangalang Teresa Benedicta ng Krus. Tingnan Edith Stein, "Husserl and Aquinas: A Comparison," in *Knowledge and Faith*, trans. by Walter Redmond (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000), 1–63; Edith Stein, "Letter to Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, OSB, 23 March 1938," in *Self-Portrait in Letters (1916-1942)*, trans. by Josephine Koepfel, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1993), 272.

kay Husserl ang problema tungkol sa empathy.³⁴ Tinalakay ni Husserl ang empathy sa kanyang *Cartesian Meditations*³⁵ gayondin sa nabanggit nang *Ideas*.³⁶ Sa pilosopiya ni Husserl, tumutukoy ang empathy sa ugnayan ng isip ko at isip ng iba o ng isip ko at karanasan ng iba. Empathy samakatuwid ang susi sa pagunawa sa bisà ng penomenolohiya.³⁷ Sa isa pang paliwanag, tinutukoy ng empathy ang katotohanan na may iba't ibang kamalayan ang tao, ibig sabihin, iba't ibang paraan ng pagdanas at pagtukoy sa mundo at bawat isang kamalayang ito ay bahagi ng sarili kong kamalayan sa iisang mundong ginagalawan namin.³⁸ Malaking problema ang empathy sa mga pilosoper gaya ni Husserl na nakahulma ang isip sa isang transendental na penomenolohiya. Nang binakuran ng transendental na penomenolohiya sa isip ng tao, inakalà nitong isang imposibilidad ang pagtawid ng isip sa ibang tao na may sarili at naiibang karanasan at may sarili at naiibang kamalayan.

Ang problemang ito ang tinangkang lunasan ni Stein sa kanyang akdang *On The Problem of Empathy*, na siya rin niyang doktoral na disertasyon. Sa batayang palagay pa lámang, ipinakita ni Stein kung paano naiiba kay Husserl ang kanyang konsepto ng empathy. Kung para kay Husserl, ang empathy ay problema kung paano magtatagpô ang ako at hindi-ako, para Stein, ang empathy ay reyalidad ng pundamental na tagpôang ito.³⁹ Sa pagbabago sa pokus ng empathy, binago rin ni Stein ang direksyon ng pananaliksik ng penomenolohiya. Hindi na ito tungkol sa akin lámang kundî tungkol rin sa aking kapwà-tao. Hindi na ito tungkol lámang sa aking kamalayan kundî sa aking ugnayan sa iba. Hindi na ito tungkol sa karanasan ko lámang kundî sa kung ano ang mararanasan pa lang kasama ng iba.⁴⁰ Walang nag-iisang indibidwal para kay Edith Stein; kahit sino ay may kapwà-tao at laging kapwà-tao rin sa iba. Walâ ring mundo na masasabi kong akin lámang; ang mundo ay laging atin. Tinatawag itong mundo sapagkat nakapaloob dito ang maraming bagay at maraming taong gaya ko.⁴¹ Ang teorya ng empathy ni Stein ang batayan ng panukalang tugon sa krisis ng anti-intelektwalismo na gaya ng nabanggit na ay bunga ng intelektwalismo na pinasinayaan ni Kant. Maarang kahit si Kant ay mabibiglâ kung malalaman niya na ang hámon niya na mangahas mag-isip ay mauuwî sa pananamlay mag-isip ng kasalukuyang sibilisasyon. Itinuturing kong

³⁴ Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, trans. by Josephine Koepfel, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1986), 269–270.

³⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. by Dorion Cairns (Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht, 1960), 92.

³⁶ Husserl, *Ideas*, 170–180.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 170–171.

³⁸ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 134–135.

³⁹ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

alternatibo ang intelektwalismo na mahahangò kay Stein sapagkat hindi lámang ito epistemolohikal; may dimensyon din itong etikal at politikal gaya ng ilalahad ko sa susunod na bahagi. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit ipinapalagay ko na posibleng maging isang epektibong instrumento ang konsepto ng empathy ni Stein para suriin ang krisis ng anti-intelektwalismo at problema ng demokrasya sa ating bansâ.

Isang Kritikang Politikal Batay kay Edith Stein

Ang teorya ng empathy, gaya ng naisaad na, ay minana ni Stein kay Husserl at naging batayan ng isang uri ng penomenolohiya na bagaman gáling sa kanyang maestro ay tahasang naiiba. Ang pagkakaibang ito ay bunga na rin ng desisyon ni Stein na iwasan ang transendental na direksyon ni Husserl at bumuô ng isang penomenolohiya na nagtatampok hindi lámang sa indibidwal na kamalayan kundî pati na rin sa pundasyon ng likás na kaugnayan ng kamalayang ito sa iba.⁴² Ang perspektibong ito ang nais kong gamitin para ipakita kung paano posibleng magamit ang teorya ng empathy ni Stein upang suriin ang krisis ng anti-intelektwalismo na isa sa pinakadominanteng patolohiya ngayon ng modernong demokrasya. Ngunit bago ko tukoyin ang paksang ito, nais kong linawin na ang teorya ng empathy ni Stein ay hindi lantaran at hindi rin literal na konseptong politikal. Nagkaroon lámang ito ng kulay na politikal dahil mas pinili ni Stein na lampasan ang limitasyon (o hubris) ng transendental na penomenolohiya at gawing mas etikal o makatao ang batayan ng kamalayan.⁴³ Ang ilang tahasang akdang politikal ni Stein ay kakikitaan din ng ganitong diin na etiko-politikal.⁴⁴ Sa mga obrang ito, kapansin-pansin ang kanyang pagtatampok sa nosyon ng pagkatao bílang pinagsasaluhang karanasan sa halip na ituring itong pribado o indibidwal lámang. Mababása rin sa isa sa kanyang mga naunang mahalagang sanaysay, ang *Sentient Causality*, ang paglalahad niya ng isang antropolohiyang nagtatampok sa likás na pagiging mapaghanap ng tao ng kahulogan at ang kahulogang ito, ayon kay Stein, ay matatagpôan lámang ng tao sa pakikipagkapwâ.⁴⁵ Sa isa pang sanaysay, ang *Individual and Community*, tinukoy ni Stein ang pagkakaiba ng komunidad at asosasyon sa pamamagitan ng pagtukoy sa organikong karakter ng una at pagkakaroon ng eksternal ng batayan ng hulí. Dahil nakaugat ang natura ng komunidad sa natura ng tao, posible lámang makamit ng tao ang kanyang kaganapan sa

⁴² *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁴ Tingnan Edith Stein, *Investigation Concerning the State*, trans. by Marianne Sawicki (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2006); Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman*, trans. by Freda Mary Oben (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996).

⁴⁵ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology*, 39–48.

loob ng isang komunidad.⁴⁶ Sa kanyang pangatlong sanaysay, *An Investigation of the State*,⁴⁷ nilinaw naman ni Stein na ang estado ay hindi komunidad kundî kasangkapan lámang ng komunidad. Ang pagiging matatag samakatuwid ng isang estado ay nakasalalay sa kakayanan nito na mapalakas ang mga komunidad na bumubuô sa kanya.⁴⁸ Hindî gaya ng ibang teoryang politikal na ang batayan ay pagtatatag ng estado o kayâ banggâan ng mga institusyon o kayâ proteksyon ng pribadong ari-arían, ang teoryang politikal ni Edith Stein ay nagmumulâ sa kanyang pilosopikal na antropolohiya na higit pang pinagyaman ng kanyang natutunan sa mga gaya nila Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden, Santa Teresa ng Avila at Santo Tomas de Aquino. Mangangahas akong sabihin na ang teorya ng empathy rin ang batayan ng personalismo ni Edith Stein; ito rin ang gagamitin kong batayan ng inihahain kong bersyon ng intelektwalismo laban sa kontradiksyon nito. Nagpapahiwatig ang empathy ng isang naiibang urî ng intelektwalismo. Sinabi kong naiiba dahil isang urî ito ng intelektwalismo na parang hindi intelektwalismo. Sa isang banda, intelektwalismo ito sapagkat praktika ito ng paghahanap sa kahulogan; gayonpaman, parang hindi rin ito intelektwalismo sapagkat hindi nito pinapalagay na ang nasabing kahulogan ay *eidos* na nagagagáp ng isip ng tao kundî isang karanasang nagaganap sa pamamagitan ng pakikipagkapwà.⁴⁹ Sa halip na tularan si Husserl sa paggamit ng empathy bílang sangkap lámang ng transendental na penomenolohiya, ibig sabihin, sa paghahanap ng klaro at tiyak na ideya, itinuring ni Edith Stein ang empathy bílang sentro ng kanyang proyektong penomenolohikal. At dahil batid niyang malaking bahagi ng pakikipagkapwà ang pagtayâ, hindi niya prayoridad ang makasiguro.⁵⁰ Sapat nang katiyakan ang pagturing sa ibang tao at sa naiibang karanasan nila bílang bukal ng kahulogan; sa pagturing na ito, tinutulungan din nila ako na makilala ang aking sarili sa pamamagitan ng pagturing nila sa akin bílang kapwà nila.⁵¹ Sa pamamagitan ng empathy, nagkakaroon ng mas masiglang komunikasyon na siyang daan upang makabuô ng isang komunidad.⁵² Sa simulâ ng papel na ito, nabanggit ko ang patuloy na pagbabâ ng kalidad ng intelektwalismo sa bansâ, ibig sabihin, patuloy na bumababâ ang kalidad ng

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 261–275.

⁴⁷ Ang tatlong sanaysay na nabanggit ay pawang nalathala sa *Jahrbuch* (1922 at 1925), ang journal na sinimulan at pinamatnugotan ni Husserl para sa mga lathalaing penomenolohikal ng kanyang mga estudyante at disipulo. Ang mga ito rin ang kumakatawan sa tinatawag na penomenolohikal na yugtô ng historyang intelektwal ni Stein. Tingnan Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology*, xxi.

⁴⁸ Stein, *Investigation*, 32–37.

⁴⁹ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 96–97.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵² Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology*, 264–272.

komunikasyon natin sa isa't isa dahil bigô tayong patatagin ang ating mga sarili bílang komunidad. Sa kasalukuyan, madalas pagkamalián na ang mabilis at madalas na palitan ng mensahe sa iba't ibang platform ng social media ay isang komunikasyon. Sinabi kong madalas pagkamalián sapagkat kung paniniwalàan si Stein, posible lámang ang komunikasyon sa pakikipagkapwà at posible ang pakikipagkapwa dahil may komunidad.⁵³ Parehong mahirap ang dalawang ito sa simpleng palitan ng elektronikong mensahe. Maraming nabubuông mga grupo ngayon—DDS, Marcos Loyalists, Kakampinks—pero hindî sila mga komunidad. Ang eksternal na batayan ng kaisahan ng mga grupong ito ang humahadlang sa kanila na maging komunidad. Sabi nga ni Stein, ang komunidad ay kinakatawan ng organikong relasyon ng mga kasapi nito sa isa't isa. Hindî sila pinapagalaw o minamanipula ng sinoman o anoman mulâ sa labas; kumikilos sila ayon sa udyok ng pakikipagkapwà.⁵⁴ May posibilidad sana tayong makabuô ng komunidad sa akademya pero dahil napanghimasokan na rin ang unibersidad ng liberalismo, mas nananaig ang pagkakanya-kanya sa maraming disiplina sa halip na makapagtatag ng isang kolektib na binibigkis ng iisang adhikà. Kahit sa loob ng akademya samakatuwid, mararamdaman din ang krisis ng intelektwalismo. Hindî sagot ang pag-organisa o pagdalo sa maraming seminar o konperensya para matugonan ang krisis na ito lalò kung walâng awtentikong paguusap o pakikinig na nagaganap sa mga nabanggit na akademikong pagtitipon. Nagiging palabas na lámang ang pagdalo sa mga ganito sapagkat walâng tuloy-tuloy na diskursong nagaganap pagkatapos. Hindî naiiba ang ganitong kalagayan sa lumalalâng politikal na kalagayan ng bansâ na gaya ng nabanggit na ay pinamamayanihan ng populismo at anti-intelektwalismo. Gaya ng ibang mananaliksik, tinitingnan ko ang mga naturang penomenon bílang patolohiya ng demokrasya. Sa kabaligtaran, ipinapalagay naman ito ng ilan bílang isang anyô ng tinatawag nilang radikal na demokrasya.⁵⁵ Hindî ko tinututolan ang pagtangkilik sa radikal na demokrasya ngunit sa tingin ko'y problematiko ang tila pilit na pagtumbas ng radikal na demokrasya sa populismo. Batid ko na hangad ng radikal na demokrasya na palawakin ang base ng politika pero sa tingin ko'y malîng isipin na mangyayari ito sa pamamagitan ng bersyon ng populismo na mayroon tayo sa bansâ ngayon. Kung mayroon mang nagagawâ ang populismo sa bansâ, ito ay ang gawing mas marupok ang base ng demokrasya sa pamamagitan ng pagkasangkapan sa mga tao at panlilinlang sa kanila para sa partisan na agendang politikal ng mga nakikinabang sa

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 238–241.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 241–244.

⁵⁵ Tingnan ang Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *Radical Democracy in the Time of Duterte* (Cotabato City, Philippines: ElziStyle Bookshop, 2022).

ganitong kalagayan.⁵⁶ Makikita sa sitwasyong ito kung paano maiuugnay ang liberalismo sa populismo at ang dalawang ito sa anti-intelektwalismo. Ang populismo ay kaliponan ng mga táong pare-parehong naniniwalà na may sarili silang pasya, na hindî sila madidiktahan at nasa panig nila ang katotohanan. Walâ silang ibang kapwà kundî ang gaya nila. At kung hindî nila sila kagaya, kaagad itong itinuturing na kaaway. Binibinyagan ang mga kaaway na ito ng ibang pangalan upang mas tumingkad ang kanilang pagiging naiiba.⁵⁷ Ang pagturing sa tao bílang kaaway dahil lámang siya ay naiiba ay hindî makatutulong sa pagpundar ng isang komunidad; hindi rin ito makatutulong sa pagpapadaloy ng komunikasyon na siyang susi ng awtentikong pakikipagkapwà. Mas magiging matibay at masigla ang demokrasya kung magagawâ nating paramihin at palawakin ang pag-iral ng iba't ibang komunidad sa halip na magparami at magdagdag lámang ng bílang ng mga tagasunod ng kani-kanyang kampo. Hindî nangangahulogan na mayroon agad komunidad kapag nagsama-sama ang mga indibidwal na may iisang layon. Hindî kusàng nangyayari ang pagiging-komunidad; kailangan itong pag-isipan; kailangan ding pagpasyahan. Higit sa lahat, kailangan itong pag-usapan sapagkat natural ang pagkakaiba-iba sa isang komunidad. Kayâ nabanggit ko kanina na ang intelektwalismo ni Stein ay parang intelektwal na parang hindî. Sapagkat, ayon sa kanya, ang empathy na maaaring maging daan tungo sa tiyak na kaalaman gaya ng hangad ni Husserl ay posible ring maging instrumento ng pagkilala at pagtanggap sa kanya o kanila bagaman naiiba o hindî agad nakikilala.⁵⁸ May alingawngaw ang púnto ni Stein sa minsang sinabi ni Leni Robredo: mas radikal ang magmahal. Upang maging mamamayan, kailangan ng tao na maalalang siya ay kapwà. Ang pagiging kapwà ang simulâ ng paglawak ng ating kamalayan. Hindî lang minsan nating nadinig ang katotohanang ito ngunit tíla matagal pa bago natin ito matutunan. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit, sa tingin ko, mananatiling napapanahon ang pagaaral sa penomenolohiya at intelektwalismo na mapupulot kay Edith Stein.

Konklusyon

Inihayag ko sa papel na ito ang diskurso tungkol sa intelektwalismo bílang problemang pilosopikal at politikal. Ang nabanggit na isyu ng intelektwalismo ay tumutukoy sa patuloy na pagbabâ at sa ibang

⁵⁶ John Vincent A. Cabañes and Jayeel S. Cornelio, "The Rise of Trolls in the Philippines (And What We Can Do About It)" in Nicole Curato, *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency* (Quezon City, Philippines: Bughaw, 2017), 231–250.

⁵⁷ Patricia Evangelista, *Some People Need Killing: A Memoir of Murder In My Country* (New York: Random House, 2023), 94–124.

⁵⁸ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology*, 206–209.

pagkakataon, tuloyang pagkawalâ ng kalidad ng diskursong politikal sa bansâ. Tinukoy ko ang ugat ng ganitong problema sa tradisyon ng Ilustrasyon na pinakilala ni Kant. Adhikà ni Kant at Ilustrasyon ang kalayàan ng tao. Ang bunga ng adhikang ito ang kultura ng liberalismo. Pangunahing halaga sa liberalismo ang pagtatampok sa indibidwal. Nang ipinagpatuloy ni Husserl ang proyekto ni Kant sa kanyang penomenolohiya, pinagtibay din niya ang pagtatangi sa indibidwal na siyang itinatampok ng liberalismo. Ang mga pilosopikal na kaisipan ng mga katulad ni Kant at Husserl ang nagbigay ng teyoretikal na lehitimasyon sa dominasyon ng liberalismo hanggang sa ngayon. Ang katibayan ng dominasyong ito ay makikita sa paglaganap ng populismo. Nabanggit ko sa papel na ang populismo ay ang sukdolang bunga ng pagsasanib-pwersa ng liberalismo at anti-intelektwalismo. Kinakatawan ng populismo ang kaliponan ng mga indibidwal na naniniwalang ang sarili ang tanging pamantayan ng dapat at totoo kayâ walang dahilan upang magsulong ng diskurso. Bilang tugon sa problemang ito, prinesenta ko ang penomenolohiya ni Edith Stein, partikular ang kanyang nosyon ng empathy, bílang batayan ng sinasabi kong naiibang intelektwalismo. Tinuring kong naiiba ang nasabing intelektwalismo dahil prayoridad nito ang paghahanap ng kahulogan kaysa tiyak na kaalaman na siyang pakay ni Kant at Husserl. Para kay Stein, walang ibang higit na makahulogan kaysa kapwà-tao. Ginamit niya ang salitang empathy para tukoyin ang tagpôan ng tao at ng kanyang kapwà at ang pagdanas niya sa kahulogan na bunga ng tagpôang ito. Tinitingnan din ni Stein ang tao bílang indibidwal ngunit naniniwalà siyang ang pagiging indibidwal nito ay nakaugat sa loob ng isang komunidad. Hindî niya nakikitang magkasalungat ang indibidwal at komunidad kundi magkarugtong at magkatuwang. Itinuturing ko ang empathy bílang isang napapanahong ekspresyon ng intelektwalismo na posibleng maging lente ng kritikang politikal na magagamit sa pagsusuri ng kalagayan ng demokrasya sa bansâ. Sa penomenolohiya ni Stein, hindî ang kampiyan ng mga indibidwal kundi ang pagtatatag ng mga komunidad ang magpapatibay at magpapasigla sa politika. Nabanggit ko na ito ay naiibang intelektwalismo dahil hinahamon tayo nitong mag-isip, manimbang at magpasya kung paano maging tao at makipagkapwà-tao. Hangad ng nasabing intelektwalismo ang pagsasaradikal hindî lámang ng demokrasya kundi ng mismong politika sa pamamagitan ng pagpapaalala sa atin na ang pagiging mamamayan ay nagsisimulâ sa pagiging mabuting tao at pagiging mabuting kapwà.

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Article

Byung-Chul Han's Theory of Negative Politics

Raniel S.M. Reyes

Abstract: It is a complex task to provide a systematic Hanian theory of politics, as Han is more concerned with diagnosing the positive, psychopolitical, and infocratic dominations of neoliberal capitalism. To fill this gap, I curate his scattered critical remarks on the contemporary political climate, in conjunction with his philosophical vocabulary, towards what I call negative politics. This intervention necessitates a disquisition of his critique of neoliberal capitalism, as well as his theory of violence. To concretize these objectives, I first highlight the distinct character of Han's theory of violence by engaging with some formulations of violence in the continental philosophical tradition. In the second part, I explain how neoliberal capitalist-authored violence provides an illusory freedom and adulterates contemporary political life. In the third, I explore his theory of infocracy within the context of global politics and crises. Given the dominance of algorithmically manipulated information in this new regime, the cult of positivity assumes more invincibility. Ultimately, I diagram and explain some revolutionary potentials embedded in his writings, which could rehabilitate contemporary politics and, more importantly, reconfigure atomized communities, thereby recovering the people's ability to contemplate, question the status quo, and think about the future.

Keywords: neoliberal capitalism, positivity, infocracy, negative politics

Violence: From the Immunological to the Post-Immunological

Western politics, according to Giorgio Agamben, is defined by the ubiquitous politicization of bare life—"the life of the *homo sacer* ... who may be killed and yet not sacrificed."¹ From residing in a

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8.

marginal milieu, bare life permeates in the whole political realm, where the *homo sacer*'s inclusion assumes the form of an exception. This is made possible by the state's sovereign legitimacy to kill the *homo sacer* "without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice"² because it resides in a zone of indistinction. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* contend that the state's sovereign authority, expressed in the forms of state surveillance and lawful violence, "consists in capturing while simultaneously constituting a right to capture. It is an incorporated, structural violence distinct from every kind of direct violence."³

However, of course, the immanent and inescapable relation between the *homo sacer* and sovereign power is not the only locale for the immense proliferation or operation of political violence. Within the restrictive confines of the book *Homo Sacer*, the *homo sacer* is eternally doomed, in the same vein that the sovereign remains an omnipotent nerve-center of power beyond critique. At least, before concluding the "Homo Sacer" chapter in the aforesaid book, Agamben claims that what makes life in the present extremely bare and dangerous is its exposure "to a violence without precedent precisely in the most profane and banal ways. Our age is the one in which a holiday weekend produces more victims on Europe's highways than a war campaign."⁴ This pronouncement should be analyzed at various levels. One possible pathway is the theorization of the *homo sacer* and sovereign power outside the logic of Eurocentrism and statist politics. A reconfiguration of their immanent relation and interpretations outside them offers a possible light outside the tunnel of sovereign violence. Interestingly, Agamben underlines in *Homo Sacer* the necessity to overcome this condition, albeit without a definitive blueprint: "And only if it is possible to think the relation between potentiality and actuality differently—and even to think beyond this relation—will be possible to think of constituting power wholly released from the sovereign ban. Until [this happens], a political theory freed from the aporia of sovereignty remains unthinkable."⁵

The previously mentioned opening also hints at new pathways to be explored in the other volumes of the *Homo Sacer* series.⁶ Beyond Agamben, bare life is not only applicable to the people residing at the peripheries or under the state of exception. Instead, it is a condition that involves "all of us,

² *Ibid.*, 83.

³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 448.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶ See, for instance, Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016). In this last volume of the *Homo Sacer* series, Agamben theorizes a post-sovereign politics and proposes a non-sovereign politics and mode of living.

without exception, who are *homines sacri*.⁷ Furthermore, it opens the doors to a novel formulation of violence, where the individual either does not perceive violence as emanating from the State apparatus by virtue of its capitalist totalization, or they do not blame sovereign power for the miseries they experience. Even before the famous “Postscript on Control Societies” in *Negotiations*,⁸ the concept of a non-Statist/post-Statist domination was already mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Within the capitalist mode of production, they opine, “it is very difficult to say who is the thief and who the victim, or even where the violence resides.”⁹ This mode of capture without capturing, which parallels Agamben’s description of the sovereign’s subjugation of bare life, still rests on negativity, unfortunately.

However, there is also another face of violence where the individual self-motivates to exert more effort, time, and energy to become better or achieve more freedom. Han calls this new adversary *psychopolitics*. One of the distinctive attributes of Han’s formulation of psychopolitics, particularly in relation to his diagnosis of neoliberal capitalism, is its post-immunological configuration. The post-immunological paradigm is defined by the destruction of borders, territories, and otherness, which previously characterized the immunological paradigm. Side by side with this event is the annihilation of the factors that constitute the dialectic of negativity. The death of negativity leads to the excessive proliferation of positivity—the principal culprit in the aggressive and accelerated cultivation of psychopolitical violence in the contemporary period.

If contemporary theorists were to conceptualize a political theory that remains statist, sovereign-laden, and negative in its approach to confronting psychopolitical violence, then it would simply exacerbate the problems plaguing the present. In this paper, I seek to formulate a theory of negative politics that confronts novel mutations of violence by collating and engaging with Han’s sporadic critical writings. Of course, this is not to assert that this is the only form of violence of paramount value today. Sovereign power or the state of exception remains systemically operative even in democracies or the most advanced societies. Its parasitic character overlaps with other regimes of power and violence, including those beyond statist and disciplinary domains, such as psychopolitical domination. In fact, Han mentions in *Topology of Violence* that the erosion of negativity today should not be understood as the disappearance of violence, since “along with the

⁷ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. by Erik Butler (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 19.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 178-180.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 447.

violence of negativity, there is a violence of positivity, which is wielded without enmity or domination.”¹⁰

Psychopolitical Violence and the Debasing of the Political

There are probably two ways to understand and analyze the detrimental implications of the neoliberal capitalist phenomenon. The first one is defined by deregulation, liberalization, and privatization. Through the catalyzing influence of globalization, these processes become fundamental channels for implementing socio-economic policies, including massive tax cuts, the erosion or elimination of healthcare and social welfare programs, the continuous and aggressive dismantling of union organizations, the impoverishment of public education, and more.¹¹ These complex events, animated by the phenomenon of globalization, make Deleuze’s analysis of the societies of control in *Negotiations* a timely contribution. Despite the protean theorization and opportune analysis of Deleuze’s control society, it remains grounded in negativity.¹² Therefore, it remains impotent in explaining the psychic and topological changes emergent in the complex transition from control society and even the disciplinary society to the achievement society.¹³

The second way to comprehend the effects of neoliberal capitalism is through positivity (or excessive positivity). The dissolution of the fundamental pillars of the immunological paradigm gives birth to the achievement society or the society of performance. One of the important claims Han makes in *The Burnout Society* concerns his critique of Hannah Arendt’s notion of the *vita activa* in the context of the achievement society. According to the former, “The late-modern *animal laborans* does not give up its individuality or ego in order to merge, through the work it performs, with the anonymous life process of the species. Rather, contemporary labor society, as a society of achievement and business, fosters individuality.”¹⁴ But he emphasizes that life today is barer than Agamben’s bare life. Meaning to say, violence today is invisible, and its oppressive hand grips everyone, not

¹⁰ Byung-Chul Han, *Topology of Violence*, trans. by Amanda Demarco (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), vii.

¹¹ Manfred Steger and Ravi Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 2018, 14.

¹² Moreover, Deleuze claims that the control society offers a more intricate form of surveillance and control where power operates in a more free-floating yet assimilative form. See Raniel Reyes, “A Genealogy of the Contemporary Undead Life through Byung-Chul Han,” in *Philosophia: An International Journal of Philosophy*, 26:2 (June 2025), 237, <<https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.26.2.a.5>>.

¹³ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

only those under the state of exception. Moreover, whereas the life of the *homo sacer* can be killed without any legal consequence, the life of the achievement subject cannot be killed. Neoliberal capitalism perceives death as a negativity or a hindrance to the flow of capital. Thus, if a person cannot be killed, then their "life equals that of the undead. They are too alive to die, and too dead to live."¹⁵ Additionally, the ego of the achievement subject is "just short of bursting ... It is hyperactive and hyperneurotic."¹⁶ In this vein, instead of experiencing freedom, the master and the slave become the exploiter and the exploited altogether.¹⁷

Han uses Psychopolitics to describe this late-modern phenomenon. In contrast to sovereign action and disciplinarity, it is a more contagious mutation of violence, grounded in positivity through the forms of freedom, internal pressures, and digital surveillance. In *Topology of Violence*, Han further opines:

Today, it is shifting from the visible to the invisible, from the frontal to the viral, from brute force to mediated force, from the real to the virtual, from the physical to the psychological, from the negative to the positive, withdrawing into the subcutaneous, subcommunicative, capillary, and neuronal space, creating the false impression that it has disappeared. It becomes completely invisible at the moment it merges with its opposite, that is, with freedom.¹⁸

Psychopolitical violence functions as a non-statist and molecular capture. Ingeniously, it engenders auto-exploiting individuals or workers in their own enterprise as they turn into masters and slaves altogether, and where "even class struggle has transformed into an inner struggle against oneself."¹⁹ As such, Antonio Negri's theorization of the cooperative, the *multitude*, the successor of Karl Marx's proletariat, is already an unsuitable agency in the neoliberal capitalist mode of production. Instead, "conditions are defined by the *solitude* of an entrepreneur who is isolated and self-combatting and practices auto-exploitation voluntarily."²⁰ In addition, Han explains in *The Expulsion of the Other* that: "The absence of a repressive gaze creates—and this is a decisive difference from the surveillance strategy of the

¹⁵ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸ Han, *Topology of Violence*, vii.

¹⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, trans. by Erik Butler (London: Verso Books, 2017), 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

disciplinary society—a deceptive sense of freedom.”²¹ The absence of a repressive gaze morphs into a “disturbed structure of gratification” in *Topology of Violence*.²² In other words, the lack of relation results in a lack of gratification and recognition from the other. Such a deficiency leads to the subject’s narcissistic relation to oneself. Problematically, the crisis of gratification compels him/her to achieve more without finality, thereby not achieving any goals, and losing “itself in dissipation.”²³ The endless pressure to achieve more without recognition and closure rebrands as freedom, i.e., emancipation from the panoptical grasp of an exterior authority. Consequently, work is converted into self-paced competitions, a site for disjointed relations, and a bastion of short-sighted visions.

Han remarks that the crisis of the contemporary period has already surmounted the normalization of the state of exception in society. Instead, “no state of exception is possible anymore because everything is absorbed by the immanence of the same.”²⁴ Like work, the positivization of politics initially delegitimizes the possibility of any form of sovereign action. For this reason, it becomes incapable of questioning and overcoming the current scheme of things and merely becomes complacent in maintaining the *status quo*. Since politics remains under the tutelage of capital, it will remain devoid of any transcendental horizon. The positivization of politics, likewise, dissolves all underlying meanings and significance of parties and ideologies. In this manner, what is produced is a ubiquitous state of political emptiness—a state filled with spectacle of media theatrics. Politicians also establish themselves in this depoliticized space of spectacle. It is not their *political acts* but rather their *personality* that is staged in the media.”²⁵

In the current political climate, struggles occur no longer between classes or ideologies, but between individual selves. When self-referentiality transitions to an absolute competition, the achievement-subject falls prey to the “destructive compulsion to outdo itself,”²⁶ and no longer to defeat the other. This is made possible by what Han calls, the *ego-ideal*. In his words:

In the ... achievement society, the superego positivizes itself into the ego ideal. The superego is repressive. It mainly voices prohibitions. It dominates the ego ... The superego generates negative compulsions. In contrast, the ego ideal exerts positive

²¹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today*, trans. by Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 49.

²² Han, *Topology of Violence*, 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 35–36.

compulsions on the ego. The negativity of the superego constrains the ego. Basing the self on the ego ideal, on the other hand, is interpreted as an act of freedom. But in the face of the unattainable ego ideal, the self sees itself as deficient, a loser to be assailed with self-reproach. Auto-aggression develops out of the gap between the real ego and the ego ideal. The ego ... is at war with itself ... External violence is replaced by self-generated violence, which is more devastating because its victims imagine themselves to be free.²⁷

Moreover, the positivization of politics delegitimizes politics from its power to enact strategic action. Without any forms of secrecy and depth transforms, politics transforms into a mere transparent activity or a referendum. In a transparency-laden political field, Han argues,

Opinions are matters of no consequence ... Compulsive transparency stabilizes the existing system most effectively ... It does not harbor negativity that might radically question the political-economic system as it stands. It is blind to what lies outside the system.²⁸

Unfortunately, the more transparency reigns, the more capital moves rapidly, the more forms of negativity are discouraged, and the more society is overrun by spectacle. Transparent politics, furthermore, is participated not by engaged and committed individuals.²⁹ Instead, it is merely manned by consumer citizens uninterested in complex deliberations and critical reflections. As the logic of consumption prevails, citizens only air their voices to complain, in the same manner that they are detached from the intricate interconnectedness between past and present predicaments.

Moreover, the value of politicians is gauged based on their ingenious technique to please the sensibilities of the masses, and not on their capability to formulate long-term visions and enact comprehensive societal reforms. The more these politicians blindly embrace the status quo or represent the so-called voice of the people, the more they are appreciated, the more negativity in society is annihilated, and the more genuine communication is abolished.³⁰

In a society governed by positivity and transparency, the role of the community is minimal. The simple reason is that only narcissistic and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

²⁸ Byung-Chul Han, *The Transparency Society*, trans. by Erik Butler (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 6–7.

²⁹ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 10.

³⁰ Han, *The Transparency Society*, 7.

apathetic individuals compose it. As such, collective action is disheartened in exchange for a personal pathway to making oneself a project. In *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, Han spends a chapter elaborating on the enormous crippling of the political:

There is no cooperative, networked multitude that could serve as a global protest movement and revolutionary body. Rather, the current form of production is based on the solitary, isolated, disconnected entrepreneur of the self ... Today, everyone is in competition with everyone else, even within a single enterprise. This universal competition may lead to an enormous increase in productivity, but it destroys solidarity and the sense of community. You cannot form a revolutionary mass out of depressive, disconnected individuals.³¹

In a world marred by narcissism, achievement, and competition, collective action or radical solidarity finds no place. Han also echoes his critique of Hard and Negri's multitude in *Topology of Violence*. In a society of indifference, the aforesaid revolutionary feat is unlikely because it is merely inhabited by "isolated and mutually antagonistic selves. Everyone involved in the capitalist process is simultaneously victim and perpetrator ... Hard and Negri miss this particular topology of the global."³²

Of course, the death of the political and the impossibility of revolution are likewise problematized in other contemporary scholarship. At the same time, not all people across the globe are exclusive or direct victims of neoliberal capitalism's psychopolitics. In *Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World*, Slavoj Žižek argues:

struggle and antagonisms are in no way reducible to the intra-personal 'struggle against oneself.' There are still millions of manual workers in Third World countries, there are big differences between different kinds of immaterial workers ... A gap separates the top manager who owns or runs a company from a precarious worker spending days at home alone with his/her personal

³¹ Byung-Chul Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, trans. by Daniel Steuer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), 18. See Han, *The Expulsion of the Other*, 39 and Franco Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation*, ed. by Erik Empson and Stephen Shukaitis, trans. by Arianna Bove, Erik Empson, Michael Goddard, Giuseppina Mecchia, Antonella Schintu, and Steve Wright (London: Minor Compositionism, 2009), 34.

³² Han, *Topology of Violence*, 119.

computer—they are definitely not both a master and a slave in the same sense.³³

Although in an earlier work, Žižek's formulation of objective violence in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, bears a partial semblance to the invisibility and deterrence of resistance conditioned by psychopolitical violence. As opposed to subjective violence, objective violence "is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceived somethings as subjectively violent."³⁴ Thanks to the humanitarian initiatives of global philanthropists or left liberal communists, the people are prevented from going beyond subjective violence and from unshackling the root causes of exploitation. Instead, they are convinced and motivated to be focused on immediately acting, i.e., in eradicating global problems, such as "starvation in Africa, the plight of the Muslim women, religious fundamentalist violence."³⁵ through collective and creative means. Unfortunately, the strategic imperative of accelerated response to humanitarian crises prevents people from reflecting and identifying the real causes of these predicaments. Against these false prophets or deceptive principles, Žižek laments:

The exemplary figures of evil today are not ordinary consumers who pollute the environment and live in a violent world of disintegrating social links, but those who, while fully engaged in creating conditions for such universal devastation and pollution, buy their way out of their own activity, living in gated communities, eating organic food, taking holidays in wildlife preserves, and so on.³⁶

In a parallel fashion, there are undeniably other regions or territories still subjugated by statist or disciplinary power, in conjunction with other socio-economic and political predicaments, such as gender inequality, massive poverty, the refugee crisis, the displacement of indigenous people, and equal access to education. In *The Enigma of Capital*, David Harvey is correct to comment on capitalism's "uneven geographical development [that] is as infinitely varied as it is volatile."³⁷

Intriguingly, the victims in Žižek's subjective and objective violence do not only refer to Agamben's *homo sacri*, but also certain social groups, such

³³ Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World* (New York and London: OR Books, 2020), 21–22.

³⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2008), 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁷ David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148.

as women, the homeless, and the unemployed. For example, women are coerced to undergo “plastic surgery, cosmetic implants, and Botox injections” to remain productive in the sexual economy.³⁸ Han emphasizes, however, that despite providing a more inclusive theory of violence, Žižek misrecognizes the violence that occurs without domination affecting all of us. The positive self-motivation to become beauty, fitness, and performance zombies, involves all of us regardless of culture, race, status etc.³⁹

At this juncture, there seems to be a problem with Han’s critique. In Third World countries, not all people possess the opportunity to become beauty or fitness enthusiasts, as they are often preoccupied with feeding their families and securing decent housing. While this third-world predicament bears a degree of legitimacy, one must realize that Han’s frame of reference is shaped by the socio-historical realities of advanced societies, namely, South Korea and Germany.⁴⁰ Albeit his perspective is arguably first-world, people in economically challenged countries persist to strive for high social status, such as owning an expensive smartphone and a luxurious house and lot, as well as possessing a flawless skin. These personal goals, understood as freedom, prompt them to hustle unlimitedly or self-optimize incessantly. This idealization may be much stronger in these places, given the enormous repressions that the people experience daily.

Given these nuances of violence, both invisible and statist, I argue that Han’s notion of psychopolitical domination is a new technologically mediated and neoliberal-authored mechanism that overlaps with other mechanisms of violence or subjugation. For this reason, instead of thinking which theory of violence is better, people should exhaust all their energies and resources in thinking about how to analyze and antagonize these protean and heterogeneous monsters. For Han, nevertheless, people must enact this philosophical gesture through the post-immunological paradigm, since it is within this paradigm that critique or negativity is impoverished.

Digital Psychopolitics, Global Politics, and Consequences

Han comprehensively differentiates the disciplinary regime from what he terms the *Information Regime* or *Infocracy* in *Infocracy: Digitization and*

³⁸ Žižek, *Violence*, 145.

³⁹ Han, *Topology of Violence*, 80-81. Žižek’s violence still adheres to the negativity model, according to Han.

⁴⁰ What is of interest for Han is how those caught in the comfier regions of late capitalism are driving themselves to produce and consume at ever greater speeds; these pressures are more psychological than physical, subtly convincing those who partially benefit from neoliberalism to perpetuate it against their own self-interest. See Jason A. Bartles, “Byung-Chul Han’s Negativity; or Restoring Beauty and Rage in Excessively Positive Times,” in *The New Centennial Review*, 21 (Winter 2021), 61.

the Crisis of Democracy. In this digital era, algorithms and artificially intelligent information reign supreme, no longer subject to the sovereign. Instead of closed spaces, the information regime employs hypercommunication and hyperconnection to produce subjects who believe that obedience is a precondition for freedom, authenticity, and creativity.⁴¹ The body is no longer the target of this ploy, but the psyche, via perpetual psychopolitical surveillance. In the information regime, the body is demoted as the subject of the health and aesthetic industry, while the psyche becomes the new locus of domination.

The radical innovation characterizing the information regime does not mean the cessation of surveillance. In fact, it merely assumes a more molecular configuration. The dissolution of closed spaces leads to open networks of information influx and hypercommunication. In the first place, why would people think they are experiencing domination when they can utilize and navigate cyberspace without limitations? In Han's view, "people do not feel that they are under surveillance. They feel free. Paradoxically, it is the feeling of freedom that secures the rule of the regime ... *When freedom and surveillance coincide, domination becomes complete.*"⁴²

In this new regime, additionally, the cellphone acts as one of the most potent panoptical devices.⁴³ The more people think that they cannot live without a cellphone and without being 24/7 hyperactive, the more their behaviors are predicted and controlled through algorithmic and AI-configured information. In an earlier work, *The Transparency Society*, Han already described how the cult of transparency forces everything inwards to convert it into information,⁴⁴ because more information and communication entail increased productivity and acceleration. In *Infocracy*, meanwhile, he provides more concrete and timely vocabulary to explicate this phenomenon.⁴⁵

Paradoxically, the very system that proliferates transparency is the same system that promotes covert violence, because the "*engine room of transparency lies in the dark*. We surrender to the growing power of the algorithmic black box."⁴⁶ In the same way, it is hidden in the sense that it is

⁴¹ Byung-Chul Han, *Infocracy: Digitalization and the Crisis of Democracy*, trans. by Daniel Steuer (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2022), 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ In *Precarious Rhapsody*, Franco Berardi claims: "The cellular phone is left on by the great majority of info-workers even when they are not working. It has a major function in the organization of labor as self-enterprise that is formally autonomous but substantially dependent. The digital network is the sphere where the spatial and temporal globalization of labor is made possible." Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*, 89.

⁴⁴ Han, *The Transparency Society*, viii.

⁴⁵ Han, *Infocracy*, 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

immanent in the everyday life, i.e., “behind the friendliness of social media, the convenience of search engine...and the courteous civility of smart apps.”⁴⁷ Not only through smartphones, but also with the help of social media influencers, the power of the information regime, i.e., its psychopolitical domination among people, fortifies.

Aside from the illusion of freedom it offers, one may wonder why psychopolitical domination is indubitably powerful. Hyper-productive individuals often lack the time to pause, reflect, and question the status quo. Their lack of time for contemplation also results in a lack of time for any political activity. This deficiency serves as the essential ingredient in producing a digital swarm, i.e., people confined to their own bubbles, whose leaders are no less than social media influencers (and even those with tendencies toward theocratic rule). In the digital swarm, anonymous subjects are recognized through their profiles. The creation of individuals’ profiles allows them to be psychopolitically captured by the information regime. Furthermore, the age of transparency and information creatively motivates people to curate their identities and encounter others through profiles. Regarding the inextricable link between one’s identity and profile in the age of digital technology, Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul D’Ambrosio’s book, *You and Your Profile: Identity After Authenticity*, offers a lucid formulation and explication of the concept *proflicity*. As a novel vocabulary, *proflicity* means the crafting of profile-configured identities using photo-editing applications, wherein online users fashion content and engage with other users as an audience altogether.⁴⁸

Given the ubiquity of psychopolitical domination, it is also noteworthy to comprehend the status of politics in the information regime. In the old book culture, as Habermas perceives it, public discussion is organized, politicians exhibit intellectual prowess, and citizens are actively engaged in politics.⁴⁹ In the electronic mass media culture, on the other hand, people have become passive subjects and politicians had maximized mediocracy to effectively substantiate their socio-economic platforms—the perfect formulas for the public sphere’s decay.⁵⁰

In *Psychopolitics*, Han underscores that today, citizens have become not merely consumers of capitalist products and services, but also of politics. For instance, they view an election as a one-time event, wherein candidates

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul J. D’Ambrosio, *You and Your Profile: Identity After Authenticity* (Columbia University Press, 2021), 3.

⁴⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 170, as cited in Han, *Infocracy*, 18.

⁵⁰ Han, *Infocracy*, 18. See Han, *Psychopolitics*, 10.

or parties are either likable or not. Being passive individuals, they fail to realize that they also have a role to play in politics. They likewise fail to establish a link between the candidate they voted for and the future of their society. Unfortunately, if they ever participate in anything political, they will simply use this opportunity to asymmetrically air their grievances, like a typical social media user. Han refers to this phenomenon as *spectator democracy*.⁵¹ A more recent concretization of spectator democracy is the Philippine Senate's gesture in relation to the proposed house arrest of former president Rodrigo Duterte. On 1 October 2025, many of them requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to put Duterte under house arrest because he is already old, sick, and weak. Nevertheless, such a theatrical gesture is merely a play of optics because it lacks any bearing on the ICC. Unfortunately, this posturing reduces the ICC case or the crime against humanity filed against Duterte, as a publicity war, at the expense of all the victims of the gruesome drug war.⁵²

Information, the heart of infocracy, is irreconcilable with politics. It crushes time into disjointed presences. In a democratic deliberation, for instance, a longer time is needed for deep contemplation, complex rational discourse, and creative imagination, which bridges the present with the past and the future. Sadly, it is affective communication that triumphs in the information regime, where "it is not the better argument but the most exciting information that prevails."⁵³ No wonder fake news and disinformation dominate the present. As a new normativity, this alarming event contributes to the polarity of politics and the strengthening of information capitalism. Behind all these are the infallible bosses who control information and manipulate the political directions of societies. If Carl Schmitt were alive today, Han asserts, then perhaps he would say that the sovereign is no longer the one who decides on the state of exception, but the one who controls the information in cyberspace.⁵⁴

The fake news and disinformation surge during the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections,⁵⁵ reminds me of the *Black Mirror* Netflix series "Waldo

⁵¹ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 11.

⁵² Jairo Bolledo, "'Distorted Sense of Justice,' Rights Groups Slam Senate resolution on Duterte House Arrest," in *Rappler* (3 October 2025), <<https://www.rappler.com/philippines/rodrigo-duterte-house-arrest-senate-resolution-statements-rights-groups-lawmakers/>>; see also Joana Lei Casilao and Sundry Locus, "ICC denies Rodrigo Duterte's interim release appeal," in *GMA News Online* (28 November 2025), <<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/967781/icc-denies-rodrigo-duterte-interim-release-appeal/story/>>.

⁵³ Han, *Infocracy*, 21.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

⁵⁵ Richard Gunther, Erik Nisbet, Paul Beck, Trump may owe his 2016 victory to 'fake news,' new study suggests," in *The Conversation* (15 February 2018), <<https://theconversation.com/trump-may-owe-his-2016-victory-to-fake-news-new-study-suggests-91538>>. But the

Moment.” The story follows Jamie, a washed-up comedian, and the man behind Waldo—an animated bear who later transforms into an instant political celebrity through his taunting of traditional or establishment candidates. Waldo’s creative, emotive, and anti-conventional theatrics contributes to the relentless valorization of entertainment over rational discourse. Ironically, there were moments in the episode where the people appreciated the presence of Waldo than the real human candidate, despite the former offering nothing but anti-establishment rants. Indeed, contemporary society is eclipsed by numerous algorithm-manipulated Waldos, created to dominate and prevent people from questioning and thinking about the things that really matter.

The victory of current U.S. President Donald Trump is a paradoxical Waldo moment. Trump is one of the foremost beneficiaries of the information regime and a complex political anomaly. As a noted symbol of infocratic politics, his political camp is enormously defined and shaped by “viral information. Infocracy promotes success-oriented, instrumental forms of action and leads to the spread of opportunism.”⁵⁶ Han further argues that “in asserting whatever suits his purposes without compunction, Donald Trump is not a typical liar ... He is, rather, indifferent towards factual truth. Someone who is blind to fact and reality poses a greater threat to truth than does a liar.”⁵⁷ Brian Massumi in *The Personality of Power*, describes Trump as:

... an exception as a person, moved by no program, no ideal, no norm, only expediency, practiced chaotically on the fly sending out waves of disturbance that stir up the sediment of society.... Trump, the media figure, is a stirrer: a node of quasi-chaotic agitation spinning off vortices of disturbance just begging for an ascription to hang themselves onto, in order to give them a sense of solidity and well-foundedness. Trump: the preeminent accident of person.⁵⁸

Like Waldo, Trump’s affective and anti-establishment theatrics contribute to the incessant privileging of spectacle over concrete, dedicated, and sophisticated discourse in the realm of politics. Not only Trump, but a vast number of politicians, political aspirants, and organizations globally utilize the techno-algorithmic services of *psychometrics*. It is a powerful

erosion of truth, Han clarifies, started even before Trump’s politics of fake news. See Han, *Infocracy*, 46.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁸ Brian Massumi, *Personality of Power: A Theory of Fascism for Anti-fascist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2025), 19.

mechanism that hybridizes profiling and marketing by sending voters personalized advertisements, based on their psychograms, *via* social media. Like consumer behavior, voting behavior is subject to unconscious conditioning. Microtargeting, in the form of dark ads or fake news, is not operationalized for critical awareness but for the manipulation of voters' perception and the decomposition of society's discursive atmosphere.⁵⁹ Sadly, some people abhor engaging with actual people but find pleasure in inadvertently interacting with opinion-manufacturing bots to allow them to be psychopolitically dominated, thereby endangering democracy. Overall, the data-driven manipulation-laden infocracy undermines the democratic process, which necessitates slowness, community, and complexities. As Han laments,

Digital communication redirects information flows in a way that undermines the democratic process. Information is distributed without passing through public spaces ... The internet is therefore not a public sphere. Social media intensifies this *communication without community* ... Digital communities are not commodified forms of community. They are incapable of *acting politically*.⁶⁰

Going back to Trump, his decisive non-consecutive victory,⁶¹ despite being a convicted felon, should be understood not a mere mass clamor for a messianic leader in time of despair. Of course, his controversial victory underlines the Americans' massive dissatisfaction with the USA's present socio-economic status, policies on border security, and the future of the country. Dramatically, Trump successfully packaged himself as a performative persona capable of manipulating the people's collective emotions, i.e., as a political device that articulates their disenchantment and revenge. Such an affective political strategy, which Massumi calls *fascism*, confirms Han's distinction between affective communication and rational discourse. According to the latter, the algorithmic-laden and positivized infrastructures of the digital regime are incompatible with rational discourse or politics in general. Simultaneously, the former prevails over the latter in the digital society:

⁵⁹ Han, *Infocracy*, 23.

⁶⁰ See Byung-Chul Han, *The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present*, trans. by Daniel Steuer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 1.

⁶¹ Bailey Richards, "Donald Trump Is the Second President in History Elected to 2 Non-Consecutive Terms — Here's the Other," in *People* (20 January 2025), <<https://people.com/donald-trump-second-president-nonconsecutive-terms-after-grover-cleveland-8735726>>.

Rational decisions require a long-term perspective. They are based on reflections that extend beyond the present moment into both past and future.... In information society, we simply do not have the time for rational action. The compulsion of accelerated communication deprives us of rationality. Under temporal pressure, we instead opt for intelligence.... Intelligent action aims at short-term solutions and successes.⁶²

Affective or digital-driven communication, on the other hand, is shaped by emotionally driven and trivialized stories and decontextualized information (fake news)—farewell to complex, deliberated, and pragmatic principles and narrations that previously constituted politics. Appallingly, the dominance of affective politics and fabricated truths should be perceived as a symptom of a wider crisis of democracy.⁶³ Thanks to neoliberal capitalism's assimilation of the digital regime, contemporary society metamorphoses into an ecosystem composed of isolated selves, regulated by affective spectacles, and manipulated by data-analytics.

A society repugnant to complex political deliberations is a society devoid of criticality and courage. Moreover, it is a society equipped with a warped understanding of history, which establishes no intricate relation to the past and the future. Without these attributes, contemporary society transforms into a smooth highway of capital. Concurrently, it produces individuals constitutive of amorphous political identities, like a politician who always maintains neutrality related to different issues just to appease all the consumer citizens, even at the expense of betraying previous promises and the values of his/her political organizations.

The pathologization of political consciousness converts the subject into a positivity machine whose life despises exuberance and the impetus for socio-political transformation. When society is occupied by depoliticized subjects, it avoids challenging the existing political-economic system and instead merely focuses on reinforcing the status quo. What governs the achievement subject is 'digital outrage'⁶⁴—governed by affective and ephemeral emotion depicted in 'politically correct' social media posts. These posts usually lack profundity, real-life concretization, and the potency to

⁶² Han, *Infocracy*, 33.

⁶³ For a more nuanced discussion of the decline of democracy at present through Han, see John Piccione, Byung-Chul Han: Digital Technologies, Social Exhaustion, and the Decline of Democracy," in *New Explorations: Studies in Culture & Communication*, 3:2 (Fall 2023), <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/nex>>.

⁶⁴ Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*, trans. by Erik Butler (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 8.

transform oppressive societal conditions. Swiftly flooding individuals with various trivialized information prevents them from conducting an in-depth and holistic analysis of their societal situatedness and forming a community marked by solidarity and negativity. Aside from rapid information bombardment, accelerated time thwarts information's cultivation to become knowledge. In this regard, information becomes deformative, communication becomes cumulative, and social awareness and critique are stifled.

An infocracy-bred concept which contributes to the crippling of the political is *dataism*.⁶⁵ Through this concept, people stop their critical evaluation of societal issues or predicaments the moment they are presented with data. For example, when people are provided with some unverified statistics about the decrease of poverty and unemployment in a particular country, they will no longer question the legitimacy of such evidence. Whereas some of this information is weaponized as optics, some is just fake news proliferated to manipulate people's perception and further promote passivity.

Dataism, moreover, decays time into fragmented presences. For this reason, it debilitates people from recognizing the links between past occurrences and the present, previous advocacies of leaders and their present platforms, and the systemic problems or objective violence, which perpetually condition multifaceted instances of subjective violence. In the dataist domain, people do not care if current apologists of authoritarian leaders are former human rights advocates, if present legislators are ex-convicts, and if famous life-coaches are mere social media influencers.

Dataism, likewise, prides itself on the idea that society may still work without politics. For example, party- or class-based democracy will soon achieve extinction to give way to a post-democratic politics—infocracy. In this regime, "Politicians will be replaced by experts and computer scientists who will *administer* society without relying on ideological assumptions or advancing particular interests. Politics will be replaced by *data-driven systems of management*, with decisions taken on the basis of big data and artificial intelligence."⁶⁶

Negative Politics: From Deactivation to Contestation

Against positive politics—the politics grounded in transparency, affective communication, and self-optimization, among others—negative politics may be described as a counterforce that privileges individuals'

⁶⁵ Han, *Infocracy*, 22-24.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

deactivation from hyperproductivity and hyperconnectivity, and as the committed practice of slow and reclusive living.⁶⁷ Correspondingly, Žižek reminds us that there are situations when the most practical thing to do, in his case against left liberal communism or global capitalism, “is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to ‘wait and see’ by means of a patient, critical analysis.”⁶⁸ These practices are essentially fueled by the *vita contemplativa*—the heart of Han’s negative politics. In *The Scent of Time*, he underscores the role of contemplative thinking as a new form of resistance.⁶⁹ In opposition to Arendt’s notion of action,⁷⁰ he states that contemplation is the very principle that gives meaning to action.⁷¹ Contemplation is neither the cessation nor the suspension of action, but a rest-in-itself which grants freedom to its agent. Such immanent freedom diverts the individual from being an *animal laborans*, and more importantly, ruptures the monotony of work and everyday living. This interruptive characteristic transforms the *vita contemplativa* into a revolutionary stance. However, he underlines that this revolution is a hybridity of contemplation and action: “A *vita contemplativa* without acting is blind, a *vita activa* without contemplation is empty.”⁷² In other words, negative politics presupposes the immanent relation between contemplation and action. The revitalization of the *vita contemplativa*, hence, should not only include the practice slowness or inoperativity, but also the unfeigned re-invention of rituals—the “symbolic techniques of making oneself at home in the world.”⁷³ Through rituals, the amorphous and narcissistic identities of individuals can be surmounted or neutralized through symbolic depth, communal belonging, and critical memory.

The institution of the family, for instance, can serve as a fecund habitat for these aforesaid values. According to the article, “Nostalgia shields psychological wellbeing from limited time Horizons,” nostalgia, as a form of emotional anchoring, helps individuals to stabilize their lives by establishing a perpetual link between their past and present:

A rich store of meaningful memories that can evoke nostalgia and remind them of their value, ability, and belonging. The human capacity to experience nostalgia

⁶⁷ Some authors believe that Han distances himself relatively from politics. See, for example, Jeremy Bell, “Against Surfing: On Lingering with Byung-Chul Han,” in *Cultural Politics*, 13 (Spring, 2017), 131.

⁶⁸ Žižek, *Violence*, 7.

⁶⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingering*, trans. by Daniel Steuer (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 85–114.

⁷⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 246.

⁷¹ Han, *The Scent of Time*, 94.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷³ Han, *The Disappearance of Rituals*, 2.

may buffer the threat of limited time horizons and provide one strategy in people's psychological toolkit to facilitate successful aging.⁷⁴

In this vein, parents should cultivate vibrant and critical memories with their children, constitutive of quality time, creative love, and strong play. In the future, these memories can serve not only as the children's psychological, but also existential sanctuary, especially during times of exhaustion, depression, and oppression. Scaled up, the cross-pollination between these interventions and pre-existing practices, as well as embedded memories within the community, can help reconfigure the understanding and practice of rituals, thereby engendering significance beyond the self and temporality. When radicalized, they can engender people to actively (or negatively) participate in redefining political relations, to relate past anomalies to the present, and to question current political monsters.

However, the disquisition on the *vita contemplativa*, in conjunction with the recalibration of rituals, is not the only feature of his theorization of negative politics. Another feature worth exploring is how negative politics serves as the antithesis to the society of positivity's psychopolitical domination and infocracy's algorithmic data-manipulation. As a counter-principle, negative politics is characterized by eroticism, gaps, and silence. It is also shaped by play, agonism, and interruptions. These attributes intersect rhizomically across his writings and assume numerous forms, such as rage, *parrhēsia*, *idiotism*, *eros*, and *listening*, to name a few.

Just a caveat, explaining and concretizing these principles does not automatically liberate people from the dictatorship of neoliberal capitalism. Going against the grain of the present is a Herculean task. Realistically speaking, elucidating and territorializing these principles could either radicalize some bastardized practices and amorphous identities, or the system could smoothly totalize them, thereby aggravating people's self-exploitation and the community's degeneration. Hence, these principles necessitate a valiant and sustained struggle against the unseen enemy (us)—the locus of the neoliberal capitalist exploitation, and other agents of oppression. Instead of crafting a world without positive violence, negative politics transfigures contemporary society into a contestable field marked by fluidity and undecidability. From my perspective, it is a more practicable objective than imagining a grand antidote to all these predicaments.

In *The Burnout Society*, Han describes *rage* as a principle of negativity—a power to say *No* to the society of the *Yes*. Rage:

⁷⁴ Erica G. Hepper, Tim Wildschut, Constantine Sedikides, Samantha Robertson, and Clay D. Routledge, "Time Capsule: Nostalgia Shields Psychological Wellbeing from Limited Time Horizons," in *Emotion* 21: 3 (April 2021), 644–664, <<https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000728>>.

[P]uts the present as a whole into question. It presupposes an interrupting pause in the present. This is what distinguishes it from anger [Ärger]. The general distraction afflicting contemporary society does not allow the emphasis and energy of rage to arise. Rage is the capacity to interrupt a given state and make a new state begin. Today it is yielding more ... to offense or annoyance ... Annoyance relates to rage as fear relates to dread [Angst]. In contrast to fear, which concerns a determinate object, dread applies to Being-as-such. It grips and shakes the whole of existence. Nor does rage concern a discrete state of affairs. It negates the whole.⁷⁵

In *The Agony of Eros*, Han further opines that rage “radically breaks with convention and inaugurates a new state of affairs.”⁷⁶ Given its disruptive power, rage is neutralized by neoliberal capitalism by converting it into guilt, exhaustion, and, as mentioned earlier, digital outrage. Accordingly, the subject turns against itself, rather against the neoliberal capitalist society or the society of positivity: “People ... see themselves as responsible for their lot and feel shame instead of questioning society or the system [P]eople are turning their aggression *against themselves*.”⁷⁷ More importantly, such impoverishment disables people from creating new things and values, which could potentially radicalize the present towards the future.

Furthermore, the crisis of truth, the principal feature defining the information regime, depicts a crisis of society and of politics. Without truth (discursive, radical, and communal), social cohesion among community members becomes a lost cause. Han emphasizes that the crisis of truth “disintegrates *from within*, and this means it comes to be held together only by external, instrumental, economic relations.”⁷⁸ The commodification of human values and intersubjective practices prevalent in the society of positivity or information regime annihilates the individual and the community. Amid this perilous period, a society grounded in certain discursive truths and people operating as a collective, related to external authorities, is significantly lacking. Although the whole *Infocracy* book observes a critical attitude against infocracy, and its political consequences, Han interestingly cites Foucault’s notion of *parrhēsia*—the act of valiantly speaking the truth. In the context of the information regime, this act

⁷⁵ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 22-23.

⁷⁶ Byung-Chul Han, *The Agony of Eros*, trans. by Erik Butler (London, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017), 43.

⁷⁷ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 6.

⁷⁸ Han, *Infocracy*, 50.

indispensably requires superlative courage, especially in a world dominated by algorithm-manipulated information and fake news and inhabited by a politically amorphous populace. *Parrhēsia* enables individuals to express their thoughts and opinions openly.⁷⁹ It necessitates “individuals who act politically to tell the truth, to care for the community by making ‘use of discourse, but of rational discourse, the discourse of Truth.’”⁸⁰ Such an act establishes a community, and consequently, assumes genuine political importance. True democracy requires individuals who can question the status quo, engage genuinely and patiently, and heroically dare to speak the truth. Against the detrimental odds of authoritarian organizations or states, some individuals remain ready to sacrifice a normal life to practice *parrhēsia*.⁸¹

One foremost example is Maria Ressa, the founder and CEO of the Philippine-based online news site *Rappler*. Under her watch, the news channel critically investigated former President Duterte’s controversial drug war, in conjunction with state-sponsored and infocratic disinformation campaigns. As a result, she was repeatedly harassed by the administration through cyber-libel and tax evasion charges and was even arrested.⁸² Despite pressures and threats, she became one of the symbols of global anti-authoritarian initiatives. Regrettably, despite receiving a Nobel Peace Prize in 2021 and inspiring many nations repressed by authoritarianism, Ressa was converted by the neoliberal capitalist ideology as a “brand,” i.e., “as a conflation of an individual human subject with the logics of marketing, individual libertarianism, and ‘social responsibility.’”⁸³ Although this allegation may partially erode Ressa’s integrity, it must also be seen as opposing a more complex adversary: the infocratic system engineered by the U.S.-Philippine elite centrism and/or U.S. geopolitical interests, which effectively totalizes media personalities, regardless of how revolutionary-minded they may be.⁸⁴

A corollary concept to rage and *parrhēsia* is idiotism. In a world governed by a tsunami of information, becoming a philosopher necessitates

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 46; See Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 136.

⁸⁰ Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 158, as cited in Han, *Infocracy*, 53.

⁸¹ In various domains, some notable figures include Daphne Caruana Galizia (Malta), Christopher Wylie (Canada/The UK), Greta Thunberg (Sweden), Citizen Lab Researchers (Canada), and Maria Ressa (The Philippines).

⁸² Hannah Ellis-Petersen, “Maria Ressa: editor of Rappler news website arrested on ‘cyber-libel’ charges,” in *The Guardian* (13 February 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/13/philippines-journalists-decry-intimidation-as-website-editor-arrested?utm_source=chatgpt.com>.

⁸³ Ma. Diosa Labiste, and Tom Sykes, “The Great Woman Theory of Media History: Maria Ressa, the neoliberal influencer brand and US-Philippine elite centrism,” in *Media Asia* (October 2025), 1–22 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2025.2571676>>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

becoming an idiot. In Han's words, "Idiotism discloses a field of immanence of events and singularities that eludes subjectivation and psychologization."⁸⁵ Idiotism appears as a symbol of resistance against the hypertransparent, achievement-obsessed, and narcissistic contemporary society. The idiot, he continues, "is unallied, un-networked, and uninformed. The idiot inhabits an immemorial outside, which escapes communication and networking."⁸⁶ Embodying the figure of the outsider, the idiot's mode of communication is silence.⁸⁷ Silence as a form of resistance resonates with Deleuze's politics of silence in *Negotiations*. In his words, "It's not a problem of getting people to express themselves, but of providing little gaps of solitude and silence in which they might eventually find something to say."⁸⁸ Despite idiotism's politics of silence, it remains a radical act, in reclaiming the self, and opening the individual to the community.

Idiotism, as a radical politics of silence, opens us to the other. Such an encounter captures Han's notion of *eros*, which is "a relationship to the Other situated beyond achievement, performance, and ability."⁸⁹ The future that rage imagines acts the Other's locale. With *eros*, political actions are defined by a mutual desire for the future, i.e., for another way of living. Unfortunately, since the present is bereft of eroticism, political action merely translates into the quest for self-optimization, trivialized, polarizing, and ephemeral causes. The revitalization of *eros* significantly engenders a society of non-calculation, opacity, and listening.

Listening exhibits *eros* in affirming the Other as alterity. For Han, it assumes a political dimension, because it involves "active participation in the existence of Others, in their suffering too. It is what joins and connects people to form a community."⁹⁰ After freeing individuals from the labyrinth of narcissism, the act of listening likewise serves as a gift and sacrifice for the *time of the Other* as "the hospitable listeners empties themselves to become the resonance chamber of the Other."⁹¹ Neoliberalized politics of time abhors the Other's time mainly because of its unproductivity and unquantifiability. In doing so, it also prevents itself from experiencing time as celebration with the Other, "the time of joyful bloom, which evades the logic of production ...

⁸⁵ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 81.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁸⁷ See the chapter, "Capitalism dislikes Silence," in Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, 104–117.

⁸⁸ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 129. See *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸⁹ Han, *The Agony of Eros*, 11.

⁹⁰ Han, *The Expulsion of the Other*, 77. See Han, *Topology of Violence*, 47 and Hartmut Rosa, "The Idea of Resonance as a Sociological Concept," in *Global Dialogue* (9 July 2018), <<https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/articles/the-idea-of-resonance-as-a-sociological-concept>>.

⁹¹ Han, *The Expulsion of the Other*, 72.

Unlike the time of the self, which isolates and separates people, the time of the Other creates a community."⁹² Listening as a gift and a sacrifice is not only a time of celebration, but also a time of healing, both individually and collectively.

The act of rage, the radical task of speaking the truth, idiotism, and the politics of eros and listening would become fruitless principles if isolated from other initiatives and causes. Revisiting some of Han's negative philosophical concepts, locating fragmented revolutionary geographies, and fashioning pockets of resistance, do not guarantee a light at the end of the tunnel. Given the confluence of psychopolitical violence and other statist and molecular oppressions, it is undoubtedly disheartening to launch protests on different fronts and even through innovative means. Indisputably, they can be commodified by neoliberal capitalism or the information regime for incessant surveillance and control. Solidarity initiatives aimed at eradicating social injustice or gender inequality, for example, can be easily utilized by left-liberal communists to call people to act immediately to address certain crises, thereby preventing them from exacerbating the root causes of these problems.⁹³ Such pseudo-urgency, Žižek asserts,

was exploited by Starbucks ... when, at store entrances, posters greeting customers pointed out that a portion of the chain's profits went into health-care for the children of Guatemala, the source of their coffee, the inference being that with every cup you drink, you save a child's life.⁹⁴

Via Han, any revolutionary projects can be used by individuals to boost their egos in pursuit of an illusory notion of freedom, and miserably, towards exhaustion and societal atomization. He further argues that revolution can never be founded on consumption, nor can consumption be the end of revolution.⁹⁵ Fingers, the organ used in buying or clicking, "by themselves, are not capable of genuine action. They are only an *organ for making consumer choices*. Consumption and revolution exclude each other."⁹⁶ Sadly, consumption disrupts the symbiotic relationship between people and the community. In this vein, politics metamorphoses into a degenerate milieu for an impossible revolution for "there is no cooperative, networked

⁹² *Ibid.*, 78.

⁹³ Žižek, *Violence*, 16.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁵ Han, *The Disappearance of Rituals*, 5.

⁹⁶ Han, *Infocracy*, 22.

multitude that could serve as a global protest movement and revolutionary body.”⁹⁷

In the context of Han’s scathing critique of neoliberal capitalism and infocracy, it is inevitable not to be pessimistic or hopeless. As Han confesses in *Capitalism and the Death Drive*: “I wanted to work towards some solutions, but I only described further problems.”⁹⁸ However, his criticisms overlap with his belief that some rituals and practices remain capable of eroticizing exhausted selves and reconfiguring atomized communities and debased political structures of the present. These concepts, oftentimes implicitly and unsystematically elucidated in his writings, hope to transform people from being pessimistic or triumphalist to being more cautious and critically hopeful. Hope, Han lucidly writes in *The Spirit of Hope*:

... is a searching movement. It is an attempt to find a firm footing and a sense of direction. By going beyond the events of the past, beyond what already exists, it also enters into the unknown, goes down untrodden paths, and ventures into the open, into what-is-not-yet. It is headed for what is still unborn. It sets off towards the new, the altogether other, the unprecedented.⁹⁹

Conclusion

In this paper, I wove together Han’s fragmented remarks on the degeneration of contemporary society, in conjunction with his philosophical jargon, towards a theory of negative politics. To achieve this goal, I explained first his critical analysis of neoliberal capitalism and problematized his theory of violence. Particularly, I elucidated his notion of positive, psychopolitical, and infocratic domination against the backdrop of some pressing issues in the globalized world. After establishing these theoretical pillars, I utilized some revolutionary principles or concepts embedded in Han’s writings to inform my theorization of negative politics.

Fundamentally, negative politics is fueled by the *vita contemplativa*, rage, parrhēsia, idiotism, eroticism, and listening. For the sake of clarity, Han’s negative politics is not only fueled by the act of contemplation, but also by communal rituals and radical actions. In other words, this novel theory of politics is based on the symbiotic connection between deactivation and

⁹⁷ Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, 18.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁹⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Spirit of Hope*, trans. by Daniel Steuer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2024), 10–11.

contestation, or to put it radically, a continuous and valiant act of deactivation and contestation.

In broad strokes, this paper aimed to demystify the accusation that Han's philosophy is anti-political or offers nothing to address the problems plaguing contemporary society. In the conventional or immunological sense, Han's philosophy is described as devoid of any explicit political relevance. However, from the post-immunological domain, he provides humanity with ethical and symbolic frameworks, which will allow them to creatively and critically navigate the positive, psychopolitical, and infocratic burdened contemporary society.

Negative politics is not simply a polarized brand of politics capable of antagonizing the positivized politics undergirding the neoliberal capitalist society. Moreover, its negativity is not defined by its capacity to launch a direct, grand, and statist confrontation against neoliberal capitalism. On the one hand, it critically diagnoses the adversary's protean configuration and violence, albeit in a more cautious, prudent, and nuanced manner. On the other hand, it circumvents neoliberal capitalism by focusing on how to rethink society's rituals to de-psychologize and free the individual from the narcissistic hamster wheel, territorialize their existence within the community, and recover life's scent and vibrance. Of course, the latter may not immediately translate into something directly political, but recalibrating the community and life may contribute to the rehabilitation of the political landscape. In a similar fashion, revisiting communal practices may not directly address the various political problems besetting contemporary society. However, they can help redefine the people's intersubjective relations and revive their capacity to question the present and imagine a negative future.

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A Feminist Re-reading of Hannah Arendt's notion of Space of Appearances

Kriedge Chlaire C. Alba

Abstract: Hannah Arendt's works faced criticisms from various feminist thinkers for an alleged gender blindness and conformity to masculine ideologies. However, there are still some thinkers like Nancy Hartsock who argue that Arendt's political thought is relevant to feminist discourse. This paper aims to provide a feminist re-reading of Arendt's distinction between the private and public realm by giving emphasis on the space of appearances as the quality that makes the public realm authentic. I argue that Arendt's notion of space of appearances, together with freedom and human plurality, can be heeded for the feminist discourse as well. To substantiate my claims, this paper shall be divided into three parts. The first is intended to focus on Arendt's notion of space of appearances as found in her prominent works. The next part focuses on various perspectives of feminist thinkers on Arendt. This is to situate her political thought within the feminist discourses. Lastly, the third section is intended to answer the main question I wish to address in this paper: What is the relevance of the Arendtian notion of space of appearances to the feminist discourse?

Keywords: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, space of appearances, feminist discourse

In feminist discourses, Arendt received mixed impressions of her political thought. Some feminists like Adrienne Rich and Mary O'Brien heavily criticized her rigid distinction between the private and public realms. They argued that Arendt's perspective on private and public realms still subscribes to patriarchal and masculine ideologies.¹ According to both thinkers, the private remains hierarchical and oppressive for women, while the public remains masculine and impossible for women to freely participate

¹ See Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York & London: W.W. Norton Company, 1979), 212 and Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (London and Boston: Routledge, 1981), 99.

authentically. On the other hand, there are also feminist thinkers like Seyla Benhabib, Susan Bickford, Mary Dietz, Nancy Hartsock, and Bonnie Honig who believe that Arendt's political thought, especially her notion of human plurality in public space, can be iterated and helpful in recognizing the place of women in the public.² For instance, Hartsock, in her work *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism*, argued that Arendt's notion of power does not subscribe to masculine ideologies as it highlights collective action rather than violence.³ Bonnie Honig, on the other hand, highlighted the agonistic quality of Arendt's public realm and argued that this is relevant in the feminist discourse.⁴ The diverse and different interpretations of Arendt's works led to various questions surrounding Arendt and feminism: Is Arendt hostile about the problems of women? Is it truly possible to appropriate Arendt's philosophy for feminist theory?

In this paper, I would like to associate my agenda with various feminist thinkers like Seyla Benhabib, Susan Bickford, Mary Dietz, Nancy Hartsock, and Bonnie Honig in the hopes of proving the relevance of Arendt in the feminist discourse. My agenda is to advance the development of feminist interpretations in Arendt's philosophy. By so doing, I will revisit Arendt's distinction of the private and public realm, and the rise of the social to re-examine Arendt's political thought from a feminist perspective. The focus of this paper is on how the space of appearances as the authentic public realm can be utilized to promote a public space that does not subscribe to male ideologies. In so doing, I do not intend to impose and claim that Arendt herself is a feminist or that her entire philosophy is appropriate to feminism. I posit that Arendt's political thoughts on notions such as space of appearances, human plurality, and freedom are also vital notions for feminism. These notions of Arendt's political thought showcase her *phenomenology of oppression and liberation*⁵ that can help us illuminate the importance of women in the space of appearance.⁶

The first part of this paper is dedicated to an elaborate discussion of Arendt's notion of space of appearances. I will survey her prominent works

² For this discussion, see Bonnie Honig ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

³ Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), 259.

⁴ Bonnie Honig, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity" in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, 135–166.

⁵ I borrow this statement from Seyla Benhabib who argues that a deeper reading of Arendt's works would bear genuine affinity to the radical claims of contemporary feminism. Benhabib also cited Nancy Hartsock's emphasis on the Arendtian notion of power, community, and action to further this claim and Ann M. Lane's parallelism between Arendt's political thought to that of feminism. See Seyla Benhabib, "Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of Public Space," in *History of the Human Sciences* 6:2 (1993), 99–100.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

such as *The Human Condition*, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Eichmann Trial: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *Between Past and Future*, *On Violence*, *On Revolution*, *Men in Dark Times*, and *Thinking without a Banister* to strengthen the understanding on space of appearances. The second part shall situate Arendt in the feminist discourse by citing the ideas of various feminist thinkers who made commentaries on her works. The third part shall provide an adequate feminist interpretation of Arendt's political thought with particular focus on her notions of space of appearances, human plurality, private and public interests. Finally, this paper shall end by answering the main question posed in the abstract: What is the relevance of Arendt's notion of space of appearances to the feminist discourse?

Arendt's Space of Appearances

Arendt criticized traditional thinkers for their incapacity to make distinctions and how ideas, notions, and concepts were negligently used interchangeably and ambiguously. By contrast, Arendt's works are focused more on establishing and clarifying distinctions between notions that appear to be similar but are different to some extent.⁷ Some notable distinctions that Arendt posed are the following: *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, violence and power, and private, public, and social realm. Among these distinctions, she is highly criticized for her rigid distinction between private and public realms. Critiques argued that the distinction is modeled after the Greek *polis* and is no longer applicable in modern society.⁸ The distinction appears simple and evident, but Arendt provided a different categorization of the two. Arendt argued that an individual lives two different lives in two different realms. In the private, one is considered as an *animal laborans* who fulfills his or her basic necessities in life. While in the public, one is considered a *homo faber* who is given the freedom to build and fabricate the artificial world of the public space.⁹ According to Arendt, the two realms stand in contrast to one another, "the distinction between a private and public sphere of life corresponds to the household and the political realms, which have existed as distinct, separate entities"¹⁰ Public realm, contrary to private realm, caters to the politics of people speaking and acting together. Arendt further argued

⁷ Margaret Canovan, "Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm" in *Hannah Arendt Critical Essays*, ed. by Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 179.

⁸ Benhabib, "Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of Public Space," 98.

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 139. See also Canovan, "Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm," 22.

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28.

that the distinction of the two realms can be revisited as the modern age paved the way for the rise of another realm, the social.¹¹

The rise of the social realm blurs the distinction between the private and public. The social for Arendt, is also referred to as the emergence of society wherein "... the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices—from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual"¹² Amidst the rise of the social, Arendt contends that the distinction between the private and public realm must be observed because the two maintain a balance for the two separate, distinct lives of individuals. The private realm is seen by Arendt as a place to hide, fulfill necessities, and is the condition that makes one human.¹³ By contrast, Arendt highlights how politics is based on the premise that all individuals are of equal standing and that this politics is beyond the inherent hierarchy in the household or in the private realm. Thus, for Arendt, the public assimilates politics, equality, freedom, and human plurality, while she remains ambiguous whether these categories of action can also be present in the private.¹⁴

Some commentators find this insistence of Arendt to promote the distinction between private and public realm amidst the rise of the social realm problematic.¹⁵ Because of Arendt's distinction, one needs to temporarily abandon the private to be able to participate in the public. Abandoning the private would entail that one needs to pass on fulfilling their natural necessities to someone else.¹⁶ For instance, the ancient household assigned women, children, and slaves to remain in the private so that the father—the only citizen in the household, can participate in the public.¹⁷ Hence as modeled after the Greek *polis*, the private realm represents oppression, denial of freedom and equality.¹⁸

There are also some kinds of participation in politics that Arendt refused to qualify as political action. For instance, she cited that voting is a private act. It is an act done privately and anonymously, for Arendt, this is insufficient to be considered as political action or political participation.¹⁹

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Honig, *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Mary Dietz, "Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics" in *Hannah Arendt Critical Essays*, 236; See Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Human beings are social and political beings that must exercise their speech and action by personally appearing in public.²⁰ The public realm is comparable and often interchangeably referred to as space of appearances. A public realm is not a simple place where people gather together. It is a spatial metaphor wherein space of appearances transpires. Margaret Canovan in her essay, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm” refers to this as the *authentic* public realm.²¹

Space of appearances is one of the most essential notions that Arendt introduced in *The Human Condition* and are present in her other works such as *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Eichmann Trial: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *Between Past and Future*, *On Violence*, *On Revolution*, *Responsibility and Judgment*, and in *Men in Dark Times*. It is further developed immanently in her collection of essays in *Thinking without Banister: Essays in Understanding*. Prominently discussed in *The Human Condition*, when talking about politics—participation, freedom, rights, and power—Arendt would always refer to human plurality as the basis of the human conditions in space of appearances. Human plurality for Arendt is the *sine qua non* for the space of appearances.²² Hence, any attempt to disregard human plurality is tantamount to the abolition of public realm per se. Arendt further discussed space of appearances as a space wherever human beings are together exercising their speech and action. It represents the various forms as to which public realm is organized. However, space of appearances as warned by Arendt is not a literal space but a potential or spatial metaphor that can exist but can also collapse when speech and action are no longer realized.²³ What Arendt meant by this is that space of appearances is not understood as something natural and automatically realized when there is a space. It is rather any place that is artificially built as long as speech and action of the plurality of people is exercised. Hence, if we call a space a space of appearances but it is rather controlled by the privileged few, by certain authorities—it still does not qualify as space of appearances in Arendtian sense. This is also the spatial metaphor in which power is manifested not through violence, strength, or force, but through speech and action.

For Arendt, power is not something measurable, unchangeable, or reliant on strength and force. Since strength is an individualistic natural quality that emerges in isolation, power for Arendt springs between human beings when they speak and act together.²⁴ For Arendt, power is boundless, limited only by the presence of others, since human power corresponds to

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

²¹ Canovan, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm,” 180.

²² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 220.

²³ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

human plurality. This plurality entails dividing or sharing power amongst people, but it does not entail diminishing or decreasing it.²⁵ Meaning to say, power is not something that belongs absolutely to just one group of individuals, it is shared amongst everyone without decreasing each and every individual's power. Power as exhibited in space of appearances, emphasizes on the unique distinctness (that is different from othering)²⁶ of individuals to confirm themselves through speech and action. This was also elucidated by Arendt in *Responsibility and Judgment* when public realm is referred to as an offering to provide space of appearances for political speech and action.²⁷ This was further emanated in *Men in Dark Times*, when her discussion focused on various persons and how they were affected by the historicity of their own time. In this work, it is in the public realm, by providing a space of appearances, that people show in deeds and words who they truly are.²⁸ The work further developed in entailing that during dark times, there is no public realm to illuminate speech and action, there are people like Jews under Nazism, who were deliberately excluded from the public.²⁹

Space of appearances is also implicitly present in her other works. The predecessor of *The Human Condition*, *Origins of Totalitarianism* represents the emergence of totalitarian propaganda that is actually aimed at the abolishment of space of appearances. Totalitarian propaganda reduces human beings to mere cogs to the bureaucratic machines of the Nazis.³⁰ In this sense, I interpret that when totalitarianism transpires, a public space is no longer a space of appearances. A totalitarian society cannot qualify as a public realm in the definition of Arendt as they do not provide a space of appearances where people can exercise their freedom and be active participants.³¹ In a totalitarian regime, people are reduced to mere masses, who simply vote and follow so-called leaders, supposedly representing them.³² In return, people do not appear and participate as political beings endowed with speech and action. Totalitarianism tramples on space of appearances, it transforms the public space into empty spaces devoid of appearances. A totalitarian public space does not value the plurality of individuals, their power, and capabilities. Hence, in Arendt's report on Adolf Eichmann, she evaluates that Eichmann evidently did not portray any

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

²⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken books, 2003), 8.

²⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1968), viii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1966), 308–309.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 311–312.

³² *Ibid.*

remorse and conscience with his involvement in Nazism.³³ Because of his apparent disregard of his own agency and distinctness from others, he allowed himself to be utilized for the extermination of the Jews. In Arendt's terms, Eichmann's notable role in Nazism cannot be classified as a political action. *Between Past and Future*, *On Violence*, and *On Revolution* provided a more contextualized interpretation on space of appearances that is grounded on the notions of freedom and equality.³⁴ Arendt likened the space of appearances to the Greek *polis* where people act and where freedom can appear.³⁵ In some of Arendt's essays like "Freedom to be Free," Arendt's discussion is much more grounded in emphasizing the role of space of appearances in ensuring that freedom persists as the *raison d'être* of politics.³⁶ Arendt further elaborated on this idea in her lecture, "Freedom and Politics, a Lecture." For Arendt, freedom entails action, freedom to participate and to start new beginnings amongst other human beings.³⁷ This makes human beings different from other animal life. She highlights the importance of freedom and participation in establishing the artificial world of politics. Arendt wrote:

... no life would develop out of inorganic processes, and that no man would emerge out of the evolution of animal life. The decisive difference between the "infinite improbabilities" on which the reality of our earthly life rests and the miraculous character inherent in those events which establish historical reality is that, in the realm of human affairs, we know the authors of "miracles." It is men who perform them—men who because they have received the twofold gift of freedom and action can establish a reality of their own.³⁸

It is seemingly obvious that space of appearances is an unproblematic notion that would promote human plurality, equality, and freedom. However, Arendt's distinction between private and public realm and the rise

³³ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1964), 112.

³⁴ For this discussion, see Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1965), and Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1970).

³⁵ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 154.

³⁶ Hannah Arendt, "The Freedom to be Free: The Conditions and Meaning of Revolutions," in *Thinking without Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975*, ed. by Jerome Kohn, 368-386 (New York: Schocken book, 2018), 373.

³⁷ Hannah Arendt, "Freedom and Politics, a lecture" in *Ibid.*, 236.

³⁸ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 171.

of the social realm are important considerations. Because of Arendt's distinction of the realms, space of appearances is much more complex than a simple space that promotes plurality, equality, and freedom. When we consider her distinction, it will entail mainly two things: (1) the public cannot include all human beings as some need to be left behind in private to fulfill labor, and (2) there are certain private matters that simply cannot be brought out to the public. The first problem in Arendt's distinction seems to pose a paradox in her promotion of human plurality and freedom for it systematically subordinates a portion of the human race and refused admittance to some.³⁹ The second point, on the other hand, believes that private matters have no place in the public realm. Arendt firmly advocates that the public realm is only concerned about politics and the welfare of its people beyond their identities and private agendas.⁴⁰ In her essay "Public Rights and Private Interests: A Response to Charles Frankel," Arendt utilized the jury as an analogy to promulgate this stance. A jury is called to appear in court to deliberate on the verdict of a case presented to them based on evidence and for the benefit of the public. Arendt mentioned that a jury possesses both private and public interests, yet they do not reach a verdict based on their personal interests; instead, their judgment is guided solely by what they consider beneficial to the public.⁴¹ This is the analogy utilized by Arendt to emphasize the difference between private and public interests and why there are concerns and issues that simply cannot be politicized. The difference between private and public interests is one of the major contentions of Arendt as to why she rigidly promotes the separation of private and public realms. Additionally, rights for Arendt can also be understood privately and publicly. For Arendt, the basic inalienable rights of an individual as a human person are considered private rights. While public rights are additional rights that individuals enjoy when they actively participate in the public, not for their own personal agenda but for the welfare of the general public.⁴²

Arendt focuses her argumentation more on what a public space ought to be to ensure that the public will be an end in itself. Arendt in turn, criticizes those people who participate simply for their personal gains and interests. However, Arendt did not provide any emphasis as to how we can arrive at this public space. She did not talk about the nuances of a public space that only caters to the privileged few. A question that reverberates in reading Arendt is how can human plurality flourish in a public space that is designed

³⁹ Dietz, "Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics," 239.

⁴⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Public Rights and Private Interests: A Response to Charles Frankel," in *Thinking without Banister*, 507.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 506.

to be enjoined only by some? This question resonates with Judith Butler's⁴³ critique in *The Force of Nonviolence*. Butler criticizes how we perceive society as if individuals are atoms that are abstracted from their material conditions and from their relations with other people.⁴⁴ Butler argues that our assumption of the social form of individuals is the masculine man. As Butler writes, "He sprang, lucky guy, from the imaginations of liberal theorists as a full adult, without relations, but equipped with anger and desire, sometimes capable of a happiness or self-sufficiency that depended on a natural world preemptively void of other people."⁴⁵ This is perhaps, one of the gaps in Arendt's contention of the space of appearances. Albeit the space of appearances is promising to combat totalitarianism and ensure human plurality, it is still limited by questioning how can we arrive at this public space for those people who do not fit into the standards of whom public space is for. Hence, it is only crucial to reread what Arendt meant by distinguishing the private interests from public rights. Indeed, because of the inequalities that persist among human beings, is it not only natural that the private interests of those who are marginalized or initially excluded in the public to be push forth in the public space?

With these in mind, Arendt is a challenging thinker for feminism. Since sex and gender issues are typically concerned with the bodies of women and their domestic welfare, some prominent feminist thinkers believe that this stance of Arendt and what she qualifies as private concerns as separated from public concerns is problematic. Moreover, her works face feminist criticisms, as some called her work silent, ignorant, and blatantly supports women subordination in the private and women's exclusion in the public.⁴⁶ Even in situations wherein women are clearly involved in the public like during the French Revolution,⁴⁷ Arendt deliberately did not include the issues related to women and their roles in both private and public in her philosophic discussions. This leads to the following questions: is Arendt still relevant to feminism? How can we defend her notion of space of appearances? To answer these questions, it is necessary to first situate Arendt in relation to the feminist question.

⁴³ Judith Butler's preferred pronouns are they/them. See also Jules Gleeson, "Judith Butler: The Backlash Against 'Gender Ideology' Must Stop," in *The Guardian* (7 September 2021), <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/07/judith-butler-interview-gender?CMP=share_btn_url>.

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London and New York: Verso, 2020), chapter 1, EPUB.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ For this discussion see, Honig, *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*.

⁴⁷ For this discussion, see Joan B. Landes, "Novus Ordo Saeclorum: Gender and Public Space in Arendt's Revolutionary France," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, 195–220.

Situating Arendt within Feminist Discourse

Adrienne Rich expected Arendt, as a woman, to include feminist discussion in her works.⁴⁸ To her dismay, Arendt is hardly concerned with feminism. However, I argue that this should not automatically dismiss the possibility of feminist interpretations and appropriations of her works. Arendt is known for her refusal to associate herself or her works to feminism and that she did not also specifically address women's concerns in her works.⁴⁹ This refusal is not a direct proof that she is, as other feminists would call her, a woman conforming to masculine ideologies.⁵⁰ Elisabeth Young Bruehl in her work *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* tried to defend, contextualize, and reinterpret the works of Arendt based on her life and experiences.⁵¹ Bruehl argues that the works of Arendt can be further developed and understood once we compare it to her personal experiences. Having this in consideration, we can also understand Arendt's political thought in her interviews as well. For instance, in Arendt's 1964 interview with Gunter Gaus, Gaus started the interview by stating that Arendt was the first woman philosopher to ever be invited to the series of interviews he conducted. Arendt protested this idea by saying that she did not belong to the circle of philosophers and associated her work more with political theory.⁵² She then made a sweeping contention against the other statement of Gaus that philosophy is a masculine occupation by saying that "it does not have to remain a masculine occupation! It is entirely possible that a woman will one day be a philosopher"⁵³ This stance alone can be understood from a feminist standpoint. Her political thought should not be easily dismissed as conformist or ignorant, contrary to the perspectives of some feminists like Rich.

Various thinkers interpret Arendt's works by claiming that Arendt is insisting to block private identities with its proliferation in the public. For some thinkers like Rich, Arendt's political thought recognizes that private

⁴⁸ For this discussion see, Honig, *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁰ See Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, 212; O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction*, 99.

⁵¹ Elisabeth Young Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982).

⁵² Gunter Gaus conducted a series of interview wherein he invited philosophers of his time. Arendt is the first woman philosopher to be interviewed by Gaus. Here, Arendt wanted to distance herself from philosophy. She contends that her works reverberates more on political theory rather than the philosophic tradition. Arendt, albeit does not want to consider herself a philosopher, still argued that it is not because she thinks philosophy is a masculine occupation or that women are incapable of becoming a philosopher. See Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains': A Conversation with Gunter Gaus," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken books, 1994), 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

identities—like sex or gender identities—have no space in the public.⁵⁴ For Bonnie Honig however, rather than interpreting this as discriminatory or disillusioned, this could be promising as it could pave the way for new identities to manifest in the public.⁵⁵ New identities that would showcase individuals' capabilities, participation, and contribution rather than boxing them in their private identities.⁵⁶ This is not to say that Arendt is right in saying that private identities have no place in public, but rather, this is to argue that individuals should appear in public more than their private identities. For example, a woman can appear in public not solely on the basis of her sex or gender, but on the basis of her capabilities. The problem with Rich's criticism of Arendt is that she expected the feminist question of the writings of Arendt simply on the account of her so-called identity as a woman.⁵⁷ For Rich, Arendt has a moral responsibility to pose the "woman question" or to include feminism in her works simply because she is a woman.⁵⁸ This disregards other identities of Arendt that may have influenced her writings, such as her German Philosophic tradition. Hence, for this paper, I do not force the feminist question or the woman question on the reading of Arendt. I am doing the opposite: I attempt to locate how some of Arendt's notions can fit into feminist discourses. Rethinking Arendt's work is not tantamount to proving that Arendt insinuates feminism in her works. This effort is an attempt to iterate her political thought to map some indirect allusions to feminism. This will be done in the next section of this paper wherein I simultaneously re-establish the Arendtian space of appearances while also exposing its limitation.

⁵⁴ As discussed by Ann M. Lane, Adrienne Rich highly criticized Arendt for her apparent prioritization of the public identities and political action. This entails that Arendt provides a male-centered idea of the public as the women who fulfil their labor and who remain in the private were not recognized. Arendt also ignored notable women activists like Olive Schreiner, Emma Goldman, and Jane Addams in her works. For this discussion, see Ann M. Lane, "The Feminism of Hannah Arendt," in *Democracy* 3:3 (1983), 109, <https://democracyjournalarchive.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/lane_the-feminism-of-hannah-arendt-democracy-3-2_-may-1983.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Honig, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 155.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ This problem was highlighted by Honig by arguing that we should accept that Arendt's works are not really feminist works just because it was written by a woman. Through this, we can instead refocus our attention to how we can appropriate the political thought of Arendt to feminism. Instead of forcing the feminist question in her writings, we can focus on appropriating Arendt to the feminist discourse.

⁵⁸ Honig, *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, 3.

Re-establishing the Arendtian Space of Appearances

Arendt's rigid distinction between private and public realms allegedly ignores the intersectionality between private affairs and public affairs. With Arendt's categorization, it ignores the reality that there are issues and concerns that intersect between the two realms. However, in this section, I will present my critique and, at the same time, redeem the philosophy of Arendt to tease out what feminists can learn from her political thought. Arendt was silent, ignorant, and accused of deliberately shutting off women in her works.⁵⁹ Joan B. Landes mentioned in her essay, "*Novus Ordo Saeclorum: Gender and Public Space in Arendt's Revolutionary France*" that Arendt was able to argue for the importance of the French revolution in history but ignore the involvement of women in such revolution.⁶⁰ As previously mentioned, her heavy grounding on the Greek *polis* is seen by various thinkers as problematic. The problem with the distinctions between private and public realms lies in the strict compartmentalization of life's activities, despite the fact that certain struggles—such as those experienced by women—intersect both the private and public spheres. According to some commentators of Arendt, women are treated as a univocal body in the private realm.⁶¹ There is this homogenizing assumption that sex identities, just like being a woman, are private forms within formed identities. In the public, on the other hand, it gives hope to the possibility of expressing oneself in their multiplicity or plurality. This entails that if one wants to participate in the public, one must temporarily abandon his or her identity in the private.⁶² This means that the identity of women is reduced to private and limited to bodily function, biological matters, and their roles. It led feminist thinkers to criticize Arendt as someone who reduces private realm to a patriarchal masculine realm and how the public realm is deemed to only cater to the privileged men.⁶³ The distinction between private and public realms gives justification as to why women are treated as the second sex and why sex and gender roles persist. This connotes how the private realm disallows a lot of people, especially women, from being political. On the other hand, there are various thinkers who would argue that this reading of *The Human Condition* can be reevaluated.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Landes, "*Novus Ordo Saeclorum: Gender and Public Space in Arendt's Revolutionary France*," 195.

⁶¹ Honig, "*Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity*," 139.

⁶² Dietz, "*Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics*," 239.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

For some, Arendt did not altogether claim that the Greek polis, exactly as it is, is the politics that is to be promoted. For Dietz and Canovan, *The Human Condition* needed to be read with more of an open mind and with a deeper understanding. According to Dietz, we should not easily dismiss Arendt's works as irrelevant or in conformity with patriarchal and masculine ideologies.⁶⁴ She cited some evident considerations, particularly how Arendt defines notions like power and space of appearances. Power, as often attributed to masculinity, can potentially lead to violence.⁶⁵ However, the notion of power in the Arendtian sense is devoid of this attribute.⁶⁶ For Arendt, power is not exercised through violence but is instead expressed through speech and action, with people who collectively act together or in concert.⁶⁷ Albeit, Arendt utilized the Aristotelian notion of the *polis*, this does not entail that Arendt conservatively conforms to this philosophic tradition. She would refer to this tradition as a foundation of her political thought, but she would still clarify and iterate most of its claims. Her discussion about the *animal laborans* is an acknowledgement of the reality during Hellenic period,⁶⁸ but this does not equate to what she wants to preserve in her promotion of the private realm. In the same work, Arendt acknowledges how women and slaves were treated as private property, hidden in the private realm.⁶⁹ Arendt also clarifies that the private and public realms are much more complex than the simplified idea that private property is the condition to allow people to participate in the public.⁷⁰ She later declared that "... the modern age emancipated the working classes and the women at nearly the same historical moment must certainly be counted among the characteristics of an age which no longer believes that bodily functions and material concerns should be hidden"⁷¹ Hence, I agree with Dietz and Canovan in their arguments that *The Human Condition* can be reevaluated to further the discourses on feminism. Moreover, to avoid misreading Arendt's position, it is best to supplement her ideas by also referring to her other works, interviews, and essays that were able to clarify the tone of her discussion in her previous

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁶⁵ bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 70.

⁶⁶ Arendt gave emphasis on power as act in concert because she criticized how power is often exercised through violence. For this discussion, see Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1970), 35–37.

⁶⁷ Patricia Owen, *Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24.

⁶⁸ Dietz, "Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics," 231.

⁶⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 72.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

works. Especially since *The Human Condition*, as Arendt herself declared, is an incomplete work.⁷²

Arendt further promotes the public realm as a space wherein action and freedom can genuinely transpire. In her words:

It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly ... No man, moreover, can live in it all the time. To be deprived of it means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all ... and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality ... The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm ... Its peculiarity is that, unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men—as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed— but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.⁷³

To engage in the space of appearances, every individual must be recognized as a free human being distinct from each other. Distinctness is very important because it recognizes the value of every individual for their own sake. In the space of appearances, speech and action must be continuously practiced. The space of appearances is a place run through words and persuasion and not through force and violence.⁷⁴ As previously mentioned, space of appearances does not pose a literal or specific space where people come together, it is a metaphorical representation of how the

⁷² Hannah Arendt, "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt," in *Thinking without a Banister*, 447.

⁷³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198–199.

⁷⁴ Arendt, *On Violence*, 56.

identities and participations can be politicized or through interaction in the public space.⁷⁵

To some extent, this is similar to John Rawls' veil of ignorance. The veil of ignorance in Rawls posits that in order for justice to prevail, we must nullify certain personal circumstances that human beings may exploit to push forth their personal agendas.⁷⁶ Rawls further notes in *A Theory of Justice* that in order for this to happen, "assume the parties are situated behind the veil of ignorance. They do not know how the various alternatives will affect their own particular case and they are obliged to evaluate principles solely on the basis of general considerations."⁷⁷ This is further emphasized by Martha Nussbaum in *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, and Species Membership*. In *Frontiers of Justice*, Nussbaum argues that the veil of ignorance is "a commitment to impartiality as a good in itself ... The parties want to pursue their own advantage; but the Veil ensures that they do so only on terms that are fair to all."⁷⁸ What Arendt wanted to do in the space of appearances resonate with some aspects of Rawls' veil of ignorance. Albeit Arendt did not altogether claim that the personal identities and private matters of individuals must be behind the veil of ignorance, it is similar in a sense that both thinkers imagine that a fair public space caters to the benefit of the common good, more than the personal interests. Both thinkers do not entail that the individual identities and private interests would be disregarded in the public. But rather, the relationality with the other should always be considered. This can emerge when we ensure that the public is an end in itself and not a means solely for private interests.

Again, space of appearances is not a univocal single space, but it is a spatial metaphor that should acknowledge multiple sites for multiple identities and expressions. The importance of the space of appearances is not about the number of individuals who come together in the same space. It is about the plurality of perspectives in people who are gathered together.⁷⁹ Human plurality in the Arendtian sense, equally values every human person for their distinctness and capacity, not reducing them to mere numbers who do not think for themselves.⁸⁰ The public, although consisting of distinct

⁷⁵ Patricia Owens, "Hannah Arendt, Violence, and the Inescapable Fact of Humanity" in *Hannah Arendt and International Relations*, ed. by Anthony F. Lang, Jr and John Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56.

⁷⁶ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 136.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 136–137.

⁷⁸ Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, and Species Membership* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 57.

⁷⁹ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public" in *Hannah Arendt Critical Essays*, 267.

⁸⁰ Rosalyn Diprose and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, *Arendt, Natality, and Biopolitics: Toward Democratic Plurality and Reproductive Justice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 63.

individuals, must go beyond their personal private interests and must also exercise their public interests.⁸¹ This very condition that Arendt did not elaborate on can also be read as the missing prong in her notion of space of appearances. The problem lies in what can qualify as private interests and what can be accounted for as public interests that call for public concerns. Private interest is defined by Arendt as individualistic and feminist movements cannot be classified as such. Simply discounting feminist movements as individualistic just because they promote reproductive rights and the alleviation of the oppressive situations in the private is an oversimplification of a complex problem. The concern of Arendt that the identity of being a woman cannot be brought out to public concern⁸² is perhaps a misnomer that feminist concerns automatically omit solely private interest and not of a public one. She also mentioned that politics should be concerned with public rights, one that is not just of an individual, but what is common to others. Commentators of Arendt failed to realize that Arendt also discussed this in her work when she discussed the rise of the social in the modern age.

The possibility of describing the profound difference between the modern and the ancient understanding of politics in terms of a clear-cut opposition ends here. In the modern world, the social and the political realms are much less distinct. That politics is nothing but a function of society, that action, speech, and thought are primarily superstructures upon social interest ... This functionalization makes it impossible to perceive any serious gulf between the two realms; and this is not a matter of a theory or an ideology, since with the rise of society, that is, the rise of the "household" (*oikia*) or of economic activities to the public realm, housekeeping and all matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a collective concern. In the modern world, the two realms indeed constantly flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process itself.⁸³

Parallel to the collective concern that Arendt was referring to, the concerns of feminists, of women insisting on participating in the public, do not only convey their private personal interest but represent that of the common public. The feminist concerns do not aim to redirect the attention of the public to their personal private interest; the aim is to be included and be

⁸¹ See Arendt, "Public Rights and Private Interests: A Response to Charles Frankel."

⁸² Arendt's concerns with politicization of identity are elucidated in her correspondence and exchange of letters with Gershom Scholem. The exchange was initiated in response to Arendt's controversial take on the Eichmann trial. Scholem is adamant in enforcing Arendt's Jewishness in her writings while Arendt contested that her Jewishness is a private matter. See Marie Luise Knott ed., *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem* trans. by Anthony David (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁸³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 33.

recognized much more than their physical body. This alone could fit into the idea of Arendt that public is not solely concerned with the individual's interest but that of a more world-centric and public interest.⁸⁴ The interest of feminism is to establish the very condition that will allow them to be *equalized*⁸⁵ among others.

Arendt may not explicitly mention feminist concerns, but her political thought exacerbates the struggle for rights, speech and action, political identities, and opinions which are all indirectly applicable to feminist concerns. The problem with Arendt's apparent disregard to the feminist concern in the public poses an assumption that people who appear in the space of appearance are already free, who can exercise their power, speak, and act together. But what about in instances, like in the case of some women, wherein they were not freed from the conditions of their private lives? What if the basic necessities are the very conditions that prohibit them from participating in the public and to be political? What about in instances wherein the private needed emancipation that is only possible through politics in public? The problem with Arendt is that she discussed public realm, the space of appearances, without discussing the necessary conditions of the people who will participate in the public.

The proposal of space of appearances and freedom are promising but only if we will include the very condition of the people to appear and to be free. Human plurality is much more than the diverse number of people gathered together. Human plurality should also acknowledge the plurality of struggles of individuals in various realms. The reading on Arendt as someone who easily dismisses the identity of individuals as private interest needs to be reevaluated. Susan Bickford, in her essay "In the Presence of Others: Arendt and Anzaldua on the Paradox of Public Appearance," highlighted the importance of identity as a public phenomenon in the paradox of the public space.⁸⁶ For Bickford, there is a paradox in the identity and space of appearances in such a way that there is a constant agonism between subjectivity and intersubjectivity.⁸⁷ The feminist struggle to demand a space in the public and to participate in the space of appearances does not solely focus on how one can freely express themselves but rather focuses also as to

⁸⁴ Canovan, "Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm," 196.

⁸⁵ When Arendt affirms that equality only existing in the public, she does not entail that injustices can legitimately persist in the private. What she meant by equality as a condition of the public or what she refers to as *equalized* is that people artificially built a community wherein people are equal regardless of their natural differences and private identities. That equality is something that is artificially built and created in the public. See Arendt, "Public Rights and Private Interests: A Response to Charles Frankel."

⁸⁶ Susan Bickford, "In the Presence of Others: Arendt and Anzaldua on the Paradox of Public Appearance," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, 314.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 315.

how one can appear together with other people. This becomes a paradox as the space of appearances do not only cater to being with each other but also portrays a space wherein people struggle against one another. Appearing in the space of appearances makes oneself subjected not only to freedom but also to judgment.⁸⁸ Judgment in this sense, emphasizing on the agonistic quality of the public, is not altogether pessimistic. Judgment together with opinion highlights that appearing in the public is not only about the individual's oneself but also about perceiving other people as other appearing individuals.

Space of appearances does not endow one's individual recognition to appear alongside other people just for their personal interest. One is appearing alongside other people to collectively be political to achieve politics as an end in itself.⁸⁹ Again, space of appearances is a place wherein people speak and act in concert. Where plurality of individuals is recognized and every individual freely shows themselves to participate in public. However, this trait of space of appearances only makes sense if it is grounded on people who already enjoy their private rights, the basic rights that they need to have. Arendt may distinguish the private from public realm, but she did not altogether consider the two to be antagonistic of one another. On the contrary, the two actually complement one another.⁹⁰ As Arendt puts it, "... privacy, was like the other, the dark and hidden side of the public realm, and while to be political meant to attain the highest possibility of human existence, to have no private place of one's own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human."⁹¹

This is why the *vita activa*, the activities of life, is not solely focused on the activity of action but it exists in a non-hierarchical order alongside labor and work that may be deemed to be nonpolitical. This is further elaborated by Arendt in her essay, "Labor, Work, Action" that *vita activa* may be seen as opposite to *vita contemplativa* but they are conditions that emanate from each other.⁹² Parallel to this, private and public realms needed to be given equal importance. As much as it is our right to participate in the public, it is also our right to resort back to private life.⁹³ The two realms, although they are different, are still related and constantly affect one another. Distinguishing them need not lead to isolating the realms rigidly as if they do not influence one another. By acknowledging this, one can cater to a space of appearances that people can gather in without falling into the mistake of

⁸⁸ See Arendt, *On Revolution*, 221.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Arendt, "Public Rights and Private Interests: A Response to Charles Frankel," 510.

⁹¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 64.

⁹² Arendt, "Labor, Work, Action" in *Thinking without a Banister*, 291.

⁹³ Arendt, "Public Rights and Private Interests: A Response to Charles Frankel," 511.

altogether abandoning the private. The agenda of feminists is not to use the public space or politics to solely gain something for themselves. The agenda is to push oneself in order to be part of the public. So that their opinions are recognized as a viable part of the public and not be reduced as mere bickering that is only welcome in the social and private. Take for example, women's rights to suffrage movement.⁹⁴ While the struggle may be framed as a fight for private rights (in terms of Arendt), its ultimate goal is not personal gain, but the political and public.

Conclusion

Feminist concerns can qualify as political because they represent cultural and collective experience. In response to Arendt's categorization of private and public realms, one cannot simply abandon one's private life. As Arendt puts it, both are needed for the growth of individuals. Feminist concerns are not simply individualistic and isolated concerns. These are things that concern the world and should have been brought to the light of the public to ensure that human dignity and human plurality will be observed by all people, both in the private and public realm.

The world-centered approach of the public needs reevaluation. In some instances, people who participate in public life have the tendency to imitate a world that only caters to the privileged few. It may also lead to the ignorance of the welfare of everyone else, for a crooked view of how the world ought to be. Arendt made a sound point that politics should be an end in itself, that it should be world-centered and not of private interests. However, my contention, alongside various feminist thinkers, is how do people, like women, reach this when the conditions of some women are not the same with most people who appear in the public. The public space that Arendt is promoting only makes sense if it will cater to the will of everyone, especially the marginalized and not just the privileged few, not just the rich, white, and male. This is the reason why it is necessary to first understand how we can establish a public space where actual people, from various backgrounds, will appear. A space where women will not be shunned off and their concerns will not be easily dismissed as private matters. Feminist concerns qualify as public interest as it involves the welfare of women in the world, as they aim to establish a public that includes the multiplicity of their identities.

This paper is both a critique against Arendt's rigid distinction on private and public realm and at the same time, an iteration of her notion of

⁹⁴ For this discussion, see Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2009).

space of appearances and freedom from a feminist perspective as an attempt to redeem the relevance of her political thought to emerging issues related to feminism. Perhaps, Arendt's political thought can be understood not as abandonment or dismissal of feminist concerns, but only as a missing link that can still fit into the goal of feminism. After all, feminism and some of Arendt's political thought share the same goal—to arrive at an authentic public realm wherein people can participate and appear with one another, to achieve a common political goal.

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Herbert Marcuse's Visit to Israel: Rethinking Israel's Military Aggression in Palestine

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Abstract: This paper focuses on Marcuse's stance toward Israel and problematizes how his critical theory can help make sense of the longstanding Israeli occupation in Palestine. As a Jew himself, Marcuse experienced antisemitism both in Germany and the US. It is for this reason, along with the longstanding persecution of the Jewish people, that he was sympathetic to the state of Israel's right to exist. On the other hand, he provided critical perspectives on Israel's policies against the Palestinians, in that he also recognized the legitimate plight of the latter. Guided by this, I aim to answer three questions: 1) What is Marcuse's general critique of military aggression? 2) How did Marcuse's visit to Israel shape his stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict during his time? and 3) What is the current state of Palestine, and how does Marcuse's notion of radical imagination invoke a rethinking of Israel's hubristic and hawkish military stance today? Ultimately, this paper does not claim to offer a grand solution to the existing conflict in the said region; rather, it centers primarily around an exploratory use of Marcuse's critical social project in analyzing the plight of the Palestinians along with the possibilities for radical resistance.

Keywords: Marcuse, Gaza, critical theory, militarization

Most, if not all, members of the first generation of the Frankfurt School were Jewish. Horkheimer, Fromm, Lowenthal, and Marcuse, for example, were of Jewish descent and were fortunate enough to have survived the holocaust by fleeing to America.¹ After the Second World War, a few of them, such as Horkheimer, Pollock, and Adorno, returned to Germany, while others, like Marcuse and Fromm, chose to stay in the United States. It was in the US that Marcuse would spend his most

¹ See Jack Jacobs, "Critical Theorists and the State of Israel," in *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 111.

productive years in terms of teaching, writing, and even becoming a world-renowned public intellectual.

According to Douglas Kellner, two tendencies of critical theory emerged in the 1940s: 1) the philosophical-cultural leaning of Horkheimer and Adorno; and 2) the practical political orientation of the philosophical project of Herbert Marcuse and Franz Neumann.² Indeed, Marcuse's model of critical social project centered mainly on an ideological critique of capitalism and the search for agents of social transformation that would bring about liberation against forms of domination. We find in his analyses in *One-Dimensional Man*, for instance, a social critique of abundance and technical progress in Western liberal democracies that fosters, in a subtle manner, a decline in the critical impulse of the individual. In *Eros and Civilization*, he argues against the surplus repression pervasive in the late industrial civilization, which principally suppresses a particular life instinct called Eros in favor of performance, productivity, accumulation, and aggression. Indeed, Marcuse was critical of the ways in which liberal democracies engender new forms of social control in an economic system that alters the biological, psychological, and cultural aspects of the individual.

Conversely, despite Marcuse's pessimistic and critical analyses of the problems he found within advanced industrial societies, he was also actively engaged in the explosion of several liberation movements at the time. He wrote on and paid close attention to the emerging movements of his time, including the civil rights movement, antiwar movement, feminist, environmental, and anti-imperialist struggles, among others. In a dramatic and unexpected turn, he unwittingly became the guru of the New Left in the US. Philosophers are not always at the forefront of mainstream political discussions. However, his vocal advocacy for the struggles and resistance efforts of several groups, both in his writings and through political action, established him as one of the most prominent public intellectuals of his time.

Indeed, he took liberation movements seriously, despite their imperfections and failures. Candidly, however, I find it perplexing that in the many years of Marcuse's writings and political participation, not so much has been discussed as regards his views on Israel and Palestine, which is perhaps one of the longest modern conflicts the world has seen. Considering the Jewish background of the first-generation members of the Frankfurt School, one wonders about their relationship with the state of Israel, especially given its convoluted geopolitical conjuncture. As such, this paper focuses fundamentally on Marcuse's stance toward Israel and how his critical theory can help make sense of the longstanding Israeli occupation in Palestine today.

² See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), xxii.

Guided by this, I aim to answer three key points: 1) What is Marcuse's general critique of military aggression? 2) How did Marcuse's visit to Israel shape his stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict during his time? and 3) What is the current state of Palestine, and how does Marcuse's notion of radical imagination invoke a rethinking of Israel's hubristic and hawkish military stance today? Ultimately, I do not claim to offer a grand solution to the existing conflict in the said region; rather, my work primarily revolves around an exploratory use of Marcuse's critical social project in understanding the plight of the Palestinians, along with the possibilities for radical resistance.³ That said, let us first proceed to a discussion on Marcuse's critique of militarism in relation to some of his fundamental concepts in critical theory in order to establish some of the problems with militarism in general.

Marcuse on Militarism

Understanding Marcuse's critique of militarism warrants a brief sketch of his general impression of late capitalist societies and the immanent contradictions in the established order. Keep in mind that he did not necessarily offer an organized and philosophically sharp account and critique of militarism. Nevertheless, fragments from several writings, including *Eros and Civilization*, *One-Dimensional Man*, *An Essay on Liberation*, and *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, to name a few, guide us in reconstructing and explaining the core principle of militarism's aggressive force in Marcuse's view.

Marcuse advances an interesting analysis concerning the totalitarian tendencies present in Western liberal democracies that differ from previous forms of totalitarianism. In particular, he notes that the defeat of Nazism has not prevented the trend toward totalitarianism; reason has become an instrument for domination. He opines that the "defeat of Fascism and National Socialism has not arrested the trend towards totalitarianism. Freedom is on the retreat-in the realm of thought as well as in that of society."⁴ Furthermore,

³ I am fully aware of the sensitive, divisive, and emotional nature of the issue at hand. Likewise, I do not assume any technical and scholarly expertise on Arab and Jewish studies nor any policy expertise. This also is not a historical tracing of the Israel-Palestine conflict. It simply aims to present a decent understanding, at the very least, of Marcuse's political engagement with the Israel-Palestine conflict to expand the discourse on critical theory's function and relevance in examining existing social pathologies and unconscionable conditions of the day.

⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Humanities Press, 1954), 433.

contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For “totalitarian” is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests. It thus precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole.⁵

Marcuse alludes to the idea that, far from being purely rational and advanced, late capitalist societies also exhibit a propensity to be totalitarian, which is worth examining. In fact, Marcuse goes on to say that there appear to be new forms of social control in democratic societies. In his time, when individuals were relishing in the technical progress and abundance guaranteed by advanced industrial society—‘a society that delivers the goods’—production and consumption were at great heights. People were afforded the opportunity to exercise freedom—indeed, an unfettered freedom in the market. Fashionable gadgets, seductive car models, a booming entertainment industry, a sea of goods in the supermarket, flashy luxury items, name it, the market has it. Enlightenment, as promised, brought in a kind of rationality that assured more happiness and freedom. Given the seduction of capitalism, what is there to complain about? Who would not marvel at society’s abundance and progress, especially against a pre-technological society?

Indeed, modernity and reason have achieved more than one could imagine. Nonetheless, Marcuse, like the other critical theorists, recognized contradictions within modernity’s rationality. According to him, this same rational society that basked in the glory of modernity’s highly advanced innovations, conversely, brought in new forms of social control. According to Marcuse, the contradiction in this society that so appeared to be rational is that it simultaneously was irrational. He says,

And yet this society is irrational as a whole. Its productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs and faculties, its peace maintained by the constant threat of war, its growth dependent on the repression of the real possibilities for pacifying the struggle for existence—individual, national, and international.⁶

⁵ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

Marcuse brings our attention to the idea that advanced industrial society is obsessed with the logic of production, accumulation, optimization, acceleration, productivity, and overconsumption; that all these come with a price. To be clear, Marcuse does not suggest that nothing good comes out of capitalism. Indeed, he is quite aware that this logic provides material stability and purpose to society to some extent. However, the trade-off in progress is that as the logic of late capitalist society is affirmed, it neglects the qualities in life that go beyond the grammar of quantities and metrics.

This becomes much clearer by identifying Marcuse's appropriation of Freud's psychoanalysis. He makes use of the latter's psychoanalytic terms to clarify this tension in advanced industrial society. In *Eros and Civilization*, he follows Freud in distinguishing two life instincts, Eros from Thanatos. In the interest of brevity, we may say that Eros or life-instinct aspires for the preservation and flourishing of life, while Thanatos or death-instinct is geared towards its destruction. These instincts, according to Marcuse, which are in constant antagonism, seek gratification. In the case of Eros, it seeks immediate gratification of sexual desire, whereas Thanatos seeks death. To be sure, their gratification ought to be satisfied, yet a level of repression is also necessary insofar as allowing limitless gratification for either could be detrimental.⁷ Put simply, when individuals are left to their own devices, social order and security will most likely be jeopardized.

Following the above, Marcuse characterizes late capitalist society as one that privileges Thanatos over Eros, which engenders certain problems. As society follows the logic of Thanatos, it becomes more and more aggressive, productive, and destructive.⁸ Inversely, it also reduces the value of Eros. This is worrisome insofar as the latter emanates a realm of ideas, images, and attitudes that propagate beauty, joy, emancipation, and the like.⁹ When these aspects of life are neglected in favor of aggression, production, and accumulation to optimize capitalist profit, we form a society that is dependent on waste, destruction, military aggression, and a host of other societal predicaments.

It is from this standpoint that he views militarization through a critical lens. He finds fault with the way in which Western liberal democracies have maintained their aggression through their hyper-militarization. Clearly, a society that is obsessed with production, consumption, and productivity, inevitably engages also in wars, destruction of the environment, and intense

⁷ See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Beacon Press, 1955), 154.

⁸ See *Ibid.*, 138.

⁹ See *Ibid.*, 224.

levels of accumulation.¹⁰ Reflecting on militarization, Marcuse, in *An Essay on Liberation*, opines:

Obscene is not the picture of a naked woman who exposes her pubic hair but that of a fully clad general who exposes his medals rewarded in a war of aggression; obscene is not the ritual of the Hippies but the declaration of a high dignitary of the Church that war is necessary for peace.¹¹

This points to the perverse attitude and behavior we have today, where military generals flash their medals with pride for having gone to war. Surely and sadly, war is inevitable and honoring the men and women in uniform for defending one's country matters. Yet, it is outright egregious to be displaying militaristic hubris. There is something problematic in normalizing wars as a means to maintain peace, as the case may be in the Middle East and various parts of the world.

Marcuse's opposition to the Vietnam War and support for anti-war movements demonstrate his practical critical outlook against militarism in general. The aggressive forces maintained in the established system have only led to torture, bombings, and burnings in Vietnam.¹² Wars achieve nothing in the long run. They only result in the casualties and displacement of innocent civilians. Truly, Marcuse was opposed to war as a means for peace. Kellner writes:

Marcuse was a sharp critic of militarism and a lover of life who hated death and killing. He feared that more sophisticated technologies would "instrumentalize" war and produce ever more brutal forms of destruction-a

¹⁰ The capitalist economy that is aggressive by design channels human instincts into destructive and dominating directions. This is chiefly institutionalized through militarization with the goal of espousing conformity and obedience, to name a few. In its overproduction and aggressive drive for economic growth, a war economy that incessantly demands for the creation of tanks, bombs, and other weapons of war appear necessary. Clearly, all this only becomes useful when wars are sustained. Hence, it is an economy that profits tremendously from wars. For more discussion on the link between technological progress and war, see Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*.

¹¹ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 12.

¹² See Herbert Marcuse, "Herbert Marcuse Denounces the Vietnam War (May 22, 1966)," trans. by Allison Brown, published in *German History in Documents and Images* (retrieved October 2024), <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/two-germanies-1961-1989/herbert-marcuse-denounces-the-vietnam-war-may-22-1966>>.

vision amply confirmed in the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars.¹³

Notably, the arms industry, collectively referred to as the military industrial complex, is a significant contributor to the problem to a large degree. The celebration of capitalism, for Marcuse, comes with the “danger and insanity in its military-industrial complex.”¹⁴ The justification that war is inevitable becomes a convenient pretext for its valorization. Never mind that profiting from war, rather than maintaining peace, is often the primary consideration for maintaining wars. Commenting on war being profitable, Naomi Klein writes:

... the real money is in fighting wars abroad. Beyond the weapons contractors, who have seen their profits soar thanks to the war in Iraq, maintaining the U.S. military is now one of the fastest-growing service economies in the world ... Now wars and disaster responses are so fully privatized that they are themselves the new market; there is no need to wait until after the war for the boom—the medium is the message.¹⁵

All things considered, Marcuse provides us with a rationalization as to why aggression, military aggression in particular, is characteristic of an irrational society that valorizes the logic of performance and productivity. Ultimately, if his analyses prompted him to comment on the Vietnam War during his time, among other things, perhaps we can also use his concepts in rethinking the ongoing Israeli military operations in Palestine. A useful point of departure before doing that would be to revisit Marcuse's visit to Israel in 1971. This gives us an understanding of his critical stance against militarism, especially as a Jewish intellectual.

Marcuse's Visit to Israel and His Views on the Arab-Israeli Conflict in a Nutshell

In December 1971, Marcuse visited the state of Israel. Zvi Tauber notes that Marcuse was invited to deliver lectures at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute of Tel Aviv University. The lectures then became known as “The

¹³ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, xxxvii

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xxx

¹⁵ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2008), 13.

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.a7>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/ladero1_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330

Jerusalem Lectures,” in which Marcuse discussed aesthetics and politics.¹⁶ Interestingly, Marcuse also requested the director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Yehuda Elkana, for a brief meeting with Moshe Dayan, Israel’s Defense Minister at the time. He also met with other dignitaries while in Israel and was even invited to the home of prominent Palestinian writer and journalist Raymonda Hawa-Tawil in the West Bank along with other dignitaries of Palestine.

Marcuse’s meeting with Israel’s Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, was a crucial moment in this visit. It is extremely rare for an intellectual to have an intimate appointment with people in power, let alone the head of the Defense Ministry of a foreign country. Their conversation was particularly telling about Israel’s aggression in the Arab region. In the course of their meeting, Marcuse pressed Moshe to admit that Israel is occupying certain parts of the Arab region. In the interview, Moshe says the following:

(He points at the map of the Middle East). You are not a military man, but nevertheless it can be seen clearly. We came here, and (a) We have cut the two parts of the Arabic world off from one another. (b) We have taken from them an Arabic land and made it Jewish¹⁷

This is a major concession that especially came straight from the horse’s mouth—a top Israeli politician himself, admitting in front of Marcuse that Israel was built on the displacement of Arabs in the said land.

At the time, the meeting was never mentioned in any of Marcuse’s writings. However, the protocol has now become a public document detailing the conversation between the two.¹⁸ Apart from the protocol, Marcuse also published an article written in English in *The Jerusalem Post* called “Israel is Strong Enough to Concede.” A Hebrew translation was then published in Israel’s *Haaretz* titled, “My Opinions on the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Israel Must Accept the Existence of a Palestinian State.” The article was published days after a series of meetings he had with the individuals mentioned in this section’s opening paragraph, which is why his article begins with a note that his views on the Arab-Israeli conflict were hinged upon his “talks with many

¹⁶ See Zvi Tauber, “Herbert Marcuse on the Arab-Israeli Conflict: His Conversation with Moshe Dayan,” in *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 158 (2012), 173, <<https://doi.org/10.3817/0312158171>>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*

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people in different regions of this country, Jews and Arabs, and based on rather extensive readings of documents and secondary literature."¹⁹

This clarifies that Marcuse did engage with the issues surrounding Israel and the Arab region at large. The series of meetings and published writings demonstrates that he was paying attention to the geopolitical affairs in the Middle East as a Jewish intellectual himself. What is particularly interesting about Marcuse is that his views on Israel were nuanced and dialectical. On the one hand, he was sympathetic to the idea of a place for Jews:

You will understand that I have personal, though not only personal, feelings of solidarity and identification with Israel ... I cannot forget that for centuries the Jews belonged to the persecuted and oppressed; that not too long ago six million of them were annihilated ... When finally a place is to be created for these people where they will not need to fear persecution and oppression that is a goal which I must declare my sympathy ... I agree with Jean-Paul Sartre, who has said that under all circumstances a new war of annihilation against Israel must be prevented.²⁰

Markedly, Marcuse defended Israel's right to exist, especially against the threats to its security. At the same time, however, he was equally critical of Israel's policies. In an interview with *The Street Journal* in 1970, he says:

Up to now I have always defended Israel, because I cannot forget the fact that 6 million Jews were exterminated and that under no circumstances should conditions arise in which the same may happen again ... But it seems to me now, that the Israeli policy, far from preventing the recurrences of such conditions, may very well work toward their recurrence, unless the policies towards the Arabs radically change.²¹

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse, "Israel is Strong Enough to Concede," in *Marcuse, The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. by Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 2005), 54.

²⁰ Herbert Marcuse, "The Problem and the Hope," in *New Outlook: Middle East Monthly*, 11:6 (July/August 1968), 56.

²¹ "Marcuse on The University Music New Culture Ecology Personal & Social Liberation Workers The Mideast," in *Street Journal* (April 1970), 12.

According to Jack Jacobs, Marcuse came to this realization after the following incidents: “the alleged bombing of a school in Egypt in which 32 children were reported to have been killed, [and] the appearance of a report that accused Israel of torturing Arab prisoners,”²² to name a few. Significantly, Marcuse announced that “as a Jew, and as a member of the New Left, I can no longer defend Israeli policies, and that I have to agree with those who are radically critical of Israel.”²³

As it pertains to Palestine, Marcuse unequivocally states the following:

There is a Palestinian people which has lived for centuries on the territory part of which is now occupied by Israel. The majority of these people now live in territories under Israeli administration. These conditions make Israel an occupying power (even in Israel itself), and the Palestinian liberation movement a national liberation movement—no matter how liberal the occupying power may be.²⁴

At the end of the day, Marcuse, while supportive of Israel’s right to exist, did not identify with Zionism²⁵ in the sense of Israel being a home for all Jews. For him, Palestine had a right as well, which is why he was equally and reasonably critical of certain Israeli policies. As such, he was in solidarity with Israel, especially during the 1967 War, but later shifted his stance as a Jew in the aftermath of the war that greatly affected Palestine and the neighboring Arab countries. To be sure, Marcuse believed that antisemitism is real. He himself was a victim of antisemitism, most especially in the United States. However, he did not want criticisms against Israel to all be reduced to antisemitism. Indeed, when antisemitism is weaponized, it shuts down any reasonable criticism against Israel’s nefarious tendencies.

²² Jack Jacobs, “Critical Theorists and the State of Israel,” 118.

²³ *Ibid*, 119.

²⁴ Marcuse, “Israel is Strong Enough to Concede,” 56.

²⁵ In a nutshell, Zionism, as a response to widespread antisemitism in Europe, is a nationalist movement that pursues the creation of a Jewish state. Popularized by Theodor Herzl in the late 1800s, it has been characterized principally as a settler colonial ideology that has resulted in Palestinian dispossession. Because of its colonial model, scholars have noted its impact toward the Palestinians, especially in terms of occupation, militarization, and the repression of the latter’s self-determination. More nuanced analyses on the said political ideology can be found on work such as Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1979) and Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York: Verso, 2003).

What this section has demonstrated thus far is that we have accounts detailing Marcuse's engagement with the Arab-Israeli conflict during his time. This offers significant insights into the extent to which his model of critical social theory was willing to go. As a Jew, he felt the necessity of understanding the conflict and publicly expressing his views about it. Surely, Marcuse may not have written extensively on the conflict between Israel and Palestine, yet his visit to Israel and his published articles indicating his ambivalent relationship with Israel as a Jewish intellectual, especially with Israel's dangerous choices within the Arab region, along with his radical critique of advanced industrial societies, can perhaps help us appraise Israel's military aggression in Palestine today. I would be remiss if this conversation were not elevated to the current state of affairs between Israel and Palestine. In fact, a rethinking of Israel's military aggression is all the more urgent now that conditions are far worse than his visit more than 50 years ago.

Rethinking Israel's Military Aggression: The State of Gaza Today

Israel and Palestine have had a long-standing conflict that has probably spanned almost eight decades now. Yet, the conversation on the conflict has only intensified and gained more mainstream global traction just over a year ago. On 7 October 2023, Hamas assaulted Israel and terrorized more than 1,200 Israeli civilians and abducted nearly 250 hostages.²⁶ Hamas' terrorism, which deserves condemnation, shocked the global community and has provoked even more violence since then. Committed to rescuing the Israeli hostages taken by Hamas, Israel issued a statement and vowed that a response is on the way. While one mourns for the Israeli lives lost and the hostages taken, and recognizes Israel's right to defend itself, its response since October 7th has also incited political discussions and division reverberating all over the world, specifically as it pertains to the question of proportionality (or disproportionality).

Gaza was home to 2.2 million Palestinians, nearly half of whom are children.²⁷ Post-October 7th, and as we speak, Israel's collective punishment, disproportionate response, and indiscriminate attack against the civilian population of Palestine, has already taken more than 63,000 lives, most of which belong to the vulnerable population, women and children.²⁸ What is

²⁶ Mary Kekatos, "1 Year into the Israel-Hamas War: The Grim Human Toll by the Numbers," in *ABC News* (7 October 2024), <<https://abcnews.go.com/International/israel-hamas-war-death-toll-1-year/story?id=114458943>>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ "Gaza Death Toll Tops 63,000 as 5 More Palestinians Die of Starvation," in *Middle East Monitor* (29 August 2025), <<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250829-gaza-death-toll-tops-63000-as-5-more-palestinians-die-of-starvation/>>.

even more unconscionable is that this might not even be the only number of fatalities on the ground, given that a number of Palestinian bodies have already been buried under the rubble of the buildings that have collapsed from Israel's bombs and which possibly may no longer be recovered and identified. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israel Defense Force (IDF) have consistently defended the position that their conduct of airstrikes and carpet bombing in various parts of Palestine is principally targeting Hamas fighters. However, Gaza's health ministry, which the World Health Organization considers trustworthy, states that more than 70% of those killed have been women and children.²⁹

Time and again, Israel has defended its actions by responding that these are done in view of retrieving Israeli captives or hostages taken during the Hamas attack in Israel on October 7th. Yet, the response has been called into question insofar as the airstrikes launched have indiscriminately killed civilians and destroyed buildings—buildings that could very well have the hostages in them. The strategy is, hence, counterintuitive to its purported aim. Indeed, Israel has been accused of genocide as its military aggression in the occupied Palestinian territories has elevated the death toll day after day. There seems to be a global consensus at this point that the systematic starvation and bombing, among others, in Gaza clearly points to genocide. In fact, two of the most prominent Israeli human rights organizations themselves, B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights Israel, have even issued definitive reports condemning Israel's actions.³⁰ Additionally, "the world's leading association of genocide scholars" has made international headlines after publicly recognizing Israel's actions in Gaza as a genocide. A report from BBC reads: "A resolution passed by the International Association

²⁹ Jake Horton, Benedict Garman, and Merlyn Thomas, "Israel Gaza: Checking Israel's claim to have killed 10,000 Hamas fighters," in *BBC* (29 February 2024), <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68387864>>.

³⁰ While using the term "genocide" in describing Israel's actions in the Gaza strip can be controversial especially months post-October 7th, a number of international human rights groups, nations, and organizations have already spoken out about Israel's genocidal intent and actions. See "Israeli Organizations Conclude Israel Committing Genocide in Gaza," in *Amnesty International* (28 July 2025), <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/07/israel-opt-israeli-organizations-conclude-israel-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza-in-another-milestone-for-accountability-efforts/>>; "End Unfolding Genocide or Watch It End Life in Gaza: UN Experts Say States Face Defining Choice," *OHCHR* (31 August 2025), <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/end-unfolding-genocide-or-watch-it-end-life-gaza-un-experts-say-states-face>>; and Jason Burke and Jason Burke International security correspondent, "UN Human Rights Staff Urge Leadership to Declare Israel's War in Gaza a Genocide," in *The Guardian* (29 August 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/29/un-human-rights-staff-urge-leadership-to-declare-israels-war-in-gaza-a-genocide>.

of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) states that Israel's conduct meets the legal definition as laid out in the UN Convention on genocide."³¹

One would think that the atrocity ends here. However, it must be noted that not only are Palestinians faced with the imminent threat of bombs and airstrikes, but the total siege of Gaza has also exacerbated their plight in many ways. Nearly all hospitals in Gaza, for example, are collapsing. In fact, 94% of all hospitals in the Gaza Strip are reported to have been decimated or severely damaged at the very least.³² Kids have been amputated without anesthesia, and medical volunteers are struggling to keep up with the increasing number of patients with dysfunctional hospital facilities. The population, especially children, also grapples with unprecedented levels of starvation and famine. Since the war began, their basic necessities have been cut off by Israel—access to food, water, electricity, and fuel has been cut off.³³ As of writing, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has declared famine in the Gaza Strip for having reached “three critical thresholds—extreme food deprivation, acute malnutrition and starvation-related deaths.”³⁴ Thus, on top of the incessant bombing of infrastructure and communities, civilians are also experiencing starvation, dehydration, sanitation concerns, and poor medical services. Indeed, all sorts of damage are done to the Palestinians. Either you die from Israel's carpet bombing or from hunger.

On top of that, a report by BU School of Law's International Human Rights Clinic says that “over 70 percent of housing in Gaza, every single university, fully or partially destroyed hospitals, health centers, UN facilities, and most of Gaza's religious and cultural institutions”³⁵ have been decimated by Israel's military aggression. With homes and buildings wrecked, virtually all of Palestine is uninhabitable, and the displacement of thousands of Palestinians adds to the appalling conditions. Moreover, with Israel's occupation, several journalists face threats and are blocked from entering various parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. As of writing, approximately 278 journalists have already been killed by the IDF, which

³¹ Emir Nader, “Israel committing genocide in Gaza, world's leading experts say,” in *BBC* (2 September 2025), <<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cde3eyzdr63o>>.

³² “Health System at Breaking Point as Hostilities Further Intensify in Gaza, WHO Warns,” in *World Health Organization* (22 May 2025), <<https://www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2025-health-system-at-breaking-point-as-hostilities-further-intensify--who-warns>>.

³³ “Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories 2023,” in *Amnesty International*, (n.d.), <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/report-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/>>.

³⁴ “Famine Confirmed for First Time in Gaza,” in *World Health Organization* (22 August 2025), <<https://www.who.int/news/item/22-08-2025-famine-confirmed-for-first-time-in-gaza>>.

³⁵ Alene Bouranova, “Is Israel Committing Genocide in Gaza? New Report from BU School of Law's International Human Rights Clinic Lays Out Case,” in *BU Today* (5 June 2024), <<https://www.bu.edu/articles/2024/is-israel-committing-genocide-in-gaza/>>.

Amnesty International's assessment considers to be the highest number of journalists killed in modern history.³⁶ Moreover, foreign aid, especially from prominent organizations like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), has had a hard time passing through checkpoints as trucks carrying loads of humanitarian aid are also blocked. This exacerbates the famine, sanitation, and medical concerns on the ground. Lastly, aid distribution sites, where Palestinians gather and scramble in desperation to seek food, have also become hubs for more Palestinian deaths as Israeli soldiers open fire on those seeking aid on multiple occasions, which effectively violates international law concerning aid distribution.³⁷

Putting this into perspective, i.e., why Israel remains belligerent and unscathed from being hawkish despite calls for an immediate and lasting ceasefire from the international community, would be a tremendous task considering its intricacies. Nevertheless, there exist clear indications and reasons behind their motivation. Firstly, Israel has been defending time and again that it is not targeting civilians but only Hamas members; that in the process, it is inevitable for the civilian population to become collateral damage, especially since Hamas uses them as a human shield. Yet multiple accounts of Israeli leaders' barbaric open admissions say otherwise. In November of last year, Israeli Heritage Minister Amihai Eliyahu brought up the idea of dropping a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip in order to end the conflict.³⁸ Further, immediately after the October 7th incident, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu uttered the following words: "We have decided to halt electricity, fuel, and goods transfer to Gaza."³⁹ As far back as 2004, Giora Eiland, the then Israel's National Security Director called Gaza a "huge concentration camp."⁴⁰ Hence, even pre-October 7th, there have been open

³⁶ "Al Jazeera's Salama among six Gaza journalists killed by Israel in attacks," in *Al Jazeera* (25 August 2025), <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/25/al-jazeera-journalist-mohammed-salama-among-14-killed-in-israeli-attack>>.

³⁷ Samy Magdy, "Dozens Killed as Palestinians in Gaza Scramble for Aid from Air and Land," in *PBS* (4 August 2025), <<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/dozens-killed-as-palestinians-in-gaza-scramble-for-aid-from-air-and-land>>. See also "Gaza: Nearly 1,400 Palestinians Killed While Seeking Food, as UN Warns Airdrops Are No Solution | UN News," in *United Nations* (1 August 2025), <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165552>>; "Gaza: Over 400 Palestinians Killed around Private Aid Hubs, UN Rights Office Says," in *United Nations* (24 June 2025), <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164846>>.

³⁸ Chantal Da Silva, "'Nakba 2023': Israel right-wing ministers' comments add fuel to Palestinian fears," in *NBC* (14 November 2023), <<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/gaza-nakba-israels-far-right-palestinian-fears-hamas-war-rcna123909>>.

³⁹ Vijay Prasad, "The savagery of the war against the Palestinian people," in *Peoples Dispatch* (10 October 2023), <<https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/10/10/the-savagery-of-the-war-against-the-palestinian-people/>>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

admissions from Israeli politicians of their occupation in Palestine.⁴¹ These open admissions are heard straight from the horse's mouth. Even IDF soldiers publicly post videos of themselves bulldozing and running over Palestinian bodies, even cheering as bombs are launched in the background.

In the broader context, it must also be noted that Hamas has a role to play as well in this political situation. There is a considerable amount of accountability to be placed on Hamas, especially with how their purported use of human shields has endangered Palestinian civilians. As such, Hamas has to be condemned for the terrorist actions it has taken. There is no excuse for the terroristic and inhumane strategies and actions from their side. Indeed, two things can be true at the same time. As such, Hamas has faced some level of backlash from Palestinians themselves:

Open criticism of Hamas has grown in Gaza since war began, both on the streets and online, though there are still those that are fiercely loyal and it is hard to accurately gauge how far support for the group has shifted ... There was opposition to Hamas long before the war, though much of it remained hidden for fear of reprisals.⁴²

Taking this into consideration, reports assert that there is still no justification for the identified genocidal actions committed by Israel. This collective punishment, which goes against international law, is even more egregious considering that Israel is ranked 17th in global military power as indicated by the Global Firepower Index 2024.⁴³ By and large, Palestine pales outright to the military strength of Israel, which explains its unwavering aggression. More importantly, it is emboldened by the world's largest military power, the United States.⁴⁴ Since October 7th, the US has provided Israel with military aid of 17.9 billion dollars. This aid given to Israel "is a mix of military financing, weapons sales, and transfers from US weapons

⁴¹ The Israel-Palestine conflict predates October 7. For almost eight decades now, it remains as one of the longest conflicts in modern history. To be sure, Palestine's Hamas has had a fair share in exacerbating the conflict, but the conditions faced by the Palestinian population is clearly directly attributable to the Israeli occupation.

⁴² Rushdi Aboualouf, "Hundreds join Gaza's largest anti-Hamas protest since war began," in *BBC* (27 March 2025), <<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g71lk09np0>>.

⁴³ Kersten Knipp, "Israel-Iran Escalation: How Strong Is Israel's Military?," in *DW* (18 April 2024), <<https://www.dw.com/en/israel-iran-escalation-how-strong-is-israels-military/a-68859030>>.

⁴⁴ "2025 United States Military Strength," in *Global Fire Power* (9 January 2025), <https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=united-states-of-america>.

stockpiles, according to the report, which is part of the institute's Costs of War project."⁴⁵ One can only imagine the bloating military budget of the US; other portions related to social services pale in comparison to the military budget allocation annually. Further, as a sitting member of the UN Security Council, the US has vetoed five UN resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire.⁴⁶ Surely, Israel has no incentive to de-escalate tensions on the ground when powerful nations like the US, Germany, the UK, and others continue to offer unconditional support. For many activists, the US, along with other allies of Israel, is complicit in the genocide committed against the Palestinian population.

Radical Imagination and the Great Refusal

As I expressed in my introduction, this paper in no way offers any solution to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine. Moreover, my appropriation of Marcuse is likewise not meant to provide a rationale behind the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Understanding the historical, political, and social conditions that shaped the ongoing conflict demands going beyond philosophy. But by virtue of exploring Marcuse's engagement with the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as reconstructing his critique of militarism, we are provided with a decent understanding concerning the perils of military aggression, especially when problematized in the context of Palestine today. Moreover, by recalling Marcuse's visit to Israel, it becomes clear that as a Jewish critical theorist, he also engaged with the conditions in Israel and Palestine during his time. This is especially important since critical theorists have not been very vocal on the conditions in Gaza. Perhaps, Habermas is another one who paid attention to the conflict, albeit coming from a different vantage point and stance altogether.⁴⁷ That said, this section outlines briefly Marcuse's perspectives on radical imagination and the Great Refusal. Perhaps, by drawing on the idea of imagination and the Great Refusal, envisioning a better Israel-Palestine relations could provide radical alternatives and possibilities to think about.

Marcuse's model of critical theory has always centered around a radical critique of society, which was primarily motivated by the fact that, for him, society has a dialectical character. And while he maintained a

⁴⁵ "US Spends More than \$20bn in Aid to Israel, Middle East Conflicts: Report," in *Al Jazeera* (7 October 2024), <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/7/us-spends-more-than-20bn-in-aid-to-israel-middle-east-conflicts-report>>.

⁴⁶ Andrew Roth, "US Vetoes Resolution for Unconditional Gaza Ceasefire at UN Security Council," *World News*, in *The Guardian* (4 June 2025), <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/04/us-vetoes-gaza-ceasefire-un-security-council>>.

⁴⁷ "Habermas on Israel: A Principle of Solidarity," in *Reset Dialogues* (15 November 2023), <<https://www.resetdoc.org/story/habermas-israel-principle-solidarity/>>.

pessimistic attitude against late capitalist societies, he simultaneously held on to a belief in the possibilities for liberation. This requires the recapturing of Eros. Being a repository of imagination, hope, and images of social transformation, it opens a sensibility that goes beyond the logic of productivity, accumulation, and aggression quintessential of the forces of domination today. To be sure, Marcuse is not suggesting that Thanatos be removed outright. It is not a matter of disposing of one and preferring the other, but a balance between these drives. In fact, the aggressive instincts of Thanatos are not an inherently detrimental instinct that ought to be destroyed; it may also enhance life when used well alongside Eros. As Kellner opines:

Marcuse argues that release and enhancement of the life instincts will tame and control the destructive instinct, Thanatos (EC, pp. 22ff, 139, 231ff). Although he accepts Freud's notion of a death instinct, he thinks that in a non-repressive civilization the life instincts will control aggressive instincts and use the aggressive instincts for the purposes of enhancing life.⁴⁸

Eros must be recovered to offer an alternative view to capitalism's destructive appropriation of Thanatos. With Eros, a radical imagination of an established order that does not valorize wars, for example, can be made possible. The dimension of possibilities spawns a utopian vision that, when juxtaposed with the current war machine that is Israel, utopian visions of a more stable Israel-Palestine relations become worth imagining. The answer as to how this is to be materialized is an ongoing debate; nonetheless, in a world that has become so cynical of its possibility, Marcuse's belief in positing a different realm of ideas can be a starting point.

It is from the standpoint of radical imagination, awakening the critical impulse and revolutionary spirit, that forms of the Great Refusal emerge against that which is. For Marcuse, the Great Refusal is "the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom—'to live without anxiety'."⁴⁹ In other words, the Great Refusal is a refusal against forces and forms of domination and injustice through 'radical resistance and struggle.'⁵⁰ The 60s were particularly promising for Marcuse in that they breathed a myriad of liberation movements that signified the

⁴⁸ Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 187.

⁴⁹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 151.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

refusal of oppositional forces against the pathological conditions of the administered society. In *An Essay on Liberation*, he writes:

In Vietnam, in Cuba, in China, a revolution is being defended and driven forward which struggles to eschew the bureaucratic administration of socialism. The guerrilla forces in Latin America seem to be animated by that same subversive impulse: liberation. At the same time, the apparently impregnable economic fortress of corporate capitalism shows signs of mounting strain: it seems that even the United States cannot indefinitely deliver its goods—guns and butter, napalm and color TV. The ghetto populations may well become the first mass basis of revolt (though not of revolution). The student opposition is spreading in the old socialist as well as capitalist countries. In France, it has for the first time challenged the full force of the regime and recaptured, for a short moment, the libertarian power of the red and the black flags; moreover, it has demonstrated the prospects for an enlarged basis. The temporary suppression of the rebellion will not reverse the trend.⁵¹

While conflicted with the efficacy of collective resistance movements, he nonetheless saw a promising potential in at least acting as a catalyst for social transformation. The student movement in the 60s was significant, for instance, because the university is one of the last bastions of critical discourse and hope. However, despite the efforts of the 60s counterculture failing to accomplish the purported goals, they nevertheless opened a radical imagination that opposes the rationality of extractivist and aggressive means of living. He considered those forms of solidarity as representative of the Great Refusal.

Anyone can rightfully doubt the viability of protest movements in resisting the system toward a radical social transformation; yet, one can also consider the potential they hold. As a matter of fact, we have seen a resurgence recently of worldwide protests against Israel's hawkish actions in Palestine. The global campus protests and international condemnation of Israel's actions, for example, reminiscent of the 60s revolutionary spirit, that reverberated throughout the world, calling for a ceasefire and arms embargo, amplified the clamor for international intervention. Indeed, Israel's

⁵¹ Marcuse, "An Essay on Liberation," 7.

occupation of Palestine has been going on for almost eight decades now. Deliberate killings of the civilian population are not new in Palestine; they predate October 7th. Yet the collective refusal of various groups since 2023 has made the issue more mainstream. In fact, it has become an important electoral issue, for example, in countries like the US, among others, as its importance has been brought to the fore at an unprecedented intensity. It is refusals like this that bring forth crucial conversations about the social pathologies and existing irrational conditions around us. In the end, "A full understanding of the impact of civil protest on the Gaza conflict may take years to assess, but the early signs are that this will be seen as the strongest example of transnational nonviolent public action in decades."⁵²

The world is exasperating and exhausting as when a country like Israel heightens its military operations and justifies killing Palestinian babies as self-defense. In such a situation, there is a tendency to lose the vitality to remain hopeful. What little credence is left in envisaging a free Palestine when a Palestinian life is not considered worth mourning and 'grievable' as opposed to that of an Israeli? Yet again, where there is oppression, there is resistance. And sometimes, art can offer a new dimension of refusal outside of the conventional forms of protest and resistance. Marcuse attributed great power to art as an expression that embodies the critical spirit and negative character of the Great Refusal—perhaps even the highest form. A radical imagination of a qualitatively better society can serve as a starting point in setting off and pursuing the struggle for liberation. As such, I wish to end with this excerpt from a poem by Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha, which inspires the possibility of imagining a reality that carries hope for a place that needs it the most:

If we stay in our houses, they bomb us.
 If we shelter in a school, they bomb us.
 If we run to a hospital, they bomb us.
 If we move into a tent, they bomb us.
 If we go to a toilet, they bomb us.
 If we run from an airstrike, they bomb us.
 If we do not do any of this, they still bomb us.
 If we stay like a tree, or temporarily leave like a leaf in
 the fall, they bomb us.

⁵² Paul Rogers, "Will global support for Palestine force Israel to honour ceasefire in Gaza?" in *OpenDemocracy* (20 October 2025), <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/gaza-israel-palestine-ceasefire-global-protests-demonstrations-trump-us/>>.

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.a7>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/ladero1_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330

But spring will come and they, those who bomb us, will
find no bombs among the flowers.⁵³

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⁵³ Mosab Abu Toha, “Exclusive: An Original Poem From Acclaimed Palestinian Poet,” in *Zetee* (1 October 2024), <<https://zetee.com/p/exclusive-an-original-poem-from-acclaimed>>.

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Emotions as Freedom: Automodern Life in the Post-Truth Era

Ian Raymond B. Pacquing

Abstract: This essay investigates the ambivalent effects of postmodern thought and its significance for subjectivity. Emerging in the cultural and intellectual upheavals of the 1960s, postmodernism questioned and rejected grand narratives and universal truths and focused instead on legitimizing pluralism, multiplicity, and difference. In this sense, it paves the way towards marginalized voices—women, minorities, children, and LGBTQ+ communities—whose experiences had been neglected by dominant Western narratives. While it is true that postmodernism expanded cultural horizons and led towards social recognition, it also produced destabilizing effects. The refusal to abide by universal and objective truths produced fragmentation, the erosion of social bonds, and the deprivation of psychic rootedness. In focusing on difference without an ontological anchor, postmodernism dissolves the coherence of the self and reduces it to commodity fixations. Hence, I argue that we need a new perspective beyond the relativistic approach of postmodern thinking. Drawing from Robert Samuels’ theory of automodernity, this paper suggests an alternative framework where digital life, situated along post-truth contexts, provides a space for emotional expression and recognition. In doing so, this study contributes to critical theory by mapping out subjectivity that is both plural and grounded, fluid yet anchored in affective and communal ties.

Keywords: Samuels, automodernity, postmodernity, critical theory

The automodern world is best characterized by our free expressions and engagements within the world of digital technology. As argued by some, the automodern era warrants human autonomy by wallowing and immersing itself in the world of the internet. In this regard, Samuels labels this as the capacity of “autonomous individuals to exploit unregulated

automated social systems.”¹ Hence, today, this cultural revolution confers on us digital competencies for interconnections to better understand the world around us. The automodern era, then, is the prevalent mediation of the web and social media platforms in our daily state of affairs. The free expressions of desires and emotions redefine how we now conceptualize human freedom. For Samuels, in our absorption and immersion in the world of a highly digitalized environment, we acquire a heightened sense of individuality, i.e., full control over ourselves and our surrounding environment.² Our fascination and, we might say, gross addiction to the net is actually, as Samuels observes, “a desire for total mobility and individual autonomy” We can express, discuss, debate, and acquiesce on things to further our knowledge and interest in our surrounding environment. But all of these new technologies, as Samuels reminds us, “point to a desire for people to be heard and seen by people they may not even know ... [it is] the desire for recognition.”³ It is for these reasons that this paper would like to propose the thesis that our immersion in the automodern world, our penchant use or inclination toward automated systems is not only a form of freedom *from* external coercion but, most likely, an opportunity for emotional unloading of repressed narratives forbidden and hidden by social constraints. While we recognize the fact that our engagement and use of the net occur within pre-structured frameworks, such as algorithmic governance, data profiling, and market-driven logic, I proffer the idea that the automodern world is now the stage of unmediated articulation of the self in the public space, and this is more audacious and apparent in the post-truth world where emotions play a significant role. Like Samuel’s, which portrays the digital culture as a “confessional booth that allows for the externalization of interior feelings and ideas”⁴, our assimilation of these systems allows for the expression of emotions, desires, and personal struggles outside the traditional confines of institutions like the family, the church, or even the nation-state. We see this manifested in social media, where users can ostensibly engage in discussions and connect with others irrespective of their race, gender, or class, seemingly challenging the postmodern assertion of social constructions and thereby the power dynamics within society. Through digital technologies, we are not simply interacting or consuming. We are, in fact, crafting a space where we feel a sense of belongingness and relatedness, a sense of active co-creators of personal meaning. Unlike earlier social frameworks, which sought to universalize rational autonomy (modernity) and break it into relativized

¹ Robert Samuels, *New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

discourses (postmodernity), the digital space exposes the immediacy of affective narration. As mentioned, this becomes more apparent in the post-truth environment by foregrounding emotions as the primary locus of human authenticity. To clarify my contentions in this paper, let me begin with my understanding of the modern and postmodern repercussions to map out why this essay advances the thesis that freedom in automodernity is a form of digital catharsis, i.e., unmediated enunciation of freedom, which is deeply intertwined with our emotional and subjective lives.

The Modern and Postmodern Age

Based on the Enlightenment ideals such as freedom, justice, rationality, and equality, the modern world, as claimed by Berman, provides us with joy, power, growth, and adventures that give us a sense of who we are, i.e., allowing us to experience ourselves and the world in all its possibilities and perils.⁵ With the liberty to choose and act upon our destiny, Taylor remarks that we can now "... decide what convictions to espouse, to determine the shape of our lives in a whole host of ways, our ancestors couldn't control."⁶ Unlike the feudal era, modern society bestows on us the freedom to participate, act, and will for ourselves our own destiny in life.⁷ Hence, left with no supernatural or divine interventions, as Taylor puts it, we are no longer sacrificed to any sacred order that transcends us.⁸ Hence, our understanding of who we are and who we could be is all bound up by our concrete material and existential experiences.

Although such might be our aspirations, modernity does not, as pointed out by Wagner, "... offer any guidance as to how one should design one's own rules, nor does it provide any criterion with which one should engage in rule deliberation."⁹ Definitely, some rules and policies were instituted to actualize those ideals, but they are often overshadowed by the power and dominance of the bourgeoisie.¹⁰ We clearly observe this through

⁵ See Marshal Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (US: Penguin Books, 1982), 15.

⁶ Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2.

⁷ Peter Zima, *Subjectivity, and Identity: Between Modernity and Post Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 4.

⁸ Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 2.

⁹ Peter Wagner, *Sociology of Modernity, Liberty, and Discipline* (London: Routledge, 1994), xii.

¹⁰ Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. by Gregor Benton and Andy Blunden (Marx/Engels Internet Archive (marxists.org), 1999), 39–42. Consequently, owners of giant corporations often dictate the rules of the game, particularly the socio-economic conditions on which our physical and mental survival rests. See Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (Canada: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1955), 348. With this, our family, our traditions, our culture and arts, our religions, and our morality, which are supposed

the rise of corporatism in the global scene, where to be free is to subsume oneself into trade and commerce as sources of power and social mobility.¹¹ Modern society, as we now know, transforms for the benefit of consumerist pleasures and hedonistic games that foster the status quo of domination and subordination.¹² Further, the incessant domination of Western narratives that control the global scene led to oppression and marginalization.¹³ Thus, we experienced and suffered the catastrophic two world wars, the unspeakable terror of Auschwitz, the unimaginable traumas in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the threat of violence, oppression, racism, the marginalization of women and children, issues on migration and citizenship on the national and global scale, and the rise of authoritarian regimes—all of these make the promises of modernity obscure. In the words of Berman, modernity, though it promises us joy and adventure, “it threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, and everything we are.”¹⁴ Modern life, as he continues, is a “paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration.”¹⁵ With this ambivalence of modern living, one questions whether there could still be such a way towards a better future.

It was in the 60s that we witnessed social movements and cultural transformations towards the rise of the postmodern world. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner describe this transformation of events in the *Postmodern Theory*. They claimed:

During the 1960s, sociopolitical movements, new intellectual currents, and the cultural revolts throughout the West against the stifling conformity of the postwar celebration of the 'affluent society' produced a sense that

to elevate us above the animal conditions, have all been set aside to give way to the institutionalization of “techno-rationalities through the rise of culture industries.” See Anthony Elliot, “Social Theory and Psychoanalysis,” in *The Routledge Companion to Social Theory*, ed. by Antony Elliot (London: Routledge, 2010), 58–60. See also Simon Clark, “The Neoliberal Theory of Society” (July 2012), <homepages.warwick.ac.uk/~syrbe/pubs/Neoliberalism.pdf>.

¹¹ Cf. Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism* (London: Duke University Press, 2000), 15.

¹² E. San Juan, *From Globalization to National Liberation: Essays of Three Decades* (Manila: UP Press, 2008), xii.

¹³ Cf. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), *Preface*, xii and Edwin van de Haar, *Classical Liberalism and International Relations Theory* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 18. See also David Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 13. This is also echoed and supported by Schwan and Shapiro who claim that the 18th and 19th-century ruling class generated power by institutionalizing a specific form of knowledge—“a defining ‘truth’ about individuals’ behavior and personality, only to discipline.” Anne Schwan and Stephen Shapiro, *How to Read Foucault’s Discipline and Punish* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 12.

¹⁴ Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.a8>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/pacquing_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330



a widespread rebellion was occurring against a rigid and oppressive modern society.¹⁶

The disorientation brought about by an oppressive bureaucracy steered towards a different understanding of social reality. It was held that the grand narratives emanating from Western culture could no longer suffice to understand and interpret reality. Western concepts are just one among the many ways to view and understand the world. Culturally, everything is different, and it is from these differences that life flows and unfolds. The Western categories are not the only objective, self-evident, and universal truths that we must believe and adhere to.¹⁷ In other words, as Wagner would assert, there are no universally valid representations of the world with which we must conform.¹⁸ What we indeed have are differences, multiplicities, pluralities, ephemerality, fragmentation, and chaos.¹⁹ Given these social sentiments, there arises what we now call the postmodern way of thinking, where “heterogeneity, plurality, constant innovation, and pragmatic construction of local rules and prescriptives [are] agreed upon by participants.”²⁰ There are no longer meta-languages or meta-narratives that solidify all representations, which can unify all things.²¹ No foundational or objective concepts that determine how life must be. Instead, it proposes the heterogeneity, multiplicity, and difference of our time.²²

As there is no “one-size-fits-all” narrative, Bauman would claim that our time today marks the end of hierarchical value structure and the rejection of all absolutizing thought coming from the West.²³ There are no absolute standards by which we have to live except those that are bound by us through our social discourses. What we have instead are fragmentations of sociocultural discourses that lead to different subjectivities, diverse experiences of space and time, and different modes of encountering the world.²⁴ Thus, by deconstructing traditional hierarchies and questioning universal truths, postmodernism provides us with some tools for cultural and political self-expression. As explained by Harvey, all of us have different ways of experiencing, interpreting, and being in the world.²⁵ With this stance,

¹⁶ Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1991), ix.

¹⁷ See Charles Lemert, *Postmodernism Is Not What You Think: Why Globalization Threatens Modernity* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 21–22.

¹⁸ See Wagner, *Sociology of Modernity, Liberty, and Discipline*, 150.

¹⁹ See Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, 44.

²⁰ Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, 165.

²¹ Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, 45.

²² Roger Frie and Donna Orange, *Beyond Postmodernism: New dimensions in clinical theory and practice* (London: Routledge, 2009), 7.

²³ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 34.

²⁴ See Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, 3–4.

²⁵ See Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, 53.

postmodernism supplies a relativist or perspectivist approach to social reality, i.e., how we understand and interpret the world is always mediated by our sociocultural and linguistic milieus.²⁶ It is in this regard that postmodern culture directs its attention to how we are all linguistically and culturally mediated. Through these social constructions, we relate, grow, develop, and find communion within our groups and communities.²⁷

While much can be appreciated from this postmodern perspective in giving voices to the unheard, the loss of a unified and objective standard has led to a lopsided view of economic and political correctness. Let us take, for instance, the power dynamics within a particular cultural discourse that, despite the growing cultural, communal, and even personal recognition and respect, postmodernism conveys,²⁸ still legitimize the role of the elite bureaucrats who control the political and economic landscapes. As most of our technological and economic resources are regulated by them, the social divide becomes unequal. Their alliances of power relations, Pingel observes, “are best achieved through the accession of more material wealth based on vertical relationships of dependence.”²⁹ In fact, the reciprocal relationships between predatory politicians and vulnerable clients are strengthened due to the presence of capital, which allows oligarchs to control the socio-political landscape.³⁰ In this sense, postmodern culture, with its focus on social constructivism, fortifies cultural as well as political backlash.³¹ More than these, as noted by Harvey, is the growing sense of disconnection and the breakdown of the signifying chain of meaning.³² Postmodern culture, with its focus on the liquidity of events, does not provide us with a stable past, present, and future. Since everything melts into air, as Marx claims, nothing gives us a sense of ontological security, where our own sense of communal “we” is forged.³³ The well-known sociologist Zygmunt Baumann also stressed this observation. For him, the social changes that occur loosen the boundaries between the “inside” and the “outside” of our sense of community, where identity formation is supposed to take place.³⁴ Accordingly, this leads to the fluidity of the self, i.e., a self that now exhibits

²⁶ See Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, 3–4.

²⁷ Cf. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, 38.

²⁸ Cf. Harold B. Davis, “Erich Fromm and Postmodernism,” in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 90:6 (December 2003), <<https://doi.org/10.1521/prev.90.6.839.28790>>.

²⁹ Cf. Jan Pingel, “Patrimonial Power Structures and Political Violence,” in *OBSERVER: A Journal on threatened Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines*, 2: 2, (2010), 10.

³⁰ See John T. Sidel, “Philippine Politics in Town, District, and Province: Bossism in Cavite and Cebu,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 56:4 (November 1997), 953.

³¹ See Samuels, *New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism*, 4–8

³² See Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, 53.

³³ See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 105.

³⁴ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Community* (London: Polity Press, 2001), 3–5.

normative patterning yet simultaneously exists in a state of flux through social adaptation.³⁵ Further, it not only remains in a state of flux but also is left in perpetual disintegration, struggles, and contradictions.³⁶ As a result, there is no stability of the self, no identity to speak of, since the boundary that delineates one's community from the other is lost. Postmodern thinking would just settle and features the self as a constantly changing, ephemeral, liquid, decentered subject, which is always being tossed by social forces outside its control.³⁷ Hence, in our postmodern culture, it is not substantial anymore to talk of places where personal and social identity are embedded since those routinized social practices which substantially connect the past, present, and an imagined future are cancelled.³⁸ Instead of engaging meaningfully with ethnic groups and communal relations in order for personal and social identities to thrive, postmodern culture sways one's psychic energy towards commodity fixations.³⁹ Life's pulsations, tremors, and unpredictable movements, which make it alive and meaningful, are now transformed into a storehouse of facts, events, and possessions.⁴⁰ What is stored in us is a globalized culture where ethnic and communal differences are obliterated.⁴¹ In this sense, our instinctual drives have become "other-directed" rather than "inner-directed".⁴² In other words, in the postmodern environment, individual agency turns into status identification or herd identity, where one can only sense a self as it unquestionably belongs to the crowd.⁴³ Traditional or conventionalized institutionalized roles are weakened and have been replaced by more individualized and "fluid" lifestyles.⁴⁴ Thus, the postmodern living leads to what Harvey calls schizophrenic lifestyles. He argues:

³⁵ See Robert Dunn, *Identity Crisis: A Social Critique of Postmodernity*, (London: Minnesota Press, 1998), 32–33.

³⁶ See Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, 15.

³⁷ Cf. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, "Individual Agency, The Ordinary, and the Postmodern Life," in *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36:3 (Summer, 1995), 555. If the subject is always decentered, says Panfilova, one's psychic energy is deprived of its human base. See Tatiana Panfilova, "Identity as a Problem of Today," in *Fromm Forum* (English Edition), 14 (2010), <<https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-Fromm/home>>. This deprivation, as Fromm would argue, dislodges the individual of the capacity to speak for oneself as a separate entity, as a distinct individual who could express "I-am-I". See Fromm, *The Sane Society*, 59.

³⁸ See Bauman, *Community*, 12–18

³⁹ See Dunn, *Identity Crisis*, 66.

⁴⁰ See Romano Biancoli, "The Search for Identity in the Being Mode," in *Fromm Forum* (English Edition), 10 (2006), 4–5.

⁴¹ See Panfilova, "Identity as a Problem of Today," 43–51.

⁴² John P. Hewitt, *Dilemmas of the American Self* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 5–6.

⁴³ See Fromm, *The Sane Society*, 61.

⁴⁴ See Dunn, *Identity Crisis*, 167.

[postmodernism] ... concentrating upon the schizophrenic circumstances induced by fragmentation and all those instabilities (including those of language) that prevent us even picturing coherently, let alone devising strategies to produce, some radically different future.⁴⁵

Since everything is fluid, fragmented, and decentered, and controlled by the demands of power dynamics, a fundamental question still lurks: What anchors human existence amid such ontological precarity? Where can individuals derive a sense of stability when the very foundations of social life are subjected to a form of psychological warfare that manipulates perception and agency? This essay contends that the automodern way of life could probably present to us a foundational structure of social relations. What we mean by this is, the digital world cuts across boundaries, irrespective of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, economic and political affiliations, or value judgements that we have. Our participation strips these visible social markers and allows us to create and participate in ideas that take precedence rather than socially constructed identities. Nevertheless, this paper acknowledges the fact that automation or digitalization of life is algorithmically structured and controlled, and profiled and even monetized by corporate industries. However, I would like to point out that despite these, our engagements in the digital world provide what Samuels calls a space where power structures that typically define identity become less relevant, enabling a reconfiguration of subjectivity.⁴⁶ Since the modern socio-political structures are a conduit for a decentered and alienated subject, the automodern world provides an emotional relief where we find expression of our deepest fears, struggles, and desires, without immediate societal judgment. It creates a sanctuary where unfiltered human expressions flow. Thus, I claim that, most especially in a post-truth environment, our participation on the web is a kind of rebirth where we reclaim our autonomy. Allow me to explore these deeper in the following discussions below.

Automodernity and the Post-Truth World

Samuels defines automodernity as the combination of our autonomy (human expression) and automation (pre-defined systems), where it provides the means to reclaim autonomy in a world dominated by fragmentation, chaos, and alienation. He extends this description by saying, "These technological objects share a common emphasis on combining together a high

⁴⁵ See Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, 53–54.

⁴⁶ Samuels, *New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism*, 12.

level of mechanical automation with a heightened sense of personal autonomy.”⁴⁷ Our personal laptops, smartphones, the internet, and social media platforms facilitate this process by offering spaces for emotional expression and connection. In fact, in the world of automation, the digital space is an active co-creator of our freedom, i.e., we find a sense of satisfaction by voicing our concerns, thoughts, feelings, and everyday concerns. Through our personal computers and gadgets, we bring the public realm into our private corners, and we are not merely consuming or interacting; instead, we are crafting spaces where we feel a profound sense of being an active co-creator of personal meaning. Our experiences of sharing emotions online are forms of liberation, i.e., an unmediated articulation of what and who we are that ignores the traditional ways of being recognized. As Wendy Chun explains:

[the digital world] allegedly freed users from the limitations of their bodies, particularly the limitations stemming from their race, class, and sex, and more ominously, from social responsibilities and conventions. The Internet also broke media monopolies by enabling the free flow of information, reinvigorating free speech and democracy. It supposedly proved that free markets—in a “friction-free” virtual environment—could solve social and political problems.⁴⁸

Further, Steinert and Dennis added that the digital world, particularly social media platforms, is an avenue for digital well-being. These systems are ways in which we could precipitate our positive emotions, and thus they contribute to the creation of our personal meaning in life.⁴⁹ Thus, Samuels reiterates that through digital technologies, temporal and spatial differences are veiled. The *otherness* of the other begins to disappear, and within this global access, we encounter different cultures and various social relationships regardless of their race, gender, or affiliations ... and this gives us control and a heightened sense of autonomy.⁵⁰ Consequently, immersing and sharing ourselves online blurs the distinction between what is private and public. Bringing the world into our private lives through our laptops is

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸ Wendy Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (London: MIT Press, 2006), *Introduction*.

⁴⁹ See Steffen Steinert and Matthew James Dennis, “Emotions and Digital Well-Being: on Social Media’s Emotional Affordances,” in *Philosophy and Technology*, 35:36 (2022), 1–21. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-022-00530-6>>.

⁵⁰ Samuels, *New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism*, 18–19.

making the public privatized, yet at the same time, allowing the private to be consumed by the public. Samuels clearly explains this when he says:

Perhaps the ultimate technology of personal culture is the laptop computer ... [it] gives the individual user the freedom to perform private activities in public ... Thus, the laptop may turn any public or commercial space into a private workplace or play space, and since people can take their work and their games with them wherever they go, the whole traditional opposition between workspace and private space breaks down.⁵¹

Again, he adds:

when one goes to a café, one sees people working with their laptops as if these customers are sitting at home: they have their food, their phone, their newspaper, and other personal items displayed in public. The reverse of the public being absorbed into the private is therefore the private being displayed in public ... Of course, both the privatization of the public and the publicizing of the private are fueled by the twin engines of autonomy and automation.⁵²

This self-expression through the digital sphere is no less than more brazen and daring than what we now experience in the post-truth world. In a society where emotions are the gateway towards legitimacy and truth,⁵³ and where the subject is decentered, truth and morals are relativized, democratic participation is jeopardized, and where everything spins into fragmentation, the issue that has become more relevant is that of recognition and validation. Understanding our needs and desires as fully autonomous individuals boils down to what Honneth would claim: that recognition is a moral and a social demand.⁵⁴ Our penchant for the web, internet, and other social media platforms speaks of our desire to be recognized. We want to be seen and heard. We want other people to respect and validate us as much as we do to

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Cf. Stephan Lewandowsky, "The 'post-truth' world, misinformation, and information literacy: A Perspective from Cognitive Science," in Stéphane Goldstein ed., *Informed Societies: Why information literacy matters for citizenship, participation, and democracy* (London: Facet Publishing, 2020), 73.

⁵⁴ See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. by Joel Anderson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 38–43.

them. Samuels points out that though the use of the internet is algorithmically controlled and driven by the corporate industry, we deliberately absorb ourselves into it because of the desire to be recognized. He says, “All of these new technologies point to a desire for people to be heard and seen by people they may not even know ... [it is] the desire for recognition.”⁵⁵ It is the fear of being left out or the fear of missing out on something that drives us to engage ourselves and express what we are or who we are online. Our aspirations, struggles, fears, hopes, and desires in life are all tied up as emotional baggage that needs to be validated or recognized by others.⁵⁶ Accordingly, the digital space represents a stage where we feel “free and safe” to express our opinions, fears, desires, and struggles. It is the arena where these repressed emotions and desires begin to untangle and are reconveyed once again, hoping that someone out there validates them.

Today, we constantly seek emotional relief amidst the social chaos we find ourselves in, and whatever our choices may be to make both ends meet, we always yearn for that emotional stability in our actions.⁵⁷ While it is true that algorithmic governance, data profiling, and corporate influence determine the scope of one’s self-expression, automodernity’s appeal is even more important in the context of the post-truth era. As McIntyre construes it, our generation has transitioned where objective facts are given less weight than appeals to emotional expressions. With the proliferation of fake news, we come to witness that facts no longer function as stable reference points in searching for truth. With the erosion of our trust in institutions like media, religion, science, and politics, we often rely on emotional expressions as a substitute for certainty. This implies that what is applicable in our social engagements is what really *feels authentic*. In fact, emotional narratives today override factual corrections because, as Higgins explains, the public hears what it wants to hear.⁵⁸ For McIntyre, what satisfies us deep inside seems to be a more relevant factor in avoiding psychic discomfort.⁵⁹ As everything becomes relativized, fragmented, and perspectival, and since no objective ontological constructs to rely on, what is now left for us is a plurality of

⁵⁵ Samuels, *New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism*, 20.

⁵⁶ See Ian Ramond B. Pacquing, “Why Radical Change is Elusive: Rethinking Social Transformation,” in *Kritike*, 19:1 (March 2025), 193–211, <<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.1.a8>>.

⁵⁷ See Erich Fromm, “Man’s Impulse Structure and Its Relation to Culture,” in Erich Fromm, *Beyond Freud* (New York: American Mental Health Association, 2010).

⁵⁸ See Kathleen Higgins, “Post-Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed,” in *Nature*, 540:9 (December 2016), 1, <<https://doi.org/10.1038/540009a>>.

⁵⁹ See Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (London: MIT Press, 2018), 5. McIntyre added that it is not about the total rejection of facts that post-truth believers advocate. They, too, believe in the certainty of things. However, the problem lies in how these believers gather and process information since they “only want to accept those facts that justify their ideology ... [facts] that favor their preexisting beliefs.” See McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, 10–11.

perspectives.⁶⁰ Truth is now a matter of our interpretation in validating our stories about the world. What is left for us then? The digital screen serves as our comfort, allowing us to feel “free and safe.” As intimated by Turkle, that:

These days, insecure in our relationships and anxious about intimacy, we look to technology for ways to be in relationships and protect ourselves from them at the same time. This can happen when one is finding one’s way through a blizzard of text messages; it can happen when interacting with a robot. I feel witness for a third time to a turning point in our expectations of technology and ourselves. We bend to the inanimate with new solicitude. We fear the risks and disappointments of relationships with our fellow humans. We expect more from technology and less from each other.⁶¹

The digital sphere serves as our refuge in which our repressed feelings and resentments can be articulated and validated. Our fears, frustrations, fascinations, allurements, pains, and struggles—all these emotionally charged responses through which we navigate our environment—find a channel of expression in the digital screen. Hence, regardless of whether we find ourselves monetized, tracked, or algorithmically exploited; online platforms serve not merely as avenues of communication but as affective spaces. It enables the concretization of emotions that might otherwise remain hidden or unspoken in the traditional social context. What we hesitate to share in public for fear of backlash can now be done anonymously through the web. After all, with our attachments to the digital platform, where sharing and liking are considered the language games of our times, we do not consider anymore whether we are tracked or manipulated by the system. What is important is that we convey and release our emotional overloads. The unfiltered self-expressions, clearly conveyed through the screen, are ways for recompensating our inner worlds and thus reconnecting with our individuality. In other words, the screen is a form of digital catharsis where we can articulate frustrations and identity crises without fear of institutional backlash. The web, internet, and social media platforms, as automated systems, create an oasis where we reconnect with ourselves. Our ability to freely express our thoughts and emotions in a

⁶⁰ See Julian Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World* (UK: Quercus, 2017), 42.

⁶¹ Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), xii.

fragmented and chaotic world makes these sites critical spaces for self-acceptance and empowerment.

Conclusion

This essay outlines the trajectory from modernity's Enlightenment ideals, through postmodernism's contextualization and cultural recognition of social relations, to the post-truth condition, where emotions dominate public life. Although it is agreeable that postmodern culture has deconstructed and fragmented our social engagements, that no universal narratives are now acceptable, it is quite lamentable too that it leaves subjectivity destabilized and loses its coherence. Everything becomes a product of social constructivism, yet, as we have argued, no stability of the self, no identity to speak of, since the boundary that delineates one's community from the other is lost. The postmodern culture leaves us with no fixed boundaries where we could connect our past, present, and future. Everything is in a state of flux, and this includes personal and social identities. Thus, its effects weaken our traditional institutions and pave the way towards the fluidity of life. It is in this context that automodernity emerges as a new cultural paradigm

Although we might be, as some would argue, algorithmically tracked, monetized, and exploited by the corporate dynamics, the digital platforms provide a space for emotional expressions, recognition, and articulations of our repressed desires. In a postmodern scenario where our trust in traditional institutions and authorities has been eroded and where everything becomes precarious, the digital space serves as a sanctuary for voicing emotionally charged narratives that probably cannot find their realization in traditional public spaces.

This is most relevant in a post-truth scenario where emotions take precedence over objective factual narratives. As argued earlier, with the erosion of our confidence in our socio-political institutions like religion and politics, we now rely on emotional expressions as a substitute for certainty, i.e., what *feels authentic* is what really matters. This is significantly important because with the plurality of perspectives, my narrative is just as valid as *yours*. My story is just as good as yours. In this context, the digital sphere becomes an avenue where fears, frustrations, pains, and joy are actualized and validated. It legitimizes our emotions, which might never be expressed in person or might otherwise remain hidden and unspoken in traditional public spaces. The digital sphere strengthens freedom by offering an avenue to create meaning. Algorithmically exploited or monetized, our engagements in the digital space do not make them less meaningful. What matters most is

that through these arrangements, we are *effecting* meaning.⁶² As Turkle quips, the digital space provides the sweetness we crave in life, for we could fall in and out of love with people and ideas.⁶³ In the digital sphere, we are allured, attracted, moved, and touched, and in these encounters with the other, we feel we are connected to something beyond ourselves. With likes and emojis, *somebody finally validates my story amidst the fragmented scenario I find myself in.*

Hence, automodern life enhances our sense of personal freedom. What we mean is the liberty to express our inner world. It is the ability to share the burdens within a world that becomes so indifferent. It is a digital catharsis, i.e., it is not just a reaction but an affirmation and assertion of existence – creating meaning in a chaotic world. So, the question now is, not whether digital spaces are truly free, but whether freedom is all about control or about participation and self-expression, regardless of who controls the platform.

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⁶² See Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship with the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 23.

⁶³ See Turkle, *Alone Together*, 152.

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A Tribute to Romualdo Abulad

Abulad: A Reflection of Kant's Good Will and Duty

Maria Majorie R. Purino

Abstract: In this short tribute piece, I recount some memorable experiences with Br. Romualdo E. Abulad, S.V.D. From the time I was his undergraduate student until we became colleagues at the Department of Philosophy of the University of San Carlos, Cebu City. In the course of the piece, I will say something about Kant, postmodernism, and also discuss some aspects of Emerita Quito's works that proved pivotal in shaping Abulad as a scholar and philosopher.

Keywords: Abulad, Quito, Kant, postmodernism

Before I begin, allow me to refer to Br. Romualdo E. Abulad, S.V.D., Ph.D., as Br. Romy—as I prefer, and has always been the case since I knew him almost three decades ago. When I was first invited to offer a tribute on Br. Romy, on the one hand, there was a part of me that was excited because I wanted to share with others the weight and responsibility, as well as the fascination and awe of being a student and later colleague of Br. Romy. On the other hand, there was also some hint of reservation as I was hesitant to even begin to describe his philosophizing in fear that I may not be able to fully articulate the immensity of his work and the monumental contribution his presence, writing, and teaching has given to philosophy. I fear I may not be able to do justice to my teacher or should I say, one of the country's premier philosophers. And so, it took a long time for me to start and when I actually began to write I had to stop and again start from scratch, because the fact is that since his passing there have already been exemplary articles and commentaries on the scholar that he was. I wanted something different, that is, something meaningful as though coming from a keen observer using the lenses of a student and a colleague. I also was aware that I need to use the right amount of scholarship that in no way limits the immensity of the person, but at the very least, shows what Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) calls the good will, which, to my knowledge, was Br. Romy's duty and legacy.

In this tribute, I will share a number of memorable encounters with Br. Romy, when he was my teacher while I was an undergraduate student and when we were colleagues in the Department. In the process I will mention a little of Kant, postmodernism, and a bit of Dr. Quito's works that were pivotal in shaping Br. Romy as the scholar and philosopher that we know him to be. I will start though by mentioning as a preamble that it was Immanuel Kant whose philosophy led Br. Romy into the life he lived. Kant's work challenged Br. Romy to withdraw from his pre-med studies and instead major in philosophy. Specifically, it was Br. Romy's Jesuit professor, whose name I could no longer recall, who once mentioned the difficulty in understanding Kant, which triggered and challenged Br. Romy to not only embark but dedicate his whole life to faithfully studying the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Once, over a cup of coffee, Br. Romy shared that he was never really fond of the laboratories and being in the medical field. So—began his journey in philosophy where he diligently devoted all his time reading, writing, understanding, and teaching the predictable yet brilliant little man from Königsberg. And perhaps we could already hear Br. Romy saying in his slightly high-pitched tone, *we may never agree with Kant, but we can never do philosophy without Kant!*

As a Teacher

It was back in 1997, attending College at the University of San Carlos in Cebu, when I first encountered Br. Romy. He was then my teacher in Indian Philosophy and Course Integration. I remember our first day of class well, he entered with his backpack in tow filled with books and maybe even a manuscript or two of a thesis advisee. The first thing that he showed us were some of the books that we would be using as references for class. He would then continue to begin his lecture. He would always come to class prepared. His lectures gave us grounding on the philosopher and at the same time give room for thought, to ponder about the implications of the lessons, not just in context of the philosopher but about life in general. He always had a book with him whenever he lectured, not because he was "bookish", in fact far from that, rather because he knows the importance of the primary source in imparting philosophical thoughts. I remember when we had an oral exam once, and a classmate clearly did not come prepared, Br. Romy casually asked him, *are you trying to put words into Heidegger's mouth?* At that moment, the remark sent chills down our spines even for those of us who had prepared—or thought we had prepared.

Although Br. Romy is often remembered as being strict in class, he was always coming from a good place. His method of teaching was never meant to intimidate or terrorize students, rather, he was simply coming from

duty. To some people, the thought of having Br. Romy as their teacher just scares the lights out of them, but that is only because they listen to stories they have picked up here and there, but in truth, being in a class under his tutelage is one of the greatest events that could happen in an otherwise seemingly monotonous and mute study of philosophy. Listening to his lectures always opened up a panoramic view of the endless potentialities of what one can be. Yes, the reading can be tough, and the oral participation can be grueling, but one is almost always assured of a class well spent. You are either left stunned because you know you have not read enough or you are fueled with the well-springs of inspiration that make you want to be more and do more.

Br. Romy lived by example and applied what Aristotle calls self-actualization. He dedicated himself to a life of contemplation in the pursuit of truth and wisdom. Like many others who with full conviction stood by what they believed in, Br. Romy followed Kant's good will and took it upon himself as his duty even if it became unpopular and seemingly unfavorable to some. After all, doing one's duty is not so much about enjoyment; it becomes even more compelling if it runs counter to our inclinations and motives. As Kant claims, "It is the motive of duty, not the motive of inclination, that gives moral worth to an action."¹ Thus, it is hard work behind our duties and not our preferences and motives that give an action its moral worth. Whether Br. Romy was the professor in the classroom, editing manuscripts in coffee shops, or serving as the Chair of the Department, he was always coming from Kant's good will and duty.

There was a time in class when Br. Romy discussed Kant's good will. He was quick to point that in this life there are many goods—money, power, wealth, to a certain extent they can help us, but they are also easily corrupted especially if paired by a bad will. And that clears the way of the good will as that which is the only thing that is good in all circumstances. "The only thing that is good without qualification or restriction is a good will ... good in all circumstances, an absolute and an unconditioned good."²

Focusing on Kant's good will, ultimately we are led to these three questions that make us reflect on what it means to be truly human. Br. Romy almost always made us come face to face with Kant's three questions:

*What can I know?
What ought I to do?
What may I hope for?*³

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by H.J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1956), 19.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 735.

Reflecting on these important questions in view of our current circumstances, indeed, what can we know? In the face of fake news, accessibility, and the clutches of artificial intelligence, is knowledge enough? What ought I to do given the demands of accountability in a decadently corrupt government and a society torn by a rigged conscience and an outcry for justice? What may I hope for?

If Kant's three questions sum up to an inquiry into *what it means to be human*, then, happiness or at least the quest for it is not farfetched. But after reflecting on our present malaise, the words of Kant in *The Groundwork* become even more relevant—"We have a right to seek our own happiness in so far as this is compatible with moral law; but to be happy is one thing and to be good is another; and to confuse the two is to abolish the specific distinction between virtue and vices."⁴ Kant was astute in his formulation of the moral law and Br. Romy was always dedicated in showing and demonstrating duty and good will reminding us that it is not just about being happy but we must also be worthy of that happiness.

In the process of thought, it always reminds us of the two-fold stem of knowledge that always makes us of both reason and experience. And it is here where we remember one of Br. Romy's favorite line, *the test of the pudding is in the eating*.

In 2000, Br. Romy published an article in *Karunungan* entitled, "What is Postmodernism?" he begins by saying upfront that, "Ours is no longer the modern age, ours is already the post-modern age, that is, the age after modernity..."⁵ Perhaps anticipating the immediate curiosity he right away clarifies his position by echoing possible questions that may have already been shaped and are lurking in the minds of his readers. "What do I mean? What do I mean by Post-modernity? Indeed, it is true that modernity is no more and that it has already given way to post-modernity?"⁶ Looking back, the ease I experience in reading Br. Romy's published articles is the same ease I experience attending his classes. He always managed to make what is otherwise difficult and complicated into something at least approachable and eventually doable.

And only after making sure that everyone is in the same boat would he continue to explain further. And by saying this, I do not mean to downplay the rigor that is involved in doing philosophy—such as the ardent reading and re-reading, a familiar struggle with the text. But there was something in the way Br. Romy handled his classes, his discussions, his fluidity with words

⁴ Kant, *Groundwork*, 38.

⁵ Romualdo Abulad, "What is Postmodernism?," in *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 17, (2000), 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*

and thoughts, such that one will always have, if not an understanding of the text, at least a firm conviction of an afternoon well spent trying to engage in the wonders of doing philosophy.

When he was my thesis supervisor for both my Master's thesis and my PhD dissertation, it always took longer to write the draft of the chapter, not because there were delays in my submissions, nor was he remiss in his comments and remarks, they were even like clockwork, ready in my inbox or through courier, after just a day or two of my submission, with my manuscript having been combed and edited with red marks and pointed questions. Perhaps, many misunderstood the process as the supervisor being difficult, but in my case, I trusted the process, and that I worked even harder, until its completion.

As a teacher, Br. Romy always took us on a journey and enabled our minds to be fascinated by the different philosophical enterprise from the East as well as in the West. He may have been popular with the philosophy of Kant for most of his life but his dissertation in 1978 was a comparative study on Links Between East & West in the Philosophies of Shankara and Kant, and he also wrote and presented a few comparative papers on Buddhism and Christianity.

I remember how he begins his classes in Philosophy by starting with three attempts to define philosophy, etymology, *Aristotelico-Thomistic* definition, and finally, the one by Jaspers where questions are more important than the answers. From there, he will continue to discuss the different approaches to the study of philosophy, the historical and systematic, and it is in these discussions that I have become in awe of the unfolding of ideas that only the study and rigor of philosophy provides.

As a Colleague

After being assigned in Davao, Br. Romy returned to the Department of Philosophy in the University of San Carlos and eventually became Chair from 2008-2013. Each month we would have our department meetings, as well as round table discussions within the faculty, and book review sessions with a close-knit group. When Br. Romy became Chair, we could already sense the gravity of the task upon us under his leadership. His mere presence in that position was a reminder to be diligent in our work as faculty, as he was. I must admit there were a couple of times when I would cower from the thought of the work in front of us "as philosophers" according to Br. Romy. For Br. Romy, the task of philosophy does not end in classrooms and when one gets the paycheck, one must live it at all times and be open to continuous learning. Kant, in the conclusion of his second Critique, mentions the significance of philosophy as the guardian of science that is the *narrow gate*

that leads to wisdom. "Science (critically sought and methodically directed) is the narrow gate that leads to the *doctrine of wisdom*, if by this is understood not merely what one ought *to do* but what ought to serve *teachers* as a guide to prepare well and clearly the path to wisdom which everyone should travel, and to secure others against taking the wrong path; philosophy must always remain the guardian of this science"⁷ Everyday, during his tenure, Br. Romy never failed to remind us of the crucial role we have as teachers. One time, when we were having coffee (yes, almost every afternoon after work, there was always time for coffee) with a few other colleagues from the Department, he strongly told us not to be a deadwood and that obtaining the PhD is not the end nor is it enough. We must continue to do philosophy and that means to read, to write, to publish, better yet to think, to reason, to have a voice, to be heard.

One of the main reasons for his sustained interest in philosophy was being a student of Dr. Quito. In an autograph signed by Dr. Quito herself dedicated to Br. Romy on her festschrift dated March 5th 1990, she writes, "To Romy Abulad, the path to philosophy should be clear to you by now" Br. Romy happened to be the one who wrote the introduction of the Festschrift, and its opening paragraph says:

Emerita S. Quito is no doubt the most important philosopher in the Philippines today. She will most likely be remembered in the future as the Filipino Socrates. Standing at a crucial threshold, she marks the end of the infantile gropings of earlier philosophers and provides ample direction to future thinkers.⁸

It was a pronouncement from a student to his teacher in awe of her monumental work in honor of philosophy. As Quito explains in her article on *Lectures on Comparative Philosophy* presented at Waseda University, Tokyo Japan in 1979, "every great undertaking in the world, be it in science or literature or practical politics, began with the germ of an idea ... behind every major and minor revolution, there was a potent idea to start the machinery of change."⁹ So, to indulge into philosophy might seem a painstakingly arduous task of reflective thinking but it clears the ground and prepares the individual to higher and sublime realizations. "True contemplation is, after all, an

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 135.

⁸ Emerita S. Quito, *A Life of Philosophy: Festschrift in Honor of Emerita S. Quito* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1990), iii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 498.

activity from the Greek *theorein*, 'to speculate', and from this theorization proceed many thought-trains that lead to new discoveries."¹⁰

Quito claims that the duty to think is endless."¹¹ She says that "thinking, in fact is an unceasing motion; it is the *theoretike energia* identical to the activity of the immortal gods, so that when man thinks, he does his utmost in accordance to what is highest in him."¹² It befits our nature not to stay and be overwhelmed simply by what our senses dictates, but, rather, to become a noble person, one who projects oneself capable of what it means to be a rational agent.

It is in these words of Dr. Quito where we find the philosophical ideals of Br. Romy come alive. To be a rational agent is to live up to the name, to be rational also means to be responsible. So, we live up to the task, and we rectify our names as students, as teachers, as philosophers. That is, if one is a student, be a good student; if one is a teacher, then, be a good teacher! We rectify our names and thus we do our duties.

At this juncture, allow me to quote a paper Br. Romy published in 2005 which supposedly holds much hope for the future of philosophy which sadly today remains unstable due to the short sightedness of many so-called educators, and I dare say administrators who are bereft of the value of philosophy. The article is entitled *Filipino Philosophy in the Turbulent Period of Postmodern Transition*.

It is a philosopher's business to think. And the Greeks were the first to show us how. This thinking of the Greeks culminates in the various sciences which grace today's colleges and universities. It can be said that Philosophy is the mother of all sciences and it remains so in our days. This is the key to the still prevalent practice of ending all graduate studies with a Ph.D., a Doctor of Philosophy. Philosophy is indeed the crown of all sciences. Especially in our time of interlinkages and multidisciplinary, when the boundaries of the disciplines are beginning to meet in a borderless land, the future of philosophy is becoming more and more assured.¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 499.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Romualdo Abulad, "Filipino Philosophy in the Turbulent Period of Postmodern Transition," in *USC Graduate Journal*, 25:1 (2005), 102.

Conclusion

I wrap up this tribute by going back to the three questions of Kant:

What can I know? In answering this, I try to echo Br. Romy's lectures on Kant's theory of knowledge that says, *thoughts without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind*.¹⁴ In wanting to know, it is always the two-fold stem of reason and experience. And learning from our teacher, we remember that what we know is sometimes not enough, rather, how we use what we know is ultimately what matters thus we are led to the second query.

What ought I to do? We do our duties simply because it is the right thing to do. As students, as teachers, as rational agents, we must always embody the good will in all our endeavors.

What may I hope for? Perhaps this is a question I leave open for us to chart our paths to continue to rectify our names hopefully enlightened by the arduous toil of our beloved teacher to whom we honor today.

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¹⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 107.

A Tribute to Romualdo Abulad

Mga Puná (Tungo) sa Pag-ása: Isang Pagsusuri sa Maka-Abulad na Pagpuná tungo sa Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino

Mariefe B. Cruz

Abstract: Aside from being an academic and researcher, the philosopher also faces a huge challenge of being a critique of the inhabited world. It is the aim of this paper to present a style of philosophical critique based on the works of Romualdo E. Abulad (“maka-Abulad”), a possible development of critical Filipino philosophy. The article begins with an assessment of the current state of the discourse on Filipino philosophy—this is done by revisiting important moments in the history of critical Filipino philosophy. Next, a comprehensive discussion regarding the method and themes of Abulad’s style of critique is provided. This involves an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Abulad’s critical philosophy. It is worthwhile to examine the existing methods of critique in Filipino philosophy because this can initiate the development of an original critical consciousness that will undergird Filipino philosophy.

Keywords: Abulad, pilosopiyang Filipino, kritisismo, kritikal na pamimilosopiyang Filipino

Bukod sa pagiging akademiko at mananaliksik, malaki rin ang hámon sa isang pilosoper na tumayo bílang kritiko sa mundong kaniyang ginagalawan.¹ Bílang diskurso sa Pilosopiyang Filipino, nakapaloob ang hámon na ito sa Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino, na tinitingnan

¹ Sa igting ng hámong ito, lalo na noong simula ng ika-21 na siglo, nagsilbi itong paksáin ng Second Thomasian Philosophers’ Reunion Convention noong taóng 2002 na may temang “Philosophy as a Critique of Society & Institutions.” Bílang susing-pananalita sa naturang kumperensiya, tinalakay ni Emerita Quito ang kahalagahan ng isang pilosoper bílang kritiko ng kinabibilangan niyang lipunan. Tingnan sa Emerita S. Quito, “Philosophy as a Critique of Society,” sa *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy* (2002), 38–45.

bílang isa sa mga diskursong may pinakamalaking potensyal na makapagpayabong ng Pilosopiyang Filipino bílang isang disiplina.

Sa taksonomiya ni F.P.A. Demeterio III, makikitang walumpu't limang porsyento (85%) ng mga pilosoper sa Filipinas ang lumilikha ng ganitong diskurso.² Sa daloy ng kasaysayan, maaari nating makita na kasabay ng pag-usbong ng mga bagong ideá ang siya ring pag-usbong ng iba't ibang diskurso at tunggalian hinggil sa mga ideáng ito. Ani naman ni de Leon, pinakamalaki ang potensyal na taglay ng kritikal na pilosopiya upang makapaghawan ng isang mas progresibong landasin para sa Pilosopiyang Filipino sa hinaharap.³ Sa kabila ng pabago-bagong klima ng diskurso sa bansa, may ilang Filipinong pilosoper pa rin ang nagtuon ng kanilang pangunahing pilosopikong layunin sa pagpapaunlad ng diskursong ito, at isa na rito si Romualdo E. Abulad na aspeto ng pagpapalaganap ng kamalayang pumuna. Wika ni de Leon:

si Abulad na siguro ang hindi tahasang nagsabi ng kaniyang layuning pilosopiko. Hindi niya deretsahang binigkas ang buong pakay niya sa pamimilosopiya. Subalit, kung mayroon táyong maaaring ituring na pangunahing sangkap na hindi nawala sa kaniyang mga isinulat, ito ay ang aspekto ng “pagpuna.”⁴

Hangad kong palawigin ang talakayan hinggil sa uri ng pagpuna na isinusulong ni Abulad, na umuugat sa pangunahin niyang pilosopikong layunin, at datapwa'y mabigyang-diin ang pagmumungkahi dito bílang pamamaraang magagamit sa Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino. Upang mapalawig pa ang kabuoang argumentong ito, susubukin kong bigyang-linaw ang pangunahing suliranin ng papel na ito na nakasentro sa kung paano makapag-aambag ang isang maka-Abulad na pagpuna sa pagpapaunlad ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino.

Alinsunod dito, binubuo ng ilang bahagi ang papel na ito. Una, tatalakayin ko ang estado ng kritisismo bílang diskurso sa Pilosopiyang Filipino. Susunod dito sisikapin kong ilantag kung ano ang isang maka-Abulad na pagpuna at paano ito nakikita sa mga sinulat ni Romualdo

² Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio, III, “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy,” sa *Pippiniana Sacra*, XLIX (May–August, 2014), 196.

³ Tingnan Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio, III, “Thought and Socio-Politics: An Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy,” sa *HINGOWA: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal*, 8:2 (2003), 17.

⁴ Emmanuel de Leon, *Mga Tomasino sa Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Manila: Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, 2019), 141–142.

Abulad. Panghuli sisikapin kong ipakita ang mga kahalagahan at kahinaan ng ganitong uri ng pagpuna.

Ang Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino

Sa pagdako natin sa ating talakayan hinggil sa maka-Abulad na pagpuna, tapat sa pagpapahalaga ni Abulad sa pagkakaroon ng isang ‘paninging makasaysayan’, kinakailangan muna nating magkaroon ng isang pagsipat sa kasaysayan ng diskurso kung saan ito nakalapat.

Subalit bago natin tangkaing sipatin ang kasaysayan ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino, kailangan muna nating bigyang-kahulugan kung ano nga ba ito. Sa mga sinuri kong teksto na nagtangkang mag-ambag sa diskursong ito, mababanaagang wala pang tuwirang naglahad ng isang pagpapakahulugan kung ano nga ba ang Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino. Sa pagkakataong ito, maaari nating gawing batayan ang mga sentimyentong inilalahad nina Bolaños, Demeterio, at Zialcita,⁵ kalakip na rin ng sarili kong kuro-kuro bunga ng malawakang pagbabasa hinggil sa mga akdang may kinalaman sa diskursong ito, upang makabuo tayo ng isang pansamantalang pagpapakahulugan ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino. Sa pakiwari ko, maaari nating tingnan ang Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino bilang isang uri ng ugnayan sa pagitan ng pilosoper bilang kritiko at ng lipunang Filipino na kanyang sinusuri kung saan isinasailalim ng pilosoper ang lipunang ito sa isang paulit-ulit na proseso ng pagsusuri-paglalatad— isang walang hanggang pagtatangkang hubarin ang patong-patong na mga maskara ng iba’t ibang aspekto ng lipunang Filipino.

Maaari nating ilapat ang simulain ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino noong panahon ng mga propagandista kung saan naging laganap ang pagbatikos ng ating mga bayani’t ilustrado sa mga mananakop na Espanyol,⁶ na mababanaagan sa mga subersibo at satirikal na akda ng ating mga bayani laban sa kolonyalismo at pang-aabusong mababanaagan noong mga panahong iyon. Samakatuwid, hindi unang lumutang ang diskursong ito mula sa nakasanayan nating istruktura ng mga pilosopikong papel, bagkus unang mapapansin ito sa mga naratibo, tula, satirikal na akda, at

⁵ Tingnan Paolo A. Bolaños, “Introduction to the Special Tribute Section: Abulad, Philosophy, and Intellectual Generosity,” sa *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 13:2 (2019), 1–15 at Fernando Nakpil-Zialcita, “Mga Anyo ng Pilosopiyang Filipino,” sa *Mga Babasahin sa Pilosopiya: Epistemolohiya, Lohika, Wika, at Pilosopiyang Pilipino*, by Virgilio Enriquez (Manila: Philippine Psychology Research and Training House, 1983).

⁶ Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio III, “Ang Kallipolis at Ang Ating Kasalukuyang Lipunan: Isang Pakikipagdiyalogo Ng Kritikal na Pilosopiyang Filipino sa Ang Republika Ni Platon,” sa *Malay*, 24:1 (2011), 3.

maiikling sanaysay na naghahangad mailantad ang estado ng lipunang kolonisado noon.⁷

Mula dito, makikita nating tunay na makulay nga ang mga simulain ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino at malaki ang potensyal nito sa lalong pagyabong sa pagdaan ng panahon, subalit malaki rin ang kinaharap nitong mga balakid pagpasok ng Dekada '70—mas partikular, sa pagsisimula ng diktadurya. Ani ni Demeterio:

Sa pagbabalik-tanaw, nagsimula lámang tahakin ng Pilosopiyang Filipino ang mundo ng politika, lipunan, kasaysayan, ekonomiya, at praxeology sa pangkalahatan, noong lumitaw ang kritikal na pamamaraan nito. Noong malupit na pinigilan ang sariwang eksperimentasyon na ito, ang trawmang inihatid ay nakaapekto sa kabuoang katangian ng Pilosopiyang Filipino at pinasinayaan ang kasalukuyang katangian nito na hiwalay sa realidad ng Filipinas.⁸

Maaari rin nating ilugar sa pagpapanahon na ito ang unti-unting pagtatanim ng mga binhi ng Pilosopiyang Filipino—mga panimulang manipestasyon ng isang uri ng pamimilosopiya na mula sa atin, na nagnanais ding maging daan upang maunawaan ang sariling atin. Makikita nating dalawang mukha ng Pilosopiyang Filipino ang sumulpot noong panahong ito: isang mukhang nakatuon sa pagtatangkang mag-ambag sa tawag ng nasyonalismo, at isang mukhang nakatuon sa pagtayo ng pilosoper bílang kritiko ng mga kasalukuyang isyung bumabalot sa kaniyang lipunan.

Pamilyar na ang kasaysayan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino sa unang mukha. Marami sa ating mga pilosoper ang nagtangkang saliksikin at bigyan ng interpretasyon ang ating pagiging Filipino. Ilang mahahalagang halimbawa na lámang dito sina Leonardo Mercado na nagtangkang ungdatin ang pilosopiyang nagmumula at nananahan sa ating kultura, kaugalian, at wika, at Florentino Timbreza na iginugol ang mayorya ng kaniyang búhay sa pananaliksik ng ating kamalayang bayan—ang ating mga salawikain at

⁷ Tingnan Andres Bonifacio, “Ang Dapat Mabatid Ng Mga Tagalog” (1896), <<http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/kalayaan-the-katipunan-newspaper/andres-bonifacio-ang-dapat-mabatid-ng-mga-tagalog-c-march-1896>>; Emilio Jacinto, “Sa Bayang Tinubuan” (n.d.), <<http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/kalayaan-the-katipunan-newspaper/emilio-jacinto-sa-bayang-tinubuan-undated>>; at Pio Valenzuela, “Katuiran Din Naman!” (1896), <<http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/kalayaan-the-katipunan-newspaper/pio-valenzuela-katuiran-din-naman-c-march-1896>>.

⁸ Demeterio, III, “Thought and Socio-Politics: An Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy,” 60–61. Akin ang salin.

kasabihan—sapagkat naniniwala siyang may taglay ang mga itong pilosopikal na pundasyon na maaari nating hanguin at kung gayon, ay maipaunawa sa antas pilosopiko ang kaisipang Filipino. Kapuwa nila sinubok unawain at bigyang kahulugan ang Filipino at kung paano ba maging Filipino. Sa proyektong ito ng paghango at pagpapaliwanag unang binuhos ng ating mga pilosoper ang kanilang oras at lakas.

Subalit kabaligtaran naman ang sinapit ng isa pang mukha ng Pilosopiyang Filipino, ang kritikal na aspekto nito. Aminado ang ating mga pilosoper na may bahid ng mga politikal na kaganapan ang nangyaring paghina ng Kritikal na Pilosopiyang Filipino noong Dekada '70, at hindi natin lubos sila masisi kung bakit hindi nila itinuon sa kritikal na aspektong ito ang kanilang atensyon⁹—parehong may mga salik ng pananakot at pagkatakot, ang pagpapatahimik at pananahimik sa pag-iwas ng mga Filipinong pilosoper na makisangkot sa diskursong ito.

Sa kabila ng makaldag na lakbayin ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino, masasabi pa rin nating unti-unti na muling umigting ang diskursong ito mula nang mabansot ito noong Dekada '70. Isang panibagong 'paggising' ang kinahaharap ng ating mga pilosoper pagkatapos ng malagim na diktadurya. Sa pakiwari ko, mahahati natin sa dalawang uri ng pamamaraan ang mga tradisyon na umusbong sa muling pag-igting ng Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino: isang pamamaraang nakabatay sa apropyasyon ng mga banyagang teorya upang masuri ang lipunang Filipino, at isang pamamarang bunga ng likas na pagmumuni ng ating mga pilosoper hinggil sa mga isyung panlipunan na tila may mala-homilyang istruktura.

Sa unang pamamaraan, mainam na halimbawa dito ang mga iskolar na namulat sa tradisyon ng kanluraning pilosopiya, lalo't higit—subalit hindi eksklusibo—sa tradisyon ng kritikal na pilosopiya sa *Frankfurt School*. Bagaman laganap na ang diskursong ito sa iba't ibang institusyon ng pilosopiya sa Filipinas, maaari tayong magbanggit ng ilang natatanging pangalan ng mga iskolar na sumasalamin sa pamamaraang ito tulad nina Franz Giuseppe Cortez,¹⁰ Agustin Martin Rodriguez,¹¹ at Jeffry Oca.¹²

⁹ Halimbawa na lamang dito ang testimonya ni Florentino Timbreza sa isang panayam Tingnan "Panayam kay Florentino Timbreza ni Richard Sanchez" (Manila, 31 January 2002).

¹⁰ Tingnan Franz Giuseppe Cortez, "The Philippine Engagement with Paulo Freire," sa *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 7:2 (2013), 50–70; "The Overcoming of Violence: Paulo Freire on the Use of Violence for Social Transformation," sa *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 10: 2 (2016), 68–83; at "Towards a Freirean Liberating Pedagogy in the Philippines: Prospects in Three Filipino Intellectuals" (Dissertation, Manila, University of Santo Tomas, 2013).

¹¹ Tingnan: Agustin Martin Rodriguez, *Governing the Other: Exploring the Discourse of Democracy in a Multiverse of Reason* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009) at *May Laro Ang Diskurso Ng Katarungan* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2014).

¹² Tingnan Jeffry Oca, "The Peasant Movement and Great Refusal in the Philippines: Situating Critical Theory at the Margins," sa *Kritike*, 12:3 (2019), 43–67.

Nagmumula sa isang mas matandang tradisyon naman ang pangalawang pamamaraan. Pinakamababanaagan ang mga ‘mala-homilyang kritikang’ ito sa unang henerasyon ng mga Filipinong pilosoper. Bilang halimbawa, mailulugar natin sa pamamaraang ito sina Emerita Quito,¹³ Florentino Timbreza,¹⁴ Alfredo Co,¹⁵ at Romualdo Abulad.¹⁶ Bagaman magkaiba ang mga pamamaraan ng dalawang tradisyong ito, mababanaagan pa rin natin na iisa lamang ang kanilang tunguhin: ang tangkaing hubarin ang patongpatong na mga maskara ng iba’t ibang aspekto ng lipunan tungo sa paglalantad ng mga problemang bumabalot dito.

Sa kabila ng malaking trawma na naidulot ng pagkakailalim sa diktadurya, may ilang mga pilosoper pa rin ang nagtangkang maglathala at akayin ang diskursong ito tungo sa kasalukuyang panahon. Isa na rito si Romualdo Abulad, na sa loob ng mahigit apat na dekada’y nagpagal na gampanan ang papel ng pilosoper bilang kritiko ng mga isyung bumabagabag sa kanyang lipunan. Isinakatuparan niya ito sa paglalathala ng mga kritikal na akda magmula 1976 hanggang Marso 2019—ilang buwan bago siya pumanaw—hinggil sa iba’t ibang mga isyung panlipunan at pangakademya mula noon hanggang ngayon. Bagaman sa unang sulyap, maaaring makita bilang ‘mala-homilya’ rin ang pakikitungo ng mga pagtatangka ni Abulad na hubaran ng maskara ang lipunan, subalit kung papatawan pa ito ng isang mas kritikal na pagbasa at pagsusuri, mababanaagan sa mga ito ang paglutang ng isang uri ng pagpunang maaari nating sabihing likas na sa kanya, na lumalampas sa ‘mala-homilyang’ istruktura—isang uri ng pagpunang bunga ng kritikal na tunguhin ng kanyang pamimilosopiya—ang maaari nating tawagin bilang isang ‘maka-Abulad na pagpuna’.

Ang mga Temang nakapaloob sa isang maka-Abulad na Pagpuna

Sa mga nilathala ni Abulad, mapapansing tila may sinasandigang pamamaraan ng pagpuna siya. Hindi direktang sinabi ni Abulad ang

¹³ Bilang halimbawa, tingnan Emerita S. Quito, “Pilosopiya Ng Edukasyon Sa Diwang Pilipino,” in *Malay*, 4 (1985), 1–5 at Emerita S. Quito, “Pro-Death Penalty: Here and Now,” sa *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 17 (2000), 7–8.

¹⁴ Tingnan Florentino T. Timbreza, “Walang Kaibigan, Walang Kumpare at Walang Kamag-Anak,” sa *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 18 (2001), 1–10; “A Crisis of Ethics in Philippine Society,” sa *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 25 (2008), 133–149.

¹⁵ Tingnan Alfredo P. Co, “Bakit, Pinoy, Bakit?” in Alfredo P. Co, *Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*, Vol. VI (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009), 12–14.

¹⁶ Tingnan Romualdo E. Abulad, “Mga Puna Tungo Sa Pag-asa,” sa *Daop Diwa*, 2 (1978), 27–30 at Romualdo E. Abulad, “Ang Diwa at Kaisipan Ng Pilipino Sa Kasaysayan Ng Himagsikan,” sa *Malay*, 5 (1986), 37–46.

kanyang pilosopikong layunin, subalit hinuha ni de Leon na kung uusisain ang pinatutunguhan ng kanyang mga akda, maaari nating tukuyin ang layuning ito bilang misyon ni Abulad na palaganapin ang kamalayang pumuna. Tinukoy ni de Leon ang apat (4) na elementong maaaring mabanaagan sa isang maka-Abulad na pagpuna: (1) ang pagtataglay nito ng paninging makasaysayan, (2) ang pagiging bukas nito sa iba't ibang pananaw at posibilidad, (3) ang laging paalala nito sa limitasyon ng ating mga pagpuna, at (4) ang mapampulbos na katangiang taglay nito.

Mula sa mga elementong ito inaakay ni Abulad ang uri ng kritisismong nais niyang ipalaganap—isang pamamaraan ng pagpunang bukas sa iba't ibang mga pananaw, mapampulbos at walang-patawad kahit sa mga kinikilingang paniniwala, na umuugat sa isang paninging makasaysayan, at mulat sa hangganan ng kakayahan nitong pumuna. Subalit, sa pakiwari ko at batay na rin sa aking pagbasa ng mga artikulo ni Abulad, na hindi natatapos sa apat na ito ang mga elementong mababanaagan sa isang maka-Abulad na pagpuna.

Kung kayâ, nais kong susugan ang mga preliminaryong obserbasyon ni de Leon sa kanyang pananaliksik sa pamamagitan ng paglalahad ng tatlo pang elementong maaaring mabanaagan sa mga pagpuna ni Abulad: (1) ang pagpunang mula loob tungo sa labas, (2) ang palagiang presensya ng hamong nakapaloob sa kanyang mga pagpuna, at (3) ang kabigkis nitong optimismo't pag-asa sa kabila ng mapampulbos na kritisismo.

Pagdating sa “pagpunang mula loob tungo sa labas”, bagaman madalas nakatuon sa mga panglabas na paksain tulad ng politika, lipunan, at kultura ang mga pagpuná ni Abulad, hindi dito nagtatapos ang kaniyang kritisismo. Mahihinuha sa kaniyang mga artikulo ang palagian niyang paalala na walang sinumang ligtas sa pagpuná—maging ang mismong pumupuná. Aniya, ang intelektuwal na patalim ng pilosoper ay “walang sinasanto, kahit ang sarili,”¹⁷ at ang naduduwag sa pansariling kritisismo ay hindi tatagal. Makikita rito na ang pagpunang itinataguyod ni Abulad ay hindi lámang nakatuon sa lipunan o estruktura, kundi tumutungo rin sa sarili.¹⁸ Para sa kaniya, kahangalan ang magpuná ng iba kung hindi rin isinasailalim ang sarili sa parehong mabagsik na lente. Parehong sentimyento ang tinukoy ni de Leon sa pagbása niya kay Abulad bilang pagbatikos hindi lámang sa pinapaksa kundi pati sa mismong pumapaksa.¹⁹ Sa lubos at tapat

¹⁷ Romualdo E. Abulad, “The Filipino as a Philosopher in Search of Originality,” sa *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (1985), 16. Akin ang salin.

¹⁸ Romualdo E. Abulad, “The Relevance of Critical Thinking in Contemporary Philippine Society,” sa *Scientia* 6:1 (2017), 36.

¹⁹ Emmanuel de Leon, “Sulyap Sa Kritisismo Ni Romualdo Abulad Sa Pamilosopiyang Filipino,” sa *Hasaan* (2019), 29.

na kritisismo sa sarili nagiging malinaw ang mga limitasyon ng ating nalalaman at nasasaklaw.²⁰

Makikita rin dito ang impluwensiyang Kantiano, lalo na ang pagtungo sa loob sapagkat ang kaalaman ay laging nasa hangganan ng ating katwiran.²¹ Sa pagsasailalim ng sarili sa kritisismo, napagtatanto natin ang hangganan ng ating kayang maláman. Bukod sa impluwensiya ni Kant, umuugat din ang elementong ito sa pagpapakiwari ni Abulad na ang sakit at hinaing ng indibidwal ay tumatawid sa sakit at hinaing ng lipunan—na ang tunay na kalagayan ng bansa ay mababása sa dinaramdam ng pangkaraniwang mamamayan.²² Samakatuwid, kinakailangan ang pagpunang nagmumula sa loob tungo sa labas upang maunawaan ang hinaing ng sarili na siya ring maaaring pinagmumulan ng hinaing ng kabuoan; at sa pagkilala sa kakulangan at kalabisan ng sarili, lalo táyong namumulat sa kakulangan at kalabisan ng lipunan na nararapat din nating tugunan.

Bukod sa nauna nang tinalakay, hindi mawawala sa maka-Abulad na pagpuná ang palagiang paglalahad ng hámon. Subalit, hindi lámang ito nakagawiang mungkahi kung ano ang “dapat gawin” upang solusyonan ang mga problemang nailalatag ng kritisismo. Tulad ng pagpapakiwari ni Abulad na bahagi rin ng kritisismo ang mismong pumupuná, kasama rin ang kritiko sa mga hámong kaniyang inilalahad. Kumbaga, tumatagos ang mga hámon na ito tungo sa isang kolektibong paghahámon.

Ilan sa mga ito ang paulit-ulit niyang pagdidiin na may pangangailangang matuklasan ang potensiyal sa likod ng kasalatan ng mga Filipino sa kultura at kasaysayan;²³ na makilala muna ng mga Filipino ang kanilang mga sarili bago unawain ang kanilang bayan;²⁴ na muling suriin ang ating mga paniniwala at pagpapahalaga;²⁵ na mangahas ng kritikal na

²⁰ Romualdo E. Abulad, “Kant’s Philosophy of Man,” sa *Sophia*, 20 (1990), 21.

²¹ Romualdo E. Abulad, “Kant and the Task of Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” sa *Sophia*, 16 (1986), 48.

²² Romualdo E. Abulad, “Ang Pulitika Ni Quezon Sa Pananaw-Pilosopo,” in *Ang Pulitika Ni Quezon at Iba Pang Sanaysay*, ed. by Marcelino A. Foronda Jr. (Manila: De La Salle University, 1977), 4, 12.

²³ Abulad, “Kant and the Task of Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” 57; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Confucianism and Filipino Culture: Two Cultures in Dialogue,” sa *Scientia*, 5:2 (2016), 3.

²⁴ Romualdo E. Abulad, “Options for a Filipino Philosophy,” sa *Karunungan*, 1 (1984), 26; Abulad, “Mga Puna Tungo Sa Pag-asa,” 30; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Contemporary Faces of Evil,” sa *PAP Conference Papers III* (2008), 7.

²⁵ Abulad, “Kant’s Philosophy of Man,” 16; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Ethics, Indigenous Ethics, and the Contemporary Challenge: Attempt at a Report on Ethics for the Filipino Today,” sa *Scientia*, 8:1 (2019), 17; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?,” sa *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 13:2 (2019), 52.

pagtanaw sa buhay at lipunan;²⁶ na makabuo ng isang orihinal na pilosopiyang pinanday ng sarili nating mga pilosoper;²⁷ na magpaalab ng sigasig at disiplina sa pananaliksik upang makapag-ambag sa pilosopiyang ito;²⁸ at na tumugon sa tawag ng “muling pagbubuo ng bansa” mula sa pagkakasadlak dulot ng diktadurya.²⁹

Bukod sa hámong taglay ng pagpuná, mayorya sa mga akda ni Abulad mula 1976 hanggang 2019 ay kaakibat ang isang optimismong nakasunod sa mga hámong ito: ang konsepto ng pag-ása.³⁰ Sa dulo ng kaniyang mga pagpuná, mababanaagan ang paghahangad niya sa potensiyal ng hinaharap at ang pag-ásang may tutugon at may magbabago’t yayabong balang araw. Samakatuwid, optimistiko rin si Abulad sa proseso at bunga ng kritisismo.³¹

Makikita dito ang pagtangi niya sa kakayahan ng kritisismong makapagpalutang ng pinakamahusay na proyekto ng mga pilosoper at maging kasangkapan sa pagsulong ng pilosopiya. Sa elemento ng optimismo tunay na maitatangi ang isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná. Bagaman mapampulbos ang kaniyang pamamaraan, hindi ito nagtatapos doon: sa paglalantad ay maaaring may mas matatag na estrukturang mabuo. Tilabaga ipinapahiwatig niya na hindi tayo *hanggang dito lámang* at kailangang mayanig ang ating mga paniniwala upang mas mapabuti ang mga ito. Kumbaga, unang hakbang lámang ang kritisismo sa proseso ng pagbabago at hindi ang katapusan ng lahat.

²⁶ Abulad, “Mga Puna Tungo Sa Pag-asa,” 30; Abulad, “The Relevance of Critical Thinking in Contemporary Philippine Society,” 63–64.

²⁷ Romulado E. Abulad, “Pilipino Sa Pilosopiya,” sa *DLSU Dialogue*, 11:1 (1976), 166; Abulad, “Options for a Filipino Philosophy,” 18; Abulad, “Ang Diwa at Kaisipan Ng Pilipino Sa Kasaysayan Ng Himagsikan,” 46; Abulad, “Kant and the Task of Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” 62; Quito, “Pulong-Isip: Meeting of Filipino Minds,” 16.

²⁸ Abulad, “The Filipino as a Philosopher in Search of Originality,” 18; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” sa *Karunungan*, 5 (1988), 10; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Ang Pilosopiyang Pranses sa Pananaw ng Isang Pilipino,” sa *Karunungan*, 8 (1991), 13; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Freedom in Times of Crisis,” sa *UNITAS*, 74:1 (March 2001), 148; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century,” sa *Suri* 5:1 (2016), 8, 16.

²⁹ Abulad, “Ang Diwa at Kaisipan Ng Pilipino Sa Kasaysayan Ng Himagsikan,” 45; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Postmodern Critique and the Ethics of Postmodernism,” sa *Two Filipino Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism* (University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2004), 90–91.

³⁰ Ginagamit ko nang magkaugnay ang salitang “optimismo” at “pag-ása.” Sa pagkakaroon ng pag-ása para sa isang hinaharap, may kalakip din itong optimismo para sa hinaharap na ito, sapagkat hindi umiiral ang pag-ása mula sa isang pesimistikong pagtanaw. Kumbaga, kapag umaasa ang tao, siya’y may taglay pa ring optimismo para sa kung anoman ang kanyang inaasahan. Samakatuwid, magkabigkis ang dalawang konseptong ito.

³¹ Tingnan Romualdo E. Abulad, “Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba? The Relavance of Filipino Philosophy in Social Renewal,” sa *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 13:2 (2019), 22.

Batay sa mga elementong inilahad na maaari nating matagpuan sa isang maka-Abulad na Pagpuna, mahihinuha nating malakas ang impluwensyang Kantiano sa pagkakabuo—malay man o hindi—ni Abulad sa paraan niya ng pagpuna. Halaw sa pagtangi ni Immanuel Kant sa kahalagahan ng isang uri ng kritisismong mapampulbos at walang pinalalagpas, na nakatuon hindi lamang sa mga bagay na sinusuri bagkus pati ang mismong sumusuri, na nagpapaalala palagi sa hangganan ng ating kakayahang pumuna, masasabi nating tunay na nakasubaybay si Abulad sa isang Kantianong pagpuna.

Subalit, sa pakiwari ko, hindi lamang paglalapat sa Kantianong pagpuna ang ginagawa ni Abulad, bagkus may pag-aangking nagaganap sa tuwing ikinakasangkapan ni Abulad ang ganitong uri ng pagpuna at hinahaluan ng sarili niyang pamamaraan. Ebidensya na rito ang palagiang magkabigkis na hamon at optimismo na matatagpuan sa kanyang mga pagpuna. Samakatuwid, hindi lamang natatapos sa pagpupulbos ang isang pagpunang maka-Abulad, bagkus naghahangad din itong makiisa sa pagtatangkang muling kumpunihin ang tinangkang pulbusin ng kritisismo nang may optimistikong pagtanaw sa bunga ng muling pagkukumpuni na ito. Kung kaya, maaari natin makita dito ang isang pamamaraang pakiwari ko’y tunay na katangi-tangi kay Abulad, na pansamantala kong babansagan bilang pamamaraang ‘puná-hámon-pag-ása’.

Ang maka-Abulad na Pagpuna bílang Pamamaraan: Ang Pamamaraang Puná-Hámon-Pag-ása

Mula sa mga inilahad na preliminaryong obserbasyon hinggil sa mga elementong nakapaloob sa isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná, iminumungkahi kong maaari nating isailalim ang mga ito sa tinatawag ko sa ngayong isang pamamaraang “puná-hámon-pag-ása.” Sa mababanaagang pamamaraan na ito sa mga akda ni Abulad, nagsisimula si Abulad sa isang pagbabaliktanaw sa kasaysayan ng paksain ng kanyang kritisismo. Maaari nating makita ang pinagkaiba ng kanyang pamamaraan, sapagkat pagkatapos ng paglalalatag ng mga punang ginabayan ng paninging makasaysayan, nagsisimulang maghain ng mga hamon si Abulad batay sa kung ano ang maaaring gawin o hindi gawin bunga ng ginawang pagpuna—*isang hámong umuugat paloob bago lumabas*, parabagang ipinapaalala niya na kinakailangan muna nating suriin at pagnilayan ang sarili nating mga pakikibaka bago tayo tumungo sa labas at sumama sa mas malawak na pakikibaka kasama ng iba. At lagi’t laging kabigkis ng mga inihahaing hamong ito ang elemento ng pag-asa, pagiging optimistiko sa nilalaman ng hinaharap, na hindi lamang nababara ang kritisismo bilang antagonismo ng kasalukuyan at nakaraan, subalit maaari

rin itong magsilbi bilang nag-aalab na sulo para sa mas mainam na hinaharap.

Pakiwari ko, lubusan lamang mababanaagan ang manipestasyon ng mga elementong nakapaloob dito at ang pamamaraan nitong ‘puná-hámon-pag-ása’ sa isang kritikal na pagbasa sa mismong mga akda ni Abulad na sumasalamin sa mga ito. Magbigay tayo ng halimbawa sa apat na temang lumulutang sa mga akda ni Abulad: (1) ang usapin ng kultura, pagpapahalaga, at kasaysayan; (2) ang kanyang mga kuro-kuro hinggil sa hinaharap ng Pilosopiyang Filipino; (3) ang pagpuná niya sa mga proyekto ng kanyang mga kontemporaneo at ang mga kontemporaneong pagpuná sa kanya; at (4) ang mga pananaw niya sa politika, lalo’t higit ang kanyang pagtanaw dito mula sa lente ng postmodernismo.

Kultura, Pagpapahalaga, at ang Paggiling ng Kasaysayan

Puná

Isa sa pinakamatingkad na paksain ni Abulad ang pagsusuri sa ating kasaysayan, lalo na sa pangmatagalang epekto ng kolonisasyon. Para sa kaniya, mga biktima pa rin tayo ng paggiling ng kasaysayan, dahil sa daantaong pagpapasasad ng iba’t ibang dayuhan, patuloy tayong naghahanap ng sariling identidad at tila wala pa ring tiyak na “sarili.”³² Sa kaniyang mga salita: “kulturang hilaw, kasaysayang walang kasaysayan, at kayamanang sinalo ng iilan— tila wala pa tayong tunay na maipagmamalaki.”³³ Dito lumilitaw ang pagdududa ni Abulad sa mga pinanghahawakan nating pagpapahalaga na produkto ng kolonyal na paghubog. Ang tinatawag niyang “panlipunang kanser”³⁴ ay makikitang gumagapang sa ating pag-iisip: pagkiling sa dayuhan, pagdakila sa salapi, at pangarap na laging nakatanaw sa labas. Kabilang dito ang tanong niya sa ating “hospitality,” na para sa kaniya ay maaaring nakaugat sa kolonyal na paghanga at hindi sa tunay na kabutihang-loob.³⁵ Kaakibat nito ang paghahanap ni Abulad sa ating mga “monumento”—mga hindi maikakailang tanda ng ating potensiyal.³⁶ Para sa kaniya, isa lamang ang malinaw na monumento ng kadakilaang Filipino: ang rebolusyon sa EDSA.

³² Tingnan Abulad, “Mga Puna Tungo Sa Pag-asa,” 27–30.

³³ Abulad, “Ang Diwa at Kaisipan Ng Pilipino Sa Kasaysayan Ng Himagsikan,” 40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵ Abulad, “Mga Puna Tungo Sa Pag-asa,” 29–30.

³⁶ Ayon kay Abulad, ang mga “monumento” na kanyang hinahanap ay yaong mga hindi maipagkakailang tanda ng potensiyal na kadakilaan ng mga Filipino. Naniniwala si Abulad na may mga hindi pa napagtatantong potensiyal ang mga Filipino, at kinakailangang makilala ang mga potensiyal na ito upang makausad tayo sa proyekto ng ating sariling pagkakakilanlan. Tingnan Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” 1.

Nakita niya ito bilang rurok ng kolonyalismong dinanas natin, kung saan ang diktadura ni Marcos ay naging simbolo ng huling yugto ng pagkaalipin. Sa pagbuwag sa rehimeng ito, nakita ni Abulad ang kongkretong manipestasyon ng kakayahan ng mga Filipino na magkaisa para sa isang kolektibong mithiin, kahit bitbit nito ang bagong pagkabalisa para sa hinaharap.³⁷

Hámon

Upang tugunan ang kawalang-katiyakan ng ating kinabukasan, naglatag si Abulad ng tatlong hámon. Una, kailangan nating tumindig at mag-isip nang magkakaisa sa halip na manatiling nakasandig sa mga pamantayang maka-dayuhan; kasama rito ang pagpapahusay sa ating mga sariling lárang.³⁸ Ikalawa, kailangan nating itaas ang antas ng ating pag-unawa upang makilala ang ating tunay na sarili— isang gawaing nag-uugat sa pagkakaroon ng kritikal na kamalayan na pumupuna sa mga lisyang kalakaran.³⁹ Sa pamamagitan ng pag-unawa sa ugat ng ating mga dinaramdam, mas mauunawaan natin ang kasalukuyan at ang magiging direksiyon natin. Ang ikatlo at pinakamatalim na hámon: ang paghahanap ng isang pilosopiya na tunay na atin.⁴⁰ Naniniwala si Abulad na may nawawalang mithiing dapat nating matuklasan— isang pilosopiyang magsisilbing gabay at pag-asa ng ating pagkabansa.

Pag-ása

Bagaman mariin ang puna ni Abulad sa kawalan natin ng maipagmamalaking kasaysayan, dito rin tumutubo ang kaniyang optimismo. Para sa kaniya, dahil hindi tayo nakapirmi sa iisang ideolohiya o tradisyon, bukás tayo sa posibilidad na lumikha ng sariling pilosopiya.⁴¹ Ang ating kawalan—ng kasaysayan, ng tiyak na kultura, ng matatag na pagpapahalaga—ay maaari rin umanong maging lakas, sapagkat binubuksan nito ang daan upang humawan tayo ng bagong landasin. Sa ganitong pananaw, nagiging posible ang pagkabuo ng isang tunay na Pilosopiyang Filipino sa hinaharap.

Ang Pilosopiyang Filipino sa Hinaharap

³⁷ Abulad, "Diwa at Kaisipan Ng Pilipino Sa Kasaysayan Ng Himagsikan," 42.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁹ Abulad, "Mga Puna Tungo Sa Pag-asa," 30.

⁴⁰ Abulad, "Kant and the Task of Contemporary Filipino Philosophy," 59.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

Puná

Ilang dekada nang nagpapatuloy ang debate hinggil sa pag-iral ng Pilosopiyang Filipino, at nasaksihan mismo ni Abulad ang takbo nito mula Dekada '70 hanggang sa panahong iminungkahi niyang paglamayan na ang katanungang ito.⁴² Kaya sa mga unang akda niya, tahasan niyang sinabing wala pa tayong ganap na Pilosopiyang Filipino. Sa kaniyang "Options for a Filipino Philosophy" (1984), iginigiit niyang bagaman dalawang henerasyon na ng guro ang dumaan, wala pa ring pilosoper na may internasyonal na kalibre, marahil dahil nababara tayo sa eksposisyon ng mga banyagang teorya.⁴³ Gayunman, nakikita niya ang pagkamulat ng mga pilosoper sa kanilang pagiging tagapagsalita ng Kanluranin. Dito niya tinukoy ang inklinasyong regresibo at progresibo: ang una—ekspositoryo, antropolohikal, historikal—ay pawang paglalahad ng umiiral na tradisyon; ang ikalawa naman ay pagtatangkang lumikha ng bagong sistemang pilosopikal. Para kay Abulad, nananatiling nangingibabaw noon ang regresibong pamamaraan.⁴⁴ Pagsapit ng 2016, pinino niya ito sa dalawang aspekto: antropolohikal at eksplorasyon. Pinuna niya ang apropyasyon ng teorya na nagiging dahilan umano ng pagkalabnaw ng pilosopikal na laman at ng pagbagsak ng internasyonal na antas.⁴⁵ Gayundin, binansagan niya ang antropolohikal na metodo bilang "alibughang anak" dahil sa tendensiyang paulit-ulit na bumalik sa inaakalang "dalisay" na nakaraan imbes na humakbang pasulong.⁴⁶

Hámon

Batay sa paniniwala niyang wala pa tayong sariling kasaysayan at "katutubong" pilosopiya, itinutulak ni Abulad ang mga Filipinong pilosoper na sila mismo ang magtatag ng isang pilosopiyang taal sa atin. Kinakailangan, wika niya, ang pagbalik at pagsusuri sa nakaraan habang pinagninilayan ang tawag ng kasalukuyan upang matukoy ang magiging direksiyon natin.⁴⁷ Kailangang katawanin ng lilikhain nating Pilosopiyang

⁴² Cf. Alfredo P. Co, "In the Beginning... A Petit Personal Historical Narrative of the Beginning of Philosophy in the Philippines," in *Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co - Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays*, Vol. VI (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 39–40 at Abulad, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century," 1.

⁴³ Abulad, "Options for a Filipino Philosophy," 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁵ Abulad, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century," 3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁷ Abulad, "Options for a Filipino Philosophy," 26.

Filipino ang pinakamatingkad na idea at pagdanas ng mga Filipino, at dapat ding luwagan ang mahigpit na kapit sa mga banyagang higante upang matutunan din nating maging “higante” sa sarili nating batayan. Sa pagpapanday ng sariling kalinangan nakasalalay ang pag-usbong ng isang pambansang pilosopiya.⁴⁸

Pag-ása

Hindi naman itinatangi ni Abulad ang kahalagahan ng pag-aaral ng banyagang teorya. Para sa kaniya, kinakailangan ito habang hindi pa tayo ganap na nakatatayo sa sarili nating pilosopikal na paa. Sa kabila ng kaniyang mga puná, nananatili ang tiwala niyang darating ang panahon na makasabay tayo sa internasyonal na diskurso—hindi na bilang tagasunod kundi bilang kapantay.⁴⁹ Tinitiyak niyang bagaman nagsisimula pa lamang ang ating gawain, may sapat na dahilan upang manatiling puno ng pag-ása para sa hinaharap ng Pilosopiyang Filipino.⁵⁰

Pagpuna sa mga Kontemporaneo

Puná

Bukod sa kaniyang malawakang puná sa kalagayan ng Pilosopiyang Filipino, kilala rin si Abulad bilang kritiko ng mga proyekto ng kaniyang mga kontemporaneo. Isa sa mga pangunahing halimbawa ang pagbása niya kay Florentino Hornedo sa *The Power to Be* (2000). Kinilala niya ang akda bilang ambag sa paghihilom at muling pagbubuo ng bayan bagaman naisulat ito ni Hornedo bago pa man ang rebolusyon sa EDSA,⁵¹ at bilang pagtatangkang lumikha ng sistematikong pilosopiyang Filipino. Subalit pinuna niya ang kawalan ng kongkretong depinisyon ng “kalayaan” at ang paggamit ni Hornedo ng pamamaraang mas literaryo kaysa penomenolohikal.⁵² Gayunpaman, itinangi niya ang akda bilang seryosong pilosopikal na gawain at manipestasyon ng “katapangan” ni Hornedo na ihain ang kaniyang palaisipan sa kritisismo.⁵³ Katulad nito, hindi nagbago ang sentimyento ni Abulad sa mga akda ni Leonardo Mercado sa kaniyang tatlong pagsusuri Para kay Abulad, nakasandig si Mercado sa antropolohikong pamamaraan at sa pagtatangkang bumuo ng “pilosopiya ng taumbayan,” na marapat sanang

⁴⁸ Abulad, “Kant and the Task of Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” 62.

⁴⁹ Abulad, “The Filipino as a Philosopher in Search of Originality,” 17.

⁵⁰ Quito, “Pulong-Isip: Meeting of Filipino Minds,” 16.

⁵¹ Abulad, “Freedom in Times of Crisis,” 143.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 145–146.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 148.

iatas sa antropolohiya.⁵⁴ Mula sa linyang ito ng pag-iisip hango rin ang pahapyaw na pagpuná niya kina Alejo at Timbreza na gumagamit ng antropolohikong lente.⁵⁵

Sa kaniyang mga artikulo, tinangkang gambalain ni Abulad ang kaniyang mga kontemporaneo, subalit mababanaagan na tila walang direktang tumugon sa mga panggagambalang ito. Maaaring may sagutan sa mga kumperensya, ngunit sa pagsusuyod ng mga lathalain, wala pang matatagpuang tugon sa kaniyang mga puná. Maaaring ito ang isang kulang na sangkap sa pagbuo ng kultura ng tunggalian sa Pilosopiyang Filipino—ang hindi natin pagharap sa dapat harapin at ang kawalan ng tugon kapag tayo’y ginagambala. Kalakip ng pag-amin sa pagkukulang ang pagsulong ng diskurso: na may kailangan pang punan, may maaaring idagdag ng iba, at may maiiusad pa ang usapan. Sa ganitong estado nagiging buháy ang talastasan sa anumang problematikong inihahain sa pilosopiya.

Bagaman maaaring hindi tumalab ang “panggagambala” ni Abulad sa kaniyang mga kakontemporaneo upang magbukás ng mainam na talastasang pilosopiko, masasabi nating tumalab naman ang “panggagambalang” ito sa kaniyang mga mambabasá sa kontemporaneong panahon, lalo’t higit pagdating sa mga sentimyento ni Abulad hinggil sa politika at postmodernismo. Sumiklab ang pinakamalawak na debate sa politika at etika sa pagbása kina Abulad nina Imbong, Abellanos, at Festin. Para kina Imbong at Abellanos, antagonistiko ang pagbása ni Abulad kay Machiavelli, na inilarawan niya bilang sagisag ng “strongman politics.”⁵⁶ kaya binuo niya ang konsepto ng “lampas-Machiavelli,” subalit pinagtalunan nina Imbong at Abellanos ang posibilidad ng “politikang walang kapangyarihan” at ang paglampas sa politika sa pamamagitan lamang ng paglampas kay Machiavelli.⁵⁷ Liban kina Imbong at Abellanos, marahil ang pinakamaigting na polemika hinggil sa kontrobersyal na “apolohiya” ni Abulad hinggil sa politika ni Duterte ay ang pagpuna ni Festin sa artikulo ni Abulad na “Why President Duterte Could Be Correct” (2017), na nagtangkang bigyang-matuwid ang EJK sa pamamagitan ng Kantian good

⁵⁴ Tingnan Abulad, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century,” 6 at Abulad, “Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba? The Relavance of Filipino Philosophy in Social Renewal,” 8.

⁵⁵ Upang masipat ang talakayang ito ni Abulad, maaaring tingnan Abulad, “Pilosopiyang Pinoy: Uso Pa Ba? The Relavance of Filipino Philosophy in Social Renewal,” 21–27.

⁵⁶ Regletto Aldrich D. Imbong, “Abulad’s Post-Machiavelli and his Apology for Duterte,” sa *PHAVISMINDA Journal* (2019), 79, 84 at Rhoderick John S. Abellanos, “Niccolo Machiavelli and the Possibility of the Post-political,” sa *PHAVISMINDA Journal* (2019), 53.

⁵⁷ Abellanos, “Niccolo Machiavelli and the Possibility of the Post-political,” 59–60, 71–72; Imbong, “Abulad’s Post-Machiavelli and his Apology for Duterte,” 83.

will at Nietzschean transvaluation of values.⁵⁸ Binigyang-diin ni Festin ang panganib ng argumentong nagmumungkahing maaaring “mabuti” ang pagpatay batay sa konteksto, lalo’t iniwasan ni Abulad banggitin ang salitang “tao.”⁵⁹

Hámon

Mula sa kabuuan ng mga puná ni Abulad, lumilitaw ang kaniyang pangunahing hámon: ang pagtalima sa pamimilosopiyang hindi nababara sa antropolohikong pamamaraan. Para sa kaniya, hindi sapat ang pag-uungkat ng nakaraan at ang mabilisang paglalapat ng empirikal na datos tungo sa malalaking konklusyon. Kailangan nating buwagin ang monopolyo ng pag-iisip na ang Pilosopiyang Filipino ay dapat magmula sa antropolohiyang konteksto lamang. Hinihikayat ni Abulad ang mga pilosoper na manatiling bukás sa iba’t ibang pamamaraan at maging masigasig sa pagsusulat, sapagkat sa pagpapalathala lamang maisasailalim sa kritisismo ang kanilang mga proyekto. Sa kritisismong ito, aniya, yumayabong ang pilosopiya— sa talastasan, sa pagtutuwid, at sa patuloy na paghubog ng pinakamahasay na bersyon ng ating mga ideá. Ngunit binabanaagan din niya ang kakulangan ng direktang pagtugon sa mga puná, na maaaring dahilan kung bakit hindi mahinog ang kultura ng tunggalian sa Pilosopiyang Filipino.

Pag-ása

Bagaman tila hindi tumalab ang panggagambala ni Abulad sa kaniyang mga kontemporaneo, malinaw namang tumalab ito sa susunod na henerasyon ng mga mambabasa. Sa partikular, nagbunsod ang kaniyang mga sulatin hinggil sa politika at postmodernismo ng bagong talastasan sa mga kabataang pilosoper, na siyang nagpatuloy ng kaniyang mithiin: ang pagbubukas ng espasyo para sa puná, hámon, at pag-ása tungo sa pagyabong ng isang Pilosopiyang Filipino. Sa pamamagitan ng mga debate na umusbong sa mga sulat ni Abulad, naging malinaw ang katuparan ng pag-ásang inihatik niya—na sa pagsasailalim natin sa puná sa isa’t isa, unti-unting naitataguyod ang kultura ng tunggalian at kritikal na pag-iisip na kinakailangan para sa hinaharap ng Pilosopiyang Filipino.

⁵⁸ Raymun J. Festin, “Duterte, Kant, and Philosophy,” sa *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, 16 and 17 (2018), 61.

⁵⁹ Inaargumento ni Festin na maaaring tingnan ang mga katagang ito (nang hindi sinasama ang salitang “tao”) bílang maaari, kung titingnan mula sa konteksto ng pagpatay sa hayop upang gawing pagkain halimbawa.

Politika at Postmodernismo

Puná

Hindi maihihiwalay ang politika sa dominante at pinakakontrobersiyal na paksain ni Abulad. Sa bahaging ito lumilitaw ang kaniyang pinakamatingkad na puná: mula sa pagtawag pansin sa pamamahala ng mga pangulo ng Filipinas hanggang sa kaniyang pagtanaw sa politika mula sa lente ng postmodernismo— na naging pundasyon ng kaniyang “apolohiya” para sa rehimen ni Rodrigo Duterte.

Nagsimula ang kaniyang puná kay Quezon, na para kay Abulad ay nagtaguyod ng mababaw na demokrasya dahil hindi ito nakaugat sa pilosopikal na pag-unawa.⁶⁰ Kalayaan na “hiniram” at hindi inangkin ang nakita niya sa panahong ito, bunga ng pag-iral ng pulitikang Amerikano sa bansa. Sa ganitong konteksto, tila hindi tumutugma ang pamamahala ni Quezon sa pangangailangan ng lipunang Filipino. Pinakamatindi ang kaniyang mga naging puna kay Marcos Sr., na binansagan niyang rurok ng kolonyalismo at simbolo ng pagkaalipin. Kaya itinuturing niya ang EDSA bilang sukdulan ng pagtitimpi at tunay na pamamaalam sa nakaraan.⁶¹ Subalit taliwas dito, nakita niya kay Estrada ang pagtatangkang ibalik ang kulturang korapsyon,⁶² samantalang naging mas mabigat ang kaniyang reserbasyon ngunit bahagyang may pag-asa sa pagpasok ng rehimeng Arroyo at Aquino.⁶³ Sa ganitong daloy umusbong ang konsepto ni Abulad ng postmodernismo bilang bagong yugto ng kasaysayan, bilang panahon ng pagbubukas, sanga-sangang posibilidad, at pagtalikod sa kolonyal na pag-iisip.⁶⁴ Dito rin nakaugat ang kaniyang pagsusuri sa politika: ang

⁶⁰ Abulad, “Ang Pulitika Ni Quezon Sa Pananaw-Pilosopo,” 1; 6-7.

⁶¹ Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” 2 at Abulad, “Ang Pilosopiyang Pranses sa Pananaw ng Isang Pilipino,” 26.

⁶² Abulad, “A Philosopher’s View from EDSA,” sa *Karunungan*, 18 (2001), 11.

⁶³ Abulad, “Contemporary Faces of Evil,” 4 at Abulad, “Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?,” 53.

⁶⁴ Mula sa koleksiyon niya ng mga akda, mababanaagang tinatanaw ni Abulad ang postmodernismo bilang isang kamalayan, pamamaraan ng pag-iisip at pamumuhay, at perspektiba na nagpapakahulugan sa pananaw ng isang tao sa kaniyang realidad at pag-iral. Aniya, kinakatawan ang panahon na ito ng pagiging bukás, inklusibo, holistiko, dinamiko, buháy, global, pakikisangkot sa diyalogo, at pagpapanday ng koneksyon sa isa’t isa. Samakatuwid, mula sa ganitong pagtanaw sa postmodernismo umuugat ang mga hámon ni Abulad hinggil sa muling pagsisimula at pagkukumpuni ng isang “bagong” lipunang Filipino. Tingnan Romualdo E. Abulad, “What Is Postmodernism?,” in *Two Filipino Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism*, 19; “What Is Postmodernism?,” 33; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Origen’s Contra Celsum: A Touch of Postmodernism,” sa *Two Filipino Thomasian Philosophers on Postmodernism*, 194; at “Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?,” 47.

paglalampas sa maka-Machiavellian na politika ng kapangyarihan tungo sa isang etikal na politika na nakasentro sa diskurso at diyalogo.

Mula sa ganitong pagtanaw natin mababasa ang apolohiya ni Abulad kay Duterte. Pinanindigan niya ang pagluklok kay Duterte ay hudyat ng “*vox populi, vox Dei*” at maaaring tugon sa krimen, korapsyon, at droga kung bibigyan lamang ng pagkakataon ang kaniyang pamumuno.⁶⁵ Kahit mulát siya sa mala-diktador na tendensiya ni Duterte, iginigiit ni Abulad na maaaring “etikal at relihiyoso” ang pangulo kung matututo tayong tumingin lampas sa pagmumura at karumal-dumal na patayan.⁶⁶ Mula rito iniuugnay niya ang pagiging “makatwiran” ng pagpatay sa konteksto ng mabuting kalooban (*good will*).⁶⁷ Idinaragdag pa niya ang posibilidad ng pagbabago ng kahulugan ng karapatang pantao sa panahong ito.⁶⁸ Sa ganitong lohika tumitindi ang kontrobersiya: maaaring basahin ang kaniyang mga pahayag bilang pagtatangkang udyukan ang mambabasa na magpuná, ngunit maaari rin itong basahin bilang tahasang apolohiya sa laganap na EJK.

Hámon

Sa kabila ng kaniyang matinding puná, nananatili kay Abulad ang hámon ng muling pagsisimula na dala ng EDSA — isang blangkong pahina na nangangailangan ng ambag ng bawat Filipino. Ang optimismong ito ay lumulutang sa kaniyang pagtanaw na ang postmodernismo ay panahon ng bukás, dinamiko, at holistikong pag-iisip, at dito nakaugat ang kaniyang mga hámon: ang pagkukumpuni ng lipunan, ang pagsasabuhay ng diyalogo, at ang pag-aangkin ng bagong direksyon lampas sa kolonyal na politika. Dito rin niya muling binalikan ang dalawang sangkap ng postmodernong kamalayan: ang *via negativa*, ang pampupulbos at pagwasak ng lahat — pati na rin ng mga paboritong paniniwala — at ang *via positiva*, ang muling pagtatayo matapos ang pampupulbos. Halimbawa niya sina Nietzsche, Marx, at Freud, na sa kabila ng kanilang matatalim na puná ay nakadirekta sa positibong pagbabago. Ganito rin ang nais niyang makita sa lipunang Filipino: ang dumaan sa pagtitibag at muling pagbuo upang paghandaan ang isang bagong panahon na bukás ang isip sa politika at kritikal. Sa ganitong konteksto rin lumilitaw ang kaniyang mga pasubali: ang pangangailangang

⁶⁵ Tingnan Abulad, “Martial Law and Religion,” sa *Scientia*, 6:2 (2017), 54; Abulad, “Filipino Postmodernity: Quo Vadis?,” 52; Romualdo E. Abulad, “Why President Duterte Could Be Correct,” sa *King’s Clarion* (17 June 2016).

⁶⁶ Abulad, “Martial Law and Religion,” 55.

⁶⁷ Abulad, “Ethics, Indigenous Ethics, and the Contemporary Challenge: Attempt at a Report on Ethics for the Filipino Today,” 8.

⁶⁸ Abulad, “Martial Law and Religion,” 57.

making, manalig sa posibilidad ng pagbabago, at bigyang-puwang ang mga pinunáng maaaring humawan ng bagong landasin.

Pag-ása

Kung mapapansin, kalakip ng mga halimbawang ito ang mga manipestasyon din ng pag-igting ng optimismong tinataglay ni Abulad mula sa mga akda niya noong Dekada '70 hanggang sa mga huli niyang akda sa ika-21 siglo, kung saan nabanaagang narating ng optimismong ito ang kanyang rurok at datapwa'y kabalintunaan sa kontrobersyal na apolohiya ni Abulad para sa rehimeng Duterte: maaaring mahalaga ito bilang udyok sa kritikal na pag-iisip, ngunit maaari rin itong maging delikado kapag ginamit bilang depensa sa karahasan ng estado. Sa isang banda, ito ay pagpapatuloy ng kaniyang puna-hámon-pag-ása: tinatawagan niya ang mambabasa na mag-isip, magtanong, at magnilay. Sa kabilang banda, nagiging babala rin ang kaniyang optimismo sapagkat makikita sa reaksyon ng mga iskolar na maaaring mauwi ang ganitong pananaw sa isang apolohiyang politikal na tumatalikod sa kritisismo. Gayunpaman, nananatili ang aral na nais ibahagi ni Abulad na sa politika man o pilosopiya, kinakailangan ang patuloy na paghimay, pagtutol, pagtatanong, at muling pag-asa upang makabuo ng isang lipunan at pilosopiyang Filipino na tunay na atin.

Pagbubuod: Ang Kahalagahan at Potensyal ng maka-Abulad na Pagpuná

Sa ginawang pagsusuri sa maka-Abulad na pagpuná at sa mga manipestasyon nito sa mga akda ni Abulad, mababanaagan ang ilang mapupulot na halagahan mula sa ganitong uri ng pagpuná.

Una, ang kahalagahan ng pag-unawa at pagiging bukás sa sariling konteksto at kasaysayan sa pagpuná. Bunga ng pagpapahalaga ni Abulad sa pagtataglay ng paninging makasaysayan na tinalakay natin, mababanaagan natin sa kanyang mga pagpuná na may pangangailangang mababad din táyo sa konteksto ng anomang bagay na pinupuná natin. Isa itong mahabang proseso na nararapat munang ilatag ang pundasyon at habiin ang kwento bago tumungo sa mismong pagpuná.

Pangalawa, ang kahalagahan ng isang pagpunang mula loob tungo sa labas. Tilabaga ipinamumukha ni Abulad ang kahalagahan ng pakikipagsapalaran sa internal nating mga pakikibaka—ang ating identidad, ang ating pagpapahalaga, ang ating pagkatao, ang ating mga pagpapasya't paninindigan—bago táyo tumungo at makiisa sa pakikibaka ng iba sa mas malawakang aspekto. Makikita sa pagtataguyod ni Abulad ng ganitong uri ng pagpuná na palagiang may paanyaya sa kanyang mga mambabasa na

samahan siyang pag-isipan ang mga hinahain niyang puná (at kung maaari, hamunin ang mga ito), sapagkat ang mga paksaing pinag-uusapan ay hindi nahihawalay sa kanilang pareho, bagkus nararapat na pagsaluhan ang mga pinalutang niyang palaisipan.

At pangatlo, ang kahalagahan ng elemento ng optimismo. Taliwas sa karaniwang estruktura ng pagpuná na nagtatapos lámang sa pampupulbos o paghahamon, makikita natin sa mga pagpuna ni Abulad ang mga manipstasyon at kapagdaka, ang daloy ng optimismo't pag-ása sa kanyang mga akda, na isa sa pinakakatangi-tanging halagahang mababanaagan sa isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná. Alalaumbaga, ipinamukha ni Abulad sa kanyang optimismo ang kahalagahan ng pagtanaw natin sa liwanag—na hindi lamang layunin ng pilosoper na makiisa sa pag-aapuhap sa dilim ng kasalukuyan niyang kinasasadlakan, bagkus kinakailangan din niyang matutong tanawin ang liwanag na maaaring taglayin ng hinaharap, at kaakibat nito, ang tanganan din ang sulô upang gabayan ang ibang matanaw rin ang liwanag na ito.

Kung ilalarawan natin ang isang maka-Abulad na Pagpuná, maaari natin itong ilarawan bílang “Mga Puná tungo sa Pag-ása”, sapagkat makikitang nakapaloob mismo sa mga katagang ito ang layunin ni Abulad sa kanyang mga pagpuná: ang pag-ása. Subalit, kung mailalarawan natin ang isang maka-Abulad na Pagpuna bílang “Mga Puná tungo sa Pag-ása”, nararapat naman nating mailarawan ang kritisismo hinggil dito bílang “Mga Puná sa Pag-ása”—samakatuwid, mga pagpuná sa parehong pag-ása na nagsisilbing ruok ng isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná.

Tulad ng unang tinuran, tunay na may angking kahalagahan ang optimismo't pag-ása sa pagsisilbi bílang liwanag na maaaring tanawin sa hinaharap. Subalit makikita rin natin mismo sa mga pagpuná ni Abulad ang kahinaang maaaring taglayin nito. Isang maigting na halimbawa na lámang dito ang naging apolohiya ni Abulad sa rehimen ni Duterte lalo't higit sa giyera nito laban sa droga at ang mga kaakibat na *extra-judicial killings (EJKs)* ng giyerang ito. Maaaring sa optimistikong pagtanaw at pag-ása sa nais makamit ng krusadang ito, tila lumabo na ang pagtingin ni Abulad sa mga kasalukuyang pagpatay at pangyuyurak sa karapatang pantao na dinulot nito. Tunay ngang sa matagal na pagtitig sa liwanag, maaaring lumabo ang ating pagtingin sa ating paligid. Kung kayâ, marahil, nararapat lámang na may limitasyon din ang pagkakasangkapan ng pag-ásang ito—ng optimistikong pagtanaw na ito—upang maiwasang kumitid o lumabo ang ating pagtanaw sa kasalukuyang kinasasadlakan.

Sa madaling salita, makikita natin dito na bagaman may kaakibat na optimismo ang pagpuna, may kaakibat ding pagpuna ang optimismo. Subalit hindi iminumungkahi ng mga pagpunang ito na wala nang ambag at hindi na natin maaaring maikasangkapan ang isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná.

Samakatuwid, hinhámon lámang táyo ng ganitong pagpuná na maging mulát din sa mga limitasyong taglay nito.

Sa naging pagsusuri hinggil sa ambag ng isang maka-Abulad na Pagpuná sa Kritikal na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino, ipinamukha sa atin ni Abulad ang kahalagahan ng pagkakaroon ng liwanag na maaaring matagpuan sa dulo ng ating mga pagpuná—ising liwanag na maaaring gumabay, subalit maaari ring bumulag. Kaakibat ng paglalantad na ito ang hámong mamulat táyo sa mga hangganan ng ganitong uri ng pagpuná at matutunan din natin kung paanong responsableng maikasangkapan ang elemento ng optimismong nakapaloob dito. Ipinapakita ng isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná na hindi salát sa kakayahang makapagpanday ng natatanging pamamaraang ng pagpuná ang ating mga Filipinong pilosoper. Bagaman hindi antagonistiko ang pagtanaw sa mga pagpunang may banyagang balangkas o apropyasyon ng mga banyagang teorya, maaaring makita bílang isang alternatibong pamamaraan ang iminumungkahing pamamaraan ng pagpuná ni Abulad—ising pamamaraang nanggagaling sa isang Filipinong pilosoper na makikitaan nating bagaman may impluwensyang Kantiano, Filipino naman ang lápat. Samakatuwid, maaaring magsilbi ang isang maka-Abulad na pagpuná bílang bukal ng isang uri ng pagpunang matatawag nating likás na mula sa atin, bunga ng isang kamalayang pumuná na tunay na nahulma, nababad, at nakiisa sa takbo ng panahong kinapalooban ni Abulad, ‘di lámang bílang isang pilosoper, kundi lalo’t higit bílang isang Filipino.

Nasa kamay na ng mga kakasangkapan ng kanyang uri ng pagpuná ang responsibilidad ng pagmamaniobra ng liwanag na ito. Subalit bagaman mabigat ang responsibilidad na kaakibat nito, masasabi pa rin nating mas maigting pa rin ang pangangailangan nating makatanaw ng liwanag sa panahong ito, lalo’t higit sa panahong ito. Ika nga ni Abulad, (at marahil, isa na ring paalala ito sa ating mga sarili ngayon) “narito ang hámon, nasa atin [na] ang tugon.”⁶⁹

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Book Review

**Ocay, Jeffrey,
*Critical Theory at the Margins: Applying
Herbert Marcuse's Model of Critical Social
Theory to the Philippines*¹**

Allison Cruyff V F. Ladero

Inspired by the critical social theory of Herbert Marcuse, the book under review called *Critical Theory at the Margins: Applying Herbert Marcuse's Model of Critical Social Theory to the Philippines*, by Jeffrey Ocay, is an important piece of work that may serve as a starting point in expanding the normative claims of critical theory to non-Western spaces. The book is an attempt to situate Marcuse's critical theory in the Philippines in order to analyze the mode of social control as well as the possibilities for emancipation in a "country at the margins." The intention is not to force Marcuse's rich and potent analysis to a country "at the margins" but to simply indicate the way in which his critical theory, for the most part, complements, but also warrants correction to a certain degree when situated in a given society that is not located at the center.² This is significant in that it boldly diverges from the European origin of critical theory and makes it adaptable and applicable to a non-European context without compromising the cohesion, consistency, and cogency of Marcuse's model of critical social theory.

The book is divided primarily into two parts, and the discussion is spread out into six chapters. Part 1 of the book deals with a straightforward reconstruction of Marcuse's critical social theory, which he does in the first 3 chapters of the book. In these chapters, Ocay traces the philosophical foundations of Marcuse's critical theory, which include Heidegger, Hegel, Marx, and Freud. Then he moves to an explanation of Marcuse's general critique of the advanced industrial society and how his notion of the Great Refusal provides a framework for the possibility of emancipation. From

¹ Davao, Philippines: Aletheia Publishing, 2023, 229pp.

² Jeffrey Ocay, *Critical Theory at the Margins: Applying Herbert Marcuse's Model of Critical Social Theory to the Philippines* (Davao, Philippines: Aletheia Publishing, 2023), 18–19.

reconstructing Marcuse's model of critical theory, he moves to identifying the empirical realities of domination and resistance in the Philippines as a country "at the margins" in the second part. From chapters 4 down to the epilogue, Ocaj articulates the dynamics of domination and resistance in the Philippines through a historical tracing of the notable events that took place in pre-colonial Philippines, Spanish, and American periods in an attempt to show the emergence of critical consciousness in the country. A discussion on technological domination, as a result of neocolonialism, and its impact of one-dimensionality ensues. Ending with a more hopeful tone, Ocaj reintroduces the Great Refusal contextualized in the peasant movement of the Philippines as a prime example of attempts to radically resist the capitalist system of social organization.

To start with, the first chapter hinges on a reconstruction of Heidegger, Hegel, and Marx in order to establish Marcuse's notion of historicity. This is fundamental because any discussion on Marcuse's theory of emancipation must first start with the idea of historicity. According to Ocaj, it is the concept of historicity that Marcuse uses in his "search for such historically and critically conscious individual, who can be the potent agent of social transformation."³ It is historicity that "defines history ... and signifies the meaning we intend when we say of something that is historical."⁴ More importantly, Ocaj notes that it is precisely historicity that "makes 'history' history."⁵ Because historicity suggests the world is historical, i.e., determined by social and material conditions, the possibilities for domination but also for change and liberation become available. It is from this vantage point that Marcuse appropriates Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*. This appropriation is predicated on the fact that it was no longer compelling for Marcuse to rely on the proletariat, especially with the ideology espoused by Soviet Marxism during his time. As such, Marcuse politicizes the concrete individual or *Dasein*. Following Heidegger, Marcuse picks up the idea that humans are shaped by history, that is, "dasein is in the present, indebted to the past, and oriented toward the future (death) ... the human being is a being in time."⁶ This affirms, notes Ocaj, *Dasein's* possibility of creating a project geared towards an authentic existence in the future.⁷ Viewed this way, the concrete individual or *dasein* bears the capability for radical action, allowing him to reshape the historically conditioned world he has been thrown into.

Heidegger's *Dasein*, however, is both apolitical and asocial. Consequently, Marcuse supplies this lack using Hegel's concept of the

³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

dialectic and master-slave relations. Ocay shows this by explaining that Marcuse's use of Hegel gives a character to *Dasein* that is both "active and reflective, that is indeed capable of radical action."⁸ For Ocay, Marcuse was convinced that by complementing Heidegger's *Dasein* with Hegel, a conceptual tool capable of engaging with the logic of capitalism would spell out the inherent possibility of emancipation and a qualitatively new society. Ultimately, this becomes even more robust with the addition of Marx in the picture. The book considers Marcuse's engagement with Marx to be particularly important because it clarifies that labor is "man's act of perfecting himself."⁹ In other words, labor is not the problem to begin with but has simply taken a perverted form, i.e., alienated labor, maintained by the existence of private property. But as Ocay, following Marcuse, will argue later in Chapters 4–6, alternative models of labor can also promote self-realization and fulfillment.

The second chapter, titled "Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse's Psychoanalytic Turn" works on the role of psychological domination both in the context of domination and liberation. This is important because, as the book explains, by borrowing conceptual tools from Heidegger, Hegel, and Marx, Marcuse was convinced that radical social transformation can happen. Yet, advanced industrial societies have only become formidable and indomitable. Marx's prediction that capitalism would transition into socialism did not materialize. Additionally, the status quo has succeeded in co-opting the proletariat. As such, Marcuse sought to rework his theory by looking into the ways the system of control effectively neutralizes any form of opposition. This is where Freud's psychoanalysis becomes particularly useful for Marcuse.

While some might find the fusion of Marx and Freud idiosyncratic and, perhaps, theoretically incompatible, the book clarifies that capitalism is not simply an economic system that manipulates solely at the level of political economy. Rather, it operates in other areas of life, even in the psychological dimension. This is why Marcuse, while not in agreement with all aspects of Freud's analysis, found it imperative to use the latter's concepts in his critical analysis of society. The book presents a comprehensive and nuanced discussion on this and notably highlights the position in which Marcuse both converges and diverges from Freud. To be sure, because Marcuse's social context is different from Freud's, he departs from Freud's notion of repression to a certain degree. From the perspective of Marcuse, "the antagonism between life instincts and restrictions of civilization is socio-historical in nature ... not given for all times."¹⁰ Ocay sees this as Marcuse's attempt to

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

recognize the legitimacy of Freud's original claim as well as an expansion of such a notion in the context of a highly technological society. Considering that late capitalist societies function on the basis of overproduction, aggression, and accumulation, the consumption habits, as well as the labor required, are also altered. Instead of having more free time—thanks to technology—the system exacts more time from individuals in order to manufacture false needs, resulting in lavish consumption, subsequently sustaining social control and domination chiefly on the level of the psyche. Indeed, it is hard to militate against a system that satisfies, drowns, and seduces you with options in the market.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the technological aspect of the system and how Marcuse identifies both the dominative and emancipative aspects of it. From explaining the role of technology in dissolving the individual's critical impulse in the previous chapter, O'Casey now proceeds to a more focused discussion on Marcuse's critical analysis of technological domination as well as the prospects of radical alternatives found in his concept of the Great Refusal. Here, he emphasizes that technology for Marcuse is value-neutral in that it can either be a tool for heightening the speed and domain of social control or advance ideals that embrace real human freedom and happiness.¹¹ Apparently, for Marcuse, the way in which technology is used in advanced industrial societies is characterized by an intense technological rationality that promotes an extractivist and productivist logic through the creation of false needs that compel individuals to conform to the dictates of the status quo. For O'Casey, as for Marcuse, this is concerning insofar as it anesthetizes the critical and negative spirit of thought, and, as an upshot, creates a one-dimensional society.¹² Despite this, the book affirms Marcuse's position that technology can still be reoriented toward more liberating directions, especially when called to question by what he terms the Great Refusal. O'Casey identifies this Marcusean concept as a "negativity both in thought and action."¹³ And because it does not take a singular form, O'Casey reads Marcuse to be suggesting that it can be expressed in the form of confrontation politics, a united front, or even through art. By establishing Marcuse's notion of the Great Refusal, O'Casey hints at efforts from movements in the Philippines, especially the peasant movement, as legitimate representatives of the ethos of this refusal.

Having reconstructed Marcuse's critical social project, the fourth chapter signals the overarching thrust of the book's second part, which is on the empirical justification of Marcuse's model of critical theory in the context of the Philippines, identified as a country at the margins. In particular, this

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹² *Ibid.*, 71.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 79.

chapter revolves around the history of domination and resistance in the Philippines, beginning from the pre-Hispanic to the Spanish and American periods. Ocay justifies this historical presentation to be necessary in that it gives the reader a glimpse of how the domination and critical resistance back then operated in a country like the Philippines. For example, he describes the primitive form of economic activity during pre-colonial Philippines as one that is heavily influenced by the *barangay* system, wherein cooperative labor, instead of wage labor, was the norm, which he elaborates in the 6th chapter. It only drastically changed when Spanish colonizers arrived and started systematically restructuring Philippine society into a feudal one as part of their colonial expansion. Writing a comprehensive account of this transformation, Ocay drives the reader to the fact that as the Spanish regime intensified its colonial project, so did the critical dimension of the Filipinos. In fact, he notes that at least 200 independent and regionalized revolts unfolded across the country, notably, the Dagohoy revolt, the Diego Silang revolt, to name a few.¹⁴ Eventually, the aggregate of this critical consciousness would culminate in the founding of the *Kataas-taasang, Kagalang-galangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (KKK). Unfortunately, these revolutionary attempts did not end the colonial experience in the country and have instead only brought in the Americans as its next colonial masters. While resistance movements remained present during this time, Ocay posits that the American project of Americanizing Philippine society was too strong a force that suppressing attempts of resistance was not a concern at all.

It is in the fifth chapter that the book analyzes more extensively the effects of imperialism and neocolonialism, especially the emergence of one-dimensionality in the country. According to Ocay, domination in the Philippines comes in different forms: militaristic, economic, political, and cultural. But he asserts that technological domination—a characteristic feature of cultural domination—functions as the most commanding in decimating the critical consciousness of Filipinos. By bringing light to these expressions of control, the reader is taken to the realization that Ocay's appropriation of Marcuse in a country at the margins exposes both the relevance as well as the theoretical deficits of the latter, specifically on the nuances of the material conditions between countries at the center and those at the margins. In contrast to Marcuse's focus on the advanced industrial societies, less developed countries, that have been captured by a colonial power like America, experience a host of issues that include foreign military presence and indebtedness to institutions like the World Bank and, International Monetary Fund, to name a few.¹⁵ He notes that the influence of

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

American consumerism has greatly modified the consumption habits in the country, as more artificial or false needs are sold in the market to command an illusion of choice. More importantly, wage labor became even more necessary, and the revolutionary spirit that used to be alive dissipated.

At the heart of the book's thesis is the quest for redemptive alternatives in a country like the Philippines. As such, the epilogue frames the conversation toward exploring several forms of the Great Refusal, with more emphasis on the peasant movement. This crystallizes the book's thesis that countries at the margins, like the Philippines, are a fertile ground for and rich source of emancipative possibilities. Indeed, in contrast to the countries at the center, those at the periphery experience domination and resistance in different ways. In the Philippines, for example, domination is two-fold: 1) modern technological form that results in one-dimensionality; and 2) more "direct, brutal, and primitive forms of oppression that sustain imperialist rule."¹⁶ While Marcuse did touch on the developing countries being critical sites of revolutionary struggles, especially in their anti-colonial resistance, Ocaj argues that the former did not touch on the nuances specific to these spaces. For sure, the Philippines has a plethora of oppositional and militant groups that contribute tremendously to countervailing the capitalist force, such as Anakbayan, Gabriela, Makibaka, to name a few. However, Ocaj maintains that it is the "oppressed of the oppressed" that provide a unique narrative of refusal.¹⁷ This he particularly identifies with the Filipino peasant movement, which bears both the real experience of violence and destruction as outsiders of the system, as well as the ways of life and social organization that outright reject the capitalist paradigm. These social conditions that are specific to countries at the periphery expose some of the limitations of the more Western orientation of Marcuse's critical analyses. Yet, Ocaj does not entirely depart from the latter. Locating his critical theory at the margins does not at all contradict Marcuse's analyses but actually expands and deepens them in more ways. The Great Refusal is given a fresh perspective when you consider the indigenous ways of organizing society among various peasant communities. He cites the *Suyuan*s in Mindoro, *Jungos* in Bohol, and *Junlos* in various areas of Mindanao as clear examples of peasant communities that practice alternative modes of existence. While different in certain ways, these communities all embody a cooperative form of work where wage labor is not the rule. As such, their work ethic is not informed by surplus repression. He notes that "they pool their labor together in order to get the job done efficiently without the use of money, that is, without paying the labor each member of the *Suyuan* or *Jungos*, or *Junlos* expends."¹⁸ More importantly, he

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 163–164.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

alludes to the fact that these communities are not marred by consumption habits that obsess over imported goods or succumb to the insatiability of acquiring false needs. Apart from this unique mode of social organization, peasant movements, writes Oca, have also been radically involved in actual militant political confrontation against the state, as seen in the case of the Higaonon tribe farmers from Sumilao who successfully won the fight for land rights by going on a hunger strike in Manila.¹⁹

In the end, the reader is made to understand that the intention for recognizing the alternative mode of existence in these peasant communities is not a naïve gesture or a way to promote a sentimental and regressive solution that calls for discarding technology altogether. Rather, it is a useful piece of writing that offers insights into the plausibility of transforming technology to more humane ways by looking into radically alternative means of organizing social life that are not derivative of the capitalist paradigm. Consistent with Marcuse's utopian project, the work qualifies the possibility of emancipation from social control by moving away from the conventional confrontational resistances and instead acknowledges the equally enduring emancipative power of indigenous practices of a country at the margins. More importantly, it highlights the existence of emancipative forces at the periphery that have not been coopted and integrated yet into the capitalist system—a site that has conveniently been categorized as “voiceless” and “powerless” but actually holds immense liberating tendencies that bring about hope. One could question, on the contrary, Oca's notion of emancipation—whether the cooperative work practiced in these peasant societies is enough to push for a radical transformation to the more mainstream Philippine society—insofar as real emancipation probably requires the reach also of masses outside of small communities and villages in real ways. Indeed, the book does not go that far. But as the first major Filipino work on critical theory at the margins, the book serves as a starting point in identifying movements that remain uncaptured wholly by the system, which is a value in itself. And as Bolanos mentioned in the foreword, the book is an invitation to address “marginal spaces as fecund resources for critical theory, as opposed to critical theory being the solution to marginalization.”²⁰

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¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, iv.

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Book Review

**Krause, Katja & Richard C. Taylor (Eds.),
*Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources:
Medieval Science
between Inheritance and Emergence*¹**

Jovito V. Cariño

The average public perception often equates German philosophy with the rationalists like Leibniz and Wolff; the pioneers of the Romantic movement like Schleiermacher, Herder, and Schelling; the exponents of Enlightenment like Kant, Fichte, and Hegel; and the counter Enlightenment thinkers like Marx and Nietzsche. Readers' modern bias induces them to treat German philosophy as a progeny of modernity to the exclusion of such outliers like Angelus Silesius and the other great pre-modern German masters like Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen, Nicholas of Cusa, and the subject matter of book under review, Albert the Great. To many, Albert the Great (despite the attribution of greatness) is but a medieval figure and a second fiddle at that to his more celebrated Italian student, Thomas Aquinas. What is often kept from popular view is Albert's immense contribution not just to the development of Catholic medieval thought but more so, to the early formation of German intellectual culture. This gross neglect has since been corrected by earlier and more recent works of scholars like Lewis White Beck,² John Marenbon,³ Stanley Cunningham,⁴ and Irven M.

¹ Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2024, 477pp.

² See Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

³ See John Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴ See Stanley B. Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

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<https://doi.org/10.25138/19.3.br2>

https://www.kritike.org/journal/special_issue_2026a/carino2_january2026.pdf

ISSN 1908-7330



Resnick.⁵ The text at hand is a testament to a growing interest on Albert's intellectual patrimony to German thought and beyond.

The book titled *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources: Medieval Science between Inheritance and Emergence* is a collection of thirteen pieces dedicated to an assortment of themes that feature Albert's engagement of his Arabic Aristotelian sources within the decades of the 1240s up to the late 1260s. This was the peak of Albert's academic productivity which counted among its fruits the treatise *Summa Creaturis*, specifically the part *De Homine* (1242); his commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Super Ethica* (1249-52), *Physics* (1251) as well as *Politics* (1264); his commentary on the pseudo-Aristotelian text, *Book on the Causes of the Properties of the Elements* (1251-1254); his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (1246-49); and his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus* (1250). What made the writings doubly remarkable was the fact that they were composed while Albert himself was deeply immersed in his various assignments across places such as Paris, Cologne, Worms, Agnani, Regensburg, Viterbo, Orvieto, Würzburg, and Strasbourg.⁶ Albert's access to and extensive use of the Arabic materials are consequences of a significant historical and cultural turning point.⁷ As one may remember, the thirteenth-century is the specific juncture when the newly established European universities were inundated with new translations of Aristotelian texts, including commentaries and editions from Arabic scholars which included key names such as Alfraganus (al-Farghānī, d. after 861 ce), Alkindus/Alkindi (al-Kindī, d. 873), Iohannitius (Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, d. 873), Constabulus (Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, d. 912), Albategnius (al-Battānī, d. 929), Ysaac Iudaeus (Ishāq ibn Sulaymān al-Isrā'īlī, d. c. 955), Alfarabius/Alfarabi (al-Fārābī, d. 970), Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 1037), Avicbron (Ibn Gabirol, d. 1058), Algazel (al-Ghazālī, d. 1111), Avempace (Ibn Bājjā, d. 1138), Alpetragius (al-Bīṭrūjī, fl. 1185–92), Averroes (Ibn Rushd, d. 1198), Rabbi Moyses (Maimonides, Mūsā ibn Maymūn, d. 1204), and the then unknown author of *Liber de Causis*.⁸ Besides metaphysics, ethics, alchemy and natural science,

⁵ See Irvn M. Resnick (Ed.), *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Boston: Brill, 2013); Irvn M. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitchell, Jr., *Albertus Magnus and the World of Nature* (London: Reaktion Books, 2022).

⁶ See Katja Krause and Richard C. Taylor (Eds.), *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources: Medieval Science between Inheritance and Emergence* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2024), 12.

⁷ See *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸ The authorship of *Liber de Causis* has been a subject matter of chronic disputes. In the thirteenth century however, Thomas Aquinas, through some textual sleuthing of his own, discovered evidence of plagiarism in the said treatise. Apparently, certain lines of *Liber de Causis* proved to be extracts from an earlier work, the *Elements of Theology*, by the Neoplatonist thinker, Proclus. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. by Vincent A. Guagliardo, O.P., Charles R. Hess, O.P., and Richard C. Taylor (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), xiii–xiv.

Albert also relied on the aforementioned Arabic authors for his researches on astronomy, medicine and mathematics. Of the scholars cited, Albert showed closer dependence on Alfarabi, Algazel, Avempace, Maimonides,⁹ and most importantly, Avicenna and Averroes. Avicenna, according to Irven M. Resnick, was the philosopher "... writing in Arabic that Albert most admired and most often cited."¹⁰ Averroes, on the other hand, in Luis Xavier Lopez-Farjeat's account, was the authority behind Albert's initial notion of the unicity of the human soul.¹¹ It would later be inherited and developed more fully by Aquinas who was one of Albert's students in Cologne.¹² Albert's following of Avicenna and Averroes is put in full display in the book. In fact, except for Chapters 1 and 13 (which serve as the bookends of the text), the rest of the chapters showcase Albert's Avicennian and Averroist inheritance in the realms of metaphysics (Chapters 2 and 12), philosophical anthropology (Chapter 3), ethics (Chapter 4), physics (Chapter 5), natural history (Chapter 6), natural philosophy (Chapters 7 and 11), epistemology (Chapter 8), and psychology (Chapters 9 and 10).

Even during his lifetime, Albert already enjoyed the accolade, "the Great," on account of the expanse and enormity of his intellectual prowess. In his studies, he attempted to cover every recognized domain of knowledge in the hope of bringing them into a synthesis and most importantly, orienting them beyond their "particular epistemic concerns."¹³ As explained by Katja Krause: "This epistemic purpose was one that Albert himself identified as crucial to his overarching science and that is very familiar to scholarship: the combination of truth with certainty and epistemic comprehensiveness to the extent that these can be achieved through the intellectual practices of defining and explaining."¹⁴ Albert's fundamental partiality towards knowledge draws from his Aristotelian anthropological worldview: "*homo in quantum homo solus intellectus*."¹⁵ Harnessing knowledge and enabling the human person, not just to know, but to know reality as one organic whole is what, according to Albert, would lead the human knower to full flourishing. In the words of

⁹ Arabic in this sense is taken as a linguistic, not a religious, reference. Maimonides and Avicenna, though Jewish scholars, were counted among Albert's Arabic sources because the language they used in their works was Arabic, the lingua franca in southern Spain from where the two originated. See Charles Manekin ed., *Medieval Jewish Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xvi; Jorger J.E. Garcia and Noone, Timothy N. ed., *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002), 174–181.

¹⁰ Krause and Taylor, *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources*, 168.

¹¹ See *Ibid.*, 226.

¹² See Thomas Aquinas, "On the Uniqueness of Intellect Against Averroists," <<https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/DeUnitateIntellectus.htm>>.

¹³ Krause and Taylor, *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources*, 312.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

Henryk Anzulewicz: “On Albert’s view, the true, natural, and essential fulfilment of human life has the good of the intellect alone as its goal; human fulfilment lies in contemplative happiness (*felicitas contemplativa*), which consists in intellectual activity undertaken for its own sake.”¹⁶

Albert’s aspiration for an epistemic synthesis directly coincided with his quest to secure the integrity of philosophy as an autonomous *scientia*. During Albert’s time, the problem concerning the scientific status of philosophy was at the center of the debates between the masters of theology and the masters of the arts of the University of Paris. Between the theologians’ view (drawn from the Augustinian tradition) of philosophy as subordinate to theology and the arts professors’ (swayed by Latin Averroism) insistence on philosophy’s radical independence, Albert proposed a third path, that is, an idea of philosophy which retains its distinction from theology without precluding the possibility of some form of theoretical interface. The same intellectual stance rubbed off on his young apprentice and fellow friar, Thomas Aquinas. Both Albert and Thomas recognized the need to assert philosophy’s autonomy. They upheld and argued for the same when they served together as members of an advisory commission for intellectual life that the Dominicans’ Master General Humbert of Romans assembled for the provincial chapter held at Valenciennes, France in 1259.¹⁷ Traces of this distinct Albertine philosophic proclivity could be found in the aforementioned *Summa de Creaturis*, specifically the part dealing with anthropology (called *De Homine*) and his commentaries on Aristotle’s *Ethica Nicomachea*, *Super Ethica* as well as *Politics*. Albert takes philosophy as a human science hence his special interest on human subjectivity.¹⁸ While openly receptive to Aristotle, Albert nonetheless did not hide his allegiance to Neoplatonism as mediated by Pseudo-Dionysius. This was evidenced most clearly by his priority for non-discursive mode of knowing over any other way of obtaining knowledge. With Pseudo-Dionysius, he asserted that the human capacity for scientific knowledge can be located neither in discursive reason nor free will but in “intuitive insight.” As Henryk Anzulewicz made clear: “Closer examination of Albert’s early statements about human nature shows that he grounds the human aptitude for science neither in discursive reason (*intellectus compositivus* or *ratio*) nor in free will (*liberum arbitrium*), but rather in intuitive insight (*intellectus simplex*). Nevertheless, Albert assigns the leading role in the cognitive process to reason and will, with their natural, specific, and individual properties. Reason and will, together with the human

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁷ See Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Albert & Thomas: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 15 and James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D’Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 138.

¹⁸ See Krause and Taylor, *Albert the Great and his Arabic Sources*, Chapters 8–10.

natural desire for knowledge, constitute an epigenetic predisposition that makes human beings capable of scientific knowing.”¹⁹

To make sense then of the complex texture of Albert’s overall philosophic project, readers must be attentive to the Aristotelian and Pseudo-Dionysian elements of his various texts. Via Pseudo-Dionysius, he accounted for the scientific status of theology by distinguishing between its two modalities, namely *scientia affectiva* and *scientia mystica*;²⁰ via the Arabic sources, he provided philosophy legitimate grounding outside the foundation of theology. The latter, with its best specimen in his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, represents a way of approaching God within the limits of human reason; the former, embodied by his treatises on the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, demonstrates a pathway to knowing God beyond the norms of human cognition. Needless to say, Albert’s interpretation of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus happily blended with his reading of the works of both Avicenna and Averroes. His works between 1248-1252, that is, the time he spent in Cologne, bore witness to this intersecting hermeneutic approach. As the designated master of the newly established Dominican *studium generale* in Germany, Albert’s primary task was to mentor select friars sent to Cologne for his tutelage. Part of his curricular repertoire was a presentation of a metaphysics of creation based on Avicenna and an experimental exposition of Pseudo-Dionysius’ treatise on divine names. Recalling Albert’s stint in Cologne, Richard Taylor wrote: “There, Albert made the unusual decision to begin by commenting on the works of Pseudo-Dionysius. In his commentary to *On the Divine Names*, he demonstrated particularly well for Thomas and his other students the value of using the *Metaphysics* of Avicenna and the *Liber de causis* from the Arabic tradition, as well as writings by Boethius, Anselm, and others from the Latin tradition, to explain the metaphysics both of creation and of being as a divine name in the writings of Dionysius. In his commentary on Dionysius’s *On the Divine Names*, Albert also discussed issues in philosophical psychology and even set out a brief account of monopsychism that was based largely on the philosopher ‘Averroes’ — albeit without explicitly mentioning the name of his source.”²¹

Albert’s attempt to re-introduce philosophy as an autonomous science was no arbitrary decision. It was a pursuit born out of Albert’s venture to supply theology’s own need for a scientific infrastructure.²² The initiative, so to speak, was a philosophic enterprise prompted by a theological goal. From distinguishing conventional revealed theology from mystical

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 285.

²⁰ See *Ibid.*, 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

²² See *Ibid.*, 19.

theology, Albert eventually segued to demarcating philosophy from theology itself. In both endeavors, Albert showed his indebtedness to and deviation from his Arabic sources. Though he did strive to stay as close as possible to the Arabic masters, his oeuvre cannot be considered a mere replica of theirs but a showcase of his critical reading of his Islamic and Jewish counterparts. The Arabic scholars did show him the way, but he was entirely on his own in charting a new direction for philosophic and theological thinking. Though underrated, Albert's imprint on German philosophy in particular and Western thought in general is one no serious scholar can afford to ignore.

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