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Lectio: A Graduate Journal of Philosophy
The Graduate School and the Department of Philosophy
University of Santo Tomas

LECTIO is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed and open access journal of Philosophy that aims to give graduate students an avenue to develop and publish their philosophic researches. Though primarily intended for philosophy majors, the journal also welcomes submissions from allied disciplines (literature, sociology, history, political science, anthropology, economics, cultural studies, etc.) with pronounced philosophic content.

The Latin lectiō (ōnis) refers to mindfulness in reading texts. It stems from the verb legere which conveys various notions such as gathering and selecting, reading and reciting, and even traversing horizons and events. LECTIO is an intentional engagement of a single text by negotiating the horizons of multiple interpretations. This was something exhibited by St. Thomas Aquinas who devoted himself to a scholastic life of lectio, disputatio, and reputatio: St. Thomas Aquinas boldly negotiated the contentious horizons of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Ibn Rushd and his other interlocutors to articulate a new event for philosophic discourse. Similarly, through our own lectio, we seek to cultivate that disposition of reading and selecting, of challenging our thoughts and expanding our philosophical horizons.

As a platform for intellectual exchange, LECTIO provides a forum for dialogue among MA and PhD students to help them cultivate their craft of research as they seek to establish their own voice within academic circles. This journal thus seeks to promote a wide range of philosophical topics aligned with the research thrusts of the Department of Philosophy, to wit:

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- Continental European Philosophy
- Contemporary philosophical issues and trends

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The beginning of LECTIO: A GRADUATE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY is a twofold conversation. The first is among friends one evening, sharing difficulties of pursuing graduate studies in a time where metrics seemingly dictate how things go. The second is between colleagues in the Department of Philosophy, sharing the desire to preserve in good memory the accomplishments of our own philosophy graduate students. What surfaced in the first conversation was the confession of a particular challenge in graduate studies: an avenue to receive critique to improve one’s works and alongside it comments for both the content and the writing style. In how graduate studies are structured, it seems it is already expected that one should strive to publish or perish though not being provided crutches to guide one in this precarious bout. We aspired to form a journal to address this need we currently recognize among graduate students. There is a demand to publish in indexed journals, however, not everyone already has that capacity to engage at such a level. In the second conversation what surfaced was the appreciation for our own philosophy graduates who, because of their respective commitments, eventually find themselves elsewhere be it in another institute of learning locally or abroad. It is rather unfortunate that we are unable to put down in print our own congratulatory remark for our colleagues. From these two conversations, LECTIO presents itself as a journal primarily for graduate students in philosophy that would provide them adequate support in terms of critique for the contents of manuscripts and likewise for a refinement of the style of writing while providing an avenue to showcase those who have already completed their degrees.

As written in the front matter, LECTIO is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, and open-access journal of Philosophy that aims to give graduate students an avenue to develop and publish their philosophic research. The Latin lectio (ōnis) refers to mindfulness in reading texts stemming from the verb legere which conveys various notions such as gathering and selecting, reading and reciting, and even traversing horizons and events. LECTIO is an intentional engagement of a single text by negotiating the horizons of multiple interpretations; through our own lectio, we seek to cultivate that disposition of reading and selecting, of challenging our thoughts and expanding our philosophical horizons. As a platform for intellectual exchange, LECTIO provides a forum for dialogue among M.A. and Ph.D. students to help them cultivate their craft of research as they seek to establish their own voice within academic circles.

We aspire each issue to be composed of various sections for a more fruitful exchange. (1) Featured Articles. Every issue will present works from keynote speakers of conferences, invited authors, or faculty members. We aspire to shed a different perspective for our graduate community to consider in their respective philosophy
research. (2) **Conference Articles.** We will hold an annual graduate conference every April/May and invite all those who have presented to submit their works for blind review, and after successful evaluation and editing, present the manuscripts to a wider audience. (3) **Abulad Sanay-say Proceedings.** Another annual event to be held every September/October is the *Abulad Sanay-say writing workshop* that would guide successful applicants in their respective writing styles and focus. This section would feature the works from the workshop *fellows* who have successfully edited their manuscripts according to the comments. (4) **Excerpts of Graduate Theses.** Graduate studies culminate with one's thesis or dissertation defense. We invite our newly minted philosophy scholars who have just successfully defended their manuscripts to submit a summary of or an extract from the theses or dissertations and aim to present them to the entire philosophy community in a congratulatory tone to showcase how the defended manuscript is a fruit of the individual author's own *lectio*. (5) **Graduate Papers.** Almost all subjects at the graduate school culminate with a term paper. These ought not to be simply done for the sake of the course but in light of broader philosophic research. We hope these papers or works-in-progress not to be put to waste and so this section allows authors to consider subjecting their articles to peer evaluation for them to be refined. Lastly, (6) **Book Reviews.** We aspire to cultivate a reading culture among the extended members of the Department of Philosophy. By such a culture, we mean a critical reading of texts as practice in other graduate communities abroad. Book reviews are essential practices of critique, and which should be a craft proper to graduate students.

For this first issue, we are glad to present a collection of articles that fill four of the six planned sections of the journal. The featured article for this issue is the keynote lecture that Dr. Christopher Ryan B. Maboloc gave during the first graduate conference last April 2021 with the theme “Christianity and the Philippine Intellectual Landscape.” Dr. Maboloc’s piece provides a peculiar insight into a post-colonial experience of both the Christian faith and of politics with two individuals with common roots: Bro. Karl Gaspar and President Rodrigo Duterte. His exposition proceeds through a mirroring of a twofold struggle: a theologico-anthropological one in relation to the Lumads for Gaspar and a political one for Duterte.

From the same conference are two articles included here. The first is from Victor John M. Loquias entitled “*Pagsantigwar sa Banwaan*: Social Healing for a ‘People Who have Nothing’” and the second is from Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland with the title “Sloterdijk and Interreligious Dialogue against Extremist Reason: A Reflection on Christianity’s Quincentennial Anniversary.” Both provide different views in understanding Christianity’s impact on the formation of society. Loquias proceeds through a reading of the Bicolano *Pagsantigwar sa Banwaan* as a form of social critique through Kristian Cordero’s metaphorical construct of physiology to poetics. This metaphorical relation to social critique is likewise maintained in Rennesland’s use of
Sloterdijk’s rhetoric of the presence of extremist reason in the development of the three monotheisms. This is discussed from the post-colonial Philippine experience.

Following these are two excerpts of theses. The first is from Paula Nicole C. Eugenio, “Growing of Roots in Times of Turmoil and Uncertainty: Simone Weil’s Legacy,” and the second is Blaise D. Ringor’s “The Necessity of Auto-Teleology in Achieving Moral Life according to Karol Wojtyla’s Philosophy.” Eugenio provides a chapter of her MA work presenting Weil’s admonition for the need to regrow roots to realize what it is to be human. This, she presents, ought to be done against a world that has gone lukewarm in social relations and cynical in its moral considerations. This likewise is the background of Ringor’s presentation of Wojtyla’s emphasis on auto-teleology. Ringor provides a summary of his MA thesis that develops humanity’s capacity to self-direct in order to realize the fundamentality of being human as geared towards a life of transcendence.

Lastly, the final section showcases two papers written through the course of their graduate studies. The first is Prince Airick S. Gapo’s “Misedukadong Filipino sa Panahon ng Bagong Populismo: Pagdalumat sa Pang-edukasyong Pananaw ni Renato Constantino bilang Paglulunas sa Kontemporaryong Kamalayan at Pagtutulay ng Edukasyon at Demokrasya” and the second is Jim Lester P. Beleno’s “Appreciating Art with Paul Ricoeur: from Aesthetics to Ethics.” Gapo provides a (re)reading of Renato Constantino’s miseducation as a stress of the balance between education and democracy in a time of the proliferation of fake news and the rise of the new populism. Beleno’s approaches to this political consciousness is set via Ricoeur’s consideration of aesthetics. He shows how Ricoeur proceeds from an aesthetic consciousness to ultimately a political attention.

Establishing a journal is not easy, yet we strive regardless in order to broaden our horizon as graduate students of philosophy. Though such a feat, this first issue was possible through the generous support of both the UST Graduate School and the Department of Philosophy. We, the editorial board, wish to thank in particular the Dean of the Graduate School, Prof. Dr. Michael Anthony C. Vasco, the Philosophy Program Lead, Prof. Dr. Paolo A. Bolaños, and also the Chair of the Department of Philosophy, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jovito V. Cariño, for their support in various ways to make this journal possible. We also wish to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. RT Pada and Asst. Prof. Dr. Raniel Reyes for their help in establishing this journal. We likewise thank those who have participated in the 2021 graduate conference: from our keynote speakers – Dr. Joel Sagut, Dr. Ryan Maboloc, and Dr. Mark Calano – to our presenters and attendees. Lastly, we thank those who have contributed to this journal either in the capacity of an author or as a peer reviewer. We hope that the seed that begins with this first issue may be brought to fulfillment in our own respective lectios.
President Rodrigo Duterte and Bro. Karl Gaspar:  
The Radicalization of Politics  
in Post-Colonial Philippines  

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Abstract: This study attempts to deliver a means of understanding post-colonial politics in the country. Politics in the Philippines is “contested”. The liberal slant in finding solutions in the state cannot overcome the reality of uneven power-relations. Deliberation, anchored in a Manila-centric model of governance, offers no respite to the inevitability of conflict and antagonism post-EDSA I. The paper draws from the radical approach of President Duterte. Using it as a vantage point provides us with contrasts between concepts (e.g. populism and elitism). This study intends to understand what Philippine democracy is about. It will be accomplished by comparing the paths and struggles of two men—the anthropologist Karl Gaspar and President Duterte. The theological struggle to liberate the Lumads from bondage in which Gaspar has found the profound meaning of his faith mission is correlated to the radical struggle in which Duterte has built his difficult political role.

Keywords: Radical Democracy; Post-Colonial Politics; Rodrigo Duterte; Karl Gaspar

The Filipino anthropologist Karl Gaspar vividly remembers the day Rodrigo Duterte, the son of the governor of the undivided province of Davao, came to Holy Cross College (now Cor Jesu) in Digos, Davao del Sur. Duterte, who was expelled from the Ateneo in Davao City, caused a stir in campus. Gaspar, who lives a life as a missionary of the Redemptorist Congregation, was a classmate of the future president. Gaspar was on his third year in high school but their paths crossed since Duterte had to take up some subjects in that level though he transferred a senior. The former mentions that the school provided the governor’s son a place to stay inside the school campus. The attention given to Duterte, says Gaspar, was natural since his classmate was the son of a prominent politician. The Llanos family of Davao del Sur, an old political clan, took good care of the future President.
The two Mindanawons will go separate ways in their chosen paths in life. Gaspar was to become a multi-awarded anthropologist. The Redemptorist brother was an activist during the Martial Law years. He recalls the dynamic student movement at the time, saying the students were passionate in the struggle for freedom and human rights. Gaspar was among the thousands of political detainees that the dictator President Ferdinand Marcos put to prison. Meanwhile, Duterte was the prosecutor in the case filed against the scholar and activist. Gaspar spent 22 months in incarceration. When Philippine democracy was finally restored after Marcos left the country at the height of the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution, Gaspar would continue to fight for the cause of freedom and human rights. This time, he has devoted his life and talent in liberating the indigenous peoples or Lumads of Mindanao.

Duterte was appointed as Vice Mayor (OIC) of Davao by the revolutionary government of President Corazon Aquino in 1986. Davao City was chaotic before Duterte entered the political scene. The communist New People’s Army’s Sparrow Unit lorded over the city. Peace and order had been the main concern of local residents. Salvaging was rampant in a place once called Nicaragdao (a combination of “Nicaragua”, which was a dangerous country at that time and “Agdao,” a populated district in downtown Davao City). The Alsa Masa was established by Juan Porras Pala, an anti-communist crusader. Pala was to become a strong and prominent critic of Mayor Duterte. Pala would later die in an ambush. After defeating Zafiro Respicio in 1988, Duterte will embark on a peace and order campaign that will last for more than two decades, a battle against criminality that would later carry him to the highest position of the land.

The Vatican Council II (1962-65) had an impact in the work of the local Church during the time of Martial Law. Gaspar’s interest in popularizing the “theology of struggle” was a major concern shared by the progressive elements of the Catholic and Protestant churches. He was involved in what was considered as a conscientization process in Mindanao. The island was to be ravaged by a Muslim rebellion for decades. Marcos alienated many Muslim Filipinos because of the Jabidah Massacre. The former dictator projected an image of a leader who gave the poor man his due. The New Society that he wanted to create was portrayed to foster a brotherhood of men. In reality, his neo-liberal approaches to the economy were blameworthy for the extreme poverty of millions of Filipinos. The excesses of the regime plunged the country into massive debt and a record of human rights abuses against those who opposed the dictatorship.

Duterte’s relationship with the hierarchy in the Catholic Church is conflicted. He is a firm believer in the separation of Church and State. The 1987 Philippine Constitution expressly provides for this as a matter of policy. The foundation of this provision is historical. During the Spanish period, the friars served as the secular administrators of the Philippine archipelago. This resulted in usury and abuses that forced the natives to surrender their land to the oppressors. But the President’s unconventional style of governance has generated powerful critics from the top of the
Catholic Church hierarchy, including Bishop Broderick Pabillo, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, and Archbishop Socrates Villegas, who have all criticized the President’s violent war on drugs.

Brother Karl and President Duterte are a manifestation of the ambivalent character of the faith experience in the country’s 500 years of Christianity. Spain used religion to subjugate the native inhabitants of the islands. This was done by using the Christian faith as a means to convert the natives. Such was a prelude towards the acceptance of Spanish rule. Vicente Rafael explains this double meaning. The translation of the Christian faith into the native language was a form of conquest and a way of understanding colonialism. Faith was meant to be seen as positive in this way. The influence of the struggle for decolonization of the Filipinos is at work until this day in the form of two modes of resistance. The first is the fight against the domination of the Lumads and the second, in the continuing resistance to elite politics. Gaspar symbolizes the former while President Duterte represents the latter.

Radical Politics in Philippine Colonial History

Christianity arrived in the Philippines not because the faith experience was meant to unify the native inhabitants of the islands. The conversion of the natives was only secondary in terms of purpose. The reason is actually land grabbing. While conquest had contributed in uniting the disarticulated islands under one central government, this has resulted in the economic and socio-political divide of the people. It has created a vacillating way of understanding the role of the Christian faith. But what became apparent is the emergence of a class conflict within Philippine society that has permeated the consciousness of Filipinos, one that is manifest in the attitude toward social status. Colonial education has something to do with this. For instance, the term “way grado” is discriminatory. More than a description of a lack of opportunity to attend school, it is a derogatory expression of how the powerless are excluded in society.

Radical politics is about accepting the fact that change cannot always happen by using institutional approaches to statecraft. Rules are not always just because of the uneven political order in the country. The type of power-relations dominating Philippine society necessitates a continuing revolt against the elite. The subjugation

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2 In an earlier study, I had argued about the nature of politics in the country. The argument is that Duterte is the manifestation of the struggle against elite rule. See Christopher Ryan Maboloc, “The Politics of Nation-States: The Case of President Rodrigo Duterte,” *Journal of ASEAN Studies* vol. 6, no. 1 (2018): 112-13.
4 Ibid., 310.
of the country by foreign rule was hastened by the betrayal of the Philippine Revolution by upper class families who simply took over from their Spanish oppressors the control of the power of the state.\textsuperscript{5} Orlino Ochosa writes about how revolutionaries have continued to resist American rule even after the surrender of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, who belonged to the upper class of society.\textsuperscript{6} When it comes to Philippine politics, the ambivalence of the revolution is about the reawakening of unending mistrust. For instance, the radical elements of the masses, according to Teodoro Agoncillo – “the anti-friars” and “separatists” – targeted with contempt the rich “mestizos.”\textsuperscript{7}

The Philippine Revolution was lost due to a lack of unity. In a letter sent by Gen. Mariano Trias, he explained to Gen. Miguel Malvar that the “goal of the revolution was out of reach.”\textsuperscript{8} Gen. Trias mentioned that it is a judgment that he considered due to the sentiments of the people. It was a conclusion arrived at because of the “evil” that haunted the revolution. Reynaldo Ileto writes that what Gen. Trias meant by this evil was the lack of unity within the ranks of the revolution.\textsuperscript{9} In response, Gen. Malvar thought that in his territory, the people wanted to continue the resistance since they were actually “less concerned about politics.”\textsuperscript{10} The revolutionaries cared more about their future and their freedom from bondage. The men under Gen. Malvar’s command were small landholders who do not want the domination of the Spanish regime to continue.\textsuperscript{11}

The moral of the Philippine Revolution points to the reality of a class antagonism as the starting point of post-colonial politics. The politics of nation building, in this sense, emanates from a dark past. The “we” versus “them” narrative within Philippine society has deep roots in the country’s struggle against foreign conquest. The kind of politics in the Philippines has always been conflicted. While Western-bred scholars insist in their Habermasian interpretation, politics in the country is actually about the struggle of the powerless whose dignity is trampled by the elites in society who want to dictate the destiny of the masses. Political conflict is not just about the narrative of political expediency. The elites belonged to what the colonizers considered as “leading citizens.”\textsuperscript{12} The same people would label great

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 236.
\textsuperscript{7} Teodoro Agoncillo, \textit{The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan} (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1956), 106.
\textsuperscript{8} Reynaldo Ileto, \textit{Pasyon and Revolution} (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1978), 162.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 163.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 110.
revolutionaries such as the Supremo Andres Bonifacio, Macario Sakay, and Julian Montalan as bandits.\textsuperscript{13}

Ileto argues that it was easy for the upper class to accept the myth of banditry since the revolutionaries were viewed as men lacking in “social status.”\textsuperscript{14} Wataru Kusaka would ascribe to President Duterte the same bandit description a hundred years later.\textsuperscript{15} Benjiemen Labastin explains that Duterte’s style “banks on the reality of social division and it is founded on a clear grasp of the social animosity concealed by the rhetoric of reform and social development of Philippine politics.”\textsuperscript{16} Gaspar will appropriate the communal character of this struggle. He will epitomize the nature of this radicalism as he lives with and fights for the Lumads in the margins of Philippine society against those who are out to destroy their sacred way of life. This can be interpreted as a radical form of resistance outside the spaces of the deliberative public sphere.\textsuperscript{17}

Some critics fail to recognize the agonistic nature of Duterte’s war against the oppressors of the Filipino people. Agonism is about the recognition of conflict as a necessary element in nation-building. A pluralist society can only proceed with its just cause of liberating the people if the public sphere is not dictated by a dominant class. The critics of the President, however, have a point when it comes to the accusation of penal populism.\textsuperscript{18} To his critics, Duterte is making a wedge between the good and the bad elements of society. The protection of the latter, his critics say, is used to justify his violent approach to the problem of criminality. However, his critics also have to acknowledge that Duterte’s radical approach in solving the problem of criminality is symptomatic of the moral divide among Filipinos.\textsuperscript{19}

Nathan Gilbert Quimpo writes that “the members of the elite – old and new – dominate the country’s political parties.”\textsuperscript{20} The anti-elite claim in Philippine politics is not without basis. While the country is no longer under its colonial masters, Philippine politics is still under the influence of a patronage system. The loyalty of the ilustrado class has metamorphosed into a “patron-client relationship” between the

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 162.
rich and the powerless that prevails to this day. The landed families in the country have established political dynasties in their own turfs, thereby controlling the state in a predatory way. The powerful have benefited from systemic injustices. Dynasties perpetrate the usurpation of power that takes advantage of the marginalized. As such, the state has become a cold-hearted monster used by the powers-that-be in Philippine society. The overarching political narrative in the country is the resentment of the poor against the elite.

Antagonism in Philippine democracy was created by a history of conquest. Ileto says that President Duterte reminds Filipinos of “the forgotten war against the United States.”21 Duterte’s foreign policy would be characterized as a pivot to China with its expected “gains, challenges and promises.”22 Since the Philippines owns a strategic position in the Pacific Theater of war, what the US wants from the country is the tactical importance of an alliance. But for Duterte, it exposes the country to the danger of being a pawn in the potential conflict between China and the US. The message of Duterte’s stubborn attitude is that the Philippines desires mutual respect. This position has been conveyed by the late Perfecto Yasay, the former foreign minister of the Duterte administration, who said that Filipinos should no longer be called the “little brown brothers” of America.23

America’s legacy in Philippine history is the perpetuation of the patronage system started by Spain.24 The centralized form of government, established by Spain to ease the administration of the islands, was copied by the Americans. To make the subjugation of the country effective, high ranking Filipino bureaucrats supported American rule.25 The collaboration of the Ilustrados, says Renato Constantino, has naturally “provided the Americans with a ready justification for the colonization of the Philippines.”26 The Ilustrados never desired to emancipate the Filipino from economic and political injustices. The “politics of change” of the second Aquino presidency, a battle-cry of liberals in the US, has not done much to improve the lives of ordinary Filipinos.

26 Ibid.
State and Religious Hegemony

According to Gaspar, the life situation of Lumads in Mindanao “remains a desperate one urgently demanding alternative development models of engaging their communities.” In his book, *Handuman (Remembrance) Digging for the Indigenous Wellspring*, Gaspar writes that the Spanish colonizers have “demonized our ancestors’ indigenous belief system.” This injustice was apparent in the “destruction of the native religion’s sacred sites and the oppressive manner they dealt with the babaylans.” Gaspar complains that “not one element of this belief system treasured by generations through thousands of years that has helped them survive life vicissitude, characterized by a belief in a Creator Deity, had any value at all... to a Chauvinistic type of Christianity.” For Gaspar, the severance from the harmony with nature “would eventually negate the value of indigenous knowledge, skills, practices, and spirituality.”

In echoing the reflections of Rafael on the religious conversion of the natives, Gaspar recognizes the positive impact of the Christian faith in the history of the Filipino nation. He writes that there were “unintended consequences to this evangelization campaign owing to the people’s wisdom embedded in their religious-cultural perspectives.” Gaspar believes that the Gospel’s “egalitarian messages helped to create the first stirrings of the desire for freedom and liberation.” Despite the travails the natives have been subjected to, they managed to overcome Spanish conquest while keeping their faith in Jesus Christ. Gaspar, however, says that indigenous peoples have held on to their practices and rituals as they try to defy a hegemonic religion that continues to “erode what they still consider important to their way of life.”

The reflections of the anthropologist would guide a political philosophy that is rooted in the desire to liberate the marginalized from the pangs of extraction and exploitation that “cause strife among the Lumads.” In a study on mining in Surigao, Gaspar explains the negative impact of certain types of economic progress in the life of the indigenous people. He warns that material progress, rooted in modernization theory, is wanting. Progress, while desirable to uplift the living conditions of people,
can also bring about the destruction of a way of life. Gaspar is fighting a continuing war – the struggle for the liberation of the Lumad from bondage. This theology of struggle seeks to give voice to the most vulnerable and powerless, who have become the victims of economic exploitation and cultural misappropriation.

Decolonization in the Philippines is the clash between dominant state institutions and the Church of the Poor. William Holden and Dan Jacobson write that the Catholic Church in the Philippines, in “demonstrating the influence of liberation theology” and its “preferential option for the poor,” has taken the position against activities “that may harm the poor by degrading the environment upon which they depend for their livelihood and further impoverish them.”36 In a way, Gaspar, while not a politician, is a living symbol of the meaning of the “political” in terms of the experience of the faith. Jesus Christ was against social and political injustices, and this is expressed concretely in works of the Church of the Poor in the country to protect the powerless from the abuses of those who are in positions of power.

On the issue of Lumad Killings, Gaspar posed these hard questions: “What should we do as citizens? Should we tolerate it? Should we allow it? Well, if we believe in human rights, we shouldn’t and we should raise our voices.”37 Gaspar feels that the youth of today have lost their dynamism to fight for the cause of human rights, unlike in the 70s.38 Gaspar thinks, reflecting on the presidency of Duterte, that the test of being a leader is about asking if one “has been able to articulate a clear vision of his administration and can then mobilize his audience to take an active part in nation-building that champions the common good.”39 Gaspar says that unlike the Lumad datus who exhibit good leadership traits and character, when it comes to the President, “there has been a paucity of visionary ideas... that would inspire the people to downplay their own personal interests in favor of that of the nation.”40 He explains:

When he won, I was hoping that you know things would change. I was a bit optimistic regarding how he could function as president and truly proud that we have somebody from Davao, from Mindanao who finally made it as the President of the Republic of the Philippines.41

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41 Basallajes and Dejito, “I did not vote for him...”
The frank demeanor of the President has contributed to his popular appeal. The language of the Bisaya was effectively used during his presidential campaign, including “Ato ni Bay,” “Bisaya na Pod,” among others. But to his adverse critics, the President is using the language of the streets to simply express his bravado. Critics rant against Duterte’s type of patronage that has resulted in the rise of the new oligarchs. Davao’s Dennis Uy of Udenna Corporation and Phoenix Petroleum, according to the political opposition, is a clear example. But at the heart of issues bedeviling President Duterte’s violent drug war, Fr. Daniel Pilario points out that most of the victims of many alleged extra-judicial killings are from poor families. The President’s critics are unequivocal in claiming that the state has transformed into an instrument of murder.

But why do people support Duterte’s hardline approach to the drug menace? The blame can only be put on the failure of the country’s liberal institutions. The politics of reform under previous administrations was only a façade that hides the continuation of the rule of the elite in Philippine society. The majority of Filipinos felt that change can only be done by a leader who has the will to protect the interests of the people against the unfair privilege of those at the top of the ladder. While it is true that many of the victims of the drug war come from poor families, it is important to know why precisely the majority of Filipinos feel so hopeless and ergo, become susceptible to a dangerous “kapit sa patalim” mentality. An unequal dynamics of power have very deadly consequences.

Mistaking the Symptom for the Disease

No poor person will ever be elected as President of the Philippines. It is not really a matter of fate. It is by all means a question of political justice or the lack thereof. Every person who has been elected to the highest position of the land belonged to the elite class. The reason is that elections in the Philippines requires massive resources and a strong political machinery. The candidate has no option but to find a rich patron who will bankroll the expenses that make things work. Any individual who desires to become President of the Philippines has to seek the blessings of the country’s business elites. While a constituency is necessary to propel a candidate into national office, the backing of powerful oligarchs is a matter of necessity to launch an effective national campaign. However, the willingness of patrons is not without a price. They do it knowing that it serves their interest.

The tradition of patronage persists in every level of Philippine society. New couples would seek influential persons, business people and mayors as wedding

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sponsors hoping the connection can help them one way or another. Ileto explains that the model of politics in the Philippines is that of a “patron-client, wherein the patrons or elites are the source not only of money and favors but of culture as well.”44 The situation of the people is such that when it comes to the political structures of the country, from the national scene down to the barangay level, “there is a debt relationship between rich and poor.”45 When it comes to politics in the country, the masses have become victims of a social conditioning that is rooted in the largely unequal life situation of the people.46 The elites force the masses into submission where options in life do not exist.

The rise to power of a leader cannot happen overnight. President Marcos then served as congressman for three terms, as senator and also as senate president before defeating President Diosdado Macapagal, to grab Malacañang. Former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and also, President PNOY were children of past presidents. President Corazon Aquino was the wife of the martyred Senator Benigno Aquino Jr., who became the youngest mayor in Philippine history at 25 years old. While former President Fidel Ramos never held office, he was the top brass of powerful Philippine Constabulary during the time of Martial Law, and together with Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, a big player during the 1986 People Power, and Gen. Jose Almonte, Ramos won the endorsement of President Cory.

Elitism is rooted in ilustrado politics. Michael Cullinane explains that the ilustrado refers to “the wealthy, mostly ethnically mixed, intellectuals.”47 Ilustrado politics today is nothing but the liberal reformist agenda that have since failed the Filipino people. Duterte won the 2016 elections because many of the problems – poverty and crime in the Metropolis, including the discomfort experienced by young professionals – have contributed to the situation in which Filipinos, especially a tech-savvy middle-class, would desire someone who has the political will. Institutional reforms are needed in the country, but not in ways shown by its weak former leaders. However, if critics ignore the historical contexts of its basic structure and the hegemonic configuration of the dynamics of power, the question is, who will fight the oligarchs? Constantino puts it rather succinctly when he says that the Philippine state under the tutelage of the Americans is a “coercive organ” that advances the “interests of its neo-colonial master.”48 Duterte is the reaction to an elitist type of democracy that perpetuates the unjust structures in the country.

The liberal critics of Duterte are mistaking the symptom for the disease. Radicalism is a question of political justice. Duterte’s approach, it can be said, is not

44 Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution, 9.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
tied to the strict formalities of a system nor the procedural purposes of protocols. In this way, he can be considered as radical. In the same way as the Lumads do not have the leverage when it comes to the formality of institutions, the attraction of common folks to a charismatic leader whose best trait is his political will is due to “the persistent inability of the state to provide basic services, guarantee peace and order, and foster economic development.” The Philippines, according to Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoroso, is a “patchwork state.” In a patchwork state, the interests of politicians overlap with the role and function of governance. As a result, the government becomes a burden, not the solution to the problems confronting society.

The theological struggle to liberate the Lumads in which Gaspar has found the meaning of his mission and faith experience is the same political struggle in which Duterte has found his difficult role and function in Philippine politics. While the problem of the indigenous people in Mindanao is about land, it is also about the problem of poverty and the lack of equity when it comes to development and economic progress. But the problem is more radical than that. The problem is systemic exclusion. The modern state and its secular institutions are hegemonic. The neoliberal system that it patronizes is reflective of the means by which the political elites take control of the political landscape while the oligarchy holds the leash on the economy. What it results to is an enslavement of people who have no means to free themselves from their overlords.

Conclusion

The post-colonial context points to a progressive approach to governance that is meant to dismantle social injustices. While in the end, only history can tell as to what is to become of the legacy of President Duterte, this study has conjectured as to the main reason for his rise to power is the failure of EDSA to change Filipino society. Post-EDSA People Power Philippines is the perpetuation of an elitist model of democracy in which an oligarchy is given a license to extract blood and sweat from this nation and its people. President Duterte is a by-product of an uneven configuration power. The people cannot mistake the symptom from the disease. The utter lack of unity among the Filipino people has been taken advantage by their masters ever since the first conquest of the land 500 years ago. It is understandable why critics continue to demonize the state. Many of our problems actually have something to do with the attitude of the people and the divided political culture that influences their behavior.

51 Ibid., 1.
Gaspar symbolizes the importance of what is happening in the margins of Filipino society. The struggle for liberation of the Lumads continues. It marches away from the center. Gaspar’s approach to social and political change is a radical model that seeks to overcome religious and cultural hegemony. Every ideology seeks to win the battle for truth against another ideology. But in Gaspar’s case, the path to liberation can only be pursued by means of respecting differences and the uniqueness of other ways of life. The uneven situation of the people, the injustices done against Muslims and Lumads, the lack of opportunity among the many, point to the reality that an elitist type of governance is nothing less than a hideous form of oppression founded on foreign conquest and domination. President Duterte and Gaspar, in this respect, are battling the same monster – hegemony – but in ways that reflect that the quest for emancipation from elite rule is a continuing struggle.

References


**Pagsantigwar sa Banwaan**
Social Healing for a “People Who have Nothing”

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Abstract: In this paper, the famous Bikolano folk way of healing called Santigwar is reconstructed as a procedure of social critique which was ideationally made possible by Kristian Cordero’s metaphorical configuration of its practice from healing a sick body to a poetics of social diagnosis. The legitimacy of this effort is grounded on the normative significance of the practice of santigwar to Bikolanos in the present and its historical background of conversion and resistance in Bikol. It is argued that while santigwar, in Cordero, is a literary piece for social healing, it could likewise serve as a local concept for social critique refurbished with the conceptual tools borrowed from the recognitive theory of Axel Honneth. Santigwar captures in literary imagination the brand of social criticism called immanent critique geared for freedom yet grounded in normativity. Hence pagsantigwar sa banwaan becomes a philosophical praxis of social healing performed for social emancipation—using Fenella Cannell’s terminology of the ethnographic value of santigwar to Bikolanos—for a “people who have nothing.”

**Keywords:** Santigwar, Conversion, Resistance, Immanent Critique, Social Emancipation

Kristian Cordero’s description of the tendency among Bikolanos when afflicted with a physical malady is popular knowledge: the cheaper and immediate recourse is to approach a parasantigwar (folk-healer) but for others, particularly the more affluent in the urban centers, it is the last resort when hope for medical prognosis runs out. Santigwar is a folk healing practice in the Bikol region that blends indigenous

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1 The author wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers of this paper originally entitled “Translating the Religio-Cultural Significance of Santigwar into a Philosophical Language of Critique” presented during the on-line “Christianity and the Philippine Intellectual Landscape Conference” held last April 2021.

animistic\textsuperscript{3} folk ways with elements from Christian repertoire. And based on available studies, a coalescence of economic, socio-cultural, historical, and religious backgrounds could be traced behind its normative practice.

In Fenella Cannell’s ethnographic accounts, popular belief in santigwar is claimed by its practitioners and believers as an alternative healing for the sick people “who have nothing.”\textsuperscript{4} She reports that the process of becoming a healer starts from the experience of oppression. Then one is “chosen” by the tawo or “spirit guide” to become a healer and undertakes the intimate process of “getting used to” it that eventually wins her worthiness. Healing is a gift and vocation assumed by an individual to serve the poor people. Thus, it is not a commercial enterprise. And healing for profit is believed to undermine her power. The gift of healing could be handed down to one’s kin, but the latter has to make herself worthy of it through the same process. The religious, Christian, element evidently manifests in that the ultimate ground or legitimacy of the power of healing is gleaned from and sustained through the healer’s imitation of the life of Christ particularly performed during the Lenten season. That santigwar could serve as a bastion of hope even, or perhaps more importantly, to a financially able person, manifests a cultural embeddedness of a social value attached to the peoples’ history and present normative orientations behind its presence.

Cordero’s poetry book Santigwar made a different ripple of signification inaugurating further ideational possibilities for this local practice. In Cordero’s poetics a writer assumes the role of the healer (parasantigwar) in identifying the causes of the present maladies of society. Furthermore, his metaphorical employment of pagsantigwar and the images that he uses in his poetry restore the memory of the region embedded in both myth and history. Pagsantigwar sa banwaan then recreates the healer’s performance of healing a sick body into a social healing for the people who is struck by social maladies. From Cannell’s ethnography to Cordero’s poetry, the parasantigwar (healer) refers now to a writer that performs pagsantigwar (diagnosis) to facilitate healing for a “people who have nothing.”

Cordero’s poetics provides a “semantic bridge”\textsuperscript{5} where a locally normative practice is employed as a resource for emancipative orientation. This paper performs that remainder of articulating santigwar as a local concept of social critique launching from Cordero’s metaphorical reconfiguration of its cultural significance. This is

\textsuperscript{3} I follow Rodney L Henry’s description of animism contextualized in the Philippine experience as “based on a central belief in spirits whose power can be manipulated through formulas, rituals, or words.” Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature, Inc. 2001), 13.

\textsuperscript{4} “Healing (pagbulong) is said by healers (parabulong) and their patients to be the ‘help’ which is given to the poor, to ‘those who have nothing.’” Fenella Cannell, Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), 80.

commenced by presenting *pagsantigwar* not only as a local and folk way of healing but as a cultural artifact of conversion and resistance based on ethnographical and historiographical accounts. The legitimacy of its being relocated to a language of critique is thus founded within its normative grip within the cultural and social milieu among Bikolanos. The second part articulates Cordero's poetics of diagnosis and prognosis in *pagsantigwar* applied to social reality. It shows how Cordero's metaphor translates the original practice of identifying causes of corporal maladies and giving therapeutic prescription into a task of the writer in general towards his ailing society. The religio-cultural value of *santigwar* assumes thus a new intellectual significance realigned towards a project of social emancipation. Finally, the last part enunciates *santigwar* as “immanent critique” in its new landscape of philosophical signification. This is a term borrowed from Axel Honneth’s social theory that grounds itself on the socio-ontological framework of recognition. Emancipation is a project that cannot be uprooted from the social and cultural orientations of individuals in the society. Cordero’s service is to have expanded *santigwar*’s possibilities granting esteem of its indigenous value in poetic form. What *santigwar* embodies in its reconfiguration is a mode of doing social critique that gears itself up for emancipation employing the arsenals of one’s own culture. This paper is one such opening of the local experience to further discursive avenues which Cordero’s poetry has just mediated.

*Santigwar* as a Cultural Artifact of Conversion and Resistance

The crucifix, icons of the Trinity, Virgin Mary and saints, orations in pamphlets, essential oil, herbal roots contained in a bottle, candle, and quasi porcelain plate are common spectacles in a healer’s “clinic.” Then in the performance of *santigwar*, one witnesses the sign of the cross, the incantation with Latin sounding oration, and communicative gestures of mediatorship resembling a priest’s privilege between the divine and the human. All these call to mind materials and practices from the Christian repertoire but surrounded with ambiguity as regards its legitimacy or conformity with Christian ideology. Whereas folk healing has been generally associated with Animism, Folk Catholicism, Folk Christianity, or Hybrid Christianity, this part of the paper expounds a way of looking at healing, specifically *santigwar*, as a cultural artifact of conversion and resistance.

The initial images conjured and involved in the practice already enunciate a religious, specifically Christian, elements that imply the colonial history of the region. The etymology is likewise unmistakable: Czarina Labayo traces the term from the Latin sanctificare and the practice in “old times...commonly known in Spanish...as making the sign of the cross while uttering words of prayer specially when one needs
to be protected from evil.” While Cordero identifies the term as a juxtaposition of the two Spanish terms, santo and agua or holy water, and the practice on the other hand as signifying the giving of blessing and healing.

**Santigwar** is usually classified as “folk healing”. But not all folk healing can be identified with the need for santigwar. It is a specific procedure that a healer parabulong or albularyo (who becomes a parasantigwar in its performance) does in cases when it is needed. In Calyd Cerio’s table of folk illnesses, symptoms, causes, diagnostic processes, and treatments, santigwar consistently functions as a diagnostic procedure for peculiar maladies. These are the illnesses which are suspected and believed to be supernaturally caused. There appears to be a variety of supernatural entities behind illnesses. One usual cause which is also identified in other studies is the “aggrieved person” or *tawong lipod* (unseen person) which a sick person is deemed to have had a disruptive “contact” with.

The exorcism-like procedure of santigwar comes from this interplay between the natural (physical sickness) and the supernatural (cause). But it is not the same as exorcism because the supernatural cause of the malady is neither a devil nor treated as such by both the healer and the sick but recognized instead as coexisting in the world. Their locus or space is believed to have been disrupted, the signs of which, manifests corporeally in the person’s illness. Rodney Henry’s description of the Filipino animistic worldview is helpful here in putting in place the cosmology implied in the belief. The supernatural world consists of an other-worldly and this-worldly dimension. The other-worldly supernatural world is the realm of “ultimate concerns” taught in the Christian doctrine such as death, salvation in God, and the afterlife while the supernatural this-worldly dimension is the realm of unseen spirits. The natural world in turn is the realm of the visible everyday experience governed by natural laws. But both the supernatural this-worldly dimension and the natural world continue to influence everyday life. The healer can navigate both worlds hence, she could negotiate this event of disruption, redeem (*bawi*) or heal (*bulong*) the sick, and restore

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harmony between the supernatural and natural worlds. Thus, unlike a doctor the parantigwar is a “séance,” a position of power\textsuperscript{13} which could only be displaced by non-belief in the supernatural itself or the negation of its agency and influence in everyday experience.

The Christian elements in santigwar confirm foremost the presence or embeddedness of Christianity\textsuperscript{14} in the region. But it also depicts how the Christian belief have been received and transformed by the people in both the rural and urban areas. As F. Landa Jocano puts it, “the touch of magic” has always been a recurrent theme in both provincial and urban rites.\textsuperscript{15} The term “magic” is used to describe the folk belief system deviating from the original Christian position yet tolerated in the light of the same “faith” practiced. Jesus Conde’s ethnographic studies on folk narratives and botanical medicines also mirror this in his description of the people’s belief as “hybrid Christianity” or the fusion between indigenous and Christian elements.\textsuperscript{16}

While santigwar could be identified as a cultural artifact of conversion in the sense of Christianity’s presence through time in the region, it is likewise an artifact of the particular kind of resistance exhibited by the natives in the region that could be traced in relation to, and compared with, other modes of resistance in the wider history of the nation. Danilo Gerona for instance provides a historiographical account for the appropriation of foreign terms in the healer’s orations. The technique of conversion employed in the early colonial period is the translation and teaching of the gospel in the native tongue. However,

its limited vocabulary did not include the words needed for an adequate teaching of the principles of faith. Such concepts and corresponding words for Dios, gracia, salvacion, Espiritu santo, cruz, santos, and others were foreign to the natives and consequently not found in their language...the untranslatability of these concepts into native terms gave the natives an impression of the intrinsic superiority of the Latin and Castilian languages over the local ones...The use of Latin as a standard ritual language of the Catholic Church endowed this language with almost magical and supernatural characteristics. This explains why native healers appropriated this language into their pagan rituals in the form of mutilated Latin incantations.\textsuperscript{17}

We are reminded of Vicente Rafael's perspective of “fishing” that problematized the technique of translation in the process of conversion. Confronted

\textsuperscript{13} Cannell, \textit{Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines}, 87.
\textsuperscript{14} Like Henry, Christianity is preferred here to cover all Christian religions in the region aside from Catholicism.
with the almost incomprehensible language of the foreign, the natives hook out onto the words of the friars and reconfigures it in their own terms. As Rafael writes, “the idiom of religious conversion was crucial” in that “it shaped the terms of native surrender just as it lent to the articulation of popular resistance to a colonizing power. Conceived dialectically, conversion requires one’s submission to and incorporation of the language and logic of Christianity as the condition of possibility for defining and subsequently overcoming one’s prior state of subordination, whether to a pagan past, a colonial overlord, or the local elite.”

The Christian elements in santigwar could be viewed similarly as a localization of the foreign but at the same time its subversion as it becomes part of the natives’ vocabulary in their own “terms” or in their agentive reconfiguration.

Gerona speaks of an “everyday resistance” of the natives in the persistence of their indigenous practices during colonial times such as “ritual (social) drinking and ritual crying pagarang that forged solidarity among the natives behind the backs of the friars.” They were forms of silent resistance in its embeddedness in the culture. Apparently, santigwar was another form of silent resistance in its continuing presence in the people’s worldview even up to this time where their animistic cosmology manifests to merge if not problematize Christianity and modern conceptions of reality.

Henry highlights that animism has its strength “on the everyday concerns of the people.” Health is one among these concerns, a disruption of which santigwar serves as a viable alternative for people other than medical care. This alternative has always been cheaper in as much as the healer does not profit from her service although she could accept any offering that the patient can give. Moreover, the presence of free governmental or private health services did not undermine and efface santigwar. The continuing preference for both alternatives however could only arise from santigwar’s normative bite on the socio-cultural background of the people other than the economic. It is a manifestation of the people’s unproblematic merging of the native and foreign belief systems which now constitutes the local. Folk Catholicism, or more generally, folk Christianity is “the coexistence of two religions in the same person without inconsistencies.” Henry provides a convincing explanation for this:

The Roman Catholic aspect of folk Catholicism deals with higher or ultimate concerns, while the animistic aspect deals with the concerns of everyday living. These are two separate thought and behavior systems, each dealing with different areas of life. Roman

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Catholicism had little or nothing to say about the everyday concerns of the Filipino. There was no theology of weather, fishing, hunting, where to build a house or how to cure a spirit-caused sickness. The Filipino assumed that this was the domain of his own spirit religion. The Spanish clergy and nobility passed judgement on the everyday animistic religion of the Filipino as superstitious and sometimes even demonic. But because the church gave no substitute for these practical, everyday concerns of the common tao (people), the belief in the power of the spirit world continues until today as the everyday religion of the Filipino.  

The combination of the native and foreign prefigures in the healer’s being able to negotiate between the supernatural and the natural. Cannell captures this well in her description of the process how the healer assumes and renews her power through the performance of the Christian pasyon. She writes, “a healer’s replication of Christ’s death and resurrection endows her with power in relation to the tawo but is also a ‘shamanic’ journey undertaken in the company of her saro or spirit-companion.” This is a similar process mirroring Reynaldo Ileto’s description of how the anting-anting (amulets) is invested with power through the pasyon which likewise renders the worthiness of its bearer who led mass revolts. Ileto revealed that “the masses’ experience of the Holy Week fundamentally shaped the style of peasant brotherhoods and uprisings during the Spanish and early American colonial periods.” The passion play or the sinakulo which the Spanish colonizers utilized for conversion evolved into something which provided lowland Philippine society with “a language for articulating its own values, ideals, and even hopes of liberation.”

Cerio glimpses on a well-founded insight after documenting the traditional healthcare systems in rural areas that today’s healers “are the modern day balian or babaylan in digesting the way how they discover and practice folk healing.” William Henry Scott have actually written that in the sixteenth century Bikolandia “religious practitioners were female shamans called baliyan, or male transvestites called asog. They wore gold ornaments on their forehead, took ritual baths, spoke with the voice of departed spirits, and delivered prayers in song…healing ceremonies included chicken sacrifices or smearing the patient’s forehead with masticated betel nut.”

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23 Ibid., 19-20.
26 Ibid., 12.
Another reinforcement, and a further historical basis for connecting Cannell’s studies with other parts of the country, could be gleaned from Alfred McCoy’s account of animism and Visayan peasant revolts. In precolonial times, the baylan is originally a woman whose socio-political status ranked with that of the datu because of her exclusive capacity to “contact the relevant spirits and propitiate them with offerings of blood and food made acceptable with arcane chants and magic words” for worldly concerns such as agriculture, health, and war. The powers and capacities of the baylan however became less exclusive to women through time and were utilized for both secular and religious purposes. In colonial times it became the source of political prowess and charisma in mobilizing disparate religious and political opposition in the colony. And the function of healing occupied no minor place:

In leading peasant revolts from the 17th to 19th centuries the babaylan brought certain tangible skills to the service of their followers. Perhaps most importantly, a high-ranking babaylan was an established leader with a wide reputation gained in travelling from village to village healing his fellowman.

The difference however between the Tagalog and Visayan peasant revolts was that while the former as Ileto presented was nurtured by folk Christianity the latter was fueled by a religion that fundamentally remained animist and pre-Hispanic. Cannell on her part would affirm the possibility of the connection between political activism, combining magical power with sharing with Christ’s life, and healing—that the florescence of organized forms of healing which tightly combine the power of the spirits and intimacy with Christ are characteristic of periods of popular political activity.”

The preceding considerations have stitched santigwar into the literature of Philippine ethnography and history. Whether linked to the movements in the north with folk Christianity or the still dominant animist historical backgrounds of insurgencies in the south, both conversion and resistance have been shown to form part of the fabric of santigwar’s practice. Hence, it could be argued that the requisite grounds needed for the reconfiguration of santigwar performed by Cordero was already available in these normative foundations.

30 The healer as a seance described by Cannell rehearses in the present almost the same feature of being or becoming a baylan as a “divine calling, often a hereditary one, and [are] frequently guided in their work by a familiar spirit who serves as their interpreter with the malign immanence.” Ibid., 343.
31 Ibid., 371-372. Italics is mine.
32 Ibid., 392.
33 Cannell, Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines, 199-200.
Cordero’s Poetics of Social Diagnosis

The book Santigwar is Kristian Cordero’s second collection of poetry which won for him the Tomas Arejola Award for Bicol Literature. The cover page image of the book already shows a telling narrative of his poetics. It is a photo of the hands of his grandmother who was a parasantigwar in their locality in Nabua, Camarines Sur. The work intends to honor her, but it depicts at the same time the transfiguration of santigwar in the hands of a poet and writer. In Cordero’s words:

In this collection, I called for a new pagsantigwar, a new haliya (a moon ritual to drive away the moon swallowing Bakunawa), which is symbolically represented as the ills and omens that afflict our community, particularly the Bikol region, which remains to be the second poorest region in the country today because of our traditional political system, militarization, low regard for education and cultural programs that would develop critical citizenry among others...I decided to become a poet, considering the healing value that poetry may render to us as a people.34

Cordero’s poetry, it will be argued, is a poetics of diagnosis where pagsantigwar is employed as a metaphor translating the original practice of identifying causes of corporal maladies and giving therapeutic prescription into a task of the writer in general towards his ailing society. The cultural value of santigwar assumes thus a new intellectual significance realigned towards social emancipation.

Becoming a parasantigwar entails an intense consciousness of the experience of oppression which is behind the vocation to accept the power of healing not as a commercial enterprise but as a gift35 for individuals “who have nothing.” Cordero’s becoming a poet rehearses the healer’s acceptance of the vocation of healing now reconfigured as a writer’s task at diagnosing the society. Santigwar assumes more articulately in this process of metaphorical configuration what it only always had implicitly—a social and political significance and value. The personal and social converge in Cordero’s poetics. He would describe his resolve in becoming a poet as “an act of mourning” for the loss of his grandmother and as a search for the

35 The patient however must not devalue the service of the healer which could be done in two extremes: the excess of lavishly giving that would appear to be a mere pay-off for her service, or the deliberate omission of offering anything in one’s capacity that shows a hurtful lack of gratitude. “The efficacy of a good healer is demonstrated by the unforced flow of both thanks and gifts, as inseparable signs of gratitude and tribute to her ability.” Cannell, Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines, 102-103.
“contradictions within the tenets” of his faith and history, “which are painfully determined by our long history of colonization.” The act of mourning is a revolutionary technique that Rafael has identified to have been employed by Rizal and the other *ilustrados* in imagining the nation and fueling patriotism. Cordero apparently attaches the memory of his grandmother with his advocacy for regional identity in a similar fashion with Rizal’s reciprocal personal longing for his mother while in Europe and his mourning for the image of a motherland lost through colonization, and now handed over to the present as something to be retrieved. Becoming a poet may be perceived as an act of revolt. And the choice of the metaphor to embody the newfound vocation after giving up the vow to his parents to become a priest expresses the act of memorializing not only his grandmother who first touched him but the role of healers in the history of the region and nation which have been replaced by priests. *Santigwar* therefore restores the memory of the region embedded in both myth and history.

Cordero is rooted in the tradition but not as mere acquiescence of what has been handed down, for his poetry becomes likewise a shedding off tradition’s old skin. *Santigwar* is imbedded in the normative experience of the region as it occupies the ambivalent places of cosmology and mythology, Christianity and its anomaly. But it is also a reconfiguration into an aesthetic piece that recreates and infuses it with new life. Cordero reproduces the original use value of *santigwar* into a work of art. As Walter Benjamin has emphasized “the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition,” a tradition that is “thoroughly alive and extremely changeable.” *Santigwar* is originally both a ritualistic and diagnostic procedure which has already been elaborated in the first part as an amalgamation of indigenous and foreign elements. Cordero maintains in *santigwar* its ritual character which is the “basis” and the “location of the original use value” of the authentic work of art. But Cordero’s metaphorical reconfiguration can also be perceived already as a “distortion of the truth” which has previously defined *santigwar* in the social relations of Bikolanos. Drawing inspiration from the early Frankfurt School’s perspective of literature, Virgilio Almario explains that every “metaphor or figurative in literature is a mechanism for distorting the truth,…every metaphor in literature is a product of the intense and acute experiencing of the reality of the world so that it comes to us in the

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36 Kristian Cordero, “Writing a Novena: Poetics, Pilgrimages and Performances in Bicol, Philippines.”
38 His grandmother is also a trained midwife hence her hand was his “first human contact.”
reading as not-ordinary, puzzling, and often unbelievable.”\textsuperscript{41} The writer’s composition of the language is the locus of this “distortion.”

Hali(y)a is one poem in the collection that strongly embodies both this embeddedness and distortion of tradition and truth. The poem Hali(y)a rehearses the precolonial ritual called Halya which is “a ritual offered to the Gugurang (god of goodness). The ritual is held on the nights of the full moon to frighten off the Bakunawa, who would swallow the moon if not scared away.”\textsuperscript{42} Halia on the other hand is a term that literally means “remove” or “to dispel.” Joined, Hali(y)a, becomes either or both a ritual (past) and a prayer (present) resembling the Oratio Imperata recited to ward off catastrophes. As the chorus and one part reads:

\begin{verbatim}
Halia an mga Yawa!  Dispel the Demons!
Halia si Bakunawa!  Dispel Bakunawa!
Ibalik an Bulan!  Return the Moon!
Iligtas an Banwaan!  Redeem the People!

Sa pakilaban ki Bakunawa
Magkuang liwanag sa saldang
asin mga bitoon na nakakorona
sa itum na babayi, an nagbabanaag
na kaagahan, magayon sining sa bulan
asin mangirhat sining sa hukbo
na andam makilaban.

In the battle against Bakunawa
Take light from the sun
and stars crowned
on the black woman, the dawning
morning, beautiful as the moon
and ferocious like legion
gearied for war.
\end{verbatim}

Cordero reconfigures the image of this ritual and conjures the “itum na babayi”\textsuperscript{43} or the virgin of Penafria instead of the mythological Gugurang. Like the old parasantigwar Cordero, in his new mode of pagsantigwar, liberally brews elements into his poetry that come from the people’s experience of the forgotten past and the present popular devotion to the virgin apparently rehearsing the unproblematic merging of the Christian faith and the old animistic worldview. Yet the diagnostic function of santigwar is maintained by Cordero only this time it becomes a diagnosis of a society seemingly unaware of its maladies in the present.

Cordero therefore creates a ripple of difference in santigwar’s signification that both speaks its normative language and shows a different way of viewing reality that has always been in the ambit of social experience. Cordero’s poetics therefore transcends in a way what Benjamin in his time would caution at entanglement of the

\textsuperscript{43} The black color of the statue of the Virgin of Peñafrancia is said to have been due to the blood of a dog sacrificed and painted on its surface. The dog however miraculously came to life and was seen by the people swimming on the Naga River. This is one of the miracles attributed to the virgin which popularized the devotion every September.
artistic function—the practice of politics instead of ritual. In Cordero, ritual and politics are brewed in pretty much the same way as the native healers’ unproblematic fusion of elements from different religious worldviews. What is meant by politics here however is attached to the recognizable identification with culture from which normative orientations are grounded. The political agenda in it would be the articulation of social experience itself that could gain political voice for emancipation employing one’s normative resources for articulation.

Cordero’s poetics of diagnosis charges local language and metaphors with social and political consciousness of concrete experiences in the region. The metaphor *Pulang Signos* (Red Omens) for example depicts the concrete signs of a society plagued with maladies, a local condition akin to the “wrong state of things” pronounced by Theodor Adorno. These visible signs are everyday sights in which the people have gotten used to and thus, perceived already as normal part of their everyday lives such as “the red lights planted near the top of the mountain” referring to cell cites symbolically referring to the technological alteration of the communicative interaction among people, “the towers with red lights guarding persons of power” referring to radio stations normalizing patronage politics through everyday broadcasting of biased information, and the “the red ideology being fought for by those who went to the mountains” symbolizing the political conflict for decades that occasionally bursts into violence. The appearance of these red lights is identified by Cordero as the new transfiguration of the *yawa* or demons.

Like in physical sickness where the symptoms foretell a deeper malady, Cordero metaphorically identifies the ultimate cause of social malaise—the *Bakunawa* which digs deeper into the memory of the region and connects it to the translocal histories of the country and to wider Asian culture in which this mythical creature is found endemic. But in the social experience of Bikolanos in which the form of the *Bakunawa* take shape in Cordero’s poetry, the serpent incarnates in the figure of a person far from its original hideous face. In his first poetry collection, the *Bakunawa* is depicted in a very familiar image showing that the serpent has already descended into the everyday lives of the people with politics as is his game:

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46 See McCoy’s “Baylan: Animist Religion and Philippine Peasant Ideology.”
Mangingnotan siya sa pag-inom nin lambanog,
Mapakawat sa gabos na kalalakihan sa salog.

He will lead the drinking of coconut wine,
He will sponsor the boys’ game in the river

Makikisumaro sa mga daragang nagbabarayle,
Mapamibi kasabay an mga madre asin prayle.

He will join the dancing ladies,
He will pray with the nuns and friars.

Mapagurit nin saiyang gira sa gabos na tinampo
Asin sa gabos na aki saiyang magiging makuapo.

He will mark his name on all concrete roads,
And all children will be his grandchildren.

Mapatugdok siya nin mga gripo
sa harayong baryo
Asin magiging katood niya
an duktor asin albulyaro.

He will install faucets
in faraway barrios,
And all doctors and healers
will be his friends.

Alagad dai aram kan banwaan na binalingaw
Na si Bakunawa
daing untok pa man sa pag-ringgaw:

But the town was unaware of the warning
That Bakunawa
never ceased messing.

Mayo nang yaman sa kadagatan,
an kabukidan
An kultura dai magiromdoman.
asin gobyerno kinakalburo

Sea resources depleted,
mountains deforested
The culture in amnesia
and government manipulated.

Asin luhay-luhay na si Bakunawa
magiging bundat giraray.
Magaraba an saiyang mga pinagibong tulay.

And slowly Bakunawa
shall again be full,
The bridges he built will fall.

Dangan pag-abot kan kadikloman,
mahihiling kan banwaan
Na mayo na sindang magayon
na bulan sa kalangitan

Then as night comes,
the town shall know
That their moon in the sky
is no more.

Then in Santigwar, Bakunawa’s birth is welcomed by the people themselves like rejoicing for the Messiah who came to save mankind and promised heaven to the faithful.

Then the town rejoiced
for they thought the curse was naught
despite knowing that a relish for crow
filled the appetite of its mother who conceived
the heir of dynasty in the province.

In one metaphor, Cordero captures in a single streak the entrenched and interconnected social problems plaguing the region—political dynasty, complicity and passivity of the people, poverty, and environmental degradation. What is worse
is that these have been normalized, it has become part of the everyday lives of Bikolanos to the extent that they could no longer recognize the enemy in their midst. The solution therefore is the procedure which has always been available, only that it has not been conceived necessary by the masses. They could not see it as needed, in the same way an affluent individual would do, as a last resort after having gone through all medical measures. The poet and writer ought to perform thus Pagsantigwar sa Banwaan—the ritual needed to identify the causes of social malaise:48

![Santigwaron niyato an banwaan.](image)

Let us diagnose our land.

Get a big torch with a light that won't quench.

Use the volcano’s fire that strengthens our souls.

And once we have recognized and named these demons like the typhoons and other misfortunes, only then shall our land be healed from its maladies.

While typhoons that strike and ravage the region year after year have been given names, the agents of social devastation have remained anonymous. Not that they are unidentifiable for these demons or serpent incarnate live visibly among the people. But naming it is taboo because doing so would perturb the society, a society which has learned to derive pleasure and tranquility from being underneath their power. Pagsantigwar as the poet’s task henceforth demands a valiant act of naming the unnamable bolstered by the “volcano’s fire.” While the poem targets big names in politics the metaphor may stand for any dominant power that hinder autonomous flourishing of the society such as estranged labor, education for profit, and cultural neglect. In other words, Santigwar in Cordero’s poetics is social criticism in literary imagination—a semantic bridge for Santigwar’s relocation into the terrain of philosophical ideation.

**Santigwar as Immanent Critique:**
**From Metaphor to Philosophical Praxis**

Whereas Axel Honneth (and Seyla Benhabib) found in Ralph Elison’s novel *The Invisible Man* the literary piece for the philosophical deployment of the epistemology of recognition (*Anerkennung*), and the absence thereof, in the concept of

“invisibility,” 49 I see in Kristian Cordero’s Santigwar a local piece of literature that captures what is called in Honneth’s social theory as an immanent critique of society. This mode of critique launches from the fundamental principle of recognition which serves as the socio-ontological foundation for the coming to be of persons in the society. Social critique in this context should always be grounded on the moral claims of persons which inform their normative orientations as individual persons, as entitled with rights, and as members of distinct cultural groups.

The metaphor of invisibility depicts the reality of moral affronts to identity claims in the experience of having been deliberately denied of recognition. As Honneth writes, “for the affected persons in particular, their ‘invisibility’ has in each case a real core: they actually feel themselves not to be perceived” 50 (Italics mine). These feelings presuppose the moral grammar of struggles for recognition which facilitates the flourishing and autonomy of agents in the society but have nonetheless been suspended due to experiences of disrespect. Disrespect (Mißachtung) is identified by Honneth as the “normative foundation of social critique.” 51 Its German term, as Joel Anderson explains, “refers not merely to a failure to show proper deference but rather to a broad class of cases, including humiliation, degradation, insult, disenfranchisement, and even physical abuse.” 52 Social critique is the philosophical enterprise of providing a “semantic bridge” where these experiences of misrecognition could be brought into the threshold of articulation to effect both individual and collective identity formation. Honneth explains well that:

the need for such semantics is met by the moral doctrines or ideas that are able normatively to enrich our notions of social community. Along with the prospect of broadened recognition relations, these languages open up an interpretive perspective for identifying the social causes of individual injuries. Thus, as soon as ideas of this sort have gained influence within a society, they generate a subcultural horizon of interpretation within which experiences of disrespect that, previously, had been fragmented and had been coped with privately can then become the moral motives for a collective ‘struggle for recognition’. 53

Various forms of misrecognition are concrete signs of social pathologies. Honneth uses the clinical term “pathology” to describe “misdevelopments” in social

50 Ibid., 113.
53 Ibid., 164.
relations aimed at by criticism. In medical language the term refers to an unhealthy physical condition but, metaphorically it denotes a society which has taken a wrong turn in the formation of autonomous identities. Thus, philosophizing today assumes the task of social diagnosis, “a therapeutic self-critique” performed not “from the outside” but within the very context of the “well-established constellation of practical norms and beliefs” of the society. From Michael Walzer, Honneth assumes the position that a social critic cannot be too distant from the hermeneutic contexts of the local culture otherwise “become a ‘dispassionate stranger’ or an ‘estranged native’ who is no longer able to decipher the normative force and moral richness of local understandings.” If, however, the critic:

follows the procedure of radical interpretation by linking up immanently with the local stock of moral norms in order to apply it critically to the individual case by means of creative interpretations, he or she will come to embody the figure of a ‘local judge’, i.e., a person sufficiently familiar with his or her social life-world to be able to credibly assume the role of a loyal critic who, angrily and insistently, sometimes at considerable personal risk..., objects, protests, and remonstrates.

Honneth returns to Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to show what a diagnosis of pathology would be like in a form of what he calls a “disclosing critique of society.” Honneth perceives in this work a philosophizing that does not proceed argumentatively in driving home ideas but rather, incites new ways of looking at life in presenting a picture of social reality that challenges present day values. In that work Adorno and Horkheimer showed that contrary to the popular belief in the enlightenment as a triumph of man’s freedom and flourishing, humanity in fact “was sinking into a new kind of barbarism.” Through their reinterpretation of the *Odyssey* the authors were able to depict figuratively the elimination of human freedom in concepts such as sacrifice and renunciation which were already contained in the myth while the enlightenment was unveiled as a relapse into myth in the subjection of the truth to the sovereign will of the subject. The rise of modern science and totalitarian systems are the historical events captured by this representation under the fundamental philosophical thesis of the domination of nature whereas the concept of

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55 Ibid., 57.
56 Ibid., 53.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
60 Ibid., xviii.
the culture industry was introduced to expose the final threat to everything that is left in being human—art—which most of the first generation of critical theorists have felt as the last resource for social emancipation.

As exemplified by Adorno and Horkheimer, a disclosing critique of society attempts to “change our value beliefs by evoking new ways of seeing” drawing on “linguistic resources that, by condensing or shifting meaning, reveal facts hitherto unperceived in social reality. Narrative presentation and the formation of suggestive metaphors are among the rhetorical figures that can serve to open up a new context of meaning.” Honneth clearly perceives the value of literary imagination in the conduct of social diagnosis where experiences of suffering in the various forms of misrecognition are provided with the means for articulation. In one interview he affirms that novels give empirical basis to his writing which empirical research in sociology could not render because “it is very often too quantitative and not sensitive enough to the nuances in everyday life.” In another instance he confers in literature or “the experience of art in general” the strengthening of “our capacity to perceive situations and events from the point of view of the [individual] other, and to include this unique viewpoint in evaluating moral conflicts.” Ellison’s novel is a good example of this that extends one’s ambit of vision to the experience of suffering of black Americans as well as of other marginalized “others.”

The difference however between a work of art and social diagnosis is that: “whereas in aesthetic representation the opening of new contexts of meaning can transpire without bounds, so to speak, in social criticism it remains bound to the limits set by the actual constraints of social reproduction.” This is why the philosopher-critic cannot assume the “view from nowhere” in his articulation of various forms of moral affronts otherwise miss out its local social contexts. Pathologies presuppose moral conceptions, norms which are culturally defined thus, as Honneth writes, “it is only by hermeneutic reference to a society’s self-understanding that social functions or their disorders can be determined.” Borrowing Gottfried Schweiger’s reading: “the normative benchmark of the recognition approach is the universal value of undistorted self-realization which can only be realized in contingent historical, social or otherwise relative forms.”

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relative aspect of recognition grounds therefore the trajectory that philosophy takes as immanent critique.

Paolo Bolaños' advocacy of appropriating Frankfurt Critical Theory in general for a more materialist-anthropological standpoint in doing philosophy in the Philippines is anchored in critical theory’s potency as “theoretical practical tools in diagnosing societal ills in the Philippines.”68 He observes in truth that “the philosophical enterprise here in the Philippines, as we know it, suffers from a failure to reflect on factual realities that materially shape our psycho-socio-political behavior and ensuing pathological consequences therein.”69 Through Honneth’s social theory, Bolaños enunciates then the fundamental task of a “critical reading of our normative life”70 which I take as a strategic function of philosophers working in the regions. The archipelagic context of the Philippines implies a diversity of norms and practices that inform everyday self-understanding and therefore, pathologies too in unique local conditions. And the rich fund of local literary resources provides this mode of doing philosophy a greater sensitivity to the experience of others and the attunement to everyday life experience.

Cordero’s poetry written in Bikol language and using images from the local culture to depict current experience in a different light has been shown to capture in metaphorical form this manner of doing philosophy. While there could be other hermeneutic possibilities for santigwar, keeping in mind the characteristic of aesthetic production cited by Honneth, the concept of diagnosis signified by the metaphor renders it as a model for a local concept of social criticism. From the medical sense of detection and definition of physical illnesses to the social significance of identifying social pathologies, the concept of diagnosis enunciated in Santigwar assumes a local, Bikolano version, of “philosophical praxis.” Bolaños’ articulation of the three moments of this process consistently reinforces the claims ushered in this paper: a critique grounded on the receptivity to the dynamics of our normative behavior, the critical assessment of normative resources, and the social emancipation right in the very locus of the normative practices and experiences of a given society.71

As in the language of both the healer and the poet, santigwar as philosophical praxis is an exigency issuing forth from the very facticity of the social body. This entails that pagsantigwar is no longer simply a task for “experts” in physical healing, or in writing as Cordero designates it among poets and writers. In so far as every individual is a member of society and partake of the suffering brought about by “invisible” and anonymous forces, santigwar becomes a task of critical thinking for

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 18.
everyone. This mode of thinking is marked by sensitivity to one’s experiences and normative practices that enables one to question and therefore, resist the normalization of a pathological condition. Being able to identify the need for pagsantigwar — of critical thinking — in times and situations where it is most needed, but otherwise perceived or deliberately screened off by others, is the local significance highlighted and gleaned from its Bikol context. Yet social critique is a task for everyone across cultures which decentralizes therefore the critical potential and function of santigwar from its culture-specific origination. As Cordero has already performed in his poetics, santigwar could also serve as a local version of social critique of conditions plaguing the global village — that of Capitalism, the upsurge of populism, truth decay, \(^{72}\) and looming environmental collapse which all need to rise into the conscious level of crisis among the people.

The Bikolano healer, the poet, and the philosopher as parasantigwar share then a parallel experience: an intense awareness of oppression and a vocation to diagnose illnesses which is the first step towards healing. And perhaps the most fundamental social diagnosis which santigwar proffers, as in Cordero’s poetics, is the complicity with malignant forces that make the society sick in the normalization of suffering and refusal to “see” santigwar as a necessity for the society. As philosophical praxis, pagsantigwar sa banwaan is henceforth geared towards emancipation for “the people who have nothing” — a metonymy gleaned from Cannell for persons experiencing various forms of oppression in the society whose freedom for articulation and participation is hindered by disrespect and various forms of social pathologies. But social emancipation nonetheless could only be carried out by the people’s agentive praxis themselves shaken from their complicity and refusal to see.

**Concluding Remarks**

The mode of philosophizing elaborated in this paper which is figuratively deployed as *Pagsantigwar sa Banwaan* is a localization of social critique reinforced by Honneth’s recognitive theory. And as in the tradition of Frankfurt Critical Theory’s engagement with other disciplines, it endeavored to explore the anthropological and historical normative bases for articulating santigwar as a local concept of critique which was already made possible by Kristian Cordero’s poetics of diagnosis.

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\(^{72}\) According to Kavanaugh and Rich this phenomenon is defined by a set of four related trends namely “(1) increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data, (2) a blurring of the line between opinion and fact, (3) the increasing relative volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact, (4) declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information.” Jennifer Kavanaugh and Michael D. Rich, *Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life* (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2018), 3.
As an immanent critique, santigwar is now enunciated as a diagnostic enterprise, gleaned from Bikol experience, of articulating social maladies which hinders the flourishing and autonomous development of individuals and the society. It entails grounding criticism on the foothold of normative practices and values of the people and a rigorous discourse with other thought disciplines which encapsulate the normative experiences of the people. Critical assessment therefore cannot take a universalist standpoint uprooted from the local contexts and moral claims of subjects to avoid “free-floating interpretations of normative values.” And from santigwar’s original exigency of identifying and courageously naming the cause(s) of aberrations, no values and experience shall be left uncritically examined. Henceforth, even if Cordero has liberated the critical potential of santigwar from its culture-specific significance, the exigency of immanent critique in santigwar rebounds even to the writers themselves who are now the new agents of “healing” in Cordero’s poetics as they too form part of the social with all its body of normative interests.

Furthermore, while maintaining its local foothold, the ambit of critical consciousness implied in santigwar extends even beyond, but not unrelated to, social recognition. Even from its use value and significance to the folk healer, santigwar has always posited the relation between the physical body and the objective world in as much the physical illnesses that the healer treats are caused by external entities in the world. The critical consciousness of santigwar in its new philosophical signification covers therefore all other contributors to the reification of human experience such as a distorted mode of relating with the environment. Even Honneth needed to rethink his concept of recognition in response to a deficit in the theoretical grounding for the relation between man and the objective world in his early works. Honneth does this by reintroducing a renewed perspective of the old idea of reification as a forgetfulness of empathetic engagement or “the primordial form of relating with the world as ‘recognition’ in its most elementary form.” The world however within which the healer operates is both intersubjective and natural. But human activity causes disruption in this still active relation between man and the (disrespected) environment which the parasantigwar (healer) diagnoses and mediates to retrieve health for the individual, the efficacy of which is undermined when the service is rendered for profit instead of the purpose of healing itself. In parallelism, santigwar as

local philosophical praxis could only legitimately function as “social healing” if it is attuned to the project of emancipation itself “for the people who have nothing.”

References


Sloterdijk and Interreligious Dialogue against Extremist Reason: A Reflection on Christianity’s Quincentennial Anniversary

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Abstract: I weave Sloterdijk’s consideration of monotheistic religions with the necessity of dialogue to save faith, and by extension reason, from extremism as a reflection on Christianity’s quincentennial anniversary in the Philippines. Sloterdijk depicts inherent pathological elements in the three monotheistic religions which left to their own ideological confinements suffer identical radicalization as history has presented. Religion plays an important role alongside language as an expression of culture in a people’s sphere-formation as setting up the boundaries of their identity. This is what Sloterdijk recognizes as immunitary reason as the drive to immunize common spaces from what we identify as foreign as opposed to extremist reason as the ideological confinement to one sphere without the malleability to forge new spheres. Sloterdijk’s response is a post-zeal manifestation dialogue, a co-immunism, which is rather timely considering that the Catholic Church in the Philippines celebrated 2020 as the year of interreligious dialogue, reflecting on how the faith arrived on the Philippine shores entwined with Hispanization; religion, a manifest of political expansionism. A post-zealotic attempt at sphere-formation allows co-immunization to secure common efforts for the same ideals. By bringing Sloterdijk and the Catholic Church’s effort for interreligious dialogue, I seek to point out a common threat recognized by the two—extremist reason, referring primary to the rise of radicalism throughout the world, yet is expanded to a particular zealotry for the privatization of affairs, i.e., a social apathy as an extreme form of ideological reason. This polemic qua reflection provides an insight into hospitality as a potential resource for moving forward.

Keywords: Sloterdijk, Extremist Reason, Interreligious Dialogue, The Philippines

1 I would like to thank the reviewer/s for the generous comments and questions that allowed me to see how the ideas herewith can easily be misunderstood and that provided me ways to clarify certain points.
Rather than beginning this paper by recounting how the Catholic faith arrived in the Western Pacific islands some 500 years ago, I find it more opportune to question the lasting significance of its lengthy presence. 2021 celebrates the quincentenary of the Catholic faith’s arrival but also the start of Spanish colonization. It is naïve to celebrate the faith without remembering the thorn of colonialization it engendered. From 1521 to 1898, the islands were united under the Spanish flag, an identification to Hispanidad which was possible at the apex of extremist reason perhaps because of the lack of any previous dialogue of the faith outside itself. This is something not unnoticed by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in declaring 2020 the year of dialogue. In this paper, I provide three points for reflection on Christianity’s quincentenary by portraying Sloterdijk’s consideration of sphere-formation and interreligious dialogue as a polemic against extremist reason. Again, this is a polemic that I leave open-ended. The three points I provide are not accelerative – they do not progress from each other – but rather are foundational – as a form of sideways mobility to expand the grammar of this reflection – for a holistic reflection. I first uncover extremist reason through a glimpse of a pathological metaphysical optimism based on immunitary reason which was the force for Christianity’s evangelization-cum-colonization. This serves as my springboard for an assessment of the faith’s presence in the Philippines. On a micronarrative, I engage Alfredo Co’s account of the evangelization of the Philippines and point out a contradiction in his reading; I argue that the religion which arrived on the shores because of immunitary reason developed into a different experience than what is presently celebrated in the quincentennial anniversary. I then present the phenomenological approach to religion as a certain post-zealotic encounter of faith, something echoed by Pope Francis and even found in the CBCP’s initiative to foster interreligious dialogue—a timely polemic against extremist reason for a country already plagued by its expressions in social and political pathologies.

Religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”

Durkheim’s sociological definition highlights how religion is a collective experience bounded by regulations. This institution plays a dominant part in a people’s identification. I would like to consider how this plays a part of Sloterdijk’s spherology sanctioned by immunitary reason; “whatever ethnic, economic and political situation might govern their lives, exist not only in ‘material conditions’, but also in symbolic

immune systems and ritual shells."³ The history of humanity can be recounted as gradations in our sphere-formation. In a social sense, this may be identified first through the family, then a bigger community, until ultimately as contemporary society portrays the global community. This progression is guided by immunitary reason which impels a form of protectionism. Immunization stands as identifying, establishing, and defending spaces that are common to a particular people—something neatly represented by culture, with religion and language as two facets among others.

I first focus on religion. A macro-narrative of this spherology is religion’s involvement in immunizations throughout history. For most of our species’ history, we were foragers, only eventually learning to settle and domesticate in the recent 10,000 years.⁴ Despite this brevity (compared to two million years), settling profoundly influenced our development to what was ultimately domestication not of livestock or flora but our very selves. We found a home. In fact, domestication comes from the Latin domus, home, and playfully thinking, it is rather peculiar that one would use the word domesticate than habituate, the latter from habitare, to dwell, while the former from domare, to tame; in finding a home, in creating meaning, we have tamed the species.⁵ Due to our domestication, we have survived according to the degree of our immunized spheres.

Localized domestication can be translated in history as the establishment of nation-states, “a simultaneously imaginary and real immune structure, that could be experienced as a convergence of place and self[,]”⁶ These served as the link between interior and exterior, the physical representation of a metaphysical limit. With the demarcated spaces, one had to keep these safe from the foreign, immunized from the profane. Coincidental to our taming was the emergence of religion as a search for metaphysical optimism—assurance, safety within the bounds of one’s immediate surroundings.⁷ This fitted perfectly well for religious immunization offers an embodiment of metaphysical optimism through rituals that save the congregation.

⁷ Harari points out how in history this was represented by “domesticated” gods such as the Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Norse gods and goddesses as part of humanity’s cognitive revolution. See Harari, Sapiens, §2.
Religious rites make the most sense to the believer who has ascribed to such the consolation of the Day of Resurrection, a common celebration among the three monotheisms that serve as a manifestation of the greatness of YHWH, Jesus, and Allah who will raise the faithful to everlasting life while cast the infidels, to eternal damnation.

The historical development of these religions is exemplary of immunization from symbolic to localized spheres. This was obvious with the scramble for Jerusalem as the localized metaphysical struggle of the three monotheistic faiths. For purpose of this essay, I focus on Christianity (Roman Catholicism) and Islam whose seats are in reality not Jerusalem but Rome and Mecca respectively. The conquest for the Holy Land was a symbolic fight for the cradle of their religions, and thus while it was under the control of Shia Moslems, Christian campaigns were plotted to regain Jerusalem under the motto “Deus vult.” God wills the conquest and wills salvation for those taking part. It is common knowledge that the metaphysical optimism that drove crusade after crusade was on the one hand for the hope of eternal life or spiritual favors or even forms of penance imposed for the remission of sins.

What I am trying to point out here is that this metaphysical optimism provides us a glimpse of extremist reason especially with “the spirituality of imitation Christi” as its foundation. With such a foundation for mimesis of taking up one’s cross and following Christ, the armed warfare for Jerusalem took form as the world’s immunization, i.e., baptism into the Christian grammar. This though was not enough of an immunization since metaphysical optimism pointed to a bigger reality; the Church found herself dividing the world to her loyal subjects to further this immunological drive in terms of salvation. The papal bull Inter Caetera apportioned lands unknown, terrae incognitae, to the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns. The circumnavigation of the globe, of which that Philippines was part with Fernando de Magallanes’ 1521 arrival, buttressed an extremizing reason and enthused a passion for religious zealotism, mimicking the same process in Europe and the Holy Land. The Latin incognatus while meaning unknown also denotes in legal parlance the state of being untried; the global evangelization took the forms of subjugating these lands under the law and trying them, making them terrae cognitae. This provided a new conquest of an even greater sphere: the world is an orb worthy of heated conquest resulting in a “theological-cosmological litany in which the spheric attributes are

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studied ‘ad majorem gloriam globi.’”\(^\text{11}\) We have to remember the earlier remark that religion provides metaphysical optimism, which sought to patch the cracks caused by the Reformation and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire with the evangelization-colonization of terrae incognitae. An additional arsenal was added to the Church’s anti-pagan metaphysical optimism: it is better to end life now than continue living a sinful life.\(^\text{12}\)

Parenthetically, what later sought to be a counter-reformation religious order eventually experienced the harshness of this metaphysical optimism. With the monarchs’ zeal of ad majorem gloriam globi, it comes to no surprise that the Society of Jesus came under fire with their firm conviction of ad majorem gloriam Dei. Earning the ire of monarchs across the Old World and their expansion (and relative success) in the New World, their motto was the grain of salt, and the very order that has a fourth vow of obedience to the Pope was expelled from Christendom by the Supreme Pontiff who stood as a mere satisfier of the Crowns’ wishes.\(^\text{13}\) With such a move, extremist reason took firm root within the Christian narrative

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For a micronarrative of extremist reason, I engage Alfredo Co’s treatment of Christianity’s arrival in the Western Pacific. He highlights the different approaches of the Catholic Church to evangelize China and the Philippines, however, becomes ambiguous if not profoundly misled in claiming things. On the one hand, “It was literally a triumphalist march of a dominant Western Catholic culture inward” signifying an evangelization-cum-Hispanization through cross and sword in the Philippines, yet he on the other claims that “the Catholicism [which the Filipinos] continue to practice now is the very kind of Catholicism brought to them by the colonizers some 500 years ago[.]”\(^\text{14}\) He portrays the generally unproblematic (as

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12 See Sloterdijk, *God’s Zeal*, §3.
13 The phrase ad majorem Dei gloriam (trans. For the greater glory of God) is the motto of the Society of Jesus. The Society was suppressed and abolished officially with papal brief *Dominus ac Redemptor Noste* by Clement XIV. (See Giovanni B. Nicolini, *History of the Jesuits: Their Origin, Progress, Doctrines, and Designs* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 1111-1130 for the Brief while the following pages for some explanations) The expression of the Pope’s subservience to the Catholic monarchs is part of the reply of the then Cardinal Ganganelli, a papabile, to the conclave’s inquiry into his stance to the Jesuit question. (See Joseph Wilhelm, “Pope Clement XIV,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04034a.htm) All professed men and women have three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, while the Jesuits have a special fourth one, which is a vow of obedience directly to the Holy Father.
14 Co, “Catholicism in Asia,” 118 and 123.
coerced) evangelization in the Philippines which was unsuccessful in China. An initial efficacious bout of evangelization was made by the Jesuit Matteo Ricci – via inculturation – who won favors even from the imperial court, yet the Church through the ardent campaigns of the Dominicans banned the incorporation of the Confucian Rites within the Christian liturgy. The difference is obvious: the Jesuits’ attempt in China was through inculturation because as Co maintains the Chinese culture was already formed through millennia, while religious orders such as the Augustinians and the Dominicans came to the Philippines with a sense of evangelization as Hispanization. We may opine that the Western Pacific islands’ immunization was not as strong as that of other cultures. Co juxtaposes the degree of the two culture’s immunization:

There was no single sovereign that ruled the entire archipelago that is now collective know to be the Philippines. There were Agtas, Ifugao, Ifatans, T'bolis, Lumads, and countless communities ruled by tribal chiefs, each having its own animistic religion, tribal customs, religious rites, individual myths and legends, by those were all that was—for the islands were never unified nor existed as a state or a country like China, India, Japan, or Khmer. China was already a well established [sic] culture and civilization when the Western colonizers and evangelizers came to the East.

Immunization bears semblance to political armament, and a unifying power that was common to the four states mentioned was indeed absent across the islands: the imperial dynasties of China and Japan, the empires of the Mogul and the Khmer. Such a unifying power though does not assure protection from factions and other colonial threats. Cambodia fell under French protection, eventually colonization, India under Portugal, the Netherlands, and eventually Great Britain, the Bakufu was forced to open Japan following the great Qing empire’s defeat in the Opium Wars. Yet beyond the political power, immunization indicates a common cultural identity, something which Co indicates to be absent from the various tribal groups scattered across the islands. Parenthetically, his pseudo-historical survey earns a comment for he portrays the Philippine religious-cultural landscape without any reference to literature or history and obviously mistakes lumads to a specific ethnic group wherein it is a collective term that today is properly recognized as Indigenous People (IP). By situating his narrative this way, it becomes obvious that the IP were no match culturally more so politically to the evangelization-Hispanization that started in 1521, thus ushering the “a triumphalist march of a dominant Western Catholic culture.

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15 See ibid., 113-115.
16 Ibid., 117.
The zeal in this conquest for the islands and by extension Asia was engendered by a metaphysical optimism stemming from something deeper. Co opines it as “European confidence” from a belief “that the search for the way to truth had ended” in the Old World, paving “the age of exploration, conquest and colonization beyond its borders.”

He contends a self-assurance of European immunitary reason qua the bankruptcy of truth-finding which propelled the colonizers to the East. Although I do not fully agree with his reading, we arrive at a similar idea that such a move was an attempt at immunizing the global sphere because of the perceived self-immunization in the Old World.

Yet, the contradiction I seek to point out is Co’s second claim that there is a Philippine joviality in celebrating one’s culture identified through religious fiestas such as those dedicated to a particular saint, patron/ness of one’s hometown, or even grander celebrations in honor of the Santo Niño (Tondo, Pandacan, Cebu), the Señor Nazareno, or the Blessed Virgin Mary (Inmaculada Concepcion, Guadalupe, de la Paz y Buen Viaje, de Peñafrancia, among others).

It seems Co outwardly equates the Philippine sense of identity indistinguishable from Christianity’s viewpoint which would obviously earn criticism from IP and Muslims in the country. However, I argue that this is a simplistic narrative. Naïvely, Co confuses two kinds of Christianity, we distinguish from the vantages of sociology and phenomenology, a religion that is organized and one that is experienced.

In the recent gathering of UMPIL (Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas), Jovito Cariño precisely accentuated how the Christianity which arrived in the islands was zealotic not primarily due to Christ’s final command of making disciples of all nations but due to political and economic motivations. This reminds us of Sloterdijk’s consideration that “the motives of Christian missionary successes should be interpreted more critically” than mere global moral improvement but as “going on the offensive by fleeing from the world – or, to put it more mildly: serving the world from a position of scepticism towards the world.”

The positions of the world and the Church can be respectively read as that between foreign and inoculated. The smaller sphere which the Church initially identified herself with desired to expand its salvific promise and baptize all nations; the world’s turning point however was the realization of its spherical structure and salvation became enthralled in political conquests. The Christianity that arrived in 1521 was zealotic

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18 Co, “Catholicism in Asia,” 118.
22 The biblical reference is from Mt. 28:19, NABRE. See Jovito Cariño, “Gunitâ ng Nakalipas na Limang Siglo,” presented at the national assembly of the Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas, 24 April 2021.
23 Sloterdijk, God’s Zeal, §4.
due to immunitary reason, a desire to inoculate the foreign. We, therefore, are left to wonder if this is the same zeal of the devotees of the Black Nazarene or the La Naval as Co would suggest. In celebrating the quincentenary of Christianity’s arrival, we are left to ponder the source of today’s joviality.

The immunization that the faith secured before, contributes to the sociological understanding of religion as I have already devoted much of the section on, whereas what we celebrate this year signifies a phenomenology of the faith, which I plan to devote the remaining section on. Earlier, I have hinted at how religion quells the drive for meaning-formation. Religious experiences as events of such meaning-formation resound this, however, Luhmann notes that “Even if meaning can be actualized at the point where an operation is using meaning, the medium as such remains invisible.”

Even if we are able to verbalize events (verbalizing as a medium between ourselves and the world, while events as the source of meaning), the medium of meaning-formation as an impetus for existence remains evanescent. We are not able to precisely articulate all experiences, more so those that provide social ontology or even meaning for oneself.

This brings us to the second facet of culture that represents the degree of one’s immunization—language. I first focus on its significance. Giorgio Agamben links being to language: to be human is to be able to use language as our connection to the world. Such is the esteem from an ontological perspective that may be attributed to letters while at the same time assert its domesticating capacity: “The latent theme of humanism is thus the de-bestialization of the human being, and its latent thesis runs: right reading tames.” Right reading domesticates the individual, educates, localizes the person to an immediate sphere. Playfully, we may even consider one’s baptism of language that initiates the child into a single perspective, dramatically domesticating the child by providing the means with which life may be articulated. Such a baptism within a single worldview is more aligned to the Jewish celebration of Shavuot than the Christian Pentecost despite both falling on the fiftieth day after Passover. Actually, Jewish educational custom aligns the entrance of children into schools with Shavuot to make parallel the first encounter with the alphabet in Moses’ bestowment of the Torah to the Israelites. We witness here not a celebration of the multiplicity of tongues but a singularity of perspectives. The child’s language-debut provides the grammar to her experience. This had a medieval implication exposed through the etymology of the word grammar since “whoever could read and write could easily

26 Sloterdijk, “Rules for The Human Park.”
manage other kinds of impossible things, too.”

The ability to use language had a synonymous magical capacity for impossibility. This grammar was tied to domestication and as presented above, the formation of immunological zones. Here we see how this is linked to the second aspect of culture as part of developing immunitary reason.

The phenomenological aspect of religion which I present here is through the treatment of language. Among the three monotheist religions, it is only Christianity which does not associate its religo-cultural identity to language. Although the language used by Jews and Moslems has developed through time, the religious identity is closely linked in the language they claim is spoken by God: Hebrew and Arabic.

Among the languages of the three monotheisms, it is easily identifiable which is based on development: Classical Hebrew and Classical Arabic are respectively the languages of the Torah and the Quran, while Classical Latin refers to the writings of Cicero, Caesar, Virgil, and Horace. We are able to scratch the surface by discovering this distinction. The association of classical Latin to the Roman language showcases not simply a source of religious convictions but of humanist ideas. The humanist ideas were cherished prior to the faith’s linguistification. Without classical Latin, Greek philosophy would not have developed further, and humanism and Latin philosophical discourses, failing to reach contemporary society. The Renaissance was a rebirth of Latin humanism. Already by this tone, we sense the difference between Christianity and Islam in their primal grammar.

This difference is further emphasized in history as to how Islamic expansionism reached its peak with the Ottoman Empire before Christianity’s reassertion of dominance through cross and sword. What propounded Christianity’s aggressive front was the language of expansion via the Enlightenment which “amounted to a continuation of Christianity by rationalist and historico-philosophical means by virtue of its ideological or propagandistic design.” The actual experience of the Philippines in its evangelization testifies to the embrace of modernity. Indeed, this is where I agree with Co. What was absent in the country was a homogenizing factor prior to foreign intervention. However, where we differ is where we draw the boundary between foreign and familiar—are we all not foreign to other groups? While the Europeans faced a united China, Japan, India, and Khmer, these nations were once composed of groups foreign to each other only having been immunized (colonized) by an even greater immunized clan. What stood as that immunizing factor in the Philippines was cross and sword. This catapulted the formation of a collective

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28 Sloterdijk, “Rules for The Human Park.”
30 See Sloterdijk, “Rules for The Human Park.”
31 See Sloterdijk, God’s Zeal, §4.
32 Ibid.
consciousness among the people we would rightly identify as Filipino—bearing testament to unifying inoculation caused by our baptism into Hispanidad. This identity of Hispanidad was then, as the Illustrados would seek to assert, the entry of the nation into the global sphere: a common language to interact with others, a language to articulate our experiences. Christianity’s language in its expansion was not of strict traditionalism as one might immediately associate to it, but rather an embrace of modernity—a desire for knowledge (the establishment of universities), a desire for medical advancement (hospitals), prevailing governance (town halls), and of course, all done for God’s zeal (churches). If the Church had not embraced this modern language, then friars should not have been engaged in the founding of these institutions to support a culturally vulnerable people. Their immunization was done in the sole language they knew, and thus the Hispanicization of the people of las Islas Filipinas.

The obvious difference between Christianity and Islam is their relation to language, the former polylingual, while the latter, monolingual. While the Catholic Church took the language of modernity (notwithstanding obvious contradictions such as inquisitions and prohibition of certain books), we notice that Islam did not take a similar path. We may be more pronounced with the Church’s translation to vernacular languages. Thus, the linguistic identity of the Latin Church, although officially is language, is the language of the times. Though not perfect, the phenomenological aspect is localized.

In anticipation of the quincentennial anniversary, the CBCP marked 2020 as the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and the Indigenous People with the theme “Dialogue Towards Harmony” which I here present alongside the Holy Father’s Fratelli Tutti and Sloterdijk’s post-zealotic narrative. With religion’s narrative above presented, we are left to ponder how extremist reason is manifest in the Philippines beyond already perceived political squabbles. Extremist reason’s emergence in the global sphere, Sloterdijk portrays, is due to the inability to dialogue outside one’s immunized sphere, resorting instead to the bursting of one’s bubbles and to “consistent applications of high cultural grammar, which was based on the rigid combination of a monovalent ontology and a bivalent logic.” This zeal to impose on everything foreign a brand of vulnerability – vulnerable to the homogenizing effects of one’s prophetic mission – fails to recognize the potency of such exposure to the other. Cariño dwells on this phenomenological experience of Christianity: through

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33 See ibid., §5.
35 Sloterdijk, God’s Zeal, §5.
the islands’ baptism in 1521 we have been secured not the Gospel of Christ but the embrace of forgetfulness (“pagtalikod sa gunitâ”): “Similar to modernity, the missionaries thought they could launch a new epoch without looking back. And again like modernity, they thought that the future, under the guise of a promised redemption, will be fulfilled as history’s destiny.”

For Cariño, Christianity and the Enlightenment merged in its arrival 500 years ago; the lesser immunized sphere of the island natives was exposed and was simply too vulnerable to the Spanish expansionists’ cross and sword, baptizing them into the grammar of a reason already extremin—harmony secured not through dialogue but homogeneity.

500 years of Christianity in the country and yet a consistent narrative of true encounter cannot be posited without resort to zealotism or blind faith. The Holy Father even affirms this through his observation of the global regress into extremist reason expressed in populist support or resentful nationalism but above all the regress of reason to forgetfulness, the weakening of historical consciousness.

Emphatic of the Holy Father to be in underscoring something Heidegger qualifies as characteristic of Western metaphysics which Dasein regresses in its everydayness. Heidegger explains that the arbitrary division ramified by the Cartesian separation of ego and everything not-ego causes a forgetfulness of something even prior to the ego. In our case of dialogue, it is the forgetfulness of the arbitrariness of our standards in considering something as indeed immunized which in turn propels us to immunize what is foreign. The harmony that one gets from this forgetfulness is ephemeral for true harmony comes from an event (Ereignis).

Perhaps this is what John Caputo refers to when he heralds a theology of event, recounting the illustrations at times paradoxical of the Kingdom of God: inviting those not worthy to the banquet (Lk. 14:15-24), yet casting out the one underdressed (Matt. 22:1-14) or even praise for the foreign Samaritan neighbor (Lk. 10:25-37) and the admonition that there is nothing external that defiles the person (Mt. 15:1-20; Mk.7:1-23) yet immediately followed by disdain for the unclean and foreign “dog” (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30).

The advent of extremist reason in religion was precisely for homogenous harmony, yet the Church is mindful that this should not be the way. This has been echoed by the Second Vatican Council’s thrust among Christians in Redentregatio Unitatis, across faiths in Nostra Aetate, along with Paul VI’s Ecclesiam Suam as landmark documents to save the Christian faith from extremism in isolation and to encounter the Lord in a rejuvenated encounter with others. Hospitality has become

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36 Cariño, “Gunitâ ng Nakalipas na Limang Siglo,” 5. Trans. is mine.
the more apt approach in our sphere-formation. This is even pushed forward with Pope Francis’ encyclical inspired by his name-sake saint who “did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines [but instead] simply spread the love of God” and through such “inspired the vision of a fraternal society.”

Visions of fraternal society are not new for Christianity, evident in the name *katholikos* (universal), and represented above all by the very papacy, marked with interculturality: neither Christ nor the first pope was Roman yet the Eternal City is foreign to both as it is in Rome, or that the title *Pontifex Maximus* was formerly designated to the chief priest in Ancient Roman culture—giving flesh to the dichotomy of the *pontifex* and God, repaying to Caesar (who at that time was the *Pontifex Maximus*) what is due and likewise to God.

Dialogue with transculturality plays a fundamental role at the heart of Christianity, and so it is an extremely elaborate account of how this primarily intercultural sphere entailed a religion that dominated with cross and sword. We ought to be mindful once more of what lies at the heart of our sphere-formation. Perhaps rather surprising the current *Pontifex Maximus* declared how God is not the center of the orb we have fetishized much; “God did not want an idol to be at the centre of the world but man, men and women who would keep the world going with their work.”

One needs to cite the exact words of the Holy Father lest the zealots be left in disbelief. Pope Francis wishes to put humanity on the stage and not merely empty idols that dominated extremist reasons of both past and present.

With humanity on stage, we are reminded of its expression-capacity through language. The treatment of language here refers not simply to the ability to talk or to engage in dialogue but hints at a deeper intimacy of Being, the allowance for an event to fully happen. It is tied to a singular grammar of expression and forms an identity. In such a way, our recourse to individual grammars reflect the singularity of our standards to immunization; we have to be wary that the very prophetic role of each religion’s language – be it an ardent continuation of tradition or an embrace of progress – remains to be part and parcel of the child’s alphabetization with equally potentially capacities for extremism. However, the CBCP reminds us of our use of Christianity’s language today: the quincentennial anniversary provides the “need to look back and seek forgiveness, reconciliation and healing for the wounds that

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resulted due to the absence of tolerance and dialogue."\(^{44}\) A post-zeal narrative is not simply a question of the ability for ecumenism or interreligious dialogue but a move beyond the nihilism masked by religious zealotry, blind faith, characteristic of extremist reason. It is likewise not a regress to any pre-global sphere. On the contrary, it should precisely go beyond the bifurcating logic of primitive sphere-formation; “What seems to be a new religious question is in fact the return of the social question on a global biopolitical level[.]”\(^{45}\) We are once more brought back to the global sphere, yet with a different attitude—hospitality. This etymologically denotes a friendliness towards others (Lt: *hospitalitas*), however, it ironically resounds *hostis* (enemy) and *potens* (power) which connote “having the power of the master of the house over the guest[.]”\(^{46}\) The obvious contradiction is contained in an even deeper root. The Latin *hospes* causes a tug in our translation as it means guest, host, friend, but at the same time stranger, or foreigner. One immunizes oneself from the stranger yet puts down these walls to let the friend end. The host is the guest; the stranger, the friend.

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As a reflection on Christianity’s quincentenary in the country, we are offered some consolation with the celebrated status hospitality has within Philippine culture, yet sadly it is almost immediately associate with industry and service. This type of hospitality I argue remains superficial if it is unable to combat extremist reason or social apathy. Jeremiah Reyes goes at length to discuss Filipino virtues, elevating *kagandahan*/*kabutihang-loob* as a root paradigm of culture, the sheer beauty of the will, and as an actualization of the other, whereas *hiya* as a passion leads one to an uncomfortable state which, for brevity, is closer to being shamed (*napahiya*) than the virtue, propriety (*kahihian*).\(^{47}\) If hospitality indeed springs from the kindness of one’s will and sensitivity towards others (*hiya* as a virtue), then that is cause for celebration, yet if done from embarrassment and fear of being left behind (*hiya* as a passion), then, a matter of alarm. We are only left to wonder how the Christian missionaries were successful in explaining to the natives what baptism and salvation are that on April 14, 1521, just about two weeks since their arrival, the first baptisms were held. Rajah Humabon became Carlos and his wife Hara, Juana. We will never know what really made them aspire for baptism, out of hospitality or fear, but this marked the start of a


\(^{45}\) Sloterdijk, *God’s Zeal*, §8.


new high grammar in the islands that eventually became the Philippines, the grammar that we today celebrate.

If indeed the exact Christianity that came to our shores 500 years ago is the identity of Filipinos today as in Co’s presentation, then perhaps religion’s sociological function has run its course and extremism is fundamentally part of our very reason as the nihilistic undertone to social and political pathologies. However, at the crossroads of our celebration, we ought to remember the vulnerability of historical consciousness; “a nation deprived of memory is orphaned from its beginning. It is a captive inside a turret enclosed by a question mark. Its existence is a space-less search. Its soul is an emptiness of restless yearning.”

We ought neither to understand this polemic as a mere defeatist position of Christianity’s arrival to the country and the forgetfulness of any indigenous practice nor as a valorization of returning to any microsphere. Resistance movements in the country to both cross and sword are simply a testament to the movement of immunological reason. We cannot simply reject what is at hand. The fact that the majority of the country today profess to be Christian presents the dominance of the grammar of this single language. What I wished to point out above with the discussion on language was how in its primal characterization, the Latin language, the language of the Catholic Church, has a civilized tone at heart with reference to the Latin classics. Such prizing of civility ought to strike a chord for any reflection on 500 years of Christianity’s arrival, civility entailing not extremism but in fact hospitality. Likewise, with my discussion of Sloterdijk, we should not misunderstand his position as an impetus to return to smaller spheres but to be conscious of various spheres that interact with one another. I have tried to underscore the need to go beyond distinctions for the obvious fact that any return is a futile venture. There is no singular past that we may return to lest we be captivated by our fantasies in conjuring social imaginaries of a fictional past that is immune in itself from, even worse, a juxtaposed foreign social imaginary.

As we are only left with scraps of what can simply be gleaned as pre-Hispanidad consciousness, we should be propelled to cherish even more the hospitality that we pride as a Filipino trait as something that brings us forward. Perhaps how all these themes coalesce to form a polemic worthy of reflection is a matter for the celebration of the 500 years of the Christian faith. Pondering on our hospitality is a new language we were never fully able to master which now allows a breeze of fresh air to dust out the consciousness that has simply been forgotten. Moving forward requires us to enact this language that can conceivably take the form of dialogue. I leave this reflection open-ended; perhaps we need to go no further, the Moslem faith arrived even earlier than Christianity—perhaps we must start with them.

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48 Cariño, “Gunitã ng Nakalipas na Limang Siglo,” 4. Trans. is mine.
References


The Growing of Roots
in Times of Turmoil and Uncertainty:
Simone Weil’s Legacy

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Abstract: This paper aims to provide an answer to the question: how does one attain authenticity through the lens of Simone Weil’s philosophy? It explores the connections among her political, social, and religious ideas, using her notions of affliction through uprootedness and attention to present her philosophy of authentic living. This exposition of Weil’s search for authenticity is an exploration of her social and religious thoughts. This is done through a close reading of her works and current contextualization of themes such as affliction brought about by war and other social ills and how attentive living could help us achieve authenticity. Authenticity is found in her concept of the different needs of the soul, specifically, the need for roots. Since this need for roots does not pertain only to the historical sense but also to the spiritual sense, I try to reinforce the idea that one cannot separate her social thought from that of religion.

Keywords: Attention, Authenticity, Rootedness

Simone Weil shares with the existentialists the same quest to answer the question how should we really live? Her entire life reflects her thoughts, which are in turn informed by her experiences of the world. Her search for authenticity springs from her awareness of the social condition of her time. In her active years, she was deeply interested in the plight of the workers and she tried to integrate herself into their reality. In her years of assimilating herself with the working force and those who are suffering, she was able to see the root cause of our suffering—uprootedness. This is what hinders us to achieve authentic existence. She did not explicitly write about authenticity yet despite this, it can nevertheless be deduced by paying attention to

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1 This is an excerpt from Paula Nicole C. Eugenio, “Simone Weil’s Philosophy of Authentic Living” (Master’s Thesis, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, May 2020).
2 Simone Pétrement, Simone Weil: A Life (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 576.
3 Mario von der Ruhr, Simone Weil: An Apprenticeship in Attention (London: Continuum, 2006), 64.
her concept of the soul’s needs and, most importantly, the need for rootedness. Her book *The Need for Roots* is dedicated to this endeavor to show the essential needs of human beings. Weil shares this undertaking with Eric Fromm, who, in his *The Sane Society*, enumerates five needs of man for true existence. They differ in approach for Fromm employs Psychology while Weil utilizes Philosophy, yet their similarities are hard to miss. Like Weil, Fromm thinks that rootedness is a part of the human condition. He emphasizes the idea of rootedness and outlines the different phases in our history and the type of rootedness experienced in each phase. He maintains that at the beginning, the idea of rootedness pertains to nature until it evolves into its rootedness in solidarity, justice, and truth. This idea of rootedness springs from a historical, social, and religious point of view. It is a rootedness that is formed through a conscious and continuous effort on the part of humanity to live harmoniously in the world, a rootedness which, like Weil’s, is always in relation with other human beings as the idea of solidarity always involves the presence of others.

This paper elaborates this central idea of rootedness in two parts: the growing of roots and attentive waiting. The first deals with the historical and spiritual aspects of rootedness, while the second deals with Weil’s notion of attention which can be achieved through education and is manifested as love or charity towards others. With these two points, Weil’s notion of authenticity is brought to fore.

**Simone Weil and The Need to Grow Roots**

Simone Weil emphasizes the need to grow roots or to be rooted. She considers it as “perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the soul, and perhaps the hardest one to define.” Her concept of roots can be viewed in two ways: first, as a historical concept; and second, as “that which gives nourishment that enables human to fully grow.” With the establishment of the role of roots, the next question to answer is how do we grow roots? The idea of participation is now a concept to consider. She maintains that: “a human being has roots by virtue of his real, active, and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future.” The idea of participation is connected to the needs for responsibility and collective property, “as the social life includes community involvement and participation in collective possession and in task of public value.”

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participation in communal activities, one is already implanting one’s roots – as roots start from “attachment bonds and nurturant relationships, such as connectedness to family, neighborhood, and nation.”9 Thus exemplifying the need for multiple roots, Weil writes: “every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for her to draw well-nigh the whole of her moral, intellectual, and spiritual life by way of the environment of which she forms a natural part.”10 This notion of participation stems from the necessity of being with others, of belonging.

Being a part of a community becomes the first step of rooting oneself. As in a sociological perspective, enculturation starts with socialization. That is also what Weil is trying to convey – our roots begin to take place the moment that we accept that we are part of a community. Yet it is best to qualify Weil’s assertion that the need to be a participant in a community does not mean being part of a collective. One of her similarities with existential thinkers like Kierkegaard is her anti-collective stance. For her, being a part of the collective is a “direct insult to human rationality and an impediment on reaching the impersonal.”11 Participation is a direct contradiction to collectivity since participation involves the impersonal rather than the personal.12 The impersonal is the denuded “I” which is the “I” that has no pride whatsoever, but an “I” that is waiting attentively for God and others. For Weil, there are two types of rootedness that we should strive to have: historical and spiritual rootedness.

**The Past as Source of Rootedness**

The widely used metaphor of roots hints at our indebtedness to our past—a historical metaphor. Simone Weil’s political and social conception of the notion of roots is about the preservation of one’s history. In *The Need for Roots*, she emphasizes the idea that “our history is an essential part of our beings[,]”13 that it is important for us to give high regard to our history “despite our political attitudes[.]”14 Our respect towards our culture and tradition allows us to form our identity as an individual and as a nation.

This high regard for history is the very reason why she strongly opposes the idea of colonialism for it uproots people. She criticizes Europe and the United States for their hand in colonizing other nations for the sake of power. She maintains that

9 *Ibid*.
14 *Ibid.* She writes: “love of the past has nothing to do with our reactionary political inclinations.”
colonizing a country robs it of its past and erases the traces of its national identity over time. Her idea of rootedness is at risk of being labeled as nationalistic but she distances it from nationalist sentiments “for [the latter] always produces toxic ideologies such as fascism, capitalism, and communism – which are all considered as destructive.” The destructive tendencies which she has observed during her time pushed her to be suspicious of many, if not all, political ideologies, as she argues: “It is the very concept of the nation that needs to be suppressed – or rather, the manner in which the word is used. For the word national and the expressions of which it forms part are empty of all meaning: their only content are millions of corpses, orphans, disabled men, tears, and despair.” The idea of nationalism is far from what true rootedness is. As for Weil and other contemporary figures like George Orwell, nationalism is a blind love for one’s country, finding no fault in it and putting it high up on a pedestal. In his essay *Notes on Nationalism*, Orwell differentiates nationalism from patriotism, as he writes:

Nationalism is the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no duty that of advancing its interest. Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism. By ‘patriotism’ I mean devotion to a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people.

But unlike him, Weil is also cautious of patriotism. She argues that patriotism is one of the three temptations that we must avoid when dealing with the problem of colonial practice. She maintains that “it inclines us to put our own country before justice or to believe that there can never be any question of having to choose between them.” And like Orwell, Weil understands nationalism as a source of dispute rather than unity especially when there is an imposition (similar to colonialism and imperialism). Orwell maintains that “nationalism is power-hunger tempered by self-deception.” This dishonesty and one’s belief that their deceit is true are the major elements for committing atrocious crimes. As Orwell explains:

The nationalist not only approves of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them. For quite six years, the English admirers of Hitler contrived not to learn of the existence of Dachau and Buchenwald. And those who are loudest in denouncing the German

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concentration camps are often quite unaware, or only very dimly aware, that there are also concentration camps in Russia.  

“Nationalists” become blinded by their own shortcomings or decided to disregard the horrors their own countries have inflicted. It becomes easy for them to overlook their faults and to just point their fingers at other nations. As Weil points out:

The harm that Germany would have done to Europe if Britain had not prevented the German victory is the harm that colonization does, in that it uproots people. It would have deprived people of their past. The loss of the past is the descent into colonial enslavement. This harm that Germany tried to do to us, we [France] did to others.

This is one of the reasons why Weil maintains that there is a need for re-rooting France during her lifetime. This need for re-rooting is also a necessity for all nations which were once colonized. Rediscovering one’s history and culture is one of the steps that we need to take for roots to grow. But this re-rooting is faced with many challenges, as Frantz Fanon suggests: “decolonizing is riddled with more suffering and pain than when the colonization took place.” These sufferings will only be meaningful when we continue to grow our roots not just historically but also spiritually.

_Spiritual Rootedness as Mystical Experience_

Simone Weil is commonly labeled as a mystic and her later thoughts, mystical in nature. In her biographical account, the shift from her mainly socio-political to religious thoughts happened right after her time at the Renault factory in 1935. Her first mystical experience happened during her stay in Portugal, having witnessed the procession of the wives of fishermen blessing their ships and their mournful hymns struck her with the archetypal human sadness. Reminiscent of her struggles in the factory, Weil ultimately realized that “Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of the slaves that they cannot help but belong to it, and I among others.” This is the turning point of her thoughts—from her revolutionary ideas waning until the realization that

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20 _Ibid_. 20.

21 Weil, “East and West,” in _Selected essays_, 199-200. Weil is pertaining to what happened to the French colonies before the World War II; specifically, what happened to French Indochina, as she writes: “through our fault, little Polynesians recite in school: ‘our ancestors that Gauls had blond hair and blue eyes …’ Alain Gerbault has described how we [French] make these populations literally die of sadness, by forbidding their customs, their traditions, of their past.”

22 Frantz Fanon, _Wretched of the Earth_ trans Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 54.

maybe something outside the socio-political realm is the answer to her ultimate question of meaning. But Weil remains outside the Church. She refuses baptism for the reason that she is afraid that being baptized would mean her being unable to merge into the crowd in their everyday lives. She argues that she needs to be with them “in order to know them so as to love them just as they are,” or her being “adopted into a circle, to find that she is at home in any human setting” which was foreign to her, as she never felt at home with anybody. She clarifies that these reasons are not contradictory, as she writes to Fr. Perrin: “to be lost to know it [the collective] is not to form part of it, and my capacity to mix with all of them implies that I belong to none.” She uses her being an outsider to look at the whole picture.

Mysticism is commonly understood as the art of union with Reality. Anthony Steinbock called it the vertical experience, for the term bears more existential sense as “verticality expresses a lived directedness – religiously, morally, and bodily.” St. Teresa of Ávila and St. John of the cross best exemplify Western Mysticism. But mysticism is not only limited to people within Christianity. Etty Hillesum and Simone Weil, both outsiders of the Church, have had their own mystical experiences. Their experiences were rooted not from a religious perspective but a psychoanalytic one for Hillesum, and a social one for Weil.

Being the art of union with Reality would entail answering the question: what is reality? Reality could mean nature, the world, or God—or all three of them. For Simone Weil, the world is the reality, and she considers the world as material relationships and as the horizon of all that is. The trace of Marx’s thought is pervasive in such a way that this materialist perspective of Weil is a product of her reading of Marx. The material relationship she mentions pertains to both natural and social relationship which ultimately makes up human beings. The world as the source of relationships is also the source of suffering through alienation, colonization, war, and others; this was the starting point of Weil’s mysticism. Her experiences of pain in the world became an avenue for her to experience grace. This is a central concept necessary for understanding when it comes to her mystic experiences. As she recalls

25 Weil, Waiting for God. 7.
26 Ibid., 13.
27 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
in one of her letters, “the word of God had no place at all in my thoughts until the day – about three years ago (1938) – when I could no longer keep it out.” She started directing her thoughts towards God and Christ without really abandoning her ideas on the suffering of the world. Through her mysticism, she formulated her notion of grace which became our means to root ourselves spiritually. It is what connects us to the Divine Absolute. Grace is what allows us to decreate the “I” which Weil maintains is the root of all the injustices in the world. It is through grace that the “I” slowly fades until “we empty ourselves and become nothing.” To be empty should not be taken negatively because it is in this emptiness that Weil believes that we become more open in knowing and accepting God. There is a need to decreate the “I” because it obscures our perspectives and the only way “to escape from the errors of false perspective is to carry one’s heart beyond space, beyond the world, to God.” This emptying of the self allows a person to await the presence of the Divine to live a life designed to be genuine. And we can only do this through practicing attention.

**Attentive Waiting**

With the presence of affliction everywhere, it is necessary to ask the question: what kind of response does seeing human suffering demand of us? Simone Weil’s answer to this is the best yet the most difficult one: attention. She defines attention as the “rarest and purest form of generosity.” As true as it is during her time, people tend to focus on themselves that thinking of others becomes a luxury. Whenever we think of the term attention, we always equate it with the word focus. When we attend to someone or something, we focus on them—we become present for and to them. This is the very core of attention: being present for the other. It becomes the rarest

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34 Weil, *Seventy Letters*, 140.
35 The “I” is the root of all injustices because the emphasis on a person necessarily creates the illusion that one is above others. See, Lisa McCullough, *The Religious Philosophy of Simone Weil* (London: I.B Tauris, 2014), 172.
37 Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, 297.
40 McCullough, *Religious Philosophy of Simone Weil*, 70. “The French term *attente* and *attendre* have all the connotation of ‘to wait’ in English, But it is also cognate with the term attention which connotes ‘to be present’ or ‘to listen to’.” See also, Peta Bowden, “Ethical Attention: Accumulating Understanding,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 6:1 (1998), 60.
and purest form of generosity not because we give away tangible things, but because we give others our undivided time and presence. We give a part of ourselves that cannot be repaid through money or any worldly matter. We give a part of ourselves that we cannot take back.

Weil’s life is a testament to this attentiveness towards others to the point that somehow she forgot to attend to her own needs. Attentiveness strengthened her conviction that self-centeredness will not help us attain the good that we are continuously searching for. She argues that every human being is capable of attention, but the capacity to be attentive seems to easily get lost in the sea of ambition and the prevalence of self-centeredness. This is the reason why she maintains that the cultivation of attention is both a social and moral obligation. It is such an obligation for it involves treating others the way they are meant to be treated. We must become attentive to others for us to understand them and for us to give them the support that they need. Moral obligation is not just being there for them when they do not need us, but precisely being there when they are at their lowest; when they feel as though they are invisible and do not deserve any attention.

It is best to understand her motivation in emphasizing attention. This notion takes shape as she questions her intellectual capacity and her search for truth. How do we find truth? Can we really find it in this world? Her quest for truth leads her to emphasize the idea of attention which is not limited to the immanent but also the transcendent world. She shares the same sentiment with Heinrich von Kleist—a German novelist through 1811—that knowledge of the physical world would never be enough to know the meaning of life. To support this available knowledge, one must have a continuous apprenticeship in attention. This allows us to know the meaning of life. She maintains that this apprenticeship presupposes intellectual honesty. She writes: “I have an extremely severe standard for intellectual honesty, so severe that I never met anyone who did not seem to fall short of it in more than one respect; and I am always afraid of failing in it myself.” This intellectual honesty she suggests presupposes the role of schools and universities in the preparation of everyone to become attentive towards the different issues surrounding the society and ultimately towards that good that we all aspire to achieve.

Attention as The Very Telos of Education

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43 Von der Ruhr, Apprenticeship in Attention, 22.
44 Ibid., 22.
45 Weil, Waiting for God, 40.
As early as the pre-war period, education already permeated Weil’s thoughts; given that she is first and foremost an educator, this is inevitable. It is evident in her notebooks that she had a very unconventional idea of what education should entail. She maintains that “an education which would educate the imagination” should be given emphasis. She advocated for the study of the arts (such as performance arts and literature) since studying the arts gives one a sense of being part of a society, with its culture and life in general.

The education system is one of the cores of society. It is imperative in building a person, an important facet of nation-building. Simone Weil shares the same view with Paulo Freire as they both maintain that the traditional pedagogy of teachers being the “giver” of knowledge is not enough for the holistic development of students. Though she does not specifically write a philosophy of education, she gives a significant amount of thought to the purpose of education throughout her lifetime. In her last written essay, she maintains that “the most important part of teaching is to teach what is to know.” She is not particular in saying that teaching is about imparting knowledge. She is more particular in teaching the meaning of knowing, such as to battle ignorance and to be able to make informed decisions. This kind of teaching must involve a pedagogy that is person-centered, a pedagogy focused on the individual as everyone has different ways of learning. As an educator, Weil followed a pedagogy that emphasizes the notion of attention. Attention, she maintains, is where justice flows. As Mario von der Ruhr emphasizes, “attention is always towards the truth.” Common knowledge dictates that truth is not limited to what we are being presented with, thus the task is to search for the truth outside what is being taught to us.

In discussing attention and education, it is important to note that attention is openness. Openness becomes hard because of what Weil called “gravity.” Gravity is what pulls the human mind into thinking lower states. This means that gravity—which can be exemplified by trivial matters—confines the human mind into thinking lower ideals, making humans self-centered. Our self-centeredness brought about by gravity hinders us to share in the reality of others. It breeds apathy. Therefore, she maintains that we must practice attention and learn how to be free from the grasp of

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46 Weil, First and Last Notebooks, 46.
47 Von der Ruhr, Apprenticeship in Attention, 27.
48 Weil, First and Last Notebooks, 364.
52 Von der Ruhr, Apprenticeship in Attention, 20.

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gravity which we could achieve through decreation through the idea of right education.  

For her, education is an “attentive endurance.”  

She asserts that the “true telos of education is the development of attention,” and the telos of attention is “contact with God.” Like Freire, she argues that learning is not just learning about facts but learning about life. She thus sees learning as apprenticeship, an apprenticeship in and for life. In her essay, The Right Use of School Studies—arguably her most essential writing pertaining to education—she writes that “the real object of school studies is to cultivate attention.” She maintains that learning is not limited to the grades that students get but to the amount of attention they learn to put into things that they want to know and understand. Attention is not the kind of physical attention, i.e., a muscular effort or willpower such as looking intently into text. It is also not the kind that puts mental stress into one’s psyche just to finish the task. “Attention consists of suspending our thoughts,” and keeping minds empty, detached, and open to new knowledge, and becomes critical about it. She maintains that the school should teach not just facts, but also a disposition towards life. School classes should not be limited to factual knowledge but should be accompanied by existential and moral wisdom. At the core of every individual which must be shaped is one’s notion of justice. Our notion of justice will shape our way of acting towards others. Justice is an important facet of her philosophy, which she defines as “consisting of seeing no harm is done to humans.” This can only be learned through attention as it shares a certain kind of affinity with truth and beauty. With the knowledge of justice through attentive learning, we are now capable of attentive action, a much-needed type of action at present. In a world where people are acting purely on their selfishness, this proves to be an important lesson that must be learned. Apart from learning basic mathematics and languages, this is the

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54 Weil, Waiting for God, 49-61.
57 Ibid., 78.
58 Weil, Waiting for God., 60. See ibid.
59 Weil, Waiting for God, 62.
61 Weil, Anthology, 93.
62 Ibid., 92.
truth that we must all aspire to know, possible only through understanding the
significance of the presence of others. To pay attention necessitates the presence of
others, as one cannot pay attention to nothing. Attention must always have an object.

Another important notion in the study of attention is her idea of “reading.” She
argues that our interaction with others can be analogous to our reading of them. Most
of the time, our reading of others is informed by gravity as we base our readings mostly
on trivial matters about their personhood such as appearance. This gives room for
misjudgment.63 We must understand that reading and action are two inseparable
entities in Weil’s formulation.64 In her idea of action, we always read and respond
with our entire being. She highlights the body’s involvement in reading and writes,
“the body plays a part in all apprenticeship”65 and that “every apprenticeship is
learning to read in a certain way.”66 Cultivation then of attention is not just an
apprenticeship of the spirit but also of the body. This is something which should be
taught in schools. She writes: “as one has to learn to read and practice a trade, so one
must learn to feel in all things, first and almost solely, the obedience of the universe to
God. It is really an apprenticeship. Like any other, it requires time and effort.”67

Going back to her notion of need, we understand that while only individuals
have needs and obligation to fulfill these needs, an individual cannot be understood in
isolation; this fulfillment of needs must be situated as an interpersonal practice. She
emphasizes the need to ask the other-centered question: what are you going through?68 By asking this question, the attentive person does what she calls the
emptying of the soul which happens as “the soul empties itself of all its own contents
in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as she is, in all her truths.”69
It goes to show that true attention involves a selfless emptying of the self to fully
understand the other and her needs. As cliché as it may sound, this is the core of
attention—attentive waiting—as one cannot entirely understand the other without
waiting for that other to present themselves to us. As with her notion of reading, we
have our own ways of reading others as they have their own way of letting themselves
be read by us. We need to learn how to show empathy in its purest form for them to
reveal themselves to us.

Though attention is manifested through the situatedness of the individual in
the interpersonal, one can still exercise attentiveness in solitude. As Weil notes: “in
solitude[,] we are in the presence of mere matter, things of less value (perhaps) than

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63 Simone Weil, “Essay on Reading,” Late Philosophical Writings trans. Eric Sprinsted and
Lawrence Schmidt (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2015), 209. See Yoda, “Simone
Weil’s Philosophy of Education,” 668.


65 Weil, Waiting for God, 132.


67 Weil, Waiting for God, 131.

68 Ibid., 64.

69 Ibid., 65.
a human spirit. Its value lies in the greater possibility of attention. If we could be attentive to the same degree in the presence of a human being.”\textsuperscript{70} It is in solitude that we exercise attention in its purest form and expression which is love.

**Love as the Maximal Attention**

There is a need to cultivate first attention in the level of the intellect as “intelligence has a role in the preparation of the nuptial consent to God.”\textsuperscript{71} Without the intellect, we will not be able to understand what holds us back from consenting to God. She maintains that “it [intellect] consists in looking at the evil in oneself and hating it; not trying to get rid of it, but simply decrying it until one feels repulsed by it.”\textsuperscript{72} An attentive intellect helps one to become aware of her possibilities and allows for the realization of the real. She maintains that:

> The necessary connections which constitute the very reality of the world have no reality in themselves except as the object of intellectual attention in action. This virtue of intellectual attention makes it an image of the Wisdom of God. God creates by the act of thinking. We, by intellectual attention, do not indeed create, we produce object, yet in our sphere we do in a certain way give birth to reality.\textsuperscript{73}

This notion, as much as Weil embraces the Kantian perspective that the mind is what orders reality as reality has no intrinsic order in itself, is closer in affinity with Spinoza’s “adequate ideas.”\textsuperscript{74} She maintains that the different degrees of attention produce different degrees of reality. The limited intellectual attention that a person has allows her to recognize conditional relations in the order of the world but this is only capable of producing “half-reality.”\textsuperscript{75} This half-reality is not the reality that everyone must strive for, as this is half-real and half-illusion. It is not reality at all but merely a falsity. The source of this illusion is what we call attachments. These attachments are part of the gravity that pulls us down.

In a letter to Joë Bousquet, she points out that daydreaming is a temporary consolation to the afflicted but is an unhealthy way of reprieve as it feeds us the unreal.\textsuperscript{76} She argues that there is a strong need to destroy this faux reality to attain

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{70} Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 121.
\bibitem{71} Weil, *Seventy Letters*, 139.
\bibitem{72} *Ibid*.
\bibitem{75} Weil, *Intimations of Christianity*, 188.
\bibitem{76} Weil, *Seventy Letters*, 141.
\end{thebibliography}
genuine reality and the only way to do so is to pay attention.⁷⁷ She maintains that “the influence of the real needs and compulsions, of real interests and materials, is indirect because the crowd is never conscious of it. To become conscious of even the simplest realities, one needs to pay attention.”⁷⁸ But according to her, intellectual attention is insufficient, as the only way we can reach the ultimate truth is through the purest form of it or what she maintains as love. Love is the manifestation of extreme attention. As she writes: “we confer upon objects and upon persons around us all that we have of all the fullness of reality when to this intellectual attention we add that attention of still higher degree which is acceptance, consent, and love.”⁷⁹ In this sense, we can understand that “love produces reality.”⁸⁰

We are led to ask: what makes being attentive the gateway to achieve the real? The way Weil characterizes attention sums it all up. She argues that “attention consists of suspending our thoughts, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object.”⁸¹ It may sound as if she is calling for passivity on our part, and that it contradicts the very nature of humans as seekers of truth. Yet, she maintains that attention is always “active passivity.”⁸² Weil argues that “attention is an effort, the greatest effort of all, perhaps, but it is a negative effort.”⁸³ It is “not to be confused with muscular effort,”⁸⁴ which does not necessarily give us the result that we are aiming for but only makes us tired. True attention does not require or produce tiredness.⁸⁵ Weil argues that if one becomes tired it means that one becomes attached to the object rather than one paying attention to it. She writes a moving piece that truly encapsulates this thought: “we do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting them.”⁸⁶ As in every intellectual pursuit, mistakes happen when we do things in haste. As we derive conclusions from immediate concepts and thoughts, our mind becomes clouded with prejudices which results in either poor translations or faulty arguments.⁸⁷ And this does not only apply to the intellectual realm but also to the spiritual one:

Active searching is prejudicial, not only to love, but also to the intelligence, whose laws are the same as those of love. We just have to wait for the solution of a geometrical problem or the meaning of Latin or Greek sentence to come to mind. Still more must we wait

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⁷⁷ Weil, Notebook, 313.
⁷⁸ Weil, Selected Essays, 150-151.
⁷⁹ Weil, Intimations of Christianity, 188.
⁸⁰ Weil, First and Last Notebooks, 90.
⁸¹ Weil, Waiting for God, 62.
⁸² McCullough, Religious Philosophy of Simone Weil, 30.
⁸³ Weil, Waiting for God, 61.
⁸⁴ Ibid., 60.
⁸⁵ Ibid., 61.
⁸⁶ Ibid., 62.
⁸⁷ Weil, Waiting for God, 62.
for any new scientific truth or for a beautiful line of poetry. Seeking leads us astray. This is the case with every form or what is truly good. Everyone should do nothing but wait for good and keep evil away. 

And where does the notion of love enter? Pure attention is best expressed through love, characterized by a desire for pure and authentic values such as truth, beauty, and goodness. She maintains that the “desire for beauty, when it reaches a certain degree of intensity and purity, is the same thing as genius.” She has a very profound understanding of what genius entails. For her, it is not just within the realm of the natural as talents are. Weil explains:

Genius is distinct from talents, to my mind, by its deep regard and intelligence for the common life of common people – I mean people without talent. The most beautiful poetry is the poetry that can best express, in its truth, the life of people who cannot write poetry. Outside of that, there is only clever poetry; and mankind can do very well without clever poetry. Cleverness makes the aristocracy of intelligence; the soul of genius is caritas, in the Christian signification of the world; the sense that every human being is all-important.

This capacity to be a genius is not easily acquired by many or by all, as it is not easy to desire God once and for all, as much as it is to think of all human beings as important. Caritas, charity, the higher kind of love, springs from God and it bleeds through others.

Conclusion

This rootedness pertains to our rootedness in the real, with the acceptance of both the good and the bad. The world created in beauty and order becomes disorderly and chaotic because of our desire for prestige, using force to uproot others, and inflicting others with unnecessary suffering. People will always argue that they are using force for self-preservation, but our civilization and our history are littered with many moments of conquest and war fought not for self-preservation but to assert dominance over the other. People are too self-centered to think of others and to

88 Ibid., 197. See also Weil, Notebooks, 301.
89 Weil, Notebooks, 449.
90 Weil, Intimations of Christianity, 150.
91 Ibid., 171.
92 Weil, Seventy Letters, 104-5. This is part of her letter to an Oxford Poet, Mr. Charles G. Bell, written in 1938.
93 Weil, First and Last Notebooks, 262.
preserve whatever is left of them. We tend to put ourselves in the center of our own universes, not having any care whether we are eclipsing others’ and uprooting them. Uprooting people could be equated to killing them, not in a mere physical way but many other ways. The lost culture or identity, metaphorical ways of killing people. A nation’s assertion that her culture is superior to the other is a large-scale act of uprooting. On the micro-level, one’s mere disregard of other’s humanity is an example of uprooting. Disregarding the homeless or the poorest of the poor is uprooting them; not treating them as human beings but mere objects which cause us inconvenience is uprooting them naturally and spiritually. Our society today is too immersed in self-prosperity that it makes us numb and deaf to the cries of help of those who are in need. We are too focused on the idea that we have to be successful, measured by material things, prestige, power, and wealth that we become poor in spirit. We are becoming unaware that we are losing our humanity, our roots, the more that we pursue these trivialities.

Indeed, we have different ways of attaining authenticity—What I may think would give me an authentic existence would not be the same with another. But the point is, the more that we become drowned in the materiality of the world, the harder it is for us to find that thing that could give us genuine satisfaction or peace. Finding that inner voice or that which calms us is difficult amid the noisy lifestyle that we have become accustomed to. Tracing back our roots is hard when it is us who try to uproot ourselves just to fit in what is considered a norm. My reading of Simone Weil has led me to the realization and gave me a much stronger conviction that we must try to find our way back to our own roots. It may involve radical changes, it may involve struggles, but in the end, to find your own essence is still and will always be worth it.

In our present time wherein uprooting people seem to be the norm, we owe it to ourselves to find and be in touch with our roots. When national identity is being sacrificed for something outside us, we run the risk of not truly knowing who we are and what we are supposed to be. Identity crisis might seem a minor problem, but this crisis eventually leads us to major dilemmas. The uprooting of one would always lead to the uprooting of others. That is why we must try not to be uprooted and if it is caused by external factors, we must take necessary actions to re-root ourselves. We can do that by being in touch with our past and make peace with it. Our history is not just our ancestry, it involves all of our past experiences and previous struggles. It is important for us to look back and to find beauty or goodness in it. Through this re-rooting, we will be able to move forward with a genuine understanding of our existence.

This is authentic living for Weil: being rooted means living with the good and the bad. When we are rooted in our history, we will always be rooted spiritually. A person who has rooted herself in the past will be able to decenter the I in herself and, thus, allow her to decenter her focus from the self towards the other. When one has already shifted her gaze to people or things outside herself, she can now be truly attentive. This attention would give her the chance to truly know the reality of the
world and to truly commune with God – which must be the end goal of all. We need this search for authenticity for we are currently living in a world full of trivialities and falsities. We owe it to ourselves to make meaning out of our lives. When we try to make meaning, we are helping our world to become a better place for an individual who has found purpose and is living an authentic life would not add affliction to the already afflicted world. An authentic individual will not uproot others and will be able to help others find their way back to their own roots.

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The Necessity of Auto-Teleology in Achieving Moral Life according to Karol Wojtyla’s Philosophy

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Abstract: The human person is a being above any other in this world because of his dignity, which springs from the fact that he can choose between good and evil. By choosing good, he experiences his becoming good; by choosing evil, his becoming evil. This truth is rooted in the reality that man is free to choose which actions will he pursue. These prevailing concurrent moral challenges in the present world are the factors contributing to the distortion of the proper use of freedom. The human person today chooses boundless freedom regardless of its moral consequences. As a consequence, living a moral life seems to be impossible since such a life is basically a life of transcendence. Karol Wojtyla’s notion of auto-teleology, which emphasizes self-limitation towards transcendence, becomes the necessary response to these moral dilemmas that obstruct living a moral life. To answer “Why is auto-teleology necessary in achieving moral life?” I will first show the auto-teleological aspect of Wojtyla’s concept of the human person and second, I will demonstrate how is the moral life shaped by human action in the thoughts of Wojtyla, because these two tenets of Wojtyla serve as the foundation of his philosophy. All in all, this thesis aims to prove that Wojtyla’s notion of auto-teleology is necessary for achieving a moral life, a life that is transcendental insofar as the human person for Wojtyla is not simply a rational being but a spiritual being too.

Keywords: Auto-teleology, ethics, human action, human person, morality, moral life

All persons have a great desire to surpass their limitations, evident in terms of technological advancements and scientific explorations to name a few. These are positive human achievements and contributions in the world brought by their desire to surpass their limits. In contrast to this, suppose a diabetic person defies the
restrictions of his medical doctor and nutritionist to limit his sugar-rich food intake and ended up being amputated. In this way, the limit is given in order to achieve a good end. These two opposing ends meet in one goal: to reach the good. Applying this to freedom, the question may arise: “If I am truly free, why do I need to limit my freedom?” Limitless freedom leads to self-destruction and social chaos. History can tell us that the greatest crimes against humanity originated from those people who forgot to respect the limits of their freedom; leaving a painful mark in this world such as Adolf Hitler’s Concentration Camps, Pol Pot’s Cambodian Genocide, the Chinese Government’s Tiananmen Square Massacre, and Al-Qaeda’s 9/11 Terrorism. Freedom must be subordinated to truth. This reality is rejected whenever a person oversteps the limits set to one’s freedom. From this, one can say that evil arises when a person bypasses the limits of freedom.

If one will revisit the history of philosophy, particularly the ethical aspects that can be learned from it, one can easily observe that the concept of limit is nothing new. Socrates in Plato’s Gorgias shows that “limitless desire is unsatisfiable desire.”2 Here, Socrates indirectly tells that someone who cannot be satisfied with what is limited will never be satisfied with anything good at all. Subsequently, Plato’s reference in the tale of Gyges’ ring in The Republic proves to us that if one is given unlimited freedom, that is, when one can get away from justice surely, he will prefer injustice over justice.3 Although this is quite pessimistic, Plato is only trying to tell us the danger of giving absolute freedom to a person who is incapable of handling it correctly. Furthermore, Aristotle’s teleological ethics demonstrated in his Nicomachean Ethics teaches man to aim for the golden mean, that which is between excess and deficiency, lest man not live a virtuous life, a life of moral excellence.4 In the middle ages, Thomas Aquinas synthesized various philosophers from the ancient period up to the early medieval period including his contemporaries.5 The most influential thinker for Thomas is the Stagirite who is no other than Aristotle. Thomas also follows Aristotle’s lead in terms of his doctrine of the golden mean. Thus, they share the view that it is important for a person to never go beyond nor beneath one’s capacity. The only difference is that for Thomas, Aristotle’s golden mean is not simply for the achievement of a virtuous life—which is of course a contemplative life—but, above

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3 See Plato, The Republic II.359c. The works written by Plato in the entirety of this research are taken from Plato: Complete Works, ed. John F. Cooper (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) and McIntyre, A Short History of Ethics, 34.
5 Armand Maurer, Medieval Philosophy: An Introduction 2nd ed. (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies,1982), 163-166.
all, it is for the sake of attaining a life of blessedness.⁶ Aquinas remarks that the golden mean is not applicable when it comes to theological virtues.⁷ Up to this point in the history of philosophy, limit is taken positively, and deviating from it means betrayal of freedom.

An opposing perspective though arises during the modern era. The modern period is the battlefield where Wojtyla developed via negativa his notion of auto-teleology understood not simply as an end or aim, above all, as a limit. The traditionalists (Aristotle and Aquinas), in Wojtyla’s mind, are the philosophers who founded what modern philosophers (Descartes, Hume, Bentham & Mill, Kant) have destroyed. Wojtyla aims to reconstruct what has been crushed by these modern thinkers. So, what did the moderns do that became the object of Wojtyla’s criticism? This began with the dualism expressed by René Descartes’ “Cogito ergo sum”⁸ which caused the foundation of man’s freedom, the soul, to be demolished since Descartes “gave the modern concept of man its distinctive dualistic character. It is typical of rationalism to make a radical contrast in man between spirit and body, between body and spirit.”⁹ This cannot be possible, according to Wojtyla because “man is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a spiritualized body, just as man’s spirit is so closely united to the body that he can be described as an embodied spirit.”¹⁰ With this, the freedom of the human person, together with the body, has been detached from the soul. The soul is perceived at this point not as “that which stands under” but “that which can stand alone.” The moral impact of this is that the body seems appears as if it becomes liberated from the chains of the soul that restricts the human person to do “whatever he wishes to do” regardless of its effects.

This is continued by David Hume with his doctrine of moral sense which shows that moral decisions are anchored in a moral feeling of good and evil.¹¹ For Hume, whatever I feel as morally good is good and whatever I feel as morally evil is evil. What is pleasing and useful—as far as the moral sense is concerned—are the only

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⁷ S.Th. Ia-IIae, 1.64, a4., resp.1.


⁹ John Paul II, Letter to Families §18.

¹⁰ Ibid.

things that are desirable and must be pursued. This cannot be acceptable, because freedom must never be anchored to mere feelings that are fleeting. It must always be anchored in truth, otherwise, it will become numb to what is morally good and evil. In this case, freedom cannot be limited to mere feelings alone because feelings depend on impulses and emotional responses. This is a dangerous understanding of freedom because aside from it being limitless, it also varies from person to person. Meaning, there can be no universal truth in which the freedom of the person must be subordinated.

Because of Hume’s promotion of moral sensibility, the political philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill endorsed utilitarianism that fostered the greatest happiness principle which “…holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.” It is a form of domination and oppression insofar as it teaches to minimize pain and maximize pleasure even at the expense of others. In this case, the use of freedom is only for the sake of maximizing happiness for the greatest number, even if it is at the expense of others’ freedom and dignity. As a consequence, people are now self-centered and self-gratifying in as much as the ultimate goal is to receive a greater benefit. Wojtyla raises a point of concern regarding this. Without a doubt,

at the foundation of ethical utilitarianism there is the continual quest for 'maximum' happiness. But this is a 'utilitarian happiness', seen only as pleasure, as immediate gratification for the exclusive benefit of the individual, apart from or opposed to the objective demands of the true good... The programme of utilitarianism, based on an individualistic understanding of freedom—a freedom without responsibilities—is the opposite of love.

Furthermore, Immanuel Kant’s sapere aude—have the courage to use your own reason!—may be understood as a tendency to moral anarchy in the sense that it promotes ethical relativism, morally permitting the human person to unleash his freedom without responsibility. However, Wojtyla notes that “freedom cannot be understood as a license to do absolutely anything; it means a gift of self. Even more: it means an interior discipline of the gift. The idea of gift contains not only the free

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initiative of the subject, but also the aspect of duty.”¹⁶ In addition, this kind of understanding definitely leads to individualism or egoism which he rejects. Wojtyla adds,

individuation presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to ‘establish the truth’ of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else ‘wants’ or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to ‘give’ to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a ‘sincere gift’. Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish.¹⁷

The very first thing that these modern notions do is to create an illusion by making man distrust his capacity to transcend what is sensible. This leads to a radical denial of the significance of metaphysics in a subtle way.¹⁸ Wojtyla illustrates the way the modern era ended “by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth.”¹⁹ This means that the use of freedom is directly linked to how the human person receives the truth. Hence, when truth is falsified and confused, it has a drastic effect on freedom. Wojtyla condemns the problematic philosophical stances which he believes are the unfolding of the problems given by the moderns in the contemporary period. The ethical and moral problems concerning limitless freedom which the moderns have spearheaded are still suffered today. In fact, Wojtyla stresses that “the human issues most frequently debated and differently resolved in contemporary moral reflection are all closely related, albeit in various ways to a crucial issue: human freedom.”²⁰ At any rate, freedom nowadays is seen as a power instead of a gift. The difference is crucial: in freedom as absolute power man perceives his freedom as an instrument of oppression; an apparatus of exploitation and worst, it is seen as a power that is absolute. In his encyclical Fides et Ratio, Wojtyla pointed out that these modern ways of thinking “have rejected philosophy’s contemplative end.”²¹ These offshoots in philosophy caused the human person to wrongly think that freedom is a license to do whatever he wants to do. As a result, it leads man to the illusion that he is incapable of auto-teleology because after all there is no need for that.

Another way of understanding freedom is as a gift. This way of understanding is taken as a responsibility, an instrument of duty, and the vessel of goodness and truth.

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¹⁷ Ibid.
²⁰ John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor, § 31.
not only to oneself but also to others. So, the problem now becomes clear, freedom as absolute power must be corrected for it hinders man to achieve a moral life. Undeniably, this is a very common topic, but what makes this different? This research focuses on Wojtyla's concept of auto-teleology, an aspect of his philosophy that is not studied in detail. One of the reasons that I can see why these scholars have missed this point is that auto-teleology is a concept of Wojtyla that he discussed in an article that serves as a sequel to his book The Acting Person. This article is entitled: “The Transcendence of The Person in Action and Man's (Auto) Self-Teleology” published in the Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research Vol. III. The opening lines confirm this, “While referring to the rich program of the Conference of Arezzo-Siena, devoted to the question of teleology in its multiple aspects and meanings, I wish to present the problem of man’s self-teleology...I undertake one more attempt to develop conceptions contained in my study The Acting Person.”

Under those circumstances, I attempt to provide a theoretical solution to the aforementioned problems through a study on how auto-teleology makes man achieve a moral life. The problem that this study wants to answer reads as follows: Why is auto-teleology necessary in achieving moral life according to Karol Wojtyla's philosophy?

WOJTYLA'S PERSONALISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

There are two ways to understand the human person according to Wojtyla. First is cosmological which understands the human person based on external and biological factors like Aristotle’s homo est animal rationale, Boethius’s persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia, and Aquinas’s perfectissimum ens. These observations are true, yet these must be complemented by the second way of understanding the person: the personalistic which seeks to understand the person inwardly since the human being is “not merely as a being defined according to species, but as a concrete self, a self-experiencing subject.”

John F. Crosby summarizes this point in a very accurate way saying that

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24 Wojtyla, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being” in Person and Community: Selected Essays, 213. The ‘irreducible’ here refers to the dignity of the human person and also of his subjectivity in contrast to objectivity, but added to that Wojtyla clarifies that he also refers by the irreducible “...everything in the human being that is invisible and wholly internal and whereby each human being, myself included, is an ‘eyewitness’ of his or her own self—of his or her own humanity and person.” Wojtyla, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being” in Person and Community, 214.
Wojtyla distinguishes between what he calls a predominantly cosmological understanding of man and a predominantly personalist understanding of him. In the former, man is considered ‘from without,’ in the latter he is considered ‘from within,’ that is, as he experiences himself in consciously living his being...in the former, man is experienced objectively, and in the latter, subjectively, or according to his subjectivity.25

This leads Wojtyla in saying that one must stop at the irreducible in man. At this point, it makes sense to ask what makes man irreducible? Wojtyla answers this in his work Love and Responsibility. He first shows that in the world there exist as objects which are also being in this world, yet these beings are deprived of reason and life, therefore a thing is an inanimate object in the proper sense of the word. But man is not an inanimate object. He possesses freedom, reason, and dignity. Therefore, he is rightly and justly to be taken as a subject. Although man is also an object, he is an object inasmuch as he also belongs in the same world as other objects. He is an objective somebody never merely an object as something. Hence, he can never be treated in the same way as any other objects for the simple reason that he is a person, someone who possesses an interior life.26 Wojtyla highlights the reason why the human person should be regarded as a person:

...to stress that man cannot be reduced wholly to what is contained in the concept of a “specimen of the species,” [i.e. homo sapiens, homo est rationalis naturae] but has in himself something more, some particular fullness and perfection of being. To emphasize this fullness and perfection the word ‘person must necessarily be used.27

One is led to ask, what makes man unique among any other being in this world? Wojtyla gives us three answers. First, one of the characteristics that make the human person unique is his interiority, his interior life.28 But, because he has a body, he can also reach to his world, to other beings that surround him, in a different way insofar as he is not only composed of a body but he has a soul.29 This interiority, therefore that

26 See Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 3-4.
27 Ibid., 4.
28 Wojtyla asserts that what forms the interior life of man is cognition and desire. He says “Cognition and desire in man take on a spiritual character, and therefore they contribute to the formation of the true interior life, which does not occur in animals. The interior life is the spiritual life. It focuses on truth and the good.” Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 5.
29 Wojtyla tells us how does man differ from other beings in this world in terms of reaching to the objective world, he says that “...precisely through interiority and interior life man not only is a
allows man to communicate with his creator—God. This particular distinctiveness makes man the greatest and the most perfect being in the created world. Nevertheless, Wojtyla reminds that “the contact of the person with the objective world, with reality, is not merely ‘biological’ (przyrodnicy), physical, as is the case with all other creations of nature (przyroda), nor only sensual, as is the case with animals.” Second, man, Wojtyla believes, is capable of self-determination. This reality is another truth that makes man an exceptional being in the world because this self-determination is “based on reflection and manifested in the fact that, while acting, man chooses what he wants to do.” This capacity to choose what he wants to do is rooted in the fact that man possesses free will he is therefore sui iuris. The human person is the master of himself, the one who steers his direction through his chosen actions as he can rationally distinguish what is right from wrong. Lastly, man, Wojtyla adds, is alteri incommunicabilis—nontransferable, incomunicable. This particular point is linked with the second point for both of them point to the power of the human person’s self-determination, interiority, and free will. Here, it is evident how no one can will or act of the will for another. Richard Spinello perfectly illustrates the expressions sui iuris and alteri incommunicabilis in the following way:

this self-possession, which becomes evident in the examination of human experience is expressed in two ways. First, the person is aware of himself; only a person can utter the word ‘I’ and know that it refers to him. Thus, a person possesses himself because he is present to himself from within by being conscious of himself and his actions. Second, a person ‘possesses himself and determines himself’ because he has mastery or control over himself.

After showing the fundamental understanding of the human person according to Wojtyla, it now makes sense to show what is the thought of Wojtyla regarding authentic human love.

WOJTYLA’S PERSONALISTIC NOTION OF HUMAN ACTION

One of the most necessary things to consider is Wojtyla’s distinction between actus humanus and actus hominis. Actus humanus implies deliberation of a specific purpose person, but at the same time mostly through them inheres in the objective world, in the ‘external’ world, where he inheres in the manner proper and characteristic to him.” Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 5.

30 Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 5.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 6.
33 See Ibid.
in consenting the will to act in such a manner. At any rate, Wojtyla is not satisfied with this Aristotelian-Scholastic definition of *actus humanus* for the sole reason that “less directly, it accounts for his potentiality as the source of acting.”  

In other words, this definition, though it is acceptable, must be developed in order to create a greater emphasis on the person. Thus, *actus voluntarius* is what Wojtyla prefers to use due to the fact that this definition “points directly to the power that serves as the dynamic basis in conscious acting, the basis of action[].”  

This *actus voluntarius* involves the use of the free will leading to the experience of the *moment of efficacy* wherein the human person—because of reflective trait of consciousness—experiences himself as being the actor, the author of the specific action that he committed. This specific *moment of efficacy* is Wojtyla’s point of departure in distinguishing the *actus voluntarius* from *actus hominis* because, in the latter, which he expresses as the *something-happens-in-man*, this moment is absent. This latter is “that form of human dynamism in which man is not aware of his efficacy and does not experience it.” Unlike those freely and consciously chosen actions, man is not responsible for the dynamism that simply happens to him inasmuch as it lacks efficacy. To make this easier to understand, it is essential to note the two levels of dynamisms namely, the somato-vegetative dynamism and the psycho-emotive dynamism. The former refers to the biological processes that happen in man, for instance, blinking, feeling sleepy, breathing, and the like, while the latter points to the emotional-affective states of man, for example being attracted to the person of the other sex. Certainly, the human person—thanks to the reflective or mirroring function of consciousness—is conscious about these experiences, but he is not responsible for these dynamisms for the sole reason that these only happen in man.  

**Self-Determination and Self-Fulfillment**

After clarifying the difference between *actus voluntarius* and *actus hominis*, it is now proper to turn our gaze towards self-determination and self-fulfillment. Self-determination is the specific trait of the acting person that confirms the human as *sui iuris* and *alteri incommunicabilis* because self-determination “presupposes a special

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37 The reflexive trait of consciousness “denotes that consciousness, so to speak, turns back naturally upon the subject, if thereby the subjectiveness of the subject is brought into prominence in experience...we mean that it directs everything back upon the subject.” *Ibid.*, 43. See also 66.


39 This is an aspect of consciousness in its “mirroring function...the penetrative illumination is rather like keeping the objects and their cognitive meanings ‘in the light,’ or ‘in the actual field of consciousness.’” *Ibid.*, 32-33. See also 88-89.
complexity of the person. Only the one who has possession of himself and is simultaneously his own sole and exclusive possession can be a person.”

Consequently, self-determination is comprised of two structures namely, self-possession and self-governance. The former refers to the experience of genuine “I will” which is contained within self-determination. “I will,” explains Wojtyla, “is an act of self-determination at a particular moment it presupposes structural self-possession. For only the things that are man’s actual possessions can be determined by him; they can be determined only by the one who actually possesses them.” The latter on the other hand is a result of the former. Without self-possession, there can be no self-governance. At any rate, these two are bound together in self-determination. With this second aspect, Wojtyla emphasizes, “every man actually governs himself; he actually exercises that specific power over himself which nobody else can exercise or execute.” It is through self-determination that every action of man, every “I will” originates from himself. No one can dictate against one’s own will. no other person can alienate him from his freedom. “The person, the acting ego,” Wojtyla adds, “also experiences the awareness that he is the one who is determined by himself and that his decisions make him become somebody, who may be good or bad.” In other words, through self-determination, the human person experiences himself not simply as the author of the action, but also the one who genuinely wills the action insofar as he governs and possesses himself. “If I determine myself,” Wojtyla emphasizes, “I must possess myself and govern myself.”

Self-fulfillment is equally important as self-determination. “The performing of an action, through the fulfillment it brings,” Wojtyla notes, “is coordinate with self-determination [...] for being the performer of an action man also fulfills himself in it.” However, there is a specific condition towards fulfillment, that is, the action must be morally good, otherwise it will lead to nonfulfillment. “Man fulfills himself as the person, as ‘somebody,’ and as such he may become either good or bad, which means that he may or may not achieve fulfillment.” If, on one hand, self-determination is conditioned by self-governance and self-possession, on the other hand, self-fulfillment strictly requires morally good actions. Besides, “human actions once performed do not vanish without a trace: they leave their moral value, which constitutes an objective reality intrinsically cohesive with the person, and thus a reality also profoundly

40 Ibid., 105. Emphasis mine
41 Ibid., 106.
42 Ibid., 107.
43 Ibid., 113.
45 Wojtyla, The Acting Person, 151.
46 Ibid., 153.
subjective." This gives justification for why the performance of morally evil actions leads to nonfulfillment since the experience of I became evil because of that action will surely leave a mark in man’s consciousness and conscience. Here, the function of conscience can be concisely summarized: it leads to man’s actions to depend on truth and goodness. In short, conscience enhances man’s use of his freedom insofar as ‘human freedom is not accomplished nor exercised in bypassing the truth but, on the contrary, by the person’s realization and surrender to truth.’ Indeed, it is only through a surrendering of freedom to truth that actions become good. Such a surrendering results in man’s self-fulfillment achieved through choosing to become good in his action. Lest we forget that “man is not only the agent of his acting, he is also the creator of it.”

Transcendence and Integration

Having discussed this, it is important to probe further the significance of transcendence. According to Karol Wojtyla, there are two kinds of transcendence. The first is horizontal transcendence and the second is vertical transcendence. Etymologically speaking, transcendence “means to go over and beyond a threshold or a boundary (trans-cendere). This may refer to subject’s stepping out of his limits toward an object, as is in different ways the case in what is known as intentional acts of external (‘transcendent’) perception.” The subject pursuing an external object is what Wojtyla called as horizontal transcendence in which “experience shows the existence of the objectively existing world outside the subjectivity of consciousness.” Yet, this is not the ultimate concern of Wojtyla because the transcendence which he wants to explain is the vertical transcendence. This second type of transcendence “is the fruit of self-determination; the person transcends his structural boundaries through the capacity to exercise freedom; of being free in the process of acting, and not only in the intentional direction of willings toward an external object.” Put it differently, vertical transcendence in this sense refers to experiencing freedom. If the direction of horizontal transcendence is ad extra, the path of vertical transcendence is ad intra—it reveals to the human person his internal structures such as freedom, self-possession, self-governance, and self-determination. These all are contributing factors towards the exercise of freedom that is rooted in

47 Ibid., 151.
48 Ibid., 154.
49 Ibid., 69.
conscience. Without a doubt, in the experience of vertical transcendence, “man manifests himself as a person.” More important than that is the fact that through vertical transcendence man realizes his spirituality.

Vertical transcendence will never be possible if the person is disintegrated and suspended in a certain void. Here, the manifestation of self-governance and self-possession becomes vivid:

He who governs himself is at the same time subjected and subordinate to himself. He who possesses himself, is simultaneously in the possession of himself, to be in the possession and to be subordinate are elements of the same structure, of the same dynamic reality that is determined by the person and the action.

Integration presupposes the fact that the human person is self-governed and self-possessed. Thus, if to be integrated means being self-governed and self-possessed, the opposite is true to disintegration: a disintegrated person is someone who has “a total absence of self-governance and self-possession...to the extent that this inability prevents him from subordinating himself and thus remaining in possession of himself...the defects and defaults of integration become, however, the defects and defaults of [vertical] transcendence.” Definitely, integration conditions the vertical transcendence of a person in action.

Auto-Teleology

With the foregoing discussion, a question therefore arises: how is it possible for a human person to subordinate himself and remain in possession of himself, a characteristic of someone who is integrated insofar as he is self-governed and self-possessed? Wojtyla’s answer, as I mentioned earlier, cannot be found in The Acting Person but instead in his article “The Transcendence of the Person in Action and Man’s Self-Teleology.” Wojtyla discussed the importance of auto-teleology in the vertical

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53 Ibid., 179.
54 Ibid., 181. It is important to note here what does Wojtyla mean by spiritual: “By ’spiritual’ we mean indeed an immaterial factor which is inherently irreducible to matter....In point of fact, we may easily observe that everything of which the person’s transcendence in the action consists, and which constitutes this transcendence, is in this sense spiritual. Since this, as we saw, is within the reach of phenomenological insight, the acceptance of the spiritual nature of man in its authentic manifestation is not a result of some abstraction but, if one may say so, has its intuitional shape: spirituality is open to intuition as well as to an unfolding analysis.” Ibid., 181. Emphasis mine.
55 See Ibid., 190.
56 Ibid., 190. Emphasis mine except “in”
transcendence of person in act. According to him, there are three ways to understand telos in this sense: (1) end, (2) aim, and above all (3) limit.

In the first sense, Wojtyla explains self-teleology as an end in light of self-determination. As already discussed, self-determination is the experience of genuine willing expressed through the statement “I will.” This indicates that “only the personal subject, or the personal ‘I’ is determining and (acting), and also, that this personal ‘I’ is determining about himself as a subject.”58 This results in Wojtyla’s realization that self-determination illuminates the way for the human person to experience himself as an end in himself. However, this cannot be a solipsistic idea, by contrast, “the self-teleology of man indicates only that this contact and this life-giving exchange are accomplished on the level and by the standards of the personal ‘I’; in him, it finds its starting point and its goal; to a certain extent it begins with him and is ultimately founded in him; it is from him that it takes its shape, and also shapes him.”59 What Wojtyla is trying to say here is that self-teleology, as seen from the aspect of self-determination, enriches man’s self-governance and self-possession because it is through self-teleology that man sees himself as the one responsible for his actions.

In the second sense, Wojtyla proves his point that the human person is also an aim for himself. “[H]is acts, and the willing, choices, and decisions, contained in them find their limit in this man himself. This limit is found on the basis of the transcendence reference to truth[.]”60 Man is an aim for himself because he must limit his actions according to what is due to him as a person. It is always expected from him that he uses his freedom according to truth and goodness rooted in his conscience with an aim to fulfill himself in it for “the personalistic structure of that fulfillment corresponds in the field of experience to the self-teleology of man.”61

Finally, the third sense is limit. This points to the fact that actions must be limited on the personal level. Actions must always reveal the person and must affirm the worth and dignity of the human person for this will lead towards transcendence insofar as it allows man to give himself to others. “If a man spontaneously ‘transcends’ himself toward another, toward others, toward the community (and this ‘transcending occurs the ‘outgrowing of one’s self’), that is the proof that self-fulfillment, or in other words, self-teleology brings with itself an opening of the subject.”62 This is proof that the more that the human person limits himself—his freedom within the truth and the good—the more he becomes capable of giving himself which results in his fulfillment as a person. “Man fulfills himself ‘through others’ and realizes his

59 Ibid., 207.
60 Ibid., 208.
61 Ibid.
own self by living ‘for others.’ This emphasizes not only the transcending one’s self toward others, but most of all the outgrowing of one’s self.” A limitation is never to be understood as a restriction, but a unique capacity of the human person. This makes us more human inasmuch as it leads us towards realizing our spirituality by vertical transcendence. As Wojtyla highlights

“self-teleology of the limit” is first of all existentially proper to the man who exists and acts in the worlds. It is the limit which is the truth of human acts. Conscience is the fundamental condition of the fulfillment of self. “The world” signifies for every man the necessity of a judgment, which arises from the very depth of his personal being.

THE NECESSITY OF AUTO-TELEOLOGY IN THE MORAL LIFE

Before going any further, it is important to recall the role which self-determination plays in the internal structure of the human person. Wojtyla tells us that self-determination allows man to experience authentic freedom which is expressed with “I can, but I need not.” The human person, whenever presented with an option to do moral evil, is free enough to reject doing it. Such is an expression of his authentic “I will.” The human person is the efficacious cause of his actions, that he is inalienable and intransferrable. As a result, even if he is coerced, he can still reject doing evil even at the expense of his own life. We can see examples of this by looking at the martyrs of the Catholic Church. Thus, Wojtyla is correct when he claims that we can discover auto(self)-teleology in self-determination. We can observe that auto(self)-teleology unfolds in self-determination insofar as “self(auto)-teleology presupposes teleology.” Auto-teleology literally means directing the self (auto) towards an end (telos). However, using Wojtyla’s own terms auto-teleology must be interpreted in threefold ways: (1) directing of the self towards an end, (2) directing of the self towards an aim, and (3) directing of the self towards the limit.

If auto-teleology presupposes teleology, one can rightly ask: what is the telos or end in this case? It is the human person himself: “the auto(self)-teleology of man is outlined as a closed cycle, constantly closing within the bounds of man as subject, who in the action becomes for himself not only an object, but also a limit and an end.” However, by saying this, it seems that the person is enclosed only to himself and experiences this only through himself. It seems like a solipsistic image in the field of morality. Yet, this cannot be the case since Wojtyla clarifies that

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 211.
65 Ibid., 206.
66 Ibid.
67 See Ibid.
man’s auto(self)-teleology does not signify in the first place a closing up within himself, but a living contact with the whole reality and a dynamic exchange, characteristic of the structure of self-determination, with the world of values, hierarchized and differentiated within itself.\(^{(68)}\)

So what is the proper way of looking at this concept of auto-teleology as an end? Humanity’s auto-teleology “indicates only that this contact and this life-giving exchange are accomplished on the level and by the standards of the personal ‘I’; in him it finds its starting point and its goal; to a certain extent it begins with him and is ultimately founded in him; it is from him that it takes its shape, and also shapes him.”\(^{(69)}\) In other words, auto(self)-teleology as end shows to man that he is an end in himself.

Wojtyla starts with the claim that “man is such a manner an aim for himself”\(^{(70)}\) because one can observe that man’s action and everything that proceeds within him before doing that action, find its limit within the person himself. “This limit,” Wojtyla explains, “is found in the basis of the transcendent reference to truth (and with it also to good...).”\(^{(71)}\) This auto-teleology of aim means that humanity’s action aims to fulfill his personhood. The human person aims to fulfill himself and can fulfill himself only by doing morally good actions that are fitting to him as a person. Although this is true, one must not forget the fact that auto-teleology as limit is the crown itself, because it conditions all auto-teleology of aim proper to man.\(^{(72)}\)

Lastly, auto-teleology of limit for Wojtyla is the crowning glory of his personalistic anthropology and ethics because the transcendence of person in act is made possible through this. The meeting point between these two is found in the conscience of man which refers him to truth that will lead him towards what is good. While auto-teleology as limit allows man to experience his conscience, one’s conscience will enable man to transcend his actions, to subordinate his freedom to the truth and the good. Thus, generally speaking, by virtue of auto-teleology as limit, the human person is able to aim for the fulfillment of his being. As such, Wojtyla emphasizes that this type of teleology “is first of all existentially proper to the man who exists and acts in the world”\(^{(73)}\) because only the human person possesses a conscience and the capacity to know the truth, giving him the capability to do the good. He is guided by his reason and not only by his instinct given by nature. It is therefore proper to say that it is only the human person himself who is given the power to know and set the limits of his freedom and his actions. By doing so, man, who is the subject of his own self-

\(^{(68)}\) Ibid.
\(^{(69)}\) Ibid., 206-207. Emphasis mine.
\(^{(70)}\) Ibid., 208.
\(^{(71)}\) Ibid.
\(^{(72)}\) See Ibid., 209 and 211.
\(^{(73)}\) Ibid., 210.
fulfillment, “keeps the full consciousness of his own non absoluteness or in other words, of the contingency, of the limitations, of the relativity of his being.” Here, we can therefore ask: if self-fulfillment is conditioned by limitation, is it not self-contradictory in the sense that self-fulfillment must liberate man? The answer is no, it is not self-contradictory. It is appropriate for self-fulfillment to be conditioned by limitation because Wojtyla understands auto-teleology of limit as limiting freedom only to the true and the good. In Wojtyla’s mind, this is the only real path toward authentic liberty. Thus, if the human person chooses morally evil acts, despite knowing the truth, he does not liberate himself. On the contrary, he chains himself by allowing his personhood and freedom to be enslaved by what is morally evil. Despite being free to reject morally evil acts, he opted to do it, defying limits for the good, resulting in non-fulfillment. Therefore, it follows that the kind of liberation of freedom that auto-teleology of limit offers is liberation from morally evil acts. Man can experience himself being free to say “I can, but I need not,” amid the inclination to do evil acts. Certainly, each can only outgrow himself and be totally free when he limits himself to what is true and good. Without a doubt, Wojtyla’s teaching on auto-teleology of limit proves to us that “man is constantly an assignment to himself; he is imposed upon himself as a task, and each time, in every action, wiling, choice, and decision are imposed upon himself anew.”

CONCLUSION

For this study, I have posed the question: Why is auto-teleology necessary in achieving moral life according to Karol Wojtyla’s Philosophy? After showing the fundamental concepts of Wojtyla’s philosophy, I have provided why and how auto-teleology is necessary for achieving moral life because auto-teleology for Wojtyla is the catalyst, so to speak, of transcendence which is the crucial factor for the human person to live a moral life. It might initially seem contradicting to see auto-teleology fused together with transcendence since transcendence implies going over the boundaries while auto-teleology is stressed as a limit. Yet, for Wojtyla, this is not a contradiction since the proper way to understand this is through succession. Auto-teleology conditions transcendence while transcendence conditions the moral life of the person insofar as the person is by nature is not merely rational but above all, transcendent.

Auto-teleology for Karol Wojtyla is necessary for a moral life since the person is not simply an objective being but a subjective being who possesses a soul. The considerations of Aristotle, Boethius, Aquinas, or even Scheler had rather reductive views of the human person, falling short to present the human being fully. Wojtyla stresses that the human person is not simply part of this world but also has a world

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74 Ibid., 209.
75 Ibid.
of his own, a world where he finds his interiority, his soul. This truth about the human person proves that auto-teleology is a requirement for him to transcend his being because without it, he remains to be an animal endowed with rationality that cannot tame his own sensibilities. This obviously happens when each allows himself to be enslaved by his passions alone. Without auto-teleology, man’s whole being and freedom are doomed.

My claim regarding auto-teleology can be solidified by finding how is it applicable to Wojtyla’s notion of love, which is also one of the bases of his notion of moral life. If authentic human love is seen in the light of spousal love, which emphasizes self-donation, it, therefore, follows that auto-teleology is necessary for three reasons. First, auto-teleology as end emphasizes self-determination which highlights self-governance and self-possession leading to the experience of the person as I am an end in itself. I must treat other human beings as an end in themselves and never as a means. With this, the utilitarian attitude is removed. Indeed, it is through auto-teleology as an end that reciprocal self-giving of individual I’s is possible because it allows each to love another on a personalistic level. Such a take affirms the dignity and worth of the beloved, preventing them to treat each other as a mere object and resulting in a sincere and radical gift of the self. Second, auto-teleology as an aim focuses on the self-fulfillment of the person, leading him to use his freedom in subordination to truth and good insofar as man aims to fulfill himself in every action. Finally, auto-teleology as limit stresses the value of vertical transcendence of the person in act. As a result, it leads the person back to his interiority where his conscience can be found and his spiritual nature can be experienced, so to speak. Through auto-teleology as limit, man becomes capable to rise above the lure of appearances, for it prevents him to transcend his actions on the horizontal aspect alone, hence leading him towards vertical transcendence, which is proper to man. Moreover, auto-teleology as limit allows man to act according to the personalistic norm, for it makes him rise beyond his own ego. As a consequence, it prevents him to be an individualistic person, making him capable of authentically loving another person through self-donation—sincere gift of the self—which is absolutely free of any utilitarian attitude. For how can one so selfish totally give himself to others. Undeniably, auto-teleology as end, aim, and limit serves as the bridge in allowing actions that express love to transcend from merely physical love to spiritual love that leads man to look at love “from ‘phenomenon’ to ‘foundation’”76

The depth of Wojtyla’s notion of auto-teleology makes one think that it is purely ideological—suspended in the abstract. However, this cannot be true, because it is existentially factual that man as being transcendental by nature is at the same time limited by his nature as human being. For instance, a person must not excessively

work physically, otherwise it can be the cause his death.77 Translating this into moral
terms, a best example can be seen with medical front-liners during this COVID-
19 pandemic who are doing their jobs to the best of their ability, not because of any
high pay awaiting them but simply because of their charity and duty to a sworn
profession despite the virus’ threat. They still opted to limit their self-care to
transcend it into selfless duty to others. Indeed, *auto-teleology* leads the person towards
outgrowing his self which makes one become a better person and finally live a moral
life—a life of transcendence. Without a doubt, “rational reflection and daily
experience demonstrate the weakness which marks man’s freedom. That freedom is
real but limited: its absolute and unconditional origin is not in itself, but in the life
within which it is situated and which represents for it, at one and the same time, both
a limitation and a possibility.”78

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THE NECESSITY OF AUTO-TELEOLOGY IN ACHIEVING MORAL LIFE


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Misedukadong Filipino sa Panahon ng Bagong Populismo: Pagdalumat sa Pang-edukasyong Pananaw ni Renato Constantino Bilang Paglulunas sa Kontemporaryong Kamalayan at Pagtutulay ng Edukasyon at Demokrasya

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Abstract: This paper revisits the nationalist ideas of Renato Constantino pertaining to the “miseducation” of Filipinos and the conception of a counter-consciousness to offer a rethinking of the contemporary political predicament pertaining to the rise of new populism and the systematized distortion of truth. There exists a historical connection between democracy and education, in the Philippine historical context, “miseducation” distorted the nexus between education and democracy and has stood as the prototype of the weaponization of education as a political tool wielded by dominant political forces both foreign and domestic. The crevices between democracy and education have manifested in the contemporary national political climate with the emergence of new populist politicians, proliferation of fake news and conditioning of political consciousness. By tracing the works of Renato Constantino particularly in philosophy of education, I am offering a rethinking of the connection between democracy and education by diagnosing the political climate and the topography of education from the lens of Constantino’s critique of Filipino education and the possibility of developing a counter-consciousness to remedy the ailments that was brought by centuries of miseducation. The first chapter offers an (a) exploration of the nexus between education and politics and an exposition of the timeless (b) critique of Renato Constantino on education in the Philippine context. The second chapter begins with an (c) exposition on new populism and post-truth, the discussion on (d) Filipinization of education for a genuine Filipino democracy and (e) radicalization of education as the seed of counter-consciousness.

Keywords: Renato Constantino, Philosophy of Education, Democracy and Education

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Malalim ang ugnayang edukasyon at politika. Ang paaralan ang nagsisilbing tulay ng mga pribadong pagpapahalagang nakukuha ng tao mula sa kanyang pamilya at pampublikong pagpapahalagang hango naman sa lipunan at estado.¹ Ang modernong panahon ang kauna-unahang pagkakataon sa kasaysayan kung saan hinangad ng estado na pag-aralin ang buong populasyon sa kanyang nasasakupan. Dahil rito, ang paaralan ay maituturing bilang kawangis at pundasyon ng lipunan.² At dahil itinuturing itong mahalagang sangay ng lipunan, nananalatay sa sistema ng edukasyon ang ahendang politikal. Isa itong bagay na hindi nito maiwawaksi sapagkat malalim ang kasaysayang pinagsasaluhang ng politika at edukasyon.³ Sa paggamit sa edukasyon bilang sandatang politikal, nababaluktot ang pagkakahulma ng lipunan at ito ay maanining sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas bilang biktima ng kolonyalismo at maging sa kasalukuyan kung saan nananag ang populismo at pagpapalaganap ng disimpormasyon upang makontrol ang kaisipang panlipunan.

Kung susuriin ang kasaysayan ng edukasyon sa bansa, mapapansin ang paggamit sa edukasyon bilang instrumentong panghulma sa kaisipan ng lipunan upang pumabor sa isang adhi kaing isinusulong ng mga sektor na nasa itaas sa hierarkiya ng kapangyarihan. Ang mga Kastila na unang kapangyarihang kolonyal na sumakop sa Pilipinas ay ginamit ang relihiyon at maging ang edukasyon sa pagpapalawig ng impluwensiya sa arkipelago. Ang edukasyong itinaguyod ng mga mananakop para sa mga katutubo ay naaayon lamang sa mga mababang kawani ng pamahalaan at hindi upang maipalabas ang mga katutubong mag-aaral sa patuloy na pag-aaral sa mga unibersidad.⁴ Bagamat mayroong mga itinatag na mga unibersidad sa Pilipinas ng iba’t-ibang mga relihiyosong grupo, ito ay eksklusibo lamang para sa mga maylupa, mga ilustrado o kaya naman ay mga creole.⁵ At upang mabigyang pundasyon ang pagpapalaganap ng impluwensya at relihiyon, sinigurong ang

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² Maaaring mabakas ang ugnayang ito mula sa panahon ng antigong Griyego. Ang bantog na pilosoper na si Platon sa kanyang mga diyalogo ay ilang beses binanggit ang ugnayang edukasyon-politika at ang pangangailangan ng edukadong mamamayan upang umunlad ang polis.
³ Maaaring mabakas ang ugnayang ito mula sa panahon ng antikong Griyego. Ang bantog na pilosoper na si Platon sa kanyang mga diyalogo ay ilang beses binanggit ang ugnayang edukasyon-politika at ang pangangailangan ng edukadong mamamayan upang umunlad ang polis.
⁵ Maaaring mabakas ang ugnayang ito mula sa panahon ng antikong Griyego. Ang bantog na pilosoper na si Platon sa kanyang mga diyalogo ay ilang beses binanggit ang ugnayang edukasyon-politika at ang pangangailangan ng edukadong mamamayan upang umunlad ang polis.

Sa pagpasok ng bagong siglo noong 1900, napasailalim ang Pilipinas sa kapangyarihan ng isang bagong tatag na bansa na may malaking kolonyal na

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7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 27
12 Kung pagbabatayan ang simulain ng rebolusyon, makikitang iito ay nagkaroon ng katawan dahil sa masa at hindi dahil sa mga ilustrado. Ngunit dahil sa hindi naging matagumpay ang mga unang hakbang ng rebolusyon na nakaunawaan ng mga sa kanilang kaisipan ni Andres Bonifacio, nagkaroon ng pagkakataon ang mga petit burges na pamumunuo iito dahil mas naging matagumpay ang simulain ng rebolusyon sa Kabite na pinamumunuan ni Emilio Aguinaldo.
pangarap, ang Estados Unidos ng Amerika. Tangan ng mga Amerikano ang kaalaman 
ukol sa kahalagahan ng paghulma ng kamalayan upang mabili at mabisang maitanim 
ang diwang kolonyal sa bagong nasasakupan. Matatas na ang mga Amerikano sa 
ginamit nitong sandatah dahil na rin sa ilang beses na paggamit nito sa 
kanilang bansa upang lukubin ang ilang minoryang grupo gaya ng mga black 
Americans.13 Sa kaso ng Pilipinas, ang sandatang ito ay lulan ng isang barkong pumalao 
mula Amerika noong 1901, isang barkong puno ng mga guro na dumagon sa pantalan 
gang Pilipinas at lubos na binago ang kamalayan Filipino.14 Ang sandatang ito ay ang 
edukasyong pampubliko. Ang kainaman ng sandatang ito sa pagbabaluktot ng 
papausbong na diwang makabansa ang siyang tinuligsa ni Renato Constantino. 
Magsisilbi ang panahong ito bilang prototype sa pag-uusisa sa kaugnayan ng edukasyon 
at politika sa kasaysayan ng bansa at sa kontemporaryong lipunang Pilipino. 

Sa pag-isip sa kontemporaryong panahon, maaninag na rin ang pag-
umpuguan ng iba’t-ibang kapangyarihang sosyal at politikal sa topograpiya ng 
edukasyon. Mababanaag ang ugnayan ng edukasyon sa mga adhiking pang-
ekonomiya. Mapapansin ang malawakang absorpsyon ng mga malalaking 
korporasyon sa ilang mga unibersidad at kolehiyo.15 Ang kasalukuyang panorama ng 
edukasyon sa Pilipinas ay unti-unti hinuhulma ng mga malalaking korporasyon. 

Nagiging kalakaran ng mga korporasyon ang pagpapalago ng ilang institusyon at 
pamantasan o di kaya nalan ay ang pagtapat ng sariling paaralan. Natural para sa 
isang pribadong korporasyon ang makalap ng kita mula sa pamumuhunan. 
Maaaring imbis na isulong ang pagpapayabong ng kamalayan, mas unahin ni ilang 
korporasyon ang pagpapalago ng kita mula sa kanilang mga pamantasan.16 Hihina ang 
impluwensiya ng mga intelektwal at mga dalubhasa kung ang primerong layunin ng 
mga administrador at may-ari ng paaralan ay hindi na nakatuon sa pag-angat ng antas 
gaalaman. At kasabay nito, nakaumang ang mas malaking pagangalib sa 
indoktrinasyon ng mga korporasyong nagmamay-ari ng mga paaralan sa kanilang mga

13 Ang aklat na pinamagatang Miseducation of the Negro na isinulat ni Carter G. Woodson na 
isa sa mga tinagurian “Thomasites” ay tumatalakay sa metodikong paggamit ng Amerika ng edukasyon 
upang hulmahin o kaya naman ay baluktutan ang umausob ang pansariling kamalayan ng isang 
grupong minorya o ng isang lahi. Sinasabi na malaki rin ang naging impluwensiya ni Woodson sa 
pagsusulat at pagtuligga ni Constantino sa kanyang kinamulatang sistema ng educasyon. 
14 Renato Constantino, “The Miseducation of the Filipinos,” The Filipinos in the Philippines 
and Other Essays (Manila: Malaya Books, 1966), 3. 
15 Sa kasalukuyan, hindi lamang mga unibersidad at terserang paaralan ang pinasok ng mga 
korporasyon. Nagsisimula na rin ang pagpasok ng mga ito sa primerang paaralan. Isang halimbawa ang 
pagtatag ng Ayala Corporation ng kanilang APEC Schools (Affordable Private Education Center, 
Inc.). 
16 Isa sa mga unang nakapansin sa “komersiyalisasyon ng edukasyon” ay si Renato 
Constantino. Ayon kay Constantino, dahil na rin sa hindi sapat ang kakayahan ng gobyerno upang 
tustusan ang mga pampublikong paaralan, dumami ang mga pribadong paaralan na ang ilan ay 
pinapatakbo ng mga banyaga na mayroon ring malaking ambag sa pagsusulong ng pribadong interes sa 
edukasyon. (Constantino, “The Miseducation of the Filipinos,” 14)
mag-aaral na siyang magiging dahilan ng paglawig ng kanilang impluwensiyang politikal at sosyolohikal.\textsuperscript{17}

Ang klimang politikal ng kasalukuyang panahon ay pinapanggalingbabawan ng bagong populismo. Isang adhikaing politikal na nakasandali sa pananamantala sa demokrasya. Ang uga't ng bagong populismo ay ang pamamayagpag ng mga politikong nakapositurang isusulong ang mga ninanais at adhikain ng masa na sawa na sa pangako ng mga elitista at politiko. Malubhang panganib ang dala ng bagong populismo kung saan namamayagpag ang pagbabaluktot ng katotohanan at pananamantala sa kolektibong emosyon ng masa.\textsuperscript{18} Sa panahon kung kailang ang katotohanan ay naisasantabi at unti-unting naagnas ang tunay na diwa ng demokrasya sa bansa, tanging edukasyon ang maaring pag-uugnayan ng pag-asa. Ngunit paano kung ang edukasyon ang mismong pagibigukan ng ganitong klimang politikal at pagkabao ng pambansang kamalayan? Paano kung ang lunas ang siyang naging tagapagpalaganap na sakit? Paano kung ang edukasyon ay nagmistulang “misedukasyon”? Ang mga katanungan ito ang siyang pinagtuunan ng pansin ng nasyonalistang si Renato Constantino.

Si Renato Constantino at ang Kultura ng Pagkabulag at Bitag ng Misedukasyon

Sa panahong dahan-dahan hinuhulma ng banyangang kamay ang kamalayan at kaisipang Filipino, nagsilbi si Renato Constantino bilang bose ng disentimyento. Maituturing si Renato Constantino na isa sa mga pinakamasugid na nasyonalista ng kanyang panahon. Bagamat isang produktong edukasyong amerikano sa bansa, isa rin siya sa mga pinakamasigasig na kritiko nito. Si Constantino ay naging isa sa mga pinakamahalagang indibidwal na tumuligsa sa mga polisiya ng Amerika ukol sa Pilipinas sa pamamagitan ng mga artikulong naglalaman ng matatalas na komentaryo ukol sa impluwensyang banyaga sa bagong-silang na gobyernong Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{19} Bukod sa pagiging propesyonal na mamamahayag, nagiging propesor rin si Constantino sa iba't-ibang prestihiyosong unibersidad sa bansa. Dagdag rito, maraming naisulat si Constantino ukol sa kasaysayan at sa pagsusulong ng kanyang posisyon na dapat

\textsuperscript{17} Maraming mga prestihiyosong unibersidad ang nabili o kaya naman ay pinamamahalaan na ng ilang maimpulwensyang korporasyon. Pinangangambahan na kung ang isang paaraalan ay patatakbuhin na parang isang negosyo, magdudulot ito ng paghina ng impluwensya ng mga intelektuwal. Dahil rito, ang panganib na ang ilang mga unibersidad o kolehiyo ay magsilbi na lamang bilang mga diploma mills ay hindi dapat maliliit.


\textsuperscript{19} Isa sa mga pinakamahahalagang tagpo sa buhay paglimbag ni Constantino ay noong minsang tugunan ng dating Pangulong Manuel Quezon ang mga articulo ni Constantino sa isang talumpati. Sa editorial na isinulat ni Constantino, tinuligsa nito ang dating pangulo na naging dahilan upang pumunta mismo si Quezon sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas upang ipaliwanag ang kanyang posisyon.
tingnan ang kasaysayan sa *punto-de-vista* ng karaniwang tao. Mapapapansin na ang pananaw ni Constantino ukol sa kasaysayan ay nababahiran ng malalim na diwang nasyonalista sa pagnanais nitong ilahad ang kasaysayan mula sa mga mata ng Pilipino na tila nagpapawaring ang mismong anak ng kasaysayan ang siya dapat maglahad ng kwentong-taong nagluwal sa kanya. Hindi lamang sa kasaysayan mapapansin ang nasyonalistang kaisipan ni Constantino, mas maaaning ito sa kanyang mga naisulat ukol sa edukasyon at kaugnayan nito sa pambansang kamalayan.


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22 Ibid.
na lubusang palaganapin ang pampublikong sistema ng edukasyon sa Pilipinas.\textsuperscript{25} Dahil rito, maaring sabihin na ang pangunahing dahilan ng pagpapalaganap ng gumaganang sistema ng edukasyon sa mga mamamayan Filipino ay instrumento lamang ng polisiyang kolonyal.\textsuperscript{26} Sa pamamagitan ng edukasyon, hinulma ng mga Amerikano ang kamalayan ng mga Filipino at inilagay sa pedestal ng pagkatuto ang kanilang wika. Ang wikang Ingles ang nagsilbing pangunahing wika pang-akademiko at kumalat na rin sa larangang propesyonal at pagnenegosyo.\textsuperscript{27} Hanggang sa kasulukuyan ay nadarama pa rin sa lahat ng sangay ng lipunan ang impluwensyang ito. Hindi maitatagdang na ang batayan ng karunungan at saysay ng isang argumento ay binabase ng mga Filipino sa mga polisiyang pagkatuto at pagpapatakbo ng mga miseduka.

Dahil ng edukasyon, hinulma ng mga Amerikano ang kamalayan ng mga Filipino at inilagay sa pedestal ng pagkatuto ang kanilang wika. Ang wikang Ingles ang nagsilbing pangunahing wika pang-akademiko at kumalat na rin sa larangang propesyonal at pagnenegosyo. Sa kasulukuyan, ay nadarama pa rin sa lahat ng sangay ng lipunan ang impluwensyang ito. Hindi maitatagdang na ang batayan ng karunungan at saysay ng isang argumento ay binabase ng mga Filipino sa mga polisiyang pagkatuto at pagpapatakbo ng mga miseduka.

Sa isa sa mga pinakamatatalas na pangungusap sa artikulong Miseducation of the Filipinos, binanggit ni Constantino ang hiram na kanluranin ukol sa demokrasya na hatid ng mga Amerikano:

\begin{quote}
Madaling unawain kung aakalain ng mga Amerikano na mayroon lamang isang uri ng demokrasya para sa kanila, at ito ay ang demokrasyang Amerikano. Kaya naman iniakma ng mga Amerikano ang kaisipang politikal na naayon sa kanila sa mga Filipino. Dahil rito, hindi nabigyan ng sapat na panahon ang mga institusyon katutubo na itaguyod ang pansariling pananaw at
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{26} Constantino, “The Miseducation of the Filipinos,” 3.

\textsuperscript{27} Ayon kay Constantino, hinubog rin ng edukasyon ang kaisipan ng mga Filipino na walang kakayahan ang bansang maging industriyalisado. Bagkus, mas makabubuti kung mananatiling naka-sentro sa agrikultura ang ekonomiya. (Ibid. 6)

\textsuperscript{28} Quito, “Ang Kaugnayan ng Wikang Pambansa at Edukasyon,” 22.

\textsuperscript{29} Constantino, “The Miseducation of the Filipinos,” 5.
ideya ukol sa demokrasya na nagbunga sa pagsupil ng katutubong
demokrasyang akma para sa Filipino.³⁰

Lubhang mabigat ang konsekuwensya ng kaisipang ito sa pananaw ng Filipino
ukol sa demokrasya at makikita ang epektong nito hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Ang
maling pag-aakma ng mga Amerikano ng kanilang uri ng demokrasya ay nagbunga ng
maling kamalayan ukol sa ugnayan ng demokrasya, kalayaan, at politika. Tila
nagkaroon ng malawakan pagkabulag sa kamalayan na nagsimula sa misedukasyon
at nagtapos sa baluktot na konsepto ng demokrasya. Dahil sa hindi nabigyan ng
pagkakataon ang pambangsan kamalayan bunga ng himagsikan na umusbong,
nanaig ang kaisipang kailangang dumepende sa kapangyarihang bangyaga na mas
matalino, mas may karanasan at mas malalim ang kasaysayan sa pamamahala.³¹ Ang
Filipinong sinupil ang kamalayan politikal bago ito tuluyang umusbong ay
binubuo ng konseptong bangyaga na hindi tugma sa katutubong kaisipan. At gaya ng
nagbukot sa unti-unting kinitikit ng damong ligaw, nabansot ang pambangsan
kalayan ng mga Filipino.

Bagamat hindi maaaring mawaglit si Renato Constantino sa mga intelektwal
na asapin patungkol sa nasionalismo, mayroon pa ring talakayan kung
mayaari bang maituring si Contantino bilang isang pilosoper.³² Karamihan sa mga akda
ni Constantino ay nagtatampok ng panibagong pananaw patungkol sa pagtitingin
sa kasaysayan at pagpapayabong ng diwang nasionalismo. Sinasabing ang bangong
pagtanan na ito at ang pagnanais ni Constantino na bumuo ng panibagong kamalayan
ay maaaring maituring sa pamimilusopiya palabas-malalim at may kasaysayan at
antropolohiya.³³ Sabi ni Constantino ay hindi malaya sa mga isagawa ni Constantino.
Malaki ang nagbukot sa unti-unting kinitikit ng mabangon, nabansot ang
mayaari bang maituring sa ilalim pa rin ng diskursong pangkasaysayan at
pambansang kamalayan ng mga Filipino. Gayunpaman, hindi pa rin mayroon pa ring
bukod na maaaring maituring si Constantino bilang isang pilosoper.

Karamihan sa mga akda ni Constantino ay mayroon ng pambansang
tulungan at ang mga isagawa ni Constantino bilang isang pilosoper.

³⁰ Ibid., 7 Akin ang salin.
³² Si Constantino ay hindi nagkamit ng normal na akademikong pag-aaral sa pilosopiya.
³³ Ilang mga kontemporaryong akademikong gawa ni Franz Guiseppe Cortez ng Unibersidad ng
Santo Tomas at Christian Bryan Bustamante ng Pamantasang San Beda ay nagsasabing ito sa ilalim
ng mga isagawa ni Constantino. Katangi-tangi ang disertasyon ni Cortez na
nagpapakita ng isang mga aspeto ng mga isagawa ni Renato Constantino. Katangi-tangi ang disertasyon
ni Cortez na
³⁴ Bukod rito, ang ugnayang edukasyon at politika ang
nagagawa ng hulma-

³⁴ Kung babasaan ang mga isagawa ni Emerita Quito, kahalagahan ng dalawang intelektual
na asapin patungkol sa nasionalismo, at hindi maitatagang
ang paggagawang pang-edukasyon at sinusuri at patuloy na
pang-aaralan sa pilosopiya ng edukasyon.

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pang-aaralan sa pilosopiya ng edukasyon.
Demokrasya sa Panahon ng Misedukasyon at Bagong Kolonisasyon


Mapapansin ang halos pagkakatulad ng pagdaloy ng kasaysayan ng politika ng bansang Pilipinas at Amerika. Dahil na rin sa pag-aakma ng mga Amerikano ng kanilang demokratikong pamamahala sa Pilipinas sa pag-aakalang ito lamang ang mainam na uri ng demokrasya. Maging sa pamamahala, pinapaalalahanan ng mga Amerikano ang mga Pilipino na hindi kakayanin ng isang maliliit at bagong sibil na

35 Ang usapin ukol sa kolonisasyon ng kaisipang politikal ay una kong narinig sa isang kumperensya kung saan nabanggit ni Dr. Zosimo Lee ang kasalukuyang klimang politikal sa ilalim ng Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte. Ayon kay Lee, maagap ang paghahanda ni Duterte sa pamamagitan ng pagaganap ng mga dating militar sa ilang maimpluwensyang posisyon sa gobyerno. Dahil rito, matatag ang posisyon ng pangulo at maaasahang masusupil ang ano mang disentimyento laban sa kanyang pamamahala.

36 McIntyre, Post-Truth, 5

38 Ang mga imaheng nais ipakita ng kasalukuyan at naging pinuno ng parehong bansa ay magkahalintulad sa ilang aspekto. Gaya na lamang ng pagkakakawala ng pamamahala ni Barack Obama at Benigno Aquino III na nagbibulalas ng mga gawaing napapangandng kanilang imahe sa nasional at internasyonal na perspektibo. Mas kapansin-pansin ang pagkakakawala na ito kina Donald Trump at Rodrigo Duterte na parehong kinikilala bilang mga politikong produkto ng bagong populismo.

bansa ang mabuhay ng wala ang impluwensiya ng Amerika.\textsuperscript{40} Ang lahat ng mapanupil na kaisipang ito ay dahan-dahang itinanim sa kamalayan ng Filipino gamit ang edukasyon. Kung mayroon mang malalaking bitak ang demokrasya sa Pilipinas, ito ay bunga ng ilang henerasyon ng misedukasyon at hiram na konseptong hindi epektibo sa kontekstong politikal ng mga Filipino. Sa simula pa lamang ay baluktot na ang kinamulatan at itinurong uri ng demokrasya sa kamalayanang Filipino. At ang mga bitak na ito ay mapapansin sa iba’t-ibang manipestasyon gaya ng wika. Ayon kay Constantino, “Isa sa pinakamahalagang dahilan ng pagtuturo ng Ingles bilang wikang gamit sa silid-aralan ay dahil itinuturing ito bilang wika ng demokrasya.”\textsuperscript{41} (akin ang salin) Malaki ang kaugnayan ng kaisipan at wika. May ilang pilosopikal na pag-aaral na rin ang nagpatunay rito.\textsuperscript{42} Sa paggamit sa Ingles bilang wikang pangturo, tila nahiwalay ang Filipino mag-aaral sa kanyang kamalayanang katutubo. At dahil Ingles rin ang gamit na wika sa usaping politikal, hindi pinag-tutuunan ng pansin ng karaniwang Filipino ang mga diskursong politikal sapakat ito ay hiwalay at malayo rin sa kanyang pang-unawa.\textsuperscript{43} Upang maging ganap ang demokrasya, nararapat lamang na makihahali sa karaniwang tao sa gawaing politikal. Ngunit bunga ng misedukasyon, hiwalay ang masa sa usapin ng pamumuno sa kanya. Dahil rito, nagkaroon ng pagkakataon ang mga politikong produkto ng bagong populismo upang mamayagpag at ang kanilang mga huwad na adhikain at pagkatawan sa mga mamamayan ang siyang nagpapalala sa sitwasyon ng demokrasya sa bansa. Isang pagkakamali ang isisi sa isang demografiko ang pagkakabaluktot ng demokrasya sa Pilipinas. Ang isiping ang maging biktima ng bagong populismo ay nakatuon sa mga mahihirap ay ay maging biktima ng mismong makinarya nito.\textsuperscript{44}

**Edukasyong Pang-Filipino Tungo sa Demokrasyang Filipino:**
**Mga Hamon at Pag-asa**

Kinakailangan munang palayain ng Filipino ang sarili sa kanyang misedukasyon bago niya matama sa kalayaang hatid ng tunay na demokrasya. Kung mananatiling misedukado ang mga mamamayan, patuloy na babaluktot ang

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 10

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 11

\textsuperscript{42} Mga isinulat nila Emerita Quito, Roque Ferriols, Leonardo Mercado, Romualdo Abulad at ilan pang primerong Filipino pilosoper. Mula sa kararanasan ni Quito sa ibang bansa, ang pag-uugnay ni Mercado at Abulad sa wika, kamalayan at pambansang kaisipan hanggang sa paggamit ni Padre Ferriols ng Filipino sa pedagohiya.

\textsuperscript{43} Constantino, “Identity and Consciousness” 52.

\textsuperscript{44} Mayroong buhay na talakayan lalo na sa mga akademiko at iskolar ukol sa kontribusyon ng mga mamamaya ng mababang demograpikong pang-ekonomiya sa pamamayagpag ng mga politikong kumakapit sa bagong populismo. Dapat isaisip ng isang nagsisiyasat na ang pagkandili sa ganitong kaisipan ay maaaring may tonong elitista na nagmamaliit sa kakayahan ng masa na maunawaan ang kanilang sariling suliranin.

Bago itanghal sa altar ng pagbabago ang nasyonalismo, mayroon munang mga isyung dapat linawin ukol sa konseptong ito. Kinakailangan nang kaukulang paglilibo sa konsepto ng nasyonalismo sa mga paaralan sa halip na pagpapapalit nito sa mababaw sa magmula sa pagkakatawan sa kamalian ng mga Filipino. Kung hindilang makapaglaban ang nasyonalismo sa ating bayan gaya na kinaharap nito, maaaring maging isang hahangin sa kanyang kalakalan at isang tao na kinikilalang tunay na tagapaglagda ng bayan. 49 Kung hindi ito maging mababaw, maaaring maging mababaw at maaring sa kanyang kalakalan at isang tao na kinikilalang tunay na tagapagtanggol sa mga politiko sa bagong populismo. Mapapansin pa rin ang konsepto ng nasyonalismo sa ating bayan, kung hindi ito maging mababaw, maaaring maging isang hahangin sa kanyang kalakalan at isang tao na kinikilalang tunay na tagapagtanggol sa mga politiko sa bagong populismo.


45 Bago pa man naging matunog ang adhikain ng dekolonisasyon, isa na si Renato Constantino sa mga nagpapalit ng isyung ito.
47 Ibid., 15
48 Bustamante, “Renato Constantino’s Discourses on Philippine Education as Post-Colonial,” 69.
49 Ang terminong ito ay ginamit ng pilosoper na si Emerita Quito sa kanyang mga sulatin ukol sa filipinization ng edukasyon at iba pang sangay ng lipunan at pilosopiya ng edukasyon.

Radikalisisyon ng Edukasyon: Binhi ng Counter-Consciousness


50 Ayon kay Constantino, ang tunay na nasyonalismo ay may dalawang aspekto: (1) ito ay dapat pang-masa at (2)ito ay dapat kontra imperyalismo. (Rolando M. Gripaldo, “Renato Constantino’s Philosophy of Nationalism: A Critique,” Filipino Philosophy: Traditional Approach (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, 2009), 5.

51 Bustamante, “Renato Constantino’s Discourses on Philippine Education as Post-Colonial,” 25.


53 Ibid.

54 Ang Pilipinas man ang unang bansa sa Timog-Silangang Asya na nag-alsa laban sa mga mananakop, ito naman ay maituturing na hindi matagumpay kung iikumpara sa iba pang mga rehigion.
mga Filipino ukol sa mga aktibista na nagsusulong sa karapatan ng mga nakaapi at nasa laylayan ng lipunan. Sila ay kadalasang tinitingnan bilang mga nanggugulang radikal na nais sirain ang maayos na sistema. Napansin ito ni Constantino at ang kanyang pananaw ukol rito ay may timbang hanggang sa kasalukuyan:


Inihahayag ni Constantino ang kadalasang pananaw laban sa disentimyento bilang kaaway ng kaayusan. Upang makabuo at tuluyang umusbong ang isang kontra-kamalayan, kinakailangan munang mabura o mapahina ang kultura ng pananahimik. Mahalagang maisakatuparan ito sapagkat hindi nabuhay ang demokrasya at tunog ng katahimikan. At muli, ang paggisimulan ng adhikaing ito ay ang edukasyong para sa Filipino. Hindi pa tapos ang pagbuo at tuluyan ang disentimyento. Mahalagang maisabuhay at matatawag ang isang edukasyon na tunay na may hangarin at itataguyod ang isang edukasyong Filipino na duny na pang-Filipino.

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Appreciating Art with Paul Ricoeur: from Aesthetics to Ethics

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Abstract: This paper is a philosophical exploration of the ethical import in Ricoeur's essay “Aesthetic Experience.” Ricoeur's long detour in philosophy via hermeneutics made it possible to encounter the world of art creatively and critically. He became convinced that art always holds a prominent place in life, especially an ethical role in man’s aim toward the good life with and for others in just institutions. However, the noble function of art is threatened nowadays due to its commercialization, manipulation, and monopoly by a few, making the art's beauty and meaning captive to man's consciousness. Therefore, the task of this study is to emancipate art through Ricoeur's radical yet creative hermeneutical admiration of aesthetics and to rediscover anew its implications to humanity particularly art’s concealed imperative of ethics. Ricoeur is mindful that a genuine aesthetic experience is possible only through the subtle yet humbling act of generosity. This refers to an openness, a receptivity, and a kind of attention—a manner of perceiving wherein art is never compromised. Attention renders justice to art. It provides space for it to unfold its meaning, to make a revelatio n of its beauty. In this way, man is able to render a proper recognition toward a work of art to be attentive once again to the superabundant meaning that it carries, which in turn ceaselessly summons man to translate his aesthetic experience into an ethical experience.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Hermeneutics, Symbol, Ethics, Attention

“The [art]work is like a trail of fire issuing from itself, reaching me and reaching beyond me to the universality of humanity.”
— Paul Ricoeur, Critique and Conviction, 180.

It is very ironic that what is in front of us, the tangible and perceivable – like the work of art – is often left unnoticed or ignored. At worst, It is deemed vague and nonsensical. This apparent absurdity in terms of artworks is especially true with modern abstract paintings like that of the abstract expressionist Tàpies and surrealist Matta that cause bewilderment to some spectators. The viewers are caught in a dilemma whether the paintings are worthy of the name art or are merely sugarcoated vandalism. The present indifference to art has obliviously buried its symbolic meaning
and imperative value. The modern [busy] person has become inattentive and forgetful—inattentive to the appearing and givenness of the art, and at the same time, forgetful of its implications to human life. We treat art today superficially as a commodity, simply an ornamentation, embellishment, and adornment. This is the reason why some critics who claim themselves to be experts of art say “that there is no progress in the history of art.”1 However, Ricoeur redeems the grandeur of art by stating that “there is still a history of materials, where progress [in art] is not absent.”2 Most of the time, our obsession with art makes us neglect and forget the why behind paintings, sculptures, music, statues, etc. For Ricoeur, the work of art is like a text, a living metaphor subjected to a Sisyphean struggle of hermeneutical interpretation and recognition.3 Hence, this is a testimony that art is imbued with irreducible and inexhaustible superabundant meaning. The paradox of the work of art opens before us: the obscurity of art is precisely its surmountable beauty; its presumed weakness is ironically its peculiar strength; its apparent non-sense is actually its sense. Art is a reservoir of meanings that is open to the world because of the “limitless of the thinkable, and with reference, the inexhaustibility of the world [of art] itself.”4 From this conviction of art, we are properly disposed and receptive to a genuine aesthetic experience.5

**Aesthetic Experience**

Ricoeur ontologically and anthropologically expresses the relation of the human person with art by conveying that the latter had and will always have a

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2 Ibid.


5 One may ask a question if Ricoeur is credible enough to discuss about aesthetics, and Peter McCormick attests that “perhaps the most central theme of Ricoeur’s extraordinary variegated work over many years — the nature, kinds, roles, and problems of interpretation — touched in many places not just on philosophical questions about morality, politics, law, and religion; Ricoeur also considered some specific works of art, especially works of literature.” Peter McCormick, “From aesthetic to Ethical experience? Paul Ricoeur’s Aesthetics,” *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2006): 111-120, https://journals.ateneo.edu/index.php/budhi/article/view/418.
prominent place in man’s life. The paleness of human existence has been colored by paintings as well as the troubled human mind, soothed by music. The problem in our modern relation to art is that the artwork has been normalized to the extent that it seems to no longer catch our attention. It ceases to give us a sense of wonder—a surprise of an unanticipated encounter—as art today is merely “reduced to sheer entertainment.” In other words, art today tends to be considered as mere objects among objects normatively used as everyday tools. This presupposes that art like the human person has the possibility to be restrained by utilitarianism, i.e., to be stripped away of the freedom to reveal itself and simply becomes reduced to mere utility. This, for Ricoeur, can be considered as a nihilistic tendency toward art that requires us to uphold an appreciative stance in the aesthetic experience. From such a view, “nothing must be excluded from one’s admiration; one even has to learn in a sense to love everything.” Ricoeur shows that there are still realities in the world that are left unappreciated, unrecognized, and unloved—and art is one of these. He points out that we need to be patient and, like a child, keep that very wonder aflame, ceaselessly traversing to the uncertain for we dwell in a vast universe where polysemy reigns. In other words, we live in a world wherein meaning is never exhausted by the human intellect. Life’s superabundance of meaning then is the perfect venue where we are summoned to ponder and challenged to posit questions. The essence of the artwork is polysemic, never running out of sense “and yet they induce unexplored relational possibilities and make possible the unfolding of new and original feelings”—a genuine aesthetic experience.

To further appreciate the beauty of art, Ricoeur relates it with language which is acknowledged for its semantic richness. He draws some affinities of art and language, saying:

The work of art is in this way, for me, the occasion for discovering aspects of language that are ordinarily concealed by its usual practice, its instrumentalized function of communication. The work of art bares properties of language which otherwise would remain invisible and unexplored.

We always fall short in recognizing that art, like language, always bestows something new for it has a life of its own. The irony of this is that it possesses its own meaning and intention apart from the artist which tickles the spectator’s curiosity: What does

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7 Ibid., 175
8 Ibid., 171.
9 Ibid., 172
12 Ibid.
that art mean? This simple yet profound question has no ready-made adequate answer. Since there will always be a certain gap, there exists an epistemic distance between an artwork and its observer for the unsaid, the unsayable, or the unspoken still remains a unique aspect of art. This is the subtlety as well as the beauty of one’s authentic encounter with the work of art in which aesthetic experience is not merely a sensical or an emotional admiration of a masterpiece but more importantly, an experience of meaning.

At the latter part of Ricoeur’s philosophical enterprise, he changed his interest to language as he traversed the “long route” of multiple hermeneutic detours.[13] It is through these detours that he was able to venture to aesthetics.[14] Earlier, I have expressed how the work of art is polysemic in nature. This refers to how no one can and will ever fully exhaust art’s meaning. From this inexhaustible richness of art, Ricoeur is convinced that art itself is hermeneutical. Hermeneutics for Ricoeur, as Richard Kearny pointed out, is the “art of deciphering indirect meaning.”[15] It follows then that art, as subjected to hermeneutics, has an indirect meaning and expression for it is open to various and even conflicting interpretations. Simply put, an artwork is presented to us indirectly through a detour of signs, and these signs in which an artwork presents itself summon us to think more.[16] One can comparatively relate art now to a symbol that stimulates curiosity, invites creative imagination, and gives rise to thought.[17] Ironically though, art as a correlative symbol points to something that cannot really be pointed to. This is the reason why every spectator is evoked to ponder on the unfathomable meaning of an artwork.

From this, we can understand how Ricoeur expresses his enchantment of how art gives rise to thought by saying that “The symbol gives; I do not posit its meaning; it is what gives meaning, but what it gives has to be thought, has to be thought through.”[18] First, Ricoeur argues that the symbol gives, and art as in a way symbolic, likewise gives. What is given is a “proposed world” wherein one is welcome to wander with

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[16] Ibid., 3.


[18] Ibid. We must note that Ricoeur necessarily uses “thinking” here not to construct, constrict or reduced the polysemic character of symbol into a knowledge, a concept, rather he innovatively uses it to render a proper and more just approach on symbol that gives rise to thought.
Ricoeur reminds one that wandering in this proposed world is not simply a walk in the park for there is a tendency to get lost in the maze of meanings within this world. Thus, this proposed world given by symbols as well as by art should be explored with the creative and critical aid of hermeneutics. Secondly, Ricoeur encourages everyone not to take the proposed world for granted. One of the historical and at the same time biblical examples given by Ricoeur is that of water. According to him, one can formulate meanings through a creative as well as a critical interpretation in which “the symbolism of water is clarified by such symbolic gestures as those of immersion, wherein one discerns both a threat – the flood is a return to the undifferentiated – and the promise of rebirth: water is both what wells up and what fecundates.” Consequently, like the symbol of the water, art immerses its viewers, wells them to give way to a rebirth—a fresh kind of looking at reality, a new manner of perceiving, which inseparably leads to a better way of living. Hence, every artwork just like every symbol “points toward reintegrating human beings in a totality: the transcendent totality of the sky, the immanent totality of vegetation, of perishing and being born again.” Art as a correlative symbol then has the possibility to become a source of unity among humanity because human persons by nature are artistic beings. The work of art has a double effect on its spectator. The spectator is induced to refigure the proposed world of art while at the same time the proposed world of art refigures the spectator’s world. Ricoeur highlights that an artwork has the capacity to refigure and restructure the world of the spectator by unsettling, challenging, and remodeling the spectator’s expectations and convictions. Yet this event of refiguration does not intend to reproduce reality. Instead, it consists in restructuring the world of the spectator to confront him or her with the world of the artwork “and it is in this that the creativity of art consists, penetrating the world of everyday experience in order to rework it from inside.” Ricoeur emphasizes this act of refiguration for most

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20 David Kaplan, an associate professor of philosophy in University of North Texas, somehow confirms that hermeneutics is indeed necessary in deciphering the irreducible expressions of symbols as he asserts that: “Hermeneutics for Ricoeur is the interpretation of signs and symbols, and texts that relate us to the world and impose an indirect or interpretative approach to knowledge.” [David Kaplan et. al., “Paul Ricoeur and the Philosophy of Technology” in *Paul Ricoeur: Honoring and Continuing the work*, 22.


22 Ricoeur made the contention that this distinct way of perceiving is a sublime form of attention. For “the whole phenomenology of attention is dependent on a phenomenology of perception.” Therefore, “must we not say that to pay attention is a way of perceiving?” Paul Ricoeur, “Attention: A Phenomenological Study of Attention and its Philosophical connection,” in *Philosophical Anthropology: Writings and Lecture*, 25-26.

23 Ricoeur, “The Symbol gives rise to Thought” in *Philosophical Anthropology: Writings and Lecture*, 123.

24 Ricoeur, “Aesthetic Experience,” 173. Emphasis is mine
artworks does not just simply represent reality as expected in figurative art, as simply patterned after a model. This is the reason why Ricoeur unquestionably admired the non-figurative paintings of Soulages and Mondrian for their distinct works evoke every observer to further explore, discover, and refigure the sublime world of art. Ricoeur expounded more on this by reasoning that,

Soulages or Mondrian did not imitate reality, in the restrictive sense of the word, because they did not make a replica of it, that their work has the power to make us discover, in our own experience, aspects up to then unknown. On a philosophical plane, this leads us to question the classical conception of truth as adequation to the real; for, if one can speak of truth in relation to the work of art, it is to the extent that this designates the capacity of the work of art to break a path by the real in accordance with the work itself, so to speak.\textsuperscript{25}

Only after the imaginative refiguration of the spectators that the work of art in the same manner refigure the former’s world when the latter starts to speak and the former learns to listen. Hence, Ricoeur made an important note heightening the value of art that “each work [of art] is authentically a modality of the soul, a modulation of the soul.”\textsuperscript{26} This is the reason why the work of art is not just a mere fancy decoration, not only the object for commercialization where the art which has the highest bid is deemed beautiful, nor is art exclusive for the few who can afford it. Art is for everyone who has a soul since art’s greatest contribution is that it soothes the weary soul and converts the callous heart. Simply put, “the experience of beautiful – and even more to the point, of the sublime – leads us to morality.”\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, the experience of the beautiful does not only appeal to our senses but ushers us back to our sense of morality. Aesthetic experience for Ricoeur has an ethical as well as political import—in which the work of art is given a political voice that had been silenced for some time.

\textbf{Arts, Ethics, and Attention}

Most of the time, people are swayed by the cliché “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder” when appreciating art, but Ricoeur rectifies this, clarifying that “the beauty of a given work, the success of a given portrait belonged not to the quality of the representation, not to the fact that it resembled a model, not even to its conforming to allegedly universal rules, but to a surplus in relation to any representation and to any rule.”\textsuperscript{28} This very surplus of art’s meaning is precisely what brings the spectator into a world “that surrounds me, that can submerge me; in any case, it is something I do

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, 173-174. Emphasis is mine).
  \item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 174.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 182.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, 180.
\end{itemize}
not produce but in which I find myself.”

Definitely, no one produces the meaning or the world of art. Even artists are not exempted. This makes more sense in reference to Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of text and action. Following Ricoeur, David Kaplan insightfully articulates that:

The hermeneutics of the text also applies to action because like texts, actions are also readable [and so with the works of art], with meanings that are distanced from the intentions of the actors [or the artists], and subject to conflicting interpretations. In the same way that a text becomes detached from its author, an action [as well as art] is detached from its agent [artist] and may take on unintended meaning of its own.

In other words, art—like text and action—has its own peculiar yet unique intention and meaning detached from the artist. By recognizing art in this manner, one is able to distance himself from it. One does not fall into the tendency to treat art as a “kind of possession, as a way of taking hold of[.]” Hence, the appearing of art takes time. It does not reveal itself in an instant. It requires relentless patience for its surplus meaning is not “behind the text [or the artwork], as a hidden intention would be, but in front of it, as that which the work unfolds, discovers, reveals.”

This subtleness of art is its radical identity, its distinctive singularity. Ricoeur, following Gilles-Gaston Granger’s Essai d’une philosophie du style, conveys that what constitutes the success of a work of art is the fact that an artist has grasped the singularity of a conjuncture, a problematic, knotted for her in a unique point, and that she responds to this by a unique gesture. How is this problem be resolved? I am thinking, for example, of Cézanne’s stubbornness confronting the Sainte-Victoire mountain: why always paint the same view over and over? Because it is never the same. It is as if it were necessary for Cézanne to do justice to something that was not the idea of the mountain.

To put it differently, the singularity of the problem that the artist is confronted compels him, in turn, to respond singularly; in the same manner, the spectator experiences the work of art singularly. Ironically, it is through this very experience of

29 Ibid., 175.
30 David Kaplan et. al., “Paul Ricoeur and the Philosophy of Technology,” 22.
31 Richard Kearney et. al., “Introduction: Ricoeur Gives rise to Thought” in Paul Ricoeur: Honoring and Continuing the work, vii-viii. For Ricoeur this “distanciation is not the product of methodology and hence something superfluous and parasitical rather it is constitutive of the phenomenon of text as writing.” (Paul Ricoeur, From Text to Action, 84) In the same manner, we can infer that like text, the distanciation of the spectator is constitutive of the phenomenon of the art.
32 Paul Ricoeur, From Text to Action, 88.
33 Ricoeur, “Aesthetic Experience,” 178. Emphasis is mine.
singularity that art’s communicability becomes possible. Ricoeur explicates that the apprehension of that singularity in an artwork arouses a “sentiment of an incredible obligation.” For instance, the paintings of Cézanne or Van Gogh are overwhelming as well as compelling. Their works summon us to a kind of responsibility. “It is as if the artist experienced the urgency of an unpaid debt with respect to something singular that had to be said in a singular manner...as soon as it can be problematized in the form of a singular question which is adequately answered in the form of a response that is singular as well, then it acquires communicability, it becomes universalizable.”34 In this case, an artwork has a life of its own apart from the artist’s intention, and our experience of art or what Ricoeur referred to as aesthetic experience presents us with a utopia wherein we can envision a better world as well as a better humanity. This is the ethical import of aesthetic experience—the arts summon us to fulfill an incredible obligation of realizing a more habitable world and a more humane humanity.

Through the perceived singularity of an artwork, humanity like the artist is beckoned to an incredible obligation—like the urgency of an unpaid debt that implicitly invites one to do something good for the other.35 Truly, “the work [of art] is like a trail of fire issuing from itself, reaching me and reaching beyond me to the universality of humanity.”36 To preserve this fire of art issuing within and throughout humanity, Ricoeur stresses that “to follow the requirements of singularity to the end is to give the best chance of the greatest universality: such is the paradox that must probably be maintained.”37 With this singularity of art, Ricoeur redisCOVERS the nexus of aesthetics and ethics:

I believe that, between ethics and aesthetics, there can be a sort of reciprocal instruction around the theme of singularity. For, by contrast with things, but like works of art, persons are also singular conjunctions – a face in which features are assembled in a unique manner, a single time; like works, they cannot be substituted for one another.38

Hence, the work of art has a clandestine ethical implication. Every work of art has an untold story waiting to be told, and each story has a lesson—food for thought, soup for the soul, nourishment for the heart. No wonder, Ricoeur acknowledges that some works of art are testimony of the good (holy) life of good (consecrated) men, stories worth remembering and narrating.39 Subsequently, these faces in a way speak to us

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34 Ibid. Emphasis is mine.
35 Leovino Ma. Garcia links this to the Filipino concept of “utang na loob” which is ironically a debt that is not really owed, but a radical kind of generosity—it is a gift, a passing on of grace.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 182.
39 See ibid.
and teach us to do good for humanity. In line with this, Ricoeur shared his reflection on the film Tseddek: “Do you remember the men and women whose testimony Marek Halter collected in his film Tseddek? What did they all say when they were asked, ‘Why did you do that? Why did you take the risk of saving the Jews?’ They simply answered, ‘What else can you do? It was the only thing to do in that situation.’”\(^{40}\) This memorable scene serves as a living testimony that the aesthetic experience of the good and the beautiful ushers us to an ethical responsibility in view of a good life with and for others. However, Ricoeur is also cautious to the possible distortion and perversion of art in which the work is manipulated for an unjust cause that certainly bears unjust results. There are cases wherein artworks are illegally replicated for profit, instrumentalized for unlawful transactions, and irresponsibly used for propagandist movements. Ricoeur furthers that “perhaps this, finally, is the ultimate impasse of perversion, to wish to allow evil to benefit from what, at very high cost, the good and the beautiful manage to produce.”\(^{41}\) Simply put, the purity of art is muddied by the impure intentions of men. However, Ricoeur believes that the good is primordial to any evil, thus, the treasured goodness and beauty of art remains and persists which continuously haunts and dares its spectator to be ethical in order to live the good life with and for others in just institutions.\(^{42}\)

Planet Earth is now being sophisticated with numerous human activities which are odd in their very own ways causing the annihilation of the pre-established order of the world. Our home, the only abode of life that we know, is so fabricated with the gratuitous changing and imbalance passing of things, giving rise to unresolved inadequacy of ideas and confirmation of truth. Therefore, the beauty, as well as the meaning of creation, is thwarted by human wickedness. In our diverse and divisive world, everything is relativized to the extent that each individual has the power to impose truth and values. This defines the nature of things as these individuals want to disregard the certainty that these objects reflect objectively. For things must be what they are not the way we want for them to be. Our world is doomed not only to perennial difficulties, but generational problems liken to a contagious virus that is spreading ceaselessly and massively, targeting every vital part of our very own being. Ricoeur, in his *The Conflict of Interpretations*, claims that we have put too much premium on man’s self-consciousness to the point that meaning and truth are on the construction, constitution, and monopoly of the self.\(^{43}\) This is why Ricoeur criticizes Descartes since the latter forgot to critique the self-consciousness’ credibility. Descartes instead triumphs his victory over sensible things by his

\(^{40}\) *Ibid.* Emphasis is mine.


universal methodic doubt at the expense of subjecting self-consciousness itself into doubt. Certainly, this is the attitude of the spectator toward an artwork. The human person has the tendency to constrict, limit, and reduce an artwork into a mere conceptualization of knowledge. Ricoeur initiates a phenomenological study of attention in order to introduce a proper and more just treatment and appreciation of art. Through such an attentive disposition, art is neither compromised nor constrained. More importantly, Ricoeur saw the lack of attentiveness of the modern person that has somehow forgotten to recognize the otherness in the art.

The inability to recognize otherness stems from a problem of attention. Ricoeur observed that most epistemologists and scientists especially psychologists customarily undermine an essential characteristic of attention. For example, Wilhelm Wundt declares that "the world as we know it is composed uniquely of our representations." In this way, Wundt has reduced attention to a sort of sub-function of consciousness—"nothing other than a reflexive operation, a second-degree consciousness, a redoubling of representation." Hence, attention, following Wundt's thought, is still a captive of self-consciousness. To refute Wundt's understanding of attention, Ricoeur rightly considers attention to be a discrete manner of perceiving for,

To perceive is not "to have a representation in consciousness" nor "to be conscious of a representation." To perceive is to be aware of [connaître] objects, of the world. When I perceive, I am not occupied with myself, I am not aware of myself. I am outside myself.

Attention, then, perceives the art in a way that it is not merely represented by the consciousness. Attention is purely to be aware of the presence, the majestic existence of the work of art. Thus, to be attentive is not to be occupied or to be aware of oneself, but rather, being open, aware, and available to the revelation of the work of art.

To further elucidate the significant role of attention in appreciating art, Ricoeur clarifies what attention is not in terms of paying attention to one's perceptions but rather to what one perceives. What the spectator sees is what one

47 Ibid., 25.
looks at, what one hears is what one listens to.\(^{48}\) In perceiving an artwork, the attentive spectator does not pay attention to his consciousness of the artwork, of what one thinks about the artwork. Instead, one pays attention to the artwork perceived. Ricoeur reiterates that “attention is perception and not a reflection, a redoubling. Must we not say that to pay attention is a way of perceiving?”\(^{49}\) This question that Ricoeur poses answers itself for attention indeed allows things to appear to us better, it allows the works of art to radiate their pure meaning and beauty “insofar as we are more attentive to them and that the art of thinking clearly in which logic and ethics are conjoined consists in paying attention as much as possible.”\(^{50}\) Being attentive toward art then makes one perceive the unperceivable. It enables one to go beyond the hither side which is not normally seen and spoken—“attention is a kind of action; it ‘accentuates,’ ‘brings about,’ in a sense ‘chooses.’ It makes something about the object appear.”\(^{51}\) From this, we can now construe attention as a kind of availability and receptivity rather than the construction and constriction of knowing. In this way, the spectator is not the producer of the artwork’s meaning but is simply its witness.

Ricoeur, however, avows to the complexity of attention for

the nature of the soul is such that it hardly attends for more than a moment to a single thing; hence, as soon as our attention turns from the reasons which show us the thing is good for us, and we merely keep in our memory the thought that it appeared desirable to us, we can call up before our mind some other reason to make us doubt it, and so suspend our judgment, and perhaps even form a contrary judgment.\(^{52}\)

One can rightly ask, how is it to be attentive amidst the plurality of things to attend to. Ricoeur ironically yet cleverly responded that our attention is captured. Most of the time, we do not pay attention to something or someone because we tend to pay attention to everything or to everyone at the same time. This is why “Attention implies inattention.”\(^{53}\) Ricoeur pondered on the thin line demarcating attention from consciousness. He acknowledged the possibility of being attentive only to one side of the picture which totally defeats the main intention of attention. Therefore, “if something draws the whole intention or a large part of it to its side, one cannot be

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.


said to be paying full attention.”

Genuine attention, then, is not just an arbitrary liking of the part and parcel of art but is a paying of attention to the artwork’s wholeness for its true beauty lies in its totality. And to this, Gabriel Marcel is correct in saying that “reverent attentiveness is no doubt what is least perceptual in the soul; it does not consist in regarding something, it is a resting place, an internal restoration.”

Indeed, the concealed truth of art appears only to attentive minds.

Conclusion

Throughout the paper, I have presented the centrality of attention in the movement from aesthetics to ethics in Ricoeur’s ideas. It is now clear that “the world of the work confronts the world of the spectator of the listener...it overturns expectations and changes horizons...If art did not have, despite its retreat, the capacity to come bursting into our midst, into our world, it would be completely innocuous; it would be struck with insignificance and reduced to sheer entertainment...” Ricoeur with André Malraux believes then that: “Great artists are not the transcribers of the world, they are its rivals.”

Hence, art does not merely represent the world but changes and transforms the world. Lastly, art summons the human person toward an ethical praxis to the other to the point that “even if I cannot see you, if I cannot touch you, I feel you, you are with me; it would be a denial of you not to be assured of this.”

Our aesthetic experience reorients us to the ethical project of living the good life with and for others.

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Ibid. Ricoeur cites here André Malraux, The Voices of Silence (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953).


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