JANUARY 2010

THIS ISSUE

Articles published in this journal do not necessarily reflect the respective ideas of the members of the editorial board and the editorial consultants. Authors of published articles are solely responsible for the defense of their own ideas or theses.

Starting with the January 2007 issue of this journal, references by any article to the logical term *proposition*, except in contextual historical citations, will be replaced by the term *constative*. Please see R. Gripaldo's "Meaning, proposition, and speech acts" in *Issues in contemporary Western philosophy,* Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue (2003). Edited by Ali Naqi Baqershahi and Roya Khoii. Supervised by Seyyed Mohammed Khamenei. Papers read during the World Congress on Mulla Sadra in May 1999. Vol. 6. Tehran: Sadra Islamic Research Institute. Also in 2001. Φιλοσοφια: *International Journal of Philosophy* 30 (1). See his paper, "The rejection of the proposition," read in 2008 during the 22nd World Congress of Philosophy, Seoul; published in 2010, Φιλοσοφια 39 (1).

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EDITOR'S NOTES

The January issue contains seven significant articles from different areas of philosophy: two from aesthetics, two from African philosophy, and one each from axiology and postmodernism, philosophical logic, philosophy of religion, and a book review.

Paul Thom, in his work "Four conceptions of musical content," argues that the content of a song or a piece in music is usually analyzed as a "type whose tokens occur when that content is played or sung." In analyzing four assumptions about the ontology of types which give rise to four different conceptions of musical content, the author tries to identify the "kind of unity possessed by musical content" on these different conceptions.

As the quintessential painter during the Romantic period in Germany where the "terrible Sublime was contrasted with the more formal elements of Beauty," Caspar David Friedrich painted some landscapes such as *The wanderer above a sea of fog* and *On the sailingboat*. While comparing the "inarticulate aesthetic sensibility" with the "more formal method of logical analysis," Noelle Leslie de la Cruz in her paper, "The philosopher as romantic wanderer: An ekphrastic engagement with Caspar David Friendrich's paintings," underscores her transition from philosophy to literary creative writing. By providing a philosophical analysis of the "visual metaphor" in Friedrich's works cited above, she integrated in a philosophical paper the result of her engagement with these works which takes the form of a literary creative piece, an ekphrastic poem. The paper is about the aesthetics of that literary form.

In the article, "Philosophy and Igbo cultural practices," Amaechi Udefi contends that we can better understand and appreciate certain Igbo cultural practices by first examining the nature of philosophy and its interface with culture. He identifies at least two senses of philosophy as a critical activity and as a "way of life."

Yoruba thought in African metaphysics has, as major concerns, the philosophical issues on human destiny, reincarnation, and personal identity. In the paper "Human destiny, reincarnation, and personal identity in Yoruba metaphysics," S. Ade Ali tries to tackle the issues of identity and reincarnation considering the different dimensions of the soul (*êmi*) and the inner-head, fate, or alter ego (*ori*), which are considered immortal.

In the paper, "On the destiny of the moral and religious values in today's postnmodern climate," Wilfried Vanhoutte contends that in contemporary society tradition, where religious and moral customs are lodged, are either critically questioned (and abandoned) or justified for its continued

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existence. Science and technology have also been similarly treated: either believed through progress to potentially increase happiness or such a belief reduced to a myth. While the belief in the rejection of tradition and the enjoyment of progress belong to modernity, the acceptance of tradition and the demythologization of progress belong to postmodernity. Vanhoutte contends that in all these philosophical positions, "a genuine moral and religious renewal may start from the rediscovery of the all-encompassing, mysterious dimension of life."

As a sequel of the paper he read in Tehran in 1999, Rolando Gripaldo contends in "The rejection of the proposition"—a paper he read in Seoul in 2008—that we rethink our logical concepts. By questioning the ontological existence of the proposition as the content of sentential utterances, as John Searle proposed, Gripaldo reasserts John Austin's constative as the generic logical term to refer to specific utterances which are true or false. The author also contends it is a category mistake to *state* an assertion or *assert* a statement unless it is qualified.

In "The spiritualist trend in modern Western philosophy: From Descartes to Sartre," James Lawler says that the contemporary debate between religion and science can be traced back to Descartes's spiritualism and Hobbes's materialism. Immanuel Kant's reconciliation of the Cartesian free subjectivity with Hobbesian materialist determinism is based on the latter's usefulness in the construction of subjectivity itself. Science for Descartes, Kant, and Sartre "rests on human cooperation in an endless pursuit of an ideal of divine perfection."

Finally, we have Marie Chris Ramoya's book review of William Schroeder's *Continental philosophy: A critical approach*. The book contains twelve chapters with an Introduction and a thirteen-page bibliography. It deals with sketches of modern thinkers and the issues they raised, and explicates the main themes that contemporary French and German philosophers contributed to the Continental tradition. It focuses on detailed accounts of the various subtraditions within the entire post-Kantian tradition and their contributions to the several subfields of philosophy such as ethics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and politics, among others. Well-discussed are hermeneutics, phenomenology, existentialism and philosophical anthropology, structuralism and the philosophies of dispersion, and postmodernism, together with an examination of their disagreements and strengths.

It is hoped that this issue with its diverse perspectives will find a niche in the intellectual horizon of the readers.

Rolando M. Gripaldo
Editor

FOUR CONCEPTIONS
OF MUSICAL CONTENT

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When someone makes music, the content of their music-making is the song they sing, or the piece they play. The idea of musical content is sometimes analyzed in terms of the notion of a type whose tokens occur when that content is played or sung. Such an analysis can be associated with different assumptions about the ontology of types. I consider four such assumptions; and I argue they give rise to four different conceptions of musical content. Finally, I consider the question what kind of unity is possessed by musical content on these four different conceptions.

This paper is about the idea of musical content. When someone makes music, the content of their music-making is the music they make: it is the song they sing, or the piece they play.

Some philosophers have suggested that the idea of musical content should be analyzed in terms of the notion of a *type* whose *tokens* occur when that content is played or sung. This thought can be associated with different assumptions about the ontology of types. I shall consider four such assumptions; and I shall argue that they give rise to four different conceptions of musical content. Finally, I consider the question as to what kind of unity is possessed by musical content on these four different conceptions.

If the analysis of musical content is to depend on the notion of a type, we have to ask, "What are types?" In approaching this question, we need to distinguish the *operation* of types from their *ontology*. The operation of types is illustrated by the following facts. A type can have multiple tokens: for example, the letter "s" considered as a type can be written many times, thus having many tokens. A type, if it is a norm-type, can have improperly formed as well as properly formed tokens: the letter "s" when written by a particular person on a particular occasion may be malformed and unrecognizable. A type can be perceived in perceiving its properly formed tokens: for example, when we see a properly formed token of the letter "s" we see the type. The properties associated with a type are also features of its properly formed tokens: for example, the particular

curvature of the letter "s" is a feature that characterizes all properly formed tokens of the letter. But the reverse is not true. There may be properties of a properly formed token which are not intrinsic to the type: for example, the color in which a properly formed token of the letter "s" is written is not an intrinsic property of the type.

Given that types operate in these ways, a type/token theory of musical content allows us to hold to certain ordinary intuitions concerning musical content. Thus, because types in general can have multiple tokens, an analysis of musical content in terms of types will imply that one and the same musical content can be tokened in multiple sound-events across space-time—in accord with our ordinary intuition that a song can be sung over and over again. Similarly, because we can in general discern the type in a properly formed token, to analyze musical content in terms of types will imply that when we hear someone singing a song we can hear the song in its singing—as our ordinary intuition requires. And, because in general the properties associated with a type transfer to the type's properly formed tokens, an analysis of musical content in terms of types will imply that the properties of the song transfer to its properly formed singings—in accordance with our ordinary intuitions. But conversely, the properties of the token do not transfer to the type—and this too agrees with our ordinary intuitions about musical content, since we hold that the singing of a song can have features that are not intrinsic to the song.

However, none of this information about the operation of types tells us what kind of thing types are. To answer *this* question we need to decide between various ontological theories. Are types *eternally existing* entities, existing (like Plato's Forms) all by themselves independent of anything that happens in the world of sense-experience (see Dodd 2007a, 61); or could they be eternally existing entities that are somehow linked with what happens in the world of human culture? Alternatively, are they *immanent* entities, existing only if and when they actually have tokens; and if so, do they change when their tokens change?

I

Let us start with Julian Dodd's book on musical works. Now, Dodd writes about musical works rather than musical content; and it is true, as Lydia Goehr (2007) has shown, that the concept of a musical work is much narrower than the concept of musical content, musical works being a highly specific kind of musical content. It is not my purpose here to give a complete analysis of the idea of a musical work. However, it will be useful to note that musical works are thought of as being somehow *fixed* in an authoritative form so that they can be identified by the composer and later re-identified: this is standardly done by the creation of a score, though it might be done by the creation of a recording or by a process of memorization within a robust oral tradition. Furthermore, in order for a

musical work to be tokened within a live musical culture it must be identified in such a way as to accommodate practical means for generating tokens; in short, it must in a practical sense be performable. Let us label these two common beliefs about musical works the requirements of *fixity* and *performability*.

These points are not part of Dodd's treatment of musical works. Dodd does not take heed of Goehr's arguments. In fact, he effectively includes all musical content under the concept of a musical work.

Dodd (2007a, 58-69) assumes that types are eternally existing entities each of which is associated with a property that also exists eternally (just as the type, The Polar Bear, is uniquely associated with the property of being a polar bear). A type, says Dodd, must be capable of being instantiated at some time or other. He applies this notion of a type to what he calls musical works (i.e., to musical content), with the proviso that such "works" must be thought of in terms of *norm* types. Thus he (2007b, 23-24) allows that there can be improperly formed tokens. His reason for doing so is that a musical work can be imperfectly, or incorrectly, sung or played. This reason, however, applies equally to musical content that is not a musical work: mistakes can be made in the performance of all music, even music that has not been given the status of a musical work.

Dodd (2007b, 27) writes:

> Intuitively, the vehicles of musical meaning are the sounds we hear—to appreciate a work of music we need only use our ears....[I]n hearing sounds as music, we attend purely to the sounds themselves, and not to their causal origin.

On the basis of this account of an audience's musical experience, he analyzes musical works in terms of norm types whose tokens are sound-sequence events, where any given sound-sequence event tokens some musical "work" (or, as I would prefer to say, some musical content). He sees this proposal as having two components, one of which concerns the individuation of musical "works" while the other concerns their ontological category. Believing, as he does, that musical experience and musical meaning depend solely on the music's sound, Dodd holds that the individuation of musical "works" is based solely on how they sound. This doctrine he calls sonicism. He takes the ontological category to which musical "works" belong to be types.

Dodd (2007b, 26-31) favors a particular form of sonicism which includes *timbre*, along with pitch and duration, among the properties that define a musical "work." Timbral sonicism implies that the sound-sequence events which properly token a given musical "work" are individuated solely by their sound, including their timbre.

Dodd's notion is indeed a minimal conception of a musical work. For him, a musical work is just any type of sound-sequence. Indeed, as Lydia

Goehr (2007, xxv) puts it, on this theory "any (musical) thing may count as a work." In fact, Dodd's concept of a musical work is even broader than this: a musical work (i.e., musical content) in his sense need not even be music. It just needs to be a sequence of sounds that could logically have a token at some time—past, present, or future.

Furthermore, if musical content is thought of in terms of eternally existing types, then it may be neither fixed nor performable. A particular congeries of sounds occurring as a result of a chance combination of events (say, a three-second time-slice of sounds from a football stadium) is in all likelihood not going to be either fixed or practically performable; but for all that, it fits Dodd's account of musical content, since there must be an eternally existing sound-sequence type of which this complex sound-event is a token. Given that musical *works* must be both fixed and performable, it is clear that Dodd's account relates to a very broad conception of musical content that of itself does not possess the distinguishing marks of musical works.

II

Let us now assume, for the purpose of analyzing the idea of musical content, that a type is not merely a sound-sequence existing independently of any human interest in it, but a sound-sequence that has been noticed by a composer; and—following the terminology of Nicholas Wolterstorff (1980) and Jerrold Levinson (1980, 5-28)—let us call this noticing an act of "selection," or "indication." Levinson (1991, 582-84), in a subtle rephrasing, describes the composer who selects or indicates a sound-sequence as *initiating* a pre-existing sound-type. The idea is that after the composer has done his initiating, we are entitled to speak of a type-as-initiated-by-a-composer; and *this* is what comes into being as a result of the composer's intervention.

The conception of musical content that is yielded by this way of understanding types is a narrower one than Dodd's: the random sound-events sampled from the stadium no longer automatically count as musical content. Moreover, it is a conception that satisfies at least one of the requirements for being a musical work, namely, our belief that musical works are created by composers. If we understand types as initiated types, and we analyze musical content in terms of types, then we arrive at a conception of a musical work as something that satisfies the fixity requirement.

It does not, however, of itself satisfy the performability requirement. An initiated type may not be performable. In fact, we can imagine a situation in which someone (say, a lecturer in musical composition) "initiates" a type whose tokening is logically possible but not practically possible, precisely in order to illustrate the fact that a work for performance needs to be such that it can practically be tokened.

The conception of musical content that is yielded by the assumption of initiated types covers unperformable as well as performable musical content. As such, it seems to fall short of what a philosopher of the arts might require of a conception of a musical work.

This conception has also been objected to by ontologists. What, they ask, *is* an initiated type? Stefano Predelli (2001, 279-92) objects that

> [It] does not appear to be true *in general* that, whenever an agent *a* enters into a relationship *R* with an object *o* at a time *t*, a novel entity comes into existence, one which may be denoted by an expression of the form '*o*-as-*R*'d-by-*a*-at-*t*'.

Dodd (2007a, 246) continues this line of thought, saying that "the worry is that indicated types have been gerrymandered into existence."

In other words, indicated (or initiated) types appear to be bogus entities; and we do not want musical works to be bogus entities. We want them to really exist, and to be really brought into existence by composers. So, it seems, if we understand a musical work such as a symphony to be an eternally existing type, then we cannot assume that it is created; but if we understand it as an initiated type, then it seems to be a bogus entity. However, the Wolterstorff/Levinson account requires that musical works be eternally existing types which have been initiated. I shall come back to this dilemma.

III

Let us now assume that the types with which we want to identify musical content exist *immanently* in their tokens.

As a way of explaining this ontology, I shall start from an unlikely point—the doctrine of Original Sin. Anselm of Canterbury and other medieval thinkers advanced a view of universals according to which, at the time when Adam and Eve were the only humans, humanity consisted just of those two humans. So when Adam and Eve sinned, humanity sinned. Humanity was altered because of an alteration in the only existing humans (see Erismann 2007, 222). "Humanity" in that sense, we could say, means human life as it is lived. The ontological assumption behind Anselm's view is that universal mankind is immanent in its particulars in a double sense: first, the universal exists when and only when it is instantiated; second, any alteration in the particulars entails a corresponding alteration in the universal.

Such an immanentist view might be applied to types and their tokens. The letter "s," considered as a type, can be thought of as existing only in its tokens, and as changing over time as its tokens change: for example, in English it was written differently (as the so-called long "s") in the middle of words until about 1800.

Such a treatment, if applied to musical content, would imply that the types which constitute it exist only derivatively on their audible tokens, and these types can vary according to the spatial and temporal variability of the music's sound-occurrences. Thus, we might say that there is the Prague *Don Giovanni* of Mozart's day, and the Vienna *Don* of Mozart's day, in contrast to the *Don* of Victorian London and the *Don* of Kierkegaard's Copenhagen, etc.—somewhat in the way that an immanentist view of recipes might maintain that paella exists only in its different versions, "the Valencia paella" versus "the Manila paella," etc. According to this way of thinking, the work itself— or the recipe itself—is no more than the sum of all its occurrences.

Take the case of a folk song. Folk songs are not eternal existents. Nor are they initiated types if they have no composer. Let us suppose that the song has no known composer. No recording of its first singing has been made. The song has no authoritative score. There is no unbroken tradition of reliable custodians preserving the song in its proper form. Thus, the song has not been fixed in the way that a symphony is fixed by the determinations of its composer and publisher. The song, it seems, is an evolving historic individual. But let's suppose there is a practical way of ensuring within tolerable limits that it is the same song that is being sung from one performance to the next. In that sense *it* is performable.

The conception of a musical content that is yielded by taking types to be immanent is different from Dodd's minimal conception of musical content, and also different from the conception of a musical work as fixed and performable. But it does share the feature of performability with musical works.

IV

Thinking of types as immanent, while it may satisfy a desire to keep types firmly tied to their tokens, also generates a problem. It seems to leave a gap where the account of types as eternal or as initiated by composers provided a single type as a stable anchor for the fluctuating multitude of tokens. Now, in the case of musical content like a folk song we may not feel a need for anything to fill this gap, but in the case of musical works like symphonies, we do. Can an immanent account name anything stable in the flux of tokens? Yes it can.

The medieval theologians believed that, over and above humankind as it was instanced in individual men and women, there existed the idea of Man in God's mind (Erismann 2007, 212). Similarly, an immanent account of musical content that treats it as existing only in its individual tokens, and as altering in space and time, is compatible with the existence of a single originating act of the composer issuing in a score or other means of fixing the prescriptions for executing properly formed

tokens. Those prescriptions remain unchanged, and remain the measure of the varying performances, in something like the way the divine Idea of Man was supposed to remain as a constant measure of the realization of that Idea in individual men and women. Even though we can understand the composer's prescriptions—or God's plan for Mankind—we are not obliged, as immanentists, to treat their content as itself enjoying an unchanging transcendent existence. The prescriptions *point to* an ideal performance—which is their intentional object—but that does not mean that in pointing to it we are committed to its existence. So we can imagine an ontology that combines an *immanent* account of works (works-as-they-are-done) with an *idealist* account of works as they are supposed to be done, where the latter carries no ontological commitment.

Perhaps it is a view of this sort that is being advanced by Joseph Margolis (1999, 90-91) when he writes about the "evolving nature" of a play such as *Hamlet*:

> Familiar philosophical canons…presume that natures are fixed or nearly fixed in the way 'natural-kind' discourse requires….But art-works, like human selves, are better thought of as histories….

This sort of account can be understood in such a way as to explain our intuitions about musical *works* like symphonies, provided that we distinguish between the work as it is tokened historically and the work as it should ideally be tokened, and provided that our talk of the musical work as it should ideally be tokened is understood simply as identifying what is ideally required of tokens, not as denoting an idealized token as an entity. This last consideration seems to have been the way C. S. Peirce (quoted by Brennan 1991, 919) was thinking of types when he argued that a type does not *exist* but that existence is supposed to conform to it. As Guy Rorhbaugh (2007, 179) remarks, "Peirce's distinction is semantic and not metaphysical."

An immanent/ideal ontology of types recognizes the ideality of musical works—a feature which Goehr (2007, 101) considers essential to a satisfactory theory of musical works:

> …talking about ideals forces us to look at the historico-conceptual foundations of practice in a way the traditional search for identity conditions for musical objects does not.

The particular form which the ideality of musical works takes in this ontology consists in the composer's prescribing what ideally is to be done in performance. Now, to say that the composer prescribes what is to be performed is to say more than that those types are

norm-types. Merely to say that something is a norm-type gives no ground for its normativity, whereas to say it is prescribed by the composer grounds its normativity in the determinative acts of the composer. Thus, this ontology of types meets the requirement of fixity.

It also meets the requirements of performability. On any account of types as immanent, the type is built up from its tokens as they emerge over time; so it cannot but be performable.

However, this ontology seems to be open to the same sort of objection that we considered earlier in relation to the ontology of initiated types, namely that it postulates the existence of bogus entities. An immanent type accompanied by a composer's act of prescription is no less gerrymandered as an entity than is an eternal type accompanied by a composer's act of initiation.

<div align="center">V</div>

Let me therefore return to this problem of gerrymandered entities. I think it should be admitted that, from a metaphysical point of view, the composer's initiation or prescription of a type, though it does set up a new relationship between composer and type, does not bring a novel entity into existence, and that the concepts of a type-as-initiated and the concept of a type-as-prescribed are indeed both metaphysically gerrymandered. But I also think that all cultural concepts are gerrymandered. The question is what significance should be attached to this gerrymandering.

To say that a certain musical content is an initiated or a prescribed type denotes a relationship that is similar with the relationship of the subject and predicate in the clause "a slave is a man." In both cases, the predicate gives the subject an ontological category, but the subject is constituted only partly by that category; it is also partly constituted by an incidental relationship—the relation of enslavement, or the relation of composition. A slave is essentially a man; but in the sense in which a slave is essentially a man, the slave is not essentially a slave. Nothing is essentially a slave. And even if a composition is essentially a sound-type, the composition is not essentially a composition, nor is anything essentially a composition. Of course, it is necessary *de dicto* that a symphony is a symphony; but it is not true *de re* of the type that is a symphony that *it* is necessarily a symphony. Just as it is not true *de re* of the bronze that has become a statue of Hermes that it is *essentially* a statue of Hermes, it is not true *de re* of the eternally existing type that is now a symphony (thanks to the composer's intervention) that it is *essentially* a symphony. Nor is it true of the evolving set of sound-events tokening a symphony that they *essentially* token a symphony. The composer might never have intervened. If he had not done so, and if those tokens still happened to occur, they would not be tokens of the symphony. By contrast, a sound-sequence is essentially a sound-sequence. From a metaphysical point of view, the

concept of a slave, or a musical work, is gerrymandered; or, as Aristotelians would say, these concepts represent accidental unities.

Following Aristotle's approach (*Metaphysics* H6, 1045a8-25; H2, 1042b15-1043a1), we could say that an abstract type and its being composed form an accidental unity but not a mere heap; rather, they form a unity in the sort of way in which a piece of wood and its position over a doorway form a unity when the wood becomes a lintel. Just as the wood's potential for use as a lintel gets actualized when the wood is put in the right position, the type's potential for use as a musical work gets actualized when the type is fixed in a form usable by practical musicians. The type-token ontology of performance and work is a determinable structure which must be further determined in order to be actualized; and some ways of actualizing this structure open up artistic possibilities which the talented composer identifies and fixes in a usable form.

The composer may not have brought a new entity into being; but the composer's intervention has genuinely initiated something. Prior to that intervention, the concept of the sound-type-as-initiated or prescribed (gerrymandered though it is) cannot have had instances; after the intervention, it can have instances. An instance of this concept occurs whenever a token of the sound-type occurs, *the composer having indicated or prescribed that type*.

Slaves are men, and they also stand in a relation of subjection to other men. Accordingly, there are different disciplinary standpoints from which we can study slavery. On the one hand, we can study slaves simply insofar as they are men—adopting the standpoint of human biology for example. On the other hand, we can study slaves insofar as they are subjected to the dominion of others—adopting the standpoint of political science. But it would be unreasonable to conclude that one of these disciplinary standpoints is incompatible with the other. Equally, it is unreasonable of Goehr (2007, 86) to conclude, in the case of the study of music, that there is an "incompatibility between the theoretical demands of identity conditions and the phenomena to be accounted for."

It would be unreasonable for a student of slavery to insist that because slaves are essentially men we should restrict our researches to the study of their humanity and leave aside all consideration of their subjection to the power of others. Equally unreasonable is the insistence of some musical ontologists on confining their researches to the "ontological category" of musical works, leaving aside all artistic considerations. A proper study of music and musical works needs to take account of their historical and artistic specificities as well as their ontological status.

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THE PHILOSOPHER AS ROMANTIC WANDERER: AN EKPHRASTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH'S PAINTINGS

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Caspar David Friedrich was the quintessential Romantic figure, portraying the Sublime in his landscape paintings. The Romantic period, particularly in Germany, England, and France, was characterized by the full development of aesthetics as a separate branch of philosophy. The terrible Sublime was contrasted with the more formal elements of Beauty. In this paper, Dr. dela Cruz similarly compares the inarticulable aesthetic sensibility and the more formal method of logical analysis, underscoring her own transition from philosophy to creative writing. She provides a philosophical analysis of what picture theorists call the "visual metaphor" in Friedrich's key works, in particular "The Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog" and "On the Sailingboat." Her engagement with these works takes the form of a creative piece—an ekphrastic poem—integrated in a philosophical paper, which is also simultaneously about the aesthetics of that literary form.

STUMBLING UPON MY INNER ROMANTIC

The tableau is dominated by the blue of water and the indigo of night. The moon, whose lower half is partly hidden by dark clouds, illuminates the sky—whose pale yellow tint follows the contours of an inverted triangle. Silver flecks adorn the surface of the peaceful waters, on which two ships are floating near the shore. In the foreground, three human figures are perched on a large, rounded rock, gazing into the horizon. Behind them there are more rocks, rising mound-like from the beach and crowding it.

Looking at *Moonrise by the sea* [1822] for the first time in an art book (see Fig.1), I felt what Caspar David Friedrich—or so I learned—often conveys in his works: stillness, contemplation. And above all, a disquieting

freedom. I realized, *this is me*. Or rather, this is a picture of my inner world, where I prefer to live.

When we are intuitively drawn to a particular creative work, say a painting, a poem, a novel, or a musical piece, it is usually because of a sensibility—sometimes stretching centuries into the past—that fits our emotional world. I say "emotional" because reason cannot completely verbalize what blossoms in the mind that beholds art. Often in such cases, we lack the words or concepts to describe the topography of our inner journey toward the Self, or "God" if you will. This is an essential Romantic premise. Until I embarked on my research, I did not even realize that the sensibility had a specific name, or that in a sense, I had an inner Romantic.

Fig. 1 - *Moonrise by the sea* [1822][1] by C. D. Friedrich

Friedrich was a 17th-century landscape painter whose works typify the German Romantic spirit. For a long time, I've been using what is probably his most famous picture, *The wanderer above a sea of mists* [1818], in my philosophy classes. One might recognize it on the cover of the Barnes and Noble Classics edition of *Thus spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche. This painting has been interpreted as the quintessential image of the human being's fundamental aloneness or individuality. However, soon after I tell my students who the artist is, his name inevitably dissolves in my mind. It was not until I came across *Moonrise by the sea* that I consciously set out to explore Friedrich's life, art, and philosophy.

His vision speaks to something in my own core. In fact, the themes that I gleaned from some of his representative works echo the ideas of my favorite philosophers: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus. Serendipitously enough, this sensation of coming home helped ease my

feeling of alienation and division, at a time when I was—and still am—transitioning from philosophy and into literature and creative writing.

I have been in philosophy for more than a decade, since I first majored in it in college. I teach it now in both the graduate and undergraduate levels, and the bulk of my published writings addresses its issues and problems. *I thought I was happy.* Shortly after I earned my Ph.D. though, I finally had the chance to delve into another field, which I often describe to slightly perplexed friends as "What I have always wanted to do": creative writing.

I have been taking courses on poetry and fiction, and in the course of learning how to think in a literary way, a couple of things crystallized for me. First, I realized that philosophy has never given me the kind of joy that poetry does, the sort of single-minded delight that is associated with the fever of creativity. It has absorbed my every angst, anguish, or anxiety (favored existentialists terms) that originally attracted me to the writings of the existentialists. In poetry, perhaps for the first time, I felt tenuously whole, yet whole nonetheless. Second, I also realized that I have never been wholly into philosophy in the same way that many of my friends and colleagues are, lunging precisely at each other's ideas with their logical rapiers. Indeed, one might grant that this dance of ideas has an aesthetics of its own, on an abstract plane, and some seem to enjoy it immensely.

I, on the other hand, have never liked arguments. Some of the most alienating courses I have ever had to teach or study were logic, critical thinking, analytic philosophy, and various permutations of these. I was attracted to those works that the Anglo-Analytic school had banished into the realms of art and literature. For the mind that loves categorization, the ideas I gravitated to do not properly belong to philosophy. Notably though, these arbitrary demarcations seem to matter only to the camp that maintains them.

This paper is thus an attempt to transcend such restrictive labels. It is a foray into aesthetics as a method in place of logic, its application through "critical feeling," under the purview of a philosophy that privileges synthesis over analysis. Though analysis is important and cannot be completely discarded, it is not my ultimate end here. As in ekphrastic poetry, I want to extend the message of Friedrich's paintings beyond their canvasses and into our lives, our very consciousness.

READING THE VISUAL METAPHOR: A CONCEPTUAL SCAFFOLDING

This tentative venture into the intersection between philosophy and art was prompted by an exercise in my poetry class. We were tasked to write ekphrastic poetry, or "poetry written in response to, or

interpreting, paintings or other works of art" (Brown 1992, 41). Famous in this genre is W. H. Auden's *Musée des beaux arts* [1940], which was inspired by Pieter Bruegel's oil painting of the fall of Icarus, executed in 1558. Auden powerfully describes the indifference of the busy port to the isolated disaster in the water, where we can see Icarus's flailing limbs. Ekphrastic works are not limited to the poetic form; consider for example Tracy Chevalier's historical novel *Girl with a pearl earring* [1999]. It tells a love story based on Johann Vermeer's iconic portrait of a girl.[2]

Fig. 2 - *Landscape with the fall of Icarus* [1558] by Pieter Bruegel

In any case, for our ekphrastic exercise I chose a version of René Magritte's *Les amants* [1928] (see Fig. 3). It depicts two lovers in a passionate and blind embrace even as their heads are swathed in grimy cloth. I began with an epigraph from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and nothingness* (1956, 478) : "...the lover does not desire to possess the beloved as one possesses a thing....He wants to possess a freedom as a freedom." In my head I was already making the connection between facelessness and the unfathomable freedom of consciousness, such that we can never really capture an essence, whether it is our own or the Other's. I thought the painting's message was very Sartrean: We can only love in the dark. We can never yank off the obscuring cloth and name the Other's features in stasis, for to do so is a form of impossible objectification.

Words failed me though, the first time I attempted this ekphrasis. Or perhaps I had the ideas in the language of philosophy, as yet untranslated into the language of poetry. My teacher commented on my clichéd abstractions and suggested that I describe, in living detail, how it must feel like under that cloth. I realize now that the difficulty I encountered with the piece is probably partly due to my philosophical

Fig. 3 - *Les amants II* [1928] by René Magritte

background. Behind me are ten years of living in an abstract house, whose inhabitants have had to master the language of logic. Poetry is an invitation to let go of this old habit of ingesting and regurgitating concepts, to learn to heed the neglected intuition, and to absorb the syntax of metaphor.

Even though much philosophical writing withers on the dead branch of theory, there *are* exceptional works that bloom with images. Plato talks of an underground cave, Albert Camus describes Sisyphus' rock, Nietzsche narrates Zarathustra's descent from his mountain, and Sartre shows us a hellish living room. These literary devices concretize what otherwise would have been transcendental—that is, abstract concepts. These allegories refer, respectively, to the metaphysical division between the ideal and sensible realms; the relation between a mind that seeks reason and a world that does not yield it; the task of redefining morality at a time when the human belief in God has faltered; and finally, the problem of co-existing with other free subjectivities. At first reading, these ideas may seem like stars that you cannot reach out and touch. But when a poetic mind transforms them, they hurtle down, tearing into the atmosphere in a blaze of cosmic insight. This is the indispensable power of metaphor, utilized in art and literature to a much greater degree than it is in philosophy.

Ekphrasis brings together the abovementioned fields by verbalizing, in a creative or literary way, an artistic or visual metaphor that corresponds to a philosophical idea. Furthermore and fittingly enough, as will be explained in the succeeding section, reading the visual metaphor in a painting—as opposed to simply considering its resemblance to reality—first came into common practice with the works of the Romantic landscape painters. It is also around the same time that

aesthetics came to be seen as a major sub-discipline in philosophy, equal to or greater than logic.

John Berger begins his classic text, *Ways of seeing* (1972, 7), with the following statement: "Seeing comes before words." In early childhood the faculty of sight operates before language acquisition. Even before we learn to speak, we are already surrounded by images or visual signs. The visual is thus more primordial than the verbal. Moreover, it can convey more meaning, as illustrated by the cliché, "a picture paints a thousand words."

The interpretation and production of images reflect a person's particular way of seeing. For example, a simple snapshot is already inscribed with the photographer's sensibilities, as indicated by his or her choice of subject matter or the angle of the shot. In turn, how we look at the picture will be partly determined by our own background and upbringing. Perception is already interpretation. "The world-as-it-is is more than pure objective fact, it includes consciousness" (Berger 1972, 11).

In light of the subjectivity of perception, reading art must involve reference to historical, cultural, and personal contexts.

> ...whether we are looking at a Byzantine Icon; a 17th-century Dutch genre picture; Pop Art; a photograph or computer animation, it is the interaction between viewer and object that gives art its meaning and decides the way in which the visual is read. (Arnold 2004, 104)

Furthermore, to read art, or to interpret a visual text, involves the synergy of two levels of human meaning-making: pictures and words. "It is important to remember that art—a visual phenomenon—is described, historicized, and appreciated using words" (Arnold 2004, 90). To appreciate the interplay between the verbal and the visual, consider how art may be read in the same way as a literary text. Mueller (1977, 50-51) enumerates examples of "visual figurative language," which are analogous to figures of speech except they are expressed pictorially. For example, there is irony in Goya's *The madhouse*, where the insane are coolly depicted. Meanwhile, *The treason of images* by René Magritte illustrates visual pun and irony through an image of a pipe above the label, "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" ("This is not a pipe").

Mueller's "visual figurative language" is a precursor to James A. W. Heffernan's more sophisticated notion of the pictorial metaphor. The similarities between reading art and reading a literary text are underscored by Heffernan's pioneering study of ekphrasis in *Museum of words: The poetics of ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. Here he (1993, 3) defines ekphrasis as "*the verbal representation of visual representation.*" It is distinct from two other ways by which literature may intersect with the visual arts, namely pictorialism and iconicity.

Pictorialism mimics through words the effect of pictures, while iconic poetry mimics the shape of natural objects. "What distinguishes those two things from ekphrasis is that both of them aim chiefly to represent natural objects and artifacts rather than works of representational art" (Heffernan 1993, 3).

Thus, ekphrasis as a verbal creative work based on a visual creative work, is a second-order representation of the world. Metaphor runs through both representations. A (Romantic) painting says something about the world in terms of meaningful images; it does not often faithfully resemble a rendered scene. In turn, the ekphrastic work verbalizes and extends the pictorial metaphor.[3]

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SUBLIME

It is the presence of the visual allegory that sets Romantic art apart from other Enlightenment styles, which emphasize the imitation of nature. To understand the reasons for this new aesthetics, let us consider the characteristics of this historical period.

Romanticism spans the years from the turn of the 17th century up to the publication of the "Communist manifesto" in 1848. It is also called the Age of Revolutions, as the lives and mindset of Europeans at the time were shaped by the violent French uprising of 1789 and Napoleon's military excursions throughout the continent. These upheavals led to a general disillusionment with the Enlightenment ideals of reason and the inevitability of progress. Popular sentiment tended toward mystic spirituality, introversion, creativity, and imagination (or the idea of genius), the pairing of reason and feeling, and the notion of the terrible *sublime* as opposed to the formally beautiful (Heath and Boreham 1999, *passim*).

Key Romantic figures include: in Germany, the philosophers Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, and the Schlegels, the poets Novalis and Hölderlin, the landscape painters Runge and Friedrich, and the composers Beethoven and Wagner; in France, the philosopher Rousseau and the painters Géricault and Delacroix; in England, the philosopher Burke, the painters Constable, Turner, and Blake (who also wrote poetry), the novelist de Quincey, the poets Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth, and Coleridge; and in Spain, the artist Goya.

As a system of ideas, German Romanticism may be understood as a development from Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy. In *Critique of pure reason* [1781], Kant describes knowledge as the intersection between the understanding (the mind) and the world. The understanding is equipped with so-called *a priori* concepts, mental categories that come before and are a precondition for it. Kant enumerates twelve such concepts classified into four kinds: quantity, quality, relation, and modality (Kant 1952, 42). Because our perception of the world is always filtered through these structures, there can be no pure knowledge of the world as such.

To escape from the pitfall of subjectivism, Kant resorts to an aesthetic theory that will bridge the gap between consciousness and the world (Bowie 2003, 2). He undertakes this task in *Critique of judgment* [1790], where he (1952, 462) writes that aesthetic tastes correspond to something *a priori* in the mind:

> ...although they do not of themselves contribute a whit to the knowledge of things, they still belong wholly to the faculty of knowledge, and evidence an immediate bearing of this faculty upon the feeling of pleasure or displeasure according to some *a priori* principle....

The mind's inherent sense of what is beautiful is a crucial point, since Kant considers beauty as a property of nature (Freeland 2001, 7). Thus, although the understanding can have no knowledge of the world-as-such, nonetheless we can intuit its essence through our recognition of what is beautiful.

Romanticism differs from Kantian philosophy in that the former has a subjective aesthetics. For the Romantic, beauty is not a property of the external object; there are also no universal or objective standards for it. Moreover, Romanticism places a premium on the sublime, which results from the conflict between classic beauty and its opposite, *terribilità* (Newton 1962, 64).

In *Critique of judgment*, Kant (1952, 495) ascribes formal qualities to the beautiful, and associates formless infinity with the sublime:

> The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes a representation of *limitlessness*....

Furthermore, the beautiful yields positive pleasure and involves charm and playfulness. The sublime on the other hand alternately attracts and repels the mind with a "dead earnest" emotion, thus yielding negative pleasure (Kant 1952, 495).

Edmund Burke (2004, 86) further develops the notion of the sublime in his landmark work, *A philosophical enquiry into the sublime and the beautiful* [1757]:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime;* that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable

of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure.

For Newton, the "proud individualism" of Romantic art lies in its choice of the sublime as its subject matter. This preference may be expressed in any of three moods, each of which is a rebellion against the formal laws of beauty: mystery, abnormality, and conflict (Burke 2004, 64). Accordingly, the sublime may be evoked by depictions of ferocious or wild animals, objects of great dimensions, vastness and infinity, a great height (especially seen from the top), darkness, conflict, and death. Such recurring motifs may be found in the following quintessential Romantic works: *The nightmare* by Henry Fuseli, *The ancient of days* by William Blake, *The execution of the rebels of 3 May 1808* by Francisco de Goya, *The sea of ice* by Caspar David Friedrich, *The raft of the medusa* by Théodore Géricault, *Dante and Vergil in hell* by Eugène Delacroix, *Eruption of the Vesuvius* by Johan Christian Clausen Dahl, and *Peace—burial at sea* by William Turner (Wolf 2007, *passim*).

Aside from the sublime as a favored subject, another element distinguishes Romantic art, in particular, German landscape painting. It is the prominence of visual allegory. To understand the reason for this, let us compare Romanticism with the other movement in Germany that addressed the Kantian gap between consciousness and the world. Represented by the philosophies of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, F. W. J. Schelling, and G. W. F. Hegel, German idealism asserts the dialectical unity of subject and object, or of mind and nature. The world is ultimately perfectly intelligible or rational, because the mind is simply the world thinking itself (Bowie 2003, 9).

From the Romantic point of view, on the other hand, nature cannot be completely known or exhausted by the understanding; it cannot be totally assimilated by consciousness. Any attempt to do so will fail, and this endless failure is expressed as "Romantic longing" (Bowie 2003, 51-52). Predominant in the Romantic landscape canvas is a feeling of wistfulness. As Newton (1962, 205) writes:

> What distinguishes the romantic artist from his fellow lies in the relationship between the image and the visual memory. For the romantic vision invariably insists that symbols of the unseen or the unseeable should become fused with memories of the seen.

Even as art attempts to preserve a vision, there is always something that will be lost. This is the reason for Romantic art's resort to metaphor. Nature's full range of meaning cannot be captured; hence, mere imitation of it will not do. One must turn to figurative expression.

The Romantics' concern with subjectivity and expression in art rather than with accuracy of imitation resulted in a change in the painting-literature analogy in nineteenth-century aesthetics. Artists and poets still insisted on the essential unity of painting and poetry, but this unity was no longer based on the traditional doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*.[4] Rather, it was rooted in the belief that both arts were spiritual and symbolic, bound to the material world, yet imaginative, private, and expressive of that which went beyond the merely physical. (Thomas 1991, 29)

Indeed, as the philosopher Friedrich Schlegel theorizes, allegory has an important role as a filter for the sublime (Bowie 2003, 52). That which cannot be represented as such must be expressed in terms of another thing. In Romantic landscape painting, raised to its fullest potential in Germany by Caspar David Friedrich [1774-1840], the grammar of the sublime includes the following:

First, there is an invocation of the past through images of ruins or graveyards. Previously, these simply signified deterioration, but in the Romantic perspective, they stand for the transience of life and the human being's heroic struggle against the natural force of decay. This inevitable destruction is seen as awesome rather than inconvenient (Newton 1962, 105). Friedrich did many studies of ruins and graveyards, among which are *The abbey in the oakwood, Monastery graveyard in snow, Tombs of ancient heroes, Hutten's tomb*, and *The ruins at Eldena*.

Fig. 4 - *The abbey in the oakwood* [1810] by C. D. Friedrich

Second, the passage of time and our finitude may also be reflected in the "evanescent" qualities of landscape, such as light (Kuzniar 1988, 362). Friedrich executed a series of paintings depicting the different times of day: *Morning, Midday, Afternoon,* and *Evening,* each one distinguished by the quality of light. Meanwhile, in *Woman before the rising sun*, the

case can be made that—notwithstanding the title—the sun is setting because of the ambiguity of light. For the Romantic landscape painter Otto Runge, the pictorial rendition of light "awakens the desire for inner illumination" (Kuzniar 1988, 364). Aside from the varying quality of light, the composition of the figures in the painting may also indicate the passage of time. This is evident in *The stages of life* [1835] (see Fig. 5). It portrays three generations—represented by Friedrich, his nephew, and his young children—watching the sunset. Three ships loom on the sea, their respective sizes or distances from the shore echoing the stature of each human figure.
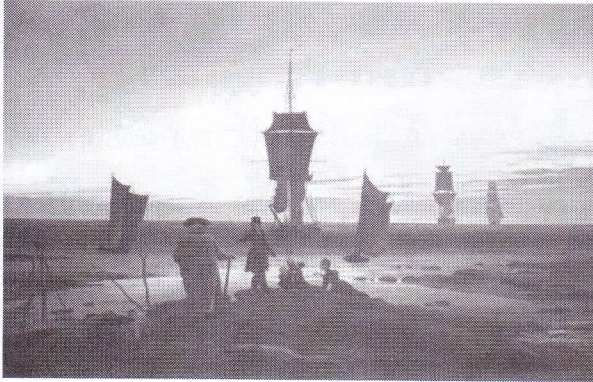
Fig. 5 - *The stages of life* [1835] by C. D. Friedrich

A third characteristic of German Romantic landscape painting is the presence of the divine in nature. Frequently in Friedrich's pictures we may find a cross in the open landscape, for example on a mountaintop or in the snow. Consider *The cross in the mountains (The Tetschen altar), Winter landscape with snow, The cross beside the Baltic,* and *Morning in the Riesengebirge*. The crosses stand for his Protestantism and his disdain for any hierarchical, ritualistic, or Church-centered version of faith. Even in the absence of literal Christian iconography, a work by Friedrich may still allude to his spirituality. In *Man and woman watching the moon,* for example, the moon may stand for Christ and the steep, rocky path for the arduous journey toward God (Piper 2000, 324).

A fourth theme is human isolation in the face of infinity. A quintessential example is Friedrich's *Monk by the sea* (see Fig. 6), in which a small black-robed figure stands on a beach, dwarfed by the ocean. The scene before him is flat and unfathomable, representing the void. Infinity may also be conveyed through heights, as in *Wanderer above the sea of mists* and *Chalk cliffs on Rügen*, or open fields such as in *The source of the river Elbe* and *Landscape in the Riesengebirge*. Significantly, Friedrich's human figures are drawn from behind and practically swallowed by the

landscape. This contributes to the sense of nature's overwhelming silence and vastness.

Fig. 6 - *Monk by the sea* [1809-10] by C. D. Friedrich

A fifth and related theme is subjectivity. As an introverted sensibility, Romanticism sees art as the creative reflection of one's inner states: "reality in landscape lies not in its reflection of nature but in the human mind" (Kuzniar 1988, 362). This is why Friedrich (see Hofmann 2000, 177) famously said:

> The painter should not merely paint what he sees in front of him but also what he sees within him. If he sees nothing within him, however, then he should refrain from painting what he sees in front of him.

Further, as Friedrich (see Hofmann 2000, 271) wrote in his journals:

> The painter's task is not the faithful representation of air, water, rocks and trees, but his soul, and his feelings should be reflected therein. Perceiving the spirit of nature, penetrating, absorbing, and reproducing it with the whole of one's heart and mind: that is the task of a work of art....

Many of Friedrich's images are obviously not faithful renditions of the natural world, instead reflecting what Hofmann refers to as "artistic truth"— to be distinguished from the "reality of nature" (Hofmann 2000, 228). In *The graveyard gate*, for example, the gates that frame the view are unrealistically high. Meanwhile, *The raven tree* is imposing and has inordinately sinister branches. Finally, *Woman at the window* (see Fig. 7) may be interpreted as an allegory about unfathomable nature and the limits of our consciousness. The woman is seen from behind and our view of the outside world is framed by the imposing windows. This is how we see the world: from a confined, and necessarily subjective, vantage point.
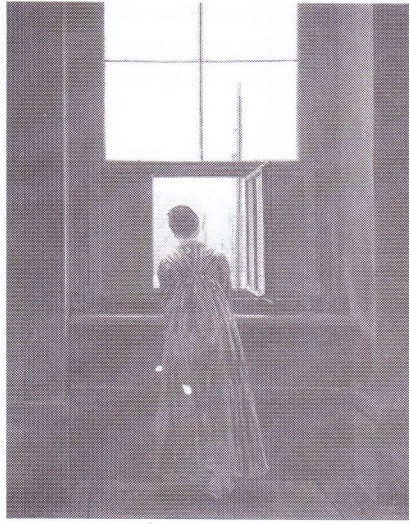
Fig. 7 - *Woman at the window* [1822] by C. D. Friedrich

TWO LETTERS TO THE ROMANTIC (EKPHRASTIC POEMS FOR FRIEDRICH)

In what follows, and in keeping with my main point in this paper about what philosophy can glean from poetry and art, I present two ekphrastic poems on selected paintings by Friedrich. Each is prefaced with a quote from the artist, and the ekphrasis addresses not just the artwork but also his words. In this sense, these are imaginary conversations in which I speak not just to Friedrich, but to anyone who is a Romantic at heart, or who has a Romantic sensibility.

The juxtaposition of the quotes from Friedrich and the artworks is a product of my subjective arrangement. My overall interpretation of each piece thus assumes the inextricability of biography and art. In fact, it is Friedrich's emotional life, as reflected in his paintings, that first attracted me to his work.

I

Fig. 8 - *The wanderer above the sea of mists* [1817-18] by C. D. Friedrich

*I must remain alone and know that I am alone, in order to see
and feel nature completely; I must surrender myself to my
surroundings, unite myself with my clouds and rocks, in order
to be what I am."*

—Caspar David Friedrich
(Hofmann 2000, 60)

I wonder what you see, standing there
your back to me, a pyramid of sharp rocks
under your feet. The solid mass of earth gives way
to the infinity of space, exactly on the spot
where you stand: one foot forward, knee slightly bent,
one arm resting on a walking stick.
The wind ruffles your Teutonic hair.
You mustn't feel the cold; your black overcoat
fits you well, contains the manly awe inside.
Mist unfurls beneath your feet. Here and there,
mountaintops and trees peek through the wisps.
In the farthest limits of vision, there are heights to scale
where the hidden sun bleeds pink into the blue.

I think I might know how it feels,
sometimes anyway, the vertigo that awaits
at the dead center of your life: Where the wind blows
relentlessly and the abyss calls to your own depths.
A place to forget the world, and the human ties we spin
to form the cocoon of self. You see now
this possibility. You have the choice to jump
(or not), to tear the heart's artificial swaddling—

and fly.

II

Fig. 9 - *On the sailing
boat* [1818] by
C. D. Friedrich
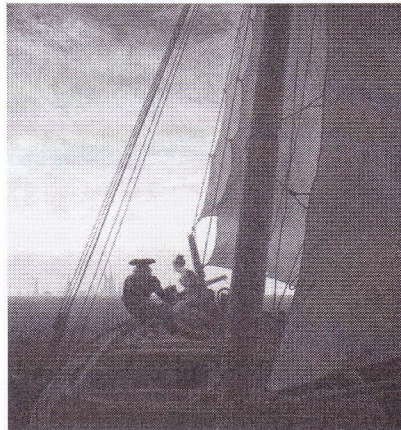
It's a droll business, when a fellow has a wife.... Everything
I do now is always done, and must be done, with my wife in
mind. If I but knock a nail into the wall, it mustn't be as high
as I can reach but only as high as my wife can reach in comfort.
In short, since I became a We, many things have changed....

—Caspar David Friedrich
(Hofmann 2000, 265)

Nothing disturbs us here
even the gentle seesaw of our ship
making love to the water
barely registers. We look at the gray city
silenced by the distance, the black
blue expanse of ocean
marooning us. In the corner of my eye
the great white sail rises
reassuringly, a stabilizing triangle
reminding us of something solid
that will always be behind us.

I pray that there will always be
enough air for the two of us,
that your grave presence will not
drain my space. Other than that,
I am fond of the weight
of your bent leg against my knee,
how you assume
the equanimity of a mermaid
staking your claim on a rock
in the middle of the ocean, making
the only sound I can hear—
inviting me to drown.

I pray that I (no, we) be saved.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN, ROMANTIC POET-PHILOSOPHER

In his introductory remarks in a section about Friedrich Hölderlin, who is arguably the greatest German lyrical poet, Bowie (2003, 82) asks, "Can the literary text say what the philosophical cannot, and what does this mean for that part of philosophy which itself seeks to explain the significance of art?" In emphasizing the pivotal role of aesthetics and

allegory in philosophical thought, this paper harks back to Hölderlin's project. He attempted a synthesis of two ways of thinking, the poetic and the philosophical—a grand endeavor that ultimately drove him mad in his thirties.

A close friend of Schelling and Hegel, Hölderlin was also interested in addressing the subject-object split introduced by Kant's critical philosophy. We've already seen how the dialecticians asserted the unity of mind and nature in a consciousness that gradually comes to know itself over time. However, Hölderlin took a detour into poetry as the only way by which consciousness may come to know the essence of its object.

For the Romantic, neither the mind (as in self-consciousness) nor the world can be known directly. By the 19th century, the Cartesian premise that one can know oneself fully or transparently had already been rejected. As for nature, the Romantics perceived it as ultimately inexhaustible; it will always exceed our powers of knowing. Hence the centrality of the sublime in Romantic art:

> The sublime resulted from the inability of thought to represent the infinite in the sensuous. At the same time the experience of the sublime aroused a sense of the infinite in the subject via the feeling of finitude it produced. In line with Kant, and in contrast to Idealism, Romanticism acknowledges the ultimate philosophical inaccessibility of the absolute but [like Kant]... will not give up the endless attempt to grasp the infinite via the sensuous (Bowie 2003, 51-52).

To overcome the alienating division between consciousness and its object, Hölderlin speaks of poetic individuality. It is a means of reflecting on the self via an external object, in creative relation. In practical terms, we can see this in the ecstatic heights that a work of art—a sonnet, a still life, a sonata—can bring us. Art functions as a revelation that subdues the manic processes of the ego: finally, it has achieved an essential knowing, if only at the moment of creation.

The highest act of reason would, therefore, be the aesthetic act. The only way for consciousness to escape its limiting subjectivity is to transcend itself through art, to apprehend nature aesthetically or to produce aesthetic objects (Bowie 2003, 86).

Significantly, the development of aesthetics as a major philosophical subdiscipline took place in Europe in the mid-18th century, around the time that the Romanic spirit was being articulated.

> The rational scientific idea of knowledge that predominated in the 18th century was that thought was superior to sensory knowledge. It was an extension of Descartes's notion of *cogito ergo sum*—I think therefore I am—humankind's ability to reason made up the core of our being. By the mid-18th century this

hierarchy of knowledge was being challenged....One of the key developments was the appearance of the term 'aesthetics,' a mode of thought that considers sensory perception as equal to rational or logical thought. Logic is based on verbal reasoning, whereas aesthetics is based on the senses.... (Arnold 2004, 77)

During the Romantic period, there were radical transformations in the relationships among art, philosophy, and music (Bowie 2003, 1). *Genius* came to be understood as the nexus of introversion, creativity, and sensitivity. Consider Kant's detailed definition (1952, 546) of it in the following passage:

...genius (1) is a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given, and not an aptitude in the way of cleverness for what can be learned according to some rule; and that consequently *originality* must be its primary property. (2) Since there may also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e., be *exemplary*; and, consequently, though not themselves derived from imitation, they must serve that purpose for others, i.e., as a standard or rule of estimating. (3) It cannot indicate scientifically how it brings about its product, but rather gives the rule as *nature*.... (4) Nature prescribes the rule through genius not to science but to art, and this also only in so far as it is to be a fine art.

The genius Hölderlin wrote his greatest lyrical works in his mid-thirties, after which he had a mental breakdown. He will never recover from it until his death at the age of seventy-three. In an insightful article, Stierling (1970) investigates the possible links between Hölderlin's mental disturbance and his schizophrenia. Here creativity, in particular lyrical creativity, is described by Stierling (1970, 203) as

...the creative person's royal and only road to solving unbearable personal conflicts and dilemmas. It becomes then a by-product of his uniquely personal attempts at conflict resolution that this person creates new meanings and *gestalten*, possibly a new consciousness and new sensibility, and very possibly a new vision of man's inner and outer worlds.

Creativity may lead to either self-healing or self-destruction. For Goethe, it led to the former, while for Hölderlin, it led to the latter. That is the price of genius.

For the philosopher who respects genius, this is my advice: Do not settle for the formal beauty of logic. *Have the courage to strive for the sublime.* We might find either salvation or damnation, but our lives will have been worthwhile if only for the attempt. Philosophy as it is being

done today (or perhaps as it is being done in my milieu) focuses on logic and argumentation. Some may even go as far as to say that these constitute the defining principles of the discipline. Any other kind of thinking that is not oriented toward the solution of a logical problem is not considered philosophy. Any reference to Being or existence, for example, is dismissed as a linguistic confusion.[5]

But what we may learn from the Romantics—who were existentialists before Heidegger and Sartre—is their daring struggle to articulate the confrontation with the infinite. For it is only we as conscious beings who can reflect on the *meaning* of our *existence*, brought about by our sense of finitude. Though it is useful and in a sense indispensable, logic cannot address existence (nor will its practitioners want to). But aesthetics can. Seeing comes before words, as Berger has written.

Let us, therefore, bring back the Romantic apotheosis of the sensual in philosophy, for it is the ground of our being. Everything else, including language itself, is second-order. Let us free ourselves from the tyranny of an exclusionary way of thinking, which dismisses all that is human in our discipline.

On this note, let me leave you with the following words from Caspar David Friedrich's journals (see Hofmann 2000, 270):

> Who would claim to know what alone is beautiful, and who could teach it? And who would set limits to things of a spiritual nature and lay down laws about them? O, you dry, leathery, mundane people, go on thinking up rules! The crowd will praise you for the crutch they provide, but those with a will of their own will scorn you and laugh....

NOTES

1. All paintings here are taken from the Internet.

2. For a discussion of how the ekphrastic imagination helps the human spirit recuperate from tragedy, political upheaval, and even just the numbness from daily living, see "Restoration and creation: The work of the ekphrastic imagination" by Marjorie Evasco (2005).

3. For an intriguing take on how metaphor connects the arts, see "Daedalus and Icarus within: The literature/art/writing connection" by G. L. Rico (1989).

4. This Latin phrase translates to "as in painting so is poetry," which appears in "Ars poetica" ("The art of poetry") by Horace. This work considers painting and poetry as sister arts, since both represent the world. This representation takes place through literal mimesis, a tradition that is antithetical to the Romantic emphasis on symbolism.

5. See for example "The elimination of metaphysics through logical analysis of language" by Rudolf Carnap (1931) and "The elimination of metaphysics" by A. J. Ayer (1936).

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PHILOSOPHY AND IGBO CULTURAL PRACTICES

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Philosophy has many definitions and interfaces, both of which are not mutually exclusive. This assertion is hardly in doubt if one recalls the origin of the various disciplines as we have them today which are grouped either as natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, all of which have a pedigree to philosophy. The truth of our claim here is easily seen in the two senses of the definition of philosophy as a critical activity and as a "way of life." This paper shall attempt to examine the nature of philosophy and its interface with culture and how such interface could enable us to unravel and appreciate better certain Igbo cultural practices.

TWO SENSES OF PHILOSOPHY

There is no doubt that a beginner in philosophy is baffled as to the apparent lack of agreement or consensus among philosophers in the definition of their subject and the presence of a preponderance of recondite questions which philosophers grapple with, most of which can neither be concretized or dramatized, as it were, to the amusement of the ordinary man on the street as he normally would find when a dramatist is on stage performance or when a political scientist is theorizing on the limitations of the presidential system of government and on the ethnic question in African politics. But saying that philosophy is difficult to define is not the same as saying that it is indefinable nor that philosophers do not know or allow certain definitions as characterizing the accurate picture of their subject. Rather it is that the question of the definition of philosophy is bound to provoke some debate among philosophers since they are wary of positing a particular method which can be identified as the philosophical method. "Philosophers, however, do accept certain minimal criteria or standards which should characterize

the subject-matter of their discipline which include as, Oladipo (1999, 19) intimates, providing theoretical frameworks for perceiving, feeling, and transforming reality and for the critical aspect in which philosophy is nothing but a critical theory challenging prevailing descriptions of ourselves; of our socio-political, ethico-religious, and cultural environment; and of providing new options as alternatives.

What emerges from our consideration is that one of the essential hallmarks of philosophy is that it is a rational activity—a critical and conscious effort to understand the universe, its origin, and man's place in it. It is also a critical thinking about the concepts and principles we use to organize our experience in morals, in religion and in social and political life, in law, in psychology, in history, and in the natural sciences (1972, 3).

Besides the technical or academic sense of the definition of philosophy there is the broad or general sense of philosophy in which it means simply as "a way of life" or a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) of a people which encapsulates their fundamental beliefs and views about the origin and nature of the world. In short, the totality of a people's beliefs which express their world outlook (Nwala 1985, 2). In this sense, philosophy is related to culture or at best, a subset of culture since a people's worldview must embody their language, art, religion, myth, behavior, ideas, values, and other elements in the universe of culture. This cultural rootedness of philosophy finds expression in Anyanwu (1983, 35) who, while quoting Florien Znameieki, says that

> The primary problem of all philosophy is the problem of the most general characters of experience and of reflection. For no object matter of knowledge can escape the necessity of being given in individual experience and no theory can escape the necessity of being the product of logical reflection....It is obvious that all philosophies are cultural philosophies.

Here Anyanwu seems to equate his notion of cultural philosophy with reflection and experience of a people on the general notion of culture.

Admittedly this approach finds admirers and represents one of the dominant orientations in the understanding of African philosophy as we shall see shortly, but its acceptance of the fact that different people respond and interpret their experiences, knowledge, etc., with different assumptions, theories, and concepts. Since none of these experiences are similar, they make African philosophy relativistic, parochial, and particularistic. The

interpretations focus more on what differentiates, for example, Africans and Europeans, rather than on what unites them. Again, Anyanwu's approach becomes unrewarding if one takes seriously Wiredu's recent research effort (1996, 20), particularly his formidable work, *Cultural universals and particulars,* where he presents in an unambiguous manner "that there are elements of both particularity and universality in culture, in any culture" which informs that although values vary from culture to culture, the fundamental biological similarities of all human beings resolve the tension between cultural disparities and as such guarantees intercultural dialogue, communication, and international understanding and cooperation.

THE NATURE OF TRADITIONAL IGBO SOCIETY

In understanding traditional Igbo society, one is confronted with several myths and folk ideas pertaining to the origin of the universe—that is cosmology, which explains how everything (including human and nonhuman categories) came into existence. This is not accidental, but in tune with the Igbo culture and worldview—the binocular, as it were, through which the "Igbo see and interpret the world in the various ways in which it manifests itself" (Madu 1992, 145). The point here is given an expanded treatment by Uzodinma Nwala, who has given an inclusive definition of worldview as referring to the "complex of beliefs, habits, laws, customs, and tradition of a people." According to him, "this worldview is enmeshed in the practical life of the people, in particular in the economic political, social, artistic, and religions life."

We have gone this length in order to establish the link between culture and worldview and also to identify some of the basic categories, namely, reality, man, nature, and other supernatural entities that constitute the framework of Igbo culture and worldview. This relationship is stated thus:

> The worldview is the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assent...The worldview lies at the very heart of culture touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture. (Kraft 1979, 53)

The understanding of the Igbo worldview and culture requires a prior knowledge of the principal elements or forces, their interaction, and how the relationship among spirits and human

beings ensures a harmonious existence or ontological balance. The Igbo try as much as possible to refrain from those actions which they consider as *nso ala* or *aru* (taboos or abominations) in order to ensure cosmic and social equilibrium in their community. They can guarantee this by sticking to their *omenani* or *omenala* (customs and traditions). The roles and etiquette contained, in *omenala* serve both religious and moral functions which an average Igbo person cannot fail to observe at his or her own peril since they are "a guide to life" as prescribed by the *ndichie* (living dead or ancestors). It is important to note that the Igbo have several myths of creation depending on the context.' But no matter the context, all the Igbo seem to share the belief that the universe is full of spirits. In other words, there is the spirits world in *Ala Mmuo* and the human world in *Ala Mmad.* And Chukwu, Chineke, Chiokike, or Osebuluwa (i.e., creator) oversees or superintends the whole world including the spirits, men, animals, plants, and other deities or spirit forces.

Omenala ndi, as it is usually called to designate Igbo ways and patterns of culture and tradition, refers to the totality of the customs, traditions, and value-orientations, which define the Igbo world. In other words, *omenala,* according to Nwala (1992, 46), embraces the entire gamut of Igbo wisdom.

One expects to find within the compass of *omenala* such commonsense knowledge of physical objects and everyday codes of conduct governing the behavior and interaction of people, scientific, and empirical views, especially those pertaining to the practice of agriculture, and their general views about the phenomena of life and death. *Omenala* also embodies the Igbo belief about the origin and nature of the universe. The traditional Igbo believe that *uwa* (cosmos, universe, world) is structured in two separate but interrelated parts; namely, *Eluigw* (sky) and *Elu-uwa* or *Ala* (earth). The apparently dual nature of Igbo world also corresponds to the two realms or spheres of existence in Igbo "anthropocentric ontology," viz., *Ala Mmuo* (invisible or supernatural world), which is the abode of the spirits and supernatural forces, and *Ala Mmadu* (visible or physical world), which is peopled by human beings including animate and inaminate objects. According to the Igbo myth of creation, *Elu-igwe,* which is symbolically referred to as *Ala Mmuo*—the abode of Chukwu or Chineke (God) and His spiritual agents—is believed to be beyond human comprehension, although some *Dibia afa* (diviners), *Ndi Eze Mmuo* (priests), *Ndi Okenye* or *Diokpa* (elders and titled Men) claim to be in constant touch and thus communicate with the spirit forces through appropriate sacrifices. The two spheres of existence are not spatially distinct as they are a concatenation of influences

and impacts crisscrossing each other. This point is summarized
by Uchendu (1965, 11-12; see also Edeh 1985, 77; and Mbiti 1969,
75):

> There is the world of man peopled by all created
> beings and things, both animate and inanimate. The spirit
> world is the abode of the creator, the deities, the
> disembodied and malignant spirits, and the ancestral
> spirits. It is the future abode of the living after their
> death. There is constant interaction between the world
> of man and the world of the dead; the visible and invisible
> force.

As we argued above that, though the Igbo conceive of two
worlds—visible and invisible—they still believe that the two worlds
are interdependent and as such the spirit forces that inhabit both
worlds maintain a constant interaction. In other words, it will
amount to a distortion to think that the Igbo world is already
structured or predetermined to move or act according to a natural
order. The point being made here is that the Igbo world is not
static but dynamic with a flurry of activities in the spiritual and
human world. The Igbo are conscious of the fact that their world
is constantly challenged and threatened by natural disasters or
misfortune in the event of breach or infraction of the ontological
balance or equilibrium either through acts of omission or
commission. These acts which offend their *omenala* (customs
and tradition) are regarded as *nso ala* (abomination or taboo).
Such acts that constitute *nso ala* include murder, (*Ochu*), suicide
(*ikwu udo*), theft (*oshi*), killing of sacred animals (*anu arusi*),
incest *(ikwa iko)*, sudden death of a younger person (*onwu ike*),
whether through natural causes or a mysterious way, as when the
person was poisoned (*iko nsi*) since there exist sorcerers (*onyensi*)
and witches (*amosu*), who are reputed for such mischievous and
antisocial acts.

The Igbo abhor and seriously frown at these acts because
they believe that the acts transgress and violate their *omenani* and
the ontological balance or equilibrium in the universe. Apparently
aware of the obvious consequences such acts of *nso ala*
(abomination) will bring to their community, which usually
manifest in the form of calamities and disasters like crops failure,
famine, epidemological cases like small pox, influenza, death
(including livestock), etc., the Igbo engage in propitiatory or
placatory sacrifices (*ichu aja*) to appease their ancestors (*ndichie*)
either to thwart or to reduce the enormity of the disaster on their
communities.

The point we are making here is narrated in Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* (see Madu 1992, 207), where Okonkwo committed various degrees of *nso ala* (abomination) as Okonkwo lost his temper and battered his wife during the week of peace, when such an act offends the gods, but he had to placate the Earth goddess (*ala*) by offering a she-goat, a hen, a length of cloth, and a hundred cowries.

The other incident which was fatal to Okonkwo was the accidental killing of a boy when his gun suddenly exploded as they were performing the funeral rites of Ezeudu. Okonkwo had to go into exile to the neighboring Mbanta (where his mother hailed from), since murder (*Ochu*), whether intentional or unintentional, constituted *nso-ala*. The fleeing of Okonkwo into exile did not stop the burning down of his building and destruction of his economic trees by his clans people, all in fulfillment of the dictates of their *omenani*. Okonkwo eventually committed suicide, an act considered as *nso-ala* by the Igbo, and was buried by strangers from another community in a shoddy and undeserving manner for a man of Okonkwo's stature, who brought fame to Umuofia. Below is the ontological hierarchy of forces that should be in harmonious existence:

Chukwu, Chineke	God
Mmuo, ndichie	Spirits
Mmadu	Human being
Umuanu, osisi	Animals, plants
Okwute, aja, igwe	Stone, sand, iron

OGBANJE (ABIKU) AND ILO-UWA IN IGBO BELIEF

Central to the Igbo worldview is the belief in *Ilo-uwa* (reincarnation) and *ogbanje* (repeater child or born to die). Reincarnation is understood here as "the theory that when the soul separates from the body at death, it informs another body for another span of earthly life" (Onyewuanyi 1996, 16).

The ground of the Igbo belief in reincarnation can be seen from their belief in the immortality of the soul; the bifurcation of the world (*uwa*) into two, namely, spiritual world and physical world, and again the need to maintain a kind of reciprocal interdependence between the dead ancestors and the living. This interdependence is reflected in the names they give to their children who are believed to be reincarnates or alter ego of their departed ones. Such names like *Nna-m* (my father), *Nne-m* (my mother), *Nna-Nna* (father of his father), *Nne-Nne* (mother of her mother), *Ogbonna* (father's namesake), *Ogbonne* (mother's namesake),

Nnaemeka (father has done well), *Nwuye-m* (my wife), *Dim-m* (my husband), and so on. Although the author [i.e., Udefi] is from Enugu (Wawa subculture), the dialectical variations are inevitable because of the existence of many subethnic groups in Igboland. However, the central and southern Igbo orthographies are used interchangeably in this essay. In Yoruba, such names as *Babatunde* (father has returned) and *Yetunde* (mother has returned) demonstrate their belief that their dead ancestors are capable of returning to life or to the physical world, just like the Igbo.

Now, going by the definition of reincarnation given above, it is not proper to say that namesakes in Igbo can be regarded as a form of reincarnation. In Igbo a child may be named after his/her parents and such child or person is usually regarded as Ogbo-m (my namesake). Although the ritual process of pronouncing the child's name by the *Dibia afa* (native doctor) is the same whether the child's parent(s) are living or dead, the difference lies in the recognition that no transition or journey from *Ala Mmadu* (human world) to the *Ala Mmuo* (spirit world) has taken place. We need not go into the controversial problems and paradoxes inherent in the African (Igbo) belief in reincarnation, one of which is the problem of individual identity. But notwithstanding the apparent contradictions in the Igbo belief in reincarnation, it seems to satisfy certain socio-psychological and moral functions for them because apart from bringing them closer to their dead ones, it assures them that the filial umblical cord is not permanertly severed even in death. Again it makes the living to lead a morally upright life in strict observance of the *omenani* (custom and tradition) of the people while refraining from *nso-ala* (abomination and taboo) because of the calamitous consequences to the individual and the community as a whole. One of these consequences is that the individual offender may not be able to return to life through reincarnation. This point is well stated by Chegwe as quoted by Madu (1992, 261) when he says,

> Life becomes a theatre with reincarnation as the unique entrance and death a natural escape gate. Every living person is conceived as having been introduced into the drama of life through reincarnation and must quit the scene when the drama is over through the one and only exit, death. But only to return to life on earth for another act with different scenes.

As it is discussed above that one of the justifications for the Igbo belief in reincarnation is the desire to preserve their community through observance of its *omenani* and the avoidance

of *nso-ala*. Naturally, everyone would want to reincarnate after life, since it is the popular belief of the community, but such aspiration may be frustrated by indulgence in acts of *nso-ala* leading eventually to a permanent severance of the ancestral life cycle, or filial bond between the living and the dead no matter how wealthy or famous the person was during his lifetime. The way the community pays those who committed *nso-ala* is, if they remained unrepentant and failed to perform *mkpucha aja* (cleansing sacrifice), either through an imposition of sanctions and ex-communication or given a shoddy or truncated burial ceremonies when they die like a chicken. The Okonkwo example in Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* as discussed above reflects this attitude of the Igbo towards *Omenani* breakers.

The Igbo classify this kind of *onwu* (death) and those of *ogbanje* as *ajoo onwu* or *onwu ojoo* (bad death) as different from those who die of natural causes *onwu chi* (good death). The latter kind of death attracts some elaborate *ikwaozu* (burial and funeral rites) and is usually highly celebrated by the Igbo because they consider the dead person as of ripe age and without blemish and as such he/she is accorded all the necessary customary burial and funeral rites for a smooth passage or transition to *Ala Mmuo* (spirit world) where other *ndichie* (ancestors) reside. This is also accompanied by the Igbo burial rendition (see Metuh 1999, 170):

> *Onwu, onwu, onwu*
> *olawala n'ebe osiribia n'uwa*
> *Chukwu akporoga ya*

> (Death, death, death
> He/she has gone home from where he/she came into the
>   world
> God has taken him/her)

The former, that is, *ajoo onwu*, including those who committed suicides, theft, struck by lightning (*Amadioha*), and *ogbanje* are denied all burial and funeral rites described above. Although some scholars like, Ikenga Metuh, may classify *Ogbanje* as belonging to *Onwu Ekwensu* caused by *Akalogoli* (evil spirits), the Igbo attitude to them in terms of the burial rites is the same with those classified as *ajoo onwu* since no tradition of *Ikwa ozu* is observed. This point is reinforced by Ikenga.Matuh (1999, 173) when he says,

> Such people are not mourned or buried in their homes
> but thrown into bad bush, ajoo ohia. There is no formal
> announcement of the death and people go about their

normal business...because the privilege of Ikwa ozu, full funeral rites, is denied them.

The *Ogbanje* (*abiku* in Yoruba) phenomenon (i.e., born to die) in Igboland has proved something like a jigsaw philosophical puzzle to both the Igbo and ethnographers. The Igbo believe that a child between the ages of one and twelve years who dies early or has no sickness at all belongs to the category of *Ogbanje*. However, they exclude cases of children who die as still birth and of deaths caused by premature birth. That is to say that before the Igbo pronounce a child *"Ogbanje,"* they would have watched the child's behavior right from day one and if they notice some strange or unusual manifestations, like scars, marks, even frequent and nagging illness, or incredible beauty, then they have every reason to believe that the child is *ogbanje* and may not live. Assuming the child eventually dies, then their belief stands confirmed. And a child that dies in this way is not usually given a sanctified funeral but a ridiculed one. Hence no form of weeping and wailing by the family is allowed, even though they are bound to be sorrowful and nurse a deep sense of loss. It is some sort of painful joy, a triumph over a supposedly encumbrance. All this is done, apparently to deter the particular child from coming back again in that form.

RESTATEMENT OF VIEWS

Let us restate the views of the two main orientations broached above and then relate their intellectual programmes to the understanding and critical reconstruction of Igbo cultural practices as discussed above.

The insights offered by Wiredu's work cited above are interesting and very apposite, particularly in the reconsideration of the preoccupation and controversies that surrounded the establishment of African philosophy as a distinct academic discipline in African universities championed by the two dominant orientations, namely, the traditionalists and universalists. Whereas the traditionalists accept a more "culturally-bound view of philosophy, the universalists adopt a universalist view of philosophy," accepting, as it were the methodological criteria including criticism, analysis, conceptual clarification, etc., which define philosophy globally. The understanding of philosophy and what it can do for Africa by the universalist group is eloquently expressed by Wiredu (1982, 41):

The function of philosophy everywhere is to examine the intellectual foundations of our life, using the best

modes of knowledge and reflection for human well-being.

For them, African philosophy cannot be descriptive and communal thought of Africans characteristic of the intellectual programme of the traditionalists. On this, Hountondji (1982, 41) remarks:

> ...if we accept that no science can exist historically without an explicit discourse, then by the same token we must regard the very idea of unconscious philosophy as absurd.

What can be gleaned from the intellectual enterprises of these two orientations is a certain "commitment of African welfare and predicament" as it is observed in the explicit expressions of the traditionalists where we notice a strong resolve borne out of nationalist urge "to provide some endogenous basis for the development of an authentic African philosophy" (Oladipo 1996, 420) free from the encumbrances of Euro-American categories and cultures. In the case of the universalists, there is also a strong commitment "to protect the disciplinary integrity of philosophy, generally construed along the lines of Western paradigms, which is taken as valid for all cultures" (Jay 1999, 12-13) irrespective of race, geography, and sociohistorical circumstances. But perhaps the dispute between the universalists and particularists which has lingered on for a long time now may after all be an unnecessary hair splitting academic exercise since it is difficult for someone to claim to be a thoroughgoing universalist or particularist without his affirmative beliefs or assumptions crisscrossing or overlapping with what he denies or disavows. This point is noticeable in Bodunrin and in Wiredu whose universalist credentials are not in doubt. Bodunrin (1991, 64) asserts that

> Philosophy must have the same meaning in all cultures...(although) the subjects that receive priority and the method of dealing with them may be dictated by the cultural biases and the existential situation in the society within which the philosophers operate.

Similarly, one finds in Wiredu a tendency towards a harmonization of the cultural universals and particulars as both elements feature in any conceptual scheme since, according to him (1996, 22), all human beings whether Africans, Europeans, or Asians are united by "our biologico-cultural identity as *homines sapientes*."

Even Onyewuenyi (1976, 521), a member of the traditionalist or particularist group believes that philosophizing is a universal experience, and "every culture has its own worldview...what is generally agreed about philosophy is that it seeks to establish order among the various phenomena of the surrounding world."

Besides this, it seems that there is no rigid or watertight distinction between the broad and technical sense of philosophy as it is now shown that one shades into another in varying degrees. Just as it can be argued that the apparent difference between the intellectual programmes of the universalists and particularists is considerably bridged since the critical or analytical African philosopher must take seriously the basic beliefs of his people who seem to take for granted the ordinary everyday facts of their experience without raising any questions. Hence, the task of the critical African philosopher is to attempt to "provide a rational basis for our beliefs and the conceptual schemes we use to express them." This point chimes with what Wiredu (1995, 3) calls "self-understanding in contemporary Africa," which requires contemporary African philosophers to go into a critical and reconstructive engagement with our heritage of traditional thought and socio-cultural practices, with a view of determining their significance for contemporary African life. Wiredu's position is reverberated in Gyekye (1997, 5) when he says,

> Philosophy is essentially a critical and systematic inquiry into the fundamental ideas or principles underlying human thought, conduct and experience ideas... relate to the various aspects of human experience to the origins of the world, the existence of God, the nature of the good society...

It is expected that certain basic beliefs as revealed in myths, folktales, proverbs, song, dance, and the like, as abstracted from the social and material structures of traditional societies should constitute the raw data for the critical African philosopher. It is in this regard that we examine an Igbo cultural practice with the hope that it serves as a rich resource for the critical African philosopher for reconstruction and theorization.

CONCLUSION

Let us tie together the basic thrust of our argument in this essay. The dispute, which essentially is methodological, between the traditonalists (ethnophilosophers) and universalists (analytic) African philosophers could be bridged if one notices that in their

respective positions, there is an element of traditionalism or particularism and universalism. It is our contention here that there is, as it were, an overlapping consensus or functions in their understanding of African philosophy since the traditionalist would seem to provide the raw materials from the African cultural framework for the universalist or critical African philosopher to work on. A practical demonstration of this is the engagement of the African philosopher to the substantive issues or problematics of the Igbo, such as *Ogbanje* and *Ilo-Uwa*.

Thus, the business of both the traditionalist and the critical African philosophers is to critique and reconstruct the Igbo cultural practices as shown above and similar other practices which many seem bizarre, but which upon analysis will reveal some significant values in the Igbo attempt to understand the meaning of life and their material environment.

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HUMAN DESTINY, REINCARNATION, AND PERSONAL IDENTITY IN YORUBA METAPHYSICS

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In African metaphysics, with special reference to Yoruba thought, human destiny, reincarnation, and personal identity constitute some of the major philosophical concerns. Given that man is trimorphously considered a composite of body (ara), soul (êmi) and inner-head (ori), the last is the metaphysical symbol of human destiny which externally is represented by the physical head. The three elements are classifiable into physical and metaphysical (spiritual) entities with êmi and ori (fate or the alter ego) taken to be immortal. Do these metaphysical entities reincarnate and in what way? This paper tries to show that the problem of personal identity and reincarnation are inconclusively resolved in Yoruba thought.

INTRODUCTION

What do reincarnation and personal identity imply? What is the nature of the self in disembodied existence? What issues are connected with reincarnation and personal identity in the African metaphysical conception of a disembodied existence? How soluble, rational, and consistent are the arguments for reincarnation and personal identity in African metaphysics and philosophical psychology taking the Yoruba people as a reference point?

In this paper, an effort is made to examine and evaluate the reincarnation and personal identity problems in the Yoruba conception of man and human destiny. On the whole, it will be argued that these two problems remain insoluble in Yoruba metaphysics. Although the metaphysical relevance and justification of the two issues and of the self in the afterlife cannot be dismissed on empirical grounds, the arguments for reincarnation and personal identity in Yoruba thought constitute a

rational attempt to explain and understand metaphysical realities in a pictorial way.

DESTINY AND THE PROBLEM
OF REINCARNATION

Reincarnation is one of the philosophically interesting issues which arise from the African conceptions of destiny. Generally speaking, reincarnation is understood to mean that the soul of a deceased continues to live and later assumes metaphysically a new body. In this sense, the person who has earlier died is reborn to complete his unaccomplished task or to make amends to his evil deeds in the previous life. Life on earth appears short for an individual to completely accomplish his destiny however long he may have lived. When death occurs to the aged, it is often regarded as a natural and inevitable response to the "final home call." Death is regarded as a transition into eternal bliss. Thus, Epicurus (see Dennis and Freund 1975, 71) conceives of death as something not to be feared since it enhances individual happiness:

> For all good and evil consist in sensation but death is deprivation of sensation. And, therefore, a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable.

The Yoruba people of West Africa derive an overwhelming happiness from the death of the aged, not only for the fact that it guarantees the immortality of the soul but also for the guarantee it gives for reincarnation which seems to enhance the continuation of the previous existence. The continuity guaranteed by reincarnation is fully illustrated by Bolaji Idowu (1962, 194-95) as follows:

> The deceased persons do reincarnate in their grandchildren and continue to live after-life .... according to this system, one grandchild may not have the monopoly of the ancestral *Ori...Yiya omo* can not be taken as establishing a reincarnation in the technical sense. All it appears to establish is the belief in the concrete fact that there are certain dominant characteristics which keep recurring through births and thus ensuring continuity of the vital existence of the family or clan.

In light of the above, it is pertinent to observe that the Africans seem not to subscribe to the technical or the classical conception of reincarnation. As Idowu (1973, 187) puts it:

> In African belief, there is no reincarnation in the classical sense, one can only speak of partial reincarnation

if the word must be used at all. There is the belief in certain areas that ancestors return in one or several children in the family.

However, the traditional conception of reincarnation is of great relevance. It ensures the survival, continuity, and prolongation of the mutual interactions between the ancestors (the departed souls) and the living members of the family. Be that as it may, there are various attempts to justify the reality and the metaphysical significance of reincarnation. The "psycho-biological interpretation" of reincarnation is one of them. According to this view, it is not the soul of the departed ancestor that reincarnates in the new child or grandchild but his characteristic features. P. A. Talbort (1926, 279), for instance, is of the view that it is the personality-soul, that is "the ego" that sends out mental and physical activities at every interval of reincarnation. In confirmity with this view, M. Y. Nabofa (1983, 311) writes:

> It has been said that it is the qualities of the departed ancestors that reincarnate. As the characteristics are spiritual, they could be absorbed or imbibed by as many children as possible...It is the spiritual qualities of the person that are believed to reincarnate but not his *Erhi* which remains in *ervbin* as an ancestor.

The proof of reincarnation from the psycho-biological point of view will be difficult to negate when we consider the validation offered by the science of metempsychosis or neurophysiology. Moreover, the discovery in the science of paranormal psychology further establishes that the spiritual characteristic traits which are often found in children suggest and confirm a kind of genetic transmission from a grandfather or from some other persons in the family lineage, who at one time or other had been insane. But is this exclusive of human race? It is important not to regard the physical resemblances between the new child and the departed soul as a monopoly of the human race. It is a common feature among brutes. It is also a biological fact that animals bear the likenesses of themselves, and the plants, of their own kind. For this reason, John Mbiti (1961, 164) writes:

> Only some human features or characteristics of the living dead are said to be 'reborn' in some children...I suspect that this belief is partly the result of externalising people's awareness of the nearness of their living-dead, and partly an attempt to explain what is otherwise a purely biological phenomenon which applies not only to human beings but also to animals.

What all these interpretations account to is an overwhelming validation of the psycho-biological analysis of reincarnation. Specifically, on what gound can reincarnation be justified in Yoruba thought? What becomes of a person in the afterlife?

To the Yoruba, in the West African subregion, the departed souls have the capacity to reincarnate. This is because reincarnation in Yoruba thought is generally regarded as "the passage of the soul from one body to another...the lot of the soul in each being determined by its behaviour in former life" (Idowu 1963, 194). The Yoruba word for reincarnation is *atunwa*, that is, "another coming." By virtue of *atunwa*, once the deceased moves to the afterlife, he remains there, and his survivors and children will maintain an unbroken intercourse with him until he reincarnates.

This interconnection between the ancestors and the living members of the family is premised on the condition that the departed had spent a glorious life and was of ripe-age before the final "home-call" (*ipe-ikêhin*). Such an ancestor at the point of reincarnation could be in the form of one's grandchildren or great grandchildren, or will have a resemblance with one's brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, nephews, uncles, nieces, and so on (Idowu 1963, 194).

Closely related to this form of reincarnation is what has been regarded as partial reincarnation in Yoruba thought. Partial reincarnation suggests, for example, that a dead man may decide to resume another chapter of life in an area remote from the place he was fully known. In this new place, he may marry, bear children, and build houses. He may start a business and carry out new ventures to continue a new passage of life until he dies again or migrates to another place whenever his whereabout has been discovered or detected by any of the people who knew him in his former life. Admittedly, this form of reincarnation is not as popular as the two earlier mentioned.

At this juncture, the question arises: what part of the self is liable to reincarnate? Is it the soul, the alter-ego, or something else? There are diverse opinions on these questions. According to A. O. Echekwube (1997, 167-83), "It is the physico-psychological characteristics of the self that reincarnate." In his view, it is not the entire spirit of the deceased that reincarnates in the new baby. Rather, it is only some of his spiritual qualities that reincarnate. He maintains that the "spirit per se" remains in the ancestral world while the physico-psychological features of it are reborn in one or several children. For the Yoruba, the element that reincarnates is the soul which is normally regarded as the categorical basis of life. What makes a soul symbolic in this sense is pertinent to mention. According to the Yoruba immortality theory, every soul has a cycle of sixteen rounds of incarnations after which the soul is due to start a fresh round again. Makinde (1983, 50) in this regard writes:

There is a theory that a person comes back to life sixteen times from the time of his first restful death, either as a

human being, or as an animal. If he was a good person, he comes back as a good person; if a bad person, his soul may be put into that of a goat or other animal, at least for the time being.

While we cannot determine how long the soul of a person remains in any form other than that of a man, yet there are various ways of determining the proper reincarnation of a person. Names like *Babatunde* (the father has returned), *Iyabë* (the mother is back to life again) as well as those names usually given to children by parents who suffered repeated death at infancy as, for instance, *Malëmë* (Don't die again), *Kokumë* (Born not to die again) and *Êmëbë* (the child is back), are usual indicators to determine reincarnational transformations into persons. Although all these names may look like guess work, various instances, however, stand to confirm their realities. Apart from *Ifà* liturgy through which the people can know whose form or identity a particular child is representing, a newly born child with the repeated marks on him at the time he first came to life will confirm the reality of his previous existence. Besides, there are other criteria for identifying or knowing a reincarnated person. Among them are the ability of the child to display the family traits; the physical resemblance; and the "memory transfer" where the child can cite some significant events of the past. Not all cases of family resemblances, however, can be regarded as evidence of proper incarnation. This is because not only do children resemble their ancestors, they also often carry both the physical and mental features of their living parents. The African belief in reincarnation might be an attempt to explain partly an otherwise purely biological phenomena applicable not only to humans but also to animals. Nevertheless, it is a fact that in some other cases, those children believed to be a reincarnation of the departed family members often do not only possess the physical and mental features of the deceased but also their moral, emotional, and intuitive features.

The validity of the "memory transfer" for identifying a reincarnated soul is often premised on the ability of the child born into the family to recollect and restate historical antecedents prior to his time. On the basis of this exposition, it is pertinent to state that the doctrine of reincarnation in Yoruba metaphysics suggests some fundamentals. Firstly, it suggests the Yoruba attempt to show that the soul of the departed does not go into oblivion. Secondly, the doctrine appears to reinforce the expectation that death is not the end of life but the reassurance of life in *continuum*. Reincarnation in Africa as portrayed in Yoruba thought may appear metaphysico-religious, yet the analysis of the concept is rational and consistent with the metaphysical explanation of nature and of human personality. However, we may ask in what way is reincarnation connected with *ori* or human destiny?

In the first place, there is a general tendency among Africans, as in Yoruba thought, that the reality of reincarnation revolves around man's

destiny. For example, the popular Yoruba belief that *ori* knows from preordination the fate of each individual; those destined to wear a crown, build a house, succeed in business; and those destined to marry or have children. This usually leads to the prayerful wish: "*Ori wo bi rere gbe mi si, ori êni ni I °e wa fun ni*" (*Ori* sports a good place for me, it is the head that fetches us fortune). In another vein, the expression: "*Ori mi gbe mi, ori inu mi ma ba tode jê*" (Save me my head, my inner-head, and do not destroy my outer-head), demonstrates that the alter-ego (*ori* or human destiny) or one's spiritual head in heaven (inner-head) has the liberty to influence the physical head (outer-head) when it eventually reincarnates. Also consider the expression: "*I°ê ori ran mi mo n °e, ëna ti ori yan fun mi ni mo n të*" (While *ori* sends me the message to run, it is the path which *ori* lays for me that I follow). From these assertions, we conclude that *ori* does not only reincarnate but it also has the metaphysical nature of transforming itself into the external symbolic reality we call the outer-head (the physical head).

It can be observed that the concept of death in African thought in general and among the Yoruba in particular provides an opportunity for every individual in heaven to redefine or remodify his goal in life. Death, in this connection, is never seen as a finite end of man. It is the opportunity for the individual to repredestine his will and subsequently come back to life with a better preordination. The expression, "*Igba ti m ba pada bë l'aye, ki n pada bë pêlu ori 're*" (May my coming back to life be endowed with a better and fortunate head) reveals this. However, at the point of reincarnation, one may not eventually reincarnate with his previous *ori*. It is important to note that while man's *ori* constitutes an important metaphysical component that determines man's destiny, we should also note that it reincarnates in the same way as the soul. Hence, the reincarnation of a soul into a good new life is just a potentiality. For the reincarnated good soul to accomplish its goal, it needs to choose a good *ori* or destiny. Otherwise, the intent of the reincarnated just soul will be hindered. The point is that the reincarnation of any soul is predicated on the choice of the appropriate *ori*. While the *ori* cannot reincarnate all alone by itself, the soul cannot also reincarnate without an appropriate *ori*. As Makinde (1983, 44) rightly observes: "Whatever the good kind of *ori* a reincarnated soul chooses, an earthly intervention by some *wilful maleficia* such as the devil, the withches and all sorts of evil spirits and even human beings, may hinder the course of his growth toward the desired good and just life."

From the preceeding discussion, we can say that the *ori* plays a prominent role in determining the future of a reincarnated soul in Yoruba philosophical psychology. One such role is that the *ori* is built into the system of reincarnation to help the person sail through the difficulties of life. In order to do this, individuals pray that their "coming back" (*atunwa*) be blissful and endowed with the proper reincarnation of the soul and of the good *ori*. What is not clear is whether Ajalërun,[1] the Yoruba Almighty God, influences the reincarnated soul to choose the

kind of *ori* that is compatible with its nature. This may, however, be necessary to maintain a certain degree of consistency. If the contrary is the case, then it will be problematic to justify the reincarnation of a just soul along with the reincarnation of a nondefective *ori*.

By and large, the component *ara* (the physical body) in Yoruba metaphysics is the only one which does not seem to have a bearing with reincarnation. At death, the body is buried. This explains why people may acquire different bodies at the point of reincarnation. *Êmi*, the breadth of life, is a vital spirit which accounts for the immortality of the individual in heaven. It is a product of *Olodumare*, the Yoruba Almighty God.

The soul returns to *Olodumare* to render an account of stewardship on earth after the death of the body. Importantly, *ori*, the symbol and controller of destiny, is the third constituent element, aside from the soul and the body, and it performs a metaphysical function. It presumably leaves the body after death and goes back to heaven where it was originally moulded, waiting to be used again by the soul at another cycle of reincarnation. The emphasis is that at the death of the body, it is only *ori* and *êmi* that do not perish to be reincarnated later.

Both *êmi* and *ori* may not reincarnate with the old or former body. This is indisputable since it is the popular belief and the prayerful desire of the person who chose a bad *ori* at the first coming to be luckier enough to be able to choose a good *ori* in the next life. More often than not, the Yoruba keep on saying that

> *Ki Olodumare °e atunwa mi ni olowo*
> *Ki o °e atunwa mi ni ëlëmë*
> *Ki n ra mëto*
> *Ki n kële*
> *Ki n °e ori re.*

> [At my next coming (reincarnation)
> God makes me rich
> Blesses me with children
> Blesses me with a car
> Blesses me with a house
> Let me be fortunate.]

In short, the vitality of the soul (*êmi*) and of the inner-head (*ori*) remains philosophically significant in the subject of reincarnation.

DESTINY AND THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

One more issue needs to be addressed, and it is the problem of personal identity in relation to immortality and human destiny. In ordinary

life, "bodily continuity" is usually considered a criterion of personal identity. When a person suffers from amnesia or is not able to recognize anything, his bodily continuity still provides the basis for recognition or personal identity. Even when he suffers a "sudden personality-change," he still remains the same person, not minding the psychological changes that have taken place in him. As long as the changes, no matter what, are still occuring in the same person, he still maintains his personal identity. Every believer in the doctrine of immortality holds that the ability of the soul to survive bodily death and the continuity of human consciousness should be the focus on the reality of personal identity. The reason for this criterion is that in the post-mortem existence, there will no longer be a body to establish the identity of a person. In fact, the question of bodily existence will be totally irrelevant in spiritual existence. It does not matter whether the body is burnt to ashes, eaten by beasts, dead or decayed in the grave.

Also, "memory" has often been identified as an important criterion for establishing the identity of a person in spiritual existence. This is normally done in connection with human consciousness. J. Hospers (1981, 414) puts the point this way:

> If consciousness in some way survives bodily death, it could not in the absence of memory be called consciousness of the same person, the person would have to remember his existence prior to his bodily death.

But we should recognize that memory and human consciousness are not sufficient to validate the identity of a person in his disembodied existence. For instance, it can be argued that there is no guarantee that the consciousness that survives bodily continuity in heaven is the consciousness of the same person. The "memory" which appears to imply an experience of personal identity raises the problem that there should first be a personal identity before there can be experience of personal identity. Indeed, memory as a criterion of personal identity gives the impression of putting the cart before the horse. At this juncture, we can ask: How do the soul and human destiny relate to personal identity in traditional Yoruba thought?

As far as the question of personality is concerned, not only must we be able to identify all the components of a person [the "body," the "soul," and the "head" (*ori*—the symbol of human destiny in individual selves here on earth and in the afterlife)], we must also be able to identify these human components as belonging to the same person other than ourselves both here and the afterlife. In other words, we must be able to identify a person and establish that he remains the same self both in his physique and in his physical and psychological features. Peter Bodunrin (1975, 38) demands that we must have an agreement on the

notion of a person at the disembodied state of the self. He (1975, 38) suggests that

> To be able to claim that a person survived his death, it ought to be possible to determine whether or not the person that has survived death is the same person that we used to know before his death.

What this criterion presupposes is that there must be the self or the subject to whom we can ascribe both the physical and psychological features peculiar to man with which we can identify him on earth. In short, we are saying that at the disembodied state, the identity of an individual presupposes the continuity and uninterrupted existence of the indivisible thing for which the linguistic pronouns used to refer to that person stand (see Bodunrin 1975, 38). And to speak of a person existing without a body is, indeed, to speak of a part of a person surviving in the disembodied state independently of the other component elements of the self. And if we are to go by John Locke's qualification of the concept of a person as comprising of both body and soul vitally and inextricably united, then the identity of a person in disembodied existence will be difficult to establish. It is far more difficult to establish the identity of a person in the afterlife if we adopt A. J. Ayer's criteria of personal identity (1973, 85) to be the same as those that determine the identity of a person's body and these must conform to the general conditions governing the identity of physical objects of a solid microscopic kind. The criteria that Locke and Ayer recommended presuppose a comprehensive account of personal identity in the afterlife; we must take into consideration psychological attributes like memory and human consciousness as well as the physical characteristics of man. Is this problem resolved in African metaphysics using the Yoruba thought as a point of reference? From a critical point of view, the argument from reincarnation seems not enough to justify the personal identity problem. According to Professor Makinde (1983, 48), a great ancestor, say, a warrior, who had lived a just, good, and famous life may come back to life reincarnated through one of his sons or daughters. This happens, when in some cases, the grown up child tends to portray the biological, psychological, professional as well as the moral traits believed to be similar to the ancestor's that had at one time lived in the family. This illustration does not seem to have resolved fully the fundamental question of what a person is in the afterlife.

Immortality and reincarnation theories undoubtedly attempt to complicate what is actually meant by a "person," especially in the spiritual world. In the Western philosophical tradition, for instance, there is a controversy as to whether a person is either a soul, body, or both. The issue seems more complicated in Yoruba philosophical tradition. For instance, if on earth a person is a composite of the body, soul, and *ori,* and

that he can only be identified with such three elements, then the reduction of the self to merely the spiritual elements of the soul and the alterego (*ori*) in the afterlife compounds the problem. The implication of this is that we still face the difficultty of stating what a person precisely is in the afterlife. Similarly, the possibility of identifying the sameness of the three elements constituting a person on earth in his disembodied existence runs into jeopardy. If this is the predicament, then the identity of a person in the spiritual world becomes an insurmountable philosophical problem, especially in Yoruba metaphysics. The evidences like reincarnation (or *abiku* syndrome), the physico-psychological traits of a reincarnated child, the memory transfer which some wonderful children display at infancy as well as the physical resemblances between a newly born child and a departed ancestor, all lie outside the scope of a disembodied existence. Hence, these cannot justify or resolve the question of personal identity in the afterlife. The reason is that not only do children resemble their living ancestors, they also carry carry the physical, biological, and psychological traits of their living parents (see Ali 1988, 219). In addition, if it is true that at the point of reincarnation the soul can inhabit any foreign body (other than man) as we are made to believe and as it sometimes happens to an unjust soul, then it follows that it will practically be difficult to use the physical criterion as an evidence for establishing personal identity in a disembodied existence.

When an unjust soul on reincarnation occupies a foreign object like a goat or pig, then the devastating effect of this will be terrible as far as the identity of the person is concerned. In the first instance, the identity of the person becomes mutilated to the extent that it will be difficult to identify a person in a brute animal. Secondly, a person who now reincarnates as a goat or pig will definitely lose his human dignity. Lastly, the "person" is to be beaten when he misbehaves and finally killed, roasted, or prepared for stew as in a goat. Moreover, his remains are later deposited in the form of feces in the dunghill. From another perspective, consider when the soul of an unjust man occupies a wild *iroko* tree[2] which we do not normally recognize as a person or to which we do not accord human dignity. Surely, the identity of the person affected will be impossible to establish. The effect of this kind of reincarnation will be too serious on a man's soul which finds its way into the wild *iroko* tree. The consequences for such a tree is to be felled, prepared as firewood, or allowed to decay.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, we can conclude that the philosophical problem of personal identity as well as of reincarnation remains insoluble in African thought as in Yoruba metaphysics. However, the advocates of the physicalist criterion, which seems more tolerable for the justification of personal identity, cannot dismiss the relevance of the Yoruba metaphysical

view about the self in the afterlife since there are no empirical grounds effectively to do so. Despite the failure of the Yoruba people to demonstrate conclusively the veracity of reincarnation, the reality of the self in the afterlife, and how this self can be identified in its disembodied existence, the arguments so far offered should be regarded as a rational attempt to explain an inexplicable metaphysical phenomenon. In short, the arguments herein presented are attempts at trying to understand pictorially and metaphysically what cannot be comprehended scientifically or empirically.

NOTES

1. Ajalorun is another name for Olodumare in the Yoruba worldview.
2. Iroko is a dreadful tree in the forest usually occupied by demonic forces.

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ON THE DESTINY OF MORAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN TODAY'S POSTMODERN CLIMATE[1]

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Contemporary society tends to behave very ambiguously towards tradition. Religious and moral customs that are still widely practiced are also often critically questioned or simply abandoned. Similarly, attitudes towards the role of science and technology in today's global community are highly paradoxical. Some practices reveal a deeply rooted belief in the potentials of science and technology to increase happiness, on both the individual and the collective levels. Other practices and discourses are trying to prove the opposite, recommending to treat the belief in scientific and technical progress as a myth that is mature for de-mythologization (Gianni Vattimo). Traditional myths should be rehabilitated instead. While the former opinion may be traced back to the spirit of modernity, the latter is called "postmodern," hinting that the modern mentality has either come to an end, or reached a stage of profound transformation. Tradition is then no longer a taboo, but identified as what founds and guarantees a community's value-system. Only the restoration of basic symbolic distinctions may prevent a culture from sliding into moral arbitrariness, in which only "good feelings" define moral standards and commitments are replaced by a "liberalism of neutrality" (Charles Taylor). A genuine moral and religious renewal may start from the rediscovery of the all-encompassing, mysterious dimension of life.

INTRODUCTION

The Pharisees told Jesus:

The disciples of John [the Baptist] and those of the Pharisees are often fasting and praying. Yours, however, are eating and

drinking! Jesus answered: Can you let the invitees at a wedding party fast as long as the groom is still with them? There will be days, however, when the groom will be taken away from them. In those days, they will fast. (Mt. 9:15 ; Mk. 2:20 ; Lk. 5:35)

The fragment of the gospel above is generally identified as the biblical foundation for the practice of fasting in the Catholic Church on Holy Friday and on other Fridays that are not special liturgical feasts. This fasting— once the object of a formal obligation, and officially still mandatory on Holy Friday— means to abstain from meat, while eating fish, beans, or eggs instead.

In many circles of catholic lay people and even among priests and religious, the observance of traditional customs—whether the object of a formal magisterial prescription or not—has been the object of animated discussions.

These discussions are tackling some or all of the following questions: "Is this a fundamental or a superfluous practice?", "Is this practice compatible with economic requirements and social expectations of modern life?", "Does this tradition make any (common) sense?", "Should every faithful not simply decide for himself (or herself) whether he (or she) will abide with it?", and "Is religion first of all a matter of keeping up with tradition, or should it display a permanent sense of adjustment or transformation instead?"

Such questions are not just reflecting an ongoing debate among Roman Catholics; they are also symptomatic of a discussion on the level of public opinion in general, and even among philosophers.

The questioning of religious traditions, then, takes place against the background of a wider debate, the one between "classical conservatives," scientists and modernists (whether "dogmatic" or "popular" ones) and postmodernists or those for whom the "modern" issues have been overcome by recent developments in the global cultural and intellectual arena.

This debate has some important bearings for educators and teachers of philosophy and related subjects, as well as for priests, religious, and various policymakers in the Philippines.

FROM NATIONAL IDENTITY
TO GLOBAL AWARENESS

It is often observed that the contemporary cultural climate—both on the national and the international level—has slid into a state of crisis. By this term, I am referring to a situation in which established customs, beliefs, social relations, and patterns of meaning continue to loose their evidence, as they are permanently challenged by a critical atmosphere. In the Philippines, this evolution might be linked to the improved communication channels between rural and tribal areas and the rest of the country.

Concreted roads, electrical power lines, and mobile telephone transmission towers have virtually eliminated any truly isolated place in this country. The ever increasing number of Filipinos who are traveling abroad—whether to find a lucrative employment, to visit relatives or to settle there for good—also contributes to the exposure of the Philippine population to foreign traditions and customs, different social structures and values, as well as to other public services and institutions. Migration affects not only the population in the Philippines, but that of many other developing countries as well. It represents one aspect of what is called globalization.

According to Anthony Giddens (1990, 64), globalization may be defined as "an intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." It means that whatever happens in a local neighborhood, "is likely to be influenced by factors operating at an indefinite distance away from that neighborhood." Food prices, for instance, have been soaring all over the world in the past years, leading in some places to riots and other social unrest. The price hikes are not only affecting rare luxury items, but even the very basics, like dairy products, wheat flour, sugar, cooking oil and even rice, in most Asian countries the ordinary people's staple food. Experts find it hard to pinpoint the precise cause of the soaring prices, but the increased demand in emerging markets like China and India—where the total population continues to grow, more and more people tend to live in urban areas, and economic progress has boosted the purchasing power of the middle and higher classes—seems to be a part of it.

According to Giddens, economic relations are among the key players in the globalization process, besides shifts in military and political constellations and in locations of industrial production and related labor force dispatching. Those economic relations are being stirred by a market-based, capitalist system, that has always transcended the boundaries of nation-states.

Science and technology are also playing an overwhelmingly important role in this accelerating process. Automation and the use of machinery are widespread in factories and offices, while desktop and laptop computers, just like mobile phones and digital cameras have found their ways even into average households in many developing countries. In spite of these profound and rapid changes, lots of people—especially in "Western" societies—are doubting whether the latest gadgets of science and technology can bring them more happiness, even while they are bringing more health, comfort, or leisure.

NEW ETHOS: MODERN OR POSTMODERN?

Today's global culture seems to be in a paradoxical mood. On one hand, it is victimized by an almost obsessive trend to enhance scientific

knowledge and boost technological comfort and refinement. On the other, it does not really believe in the power of these to provide more than superficial fulfillment or contentment to individuals. This state of mentality is typical of today's society in most parts of the world, having passed "beyond" the modern inventions and the myth of perfect happiness that was once associated with them. In other words, modern culture is in a process of self-evaluation and transformation. As such it is sometimes labeled a "late-modern" culture, or even a "postmodern" one. The former term suggests that the current climate has not shaken off the "modern" legacy entirely, but that this has reached a degree of excess maturity, turning it into a fruit of "secondary quality." Just as overripe fruits tend to be sold at discounted prices in the market, so modernity has been brought down from the pedestal on which it was once placed. The term "postmodern" suggests that modernity has already come to an end and that the current culture is of a new type and orientation, even as its precise features— especially those that are supposed to distinguish it from the "modern" culture—remain rather vague for the moment. Further analysis of the terminology and the relation between the "modern" and the "postmodern" would lead us too far astray, no matter how interesting such analysis could be. I will, therefore, return to the point marked in the beginning of this text, which is the peculiar attitude towards creativity and tradition.

One of the most fundamental characteristics of postmodernism is the disbelief in the possibility to create any new meaning or any original philosophical theory. If nothing new is possible, history will be conceived as a repetitive process, according to which the same is continuously reformulated in slightly other terms or in a slightly different environment. Gianni Vattimo (1992, 2 and ff.) defines postmodernism as a trend in culture where history is understood as a zigzag line, that is without a clear focus, rather than as a linear and progressive development that aims at the gradual realization of a well-identified target. In a previous trend, such target could be the "ideal human," that was expected to be manifested at the end of a steady, rational process of emancipation. From such modernist angle, every human production which is new, original, or creative deserves special admiration, as it contributes to the transformational process that leads to more "humanity." Accordingly, ideas, values, or action patterns that have their roots in the past will be judged superseded, useless, or even harmful to such progress. Therefore, a rupture or contrast with the legacy of tradition seems to be essential to modernity, as Giddens (1990, 36) claims.

For Vattimo (1992, 2-5), the modernist position has first been challenged by the colonized peoples, who have largely resisted or challenged the unilateral, "enlightened" expectations from their colonizers. Second, modern ideals were undermined by the mass media. Both occurences have not lead to a more homogeneous world culture, as some had expected, but rather to its opposite, this is the proliferation of a wide array of *Weltanschauungen*. Every individual or group—whether large or

small—claims a place in the global marketplace of world views, opinions, and lifestyles, which is proved by the huge success of literature, TV programs, and websites that are dedicated to these categories. The effect of this fragmentation of the discourse on human meaning and truth is that the distinction between the universal and the individual, between philosophy and mythology, or between theory and (hi)story starts to fade. Vattimo actually identifies the return of myth as one of the basic features of contemporary consciousness. On one hand, there is what he calls "archaism" towards myth, meaning that myth is seen as a more authentic, a more pure approach of knowledge than that of rational science and technology; on the other hand, "cultural relativism" tends to prevent any possible confrontation between myth and reason by declaring them to form just two different and incompatible paradigms of knowledge, while "tempered irrationalism" or "limited rationality" prefer narratives to more systematic or logical forms of argumentation. It had been the aim of modernity to do away with pre-rational forms of understanding, like myth, that were considered to reflect a primitive and immature stage of human understanding. However, contemporary consciousness, is witnessing now a "de-mythologization" of the "myth" of modernity. This can be somehow compared to a "de-construction" or an "archeological" analysis of the historical presuppositions (and prejudices) upon which modernity is based. As Vattimo (1992, 42) says,

> When demythologization itself is revealed as a myth, myth regains legitimacy, but only within the frame of a generally "weakened" experience of truth. The presence of myth in our culture does not represent an alternative or opposing movement to modernization, but is rather its natural outcome, its destination, at least thus far. The demythologization of demythologization, moreover, may be taken as the true moment of transition from the modern to the postmodern.

Society, attitudes, and common expectations have always been based on a combination of tradition and innovation, but the latter seems only of secondary importance to postmodern thought. Innovation seems no longer possible in a period in which philosophy and history heard their respective ends being proclaimed, unless innovation simply consists in a "recycling" of tradition.

ROLE AND NATURE OF TRADITION

We could further investigate the nature of the postmodern attitude towards tradition. "Tradition" could be defined as "the transmission of a set of values, lifestyle-related practices, symbolic relations, and principles of social organization, that are in such a way passed on from generation to

generation within a particular geographic area." In this context, De Dijn (2006, 14 and ff.) lists as examples of "meaningful" distinctions those between male and female, man and animal, the living and the dead, adults and minors, etc. Such distinctions are branded "symbolic" because they cannot be reduced to a natural or biological basis, even if they are not totally without interaction with natural or biological processes. Such distinctions are also not instrumental, nor technically "useful" to achieve some practical life targets. However, as symbolic distinctions, they cannot just be neglected or denied, given their constitutive roles in culture. Marriage between two male or two female persons was given a legal status in some countries, but it can never exactly mean the same as a marriage between a male and a female, given that in the latter, the unique relationship between the two spouses can lead to the biological creation of a new person, this is from the combination of their respective bodies and persons. Even the adoption of a child in a same-sex marriage can never express the union between both partners to the same extent. Another example of the specific character of symbolic relationships is provided by a comparison between the relation of two live-in partners and that of two spouses. Both couples might have the same feelings of love and affection for each other, but in the case of the wed spouses, there has been an explicit word from both, in order to "seal" this relation in public. Still another example is in the difference between "fathering" a child in the biological sense, this is after having intercourse with a fertile woman, and "fathering" a child by declaring its birth in the municipality. A new child is not just another specimen of the human race, but a person who will receive his (or her) unique identity through the giving of a personal name, an act with highly symbolic repercussions. Likewise, the name of God is something exclusive, that should be pronounced with respect or—as some traditions want it—should not be pronounced at all! Images of God are often forbidden—except for Christians, as they believe that God has intentionally taken a human and representative form in Jesus. The global incident of 2006 that involved a Danish newspaper that had published cartoons of the prophet Mohammed proves the high sensitivity of Muslims for the ways in which the symbols of their faith are being dealt with. Similarly, the "Da Vinci code" and some "hyper-realistic" Jesus-movies have offended some Christians.

The symbolic distinctions that were mentioned obviously have some kind of a sacred character. De Dijn (2006, 16) further points out that any transcendent meaning is also simultaneously an incarnated meaning. No matter how fundamental a particular truth, it always comes to us through particular institutions, groups, or individuals. Socially constitutive truths are not rarely transmitted through the educational process, whether at home or at school. Now, education is an aspect of the social structure, just like mass communications. Hence, fundamental truths cannot be established nor do they enjoy any continuous authority without this social structure;

they actually presuppose the environment that they are further corroborating. In this way, the social environment risks to become a part of the structure of meaning itself, such as a dough wrapper that forms an inseparable part of the lumpia! This explains why the typically modern and "enlightened" idea of "demythologizing" traditional religious narratives, in order to isolate their "real and pure" content, is doomed to fail. It also illustrates why religious "inculturation" is both important and difficult, as a missionary might face a set of inherent, culturally tainted traits in his religious message, that do not easily fit in the local culture of the target community. Inculturation—as a compromise between an "ideal" and universal Christian message and a geographically and historically colored framework of dissemination—deserves both to be taken very seriously and to be approached with a sense of relativity, as the tension between content and form cannot entirely be neutralized, while the unity and integrity of the content should be preserved. Nobody, for instance, will seriously question the soundness of maintaining bread, water, and wine as basic ingredients for the eucharistic consecration, even as these are not the evident constituents of an ordinary evening meal in many parts of the Philippines.

RELIGION, ASCETICISM, AND HAPPINESS

It is believed that in a free and open society, everything should be discussable. Contemporary Western culture views taboos and related restrictions as a heritage of the past, the result of magic practices or religious fantasies of a premodern social community. Such taboos are considered to be interesting for study purposes in anthropology or related fields, but their content isn't to be taken seriously. In spite of this apparent open-mindedness, at least one taboo has continued to exist until the present day: death. Television talk shows have brought many social issues and problems that used to be "off limits" to the front stage, such as homosexuality, sexual abuse (especially in the Church), mental illness, parent-child relations, and others. Death, however, is rarely or never on the agenda, maybe because it is a topic that challenges so radically the late-modern "aesthetic" parameters of happiness. What is being said about death can also be applied to pain. Just like death, pain has been experienced from of old as something to prevent or to flee from.

However, if pain is experienced as contrary to value, this is not exclusively because of its contrast with physical wellbeing. Pain is also rejected because of its alleged incompatibility with the dignity of the person. Suffering can be "inhuman," even more if this suffering is inflicted by other humans, and if the "victims" are "weak"—for instance, children, women, immigrants, civilians in a war situation, etc. The exception lies in certain forms of suffering that are being deliberately sought for ascetic or penitential reasons, meaning that suffering may sometimes be experienced

as a means to achieve some form of spiritual progress or purification, or more specifically reconciliation with God.

Asceticism is often practiced within an ambition of spiritual heroism. Nowadays, someone's basic survival skills tend to cause more admiration than another's enthusiasm for a transcendent goal, even as such admiration remains very superficial (Taylor 1994, 29). Asceticism does not enjoy, therefore, a wide popularity. At certain occasions in history, asceticism has definitely been practiced in an extremist fashion. Cistercian monk Thomas Merton provides us with examples from the history of monasticism, in particular, from the Trappist reform of some Cistercian monasteries in the second part of the 17th century. He (1949, 43-46) writes:

> However, if the Rule at la Trappe was not particularly hard, the Abbé de Rancé encouraged his monks to compete with one another in extra penances and fasts and mortifications. One of the religious, who was not strong enough to work in the fields, exercised his ingenuity in manufacturing little penitential instruments of sharp wire, which the more zealous monks were allowed to wear about their person. It was considered a virtue to ruin one's health by excessive private fasting, and the religious who did not protest when the superior offered him medicine and rest and extra nourishment when he fell ill was apt to be tacitly considered a weakling. It is said that de Rancé dismissed a novice because he reached out somewhat gingerly for a clump of stinging nettles that he had been told to pull out by the roots.
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> Once they [the monks] overlooked the fact that mortification has an object beyond itself—it is designed to set the soul free from its attachments and dispose it for union with God in contemplation and purity of love—the monks tended to pile penance upon penance in a mathematical accumulation of merits. The one who fasted the most, took the most disciplines, slept the least, was thought to have the most merit. He was the best monk. And the whole atmosphere of a Trappist monastery was one of athletic activity rather than of contemplative detachment and peace.

It is obvious that asceticism overshoots its target if it is being driven by excessive zeal. John Cassian—one of the fathers of Western Christian monasticism around 400 A.D.—has expressed the concern that too radical ambitions in fasting are eventually impossible to realize. If they can be realized, then this is usually only for a short time; overly strict practices cannot be sustained for long. In such cases, the tendency may arise to compensate one excess by another, substituting over-rigidity with over-indulgence:

> A reasonable supply of food partaken of daily with moderation is better than a severe and long fast at intervals. Excessive fasting has been known not only to undermine the constancy of the mind, but also to weaken the power of prayers through sheer weariness of body. (Cassian 1994, 236)

Abbot Macarius the Egyptian—according to his disciple Evagrius Ponticus (see Harmless 2004, 196)—once told that "a monk should always live as if he were to die on the morrow but at the same time that he should treat his body as if he were to live on with it for many years to come." The passion for pleasure should not absorb one's attention nor become his main objective in life. However, the struggle for spiritual purity requires endurance. It is, therefore, important to take proper care of one's body and to manage its energetic resources. Asceticism is, in other words, to be practiced with a healthy dose of modesty. As such, it is also an inalienable part of the Buddhist tradition, especially through the rule for monks known as *Patimokkha*. The ten precepts—the abstention of destroying life, stealing, adultery, lying, alcohol, eating at improper times, dancing and singing, perfumes and make-up, comfortable bedding, and silver and gold—are in fact practical recommendations on how to deal with universal suffering. This suffering is caused by the imperfections and unending changes in the world of senses, and ultimately by desire, as taught in the Second Noble Truth. To illustrate the Buddha's emphasis on modesty (see Gira 1989, 43 and ff.; 96-101), it may be sufficient to refer to his tolerance of a triple dress for his monks—given the cold of the night—while other ascetics tended to allow their disciples to wear only a single one!

Such forms of indulgence or moderation will appear to a postmodern mind as just "all too reasonable," as asceticism—understood as "self-imposed suffering for a spiritual purpose"—is only deemed tolerable if limited to an eccentric and perhaps neurotic minority.

ANTI-AESTHETICISM OF TRADITION

It would be deemed extravagant —hence a form of "reductionism"— to consider happiness and health, whether mental or physical, as each other's equivalents, in spite of some affinities that obviously exist between them. The Stoic philosophers already found that the causes of pain are often beyond the individual's control and should, therefore, not be used as a basis for unhappiness; likewise, good feelings do not justify a state of happiness if these feelings depend purely on external factors. Instead, the Stoics advocate one's own will-power as the key to real happiness. This is, for instance, the reason why Epictetus identifies philosophy—rather than "good feelings"—as an alternative way to happiness. If philosophy is being practiced in a "eudaimonistic" perspective, this is with happiness as

its final objective, then as long as we are aware of the teachings of philosophy, we will not be unhappy in case of illness or other trouble.

> And what do I trouble myself about anything that can happen if I possess greatness of soul? What shall distract my mind or disturb me or appear painful? Shall I not use that power for the purposes for which I received it, and shall I grieve and lament over what happens ?" (Epictetus 1952, 111).

The practice of philosophy in times of trouble (or that of another spiritual activity) is actually a way of breaking with the compelling immediacy of aesthetic experience. Therefore, a philosopher remains optimistic and joyful, as long as Providence allows him to exercise his intellectual or spiritual capacities. "For what else can I do, a lame old man, than sing hymns to God?" (Epictetus 1952, 122). For the same reasons, philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius (1952, 288) gives us the following advice: "Receive wealth and prosperity without arrogance, and be ready to let it go."

The Christian desert fathers, too, were familiar with all kinds of human joys and problems. They found that a Christian should be able to bear both good and bad feelings with equanimity. In other words, Christians should not be disrupted in their continuous praise of their Creator by pain, hunger, or other discomfort, as prayer leads to wisdom and peace of mind, which are supreme values: "Love to pray without ceasing, so your heart will be enlightened" is the advice given by Isaiah of Scetis (Harmless 2004, 266). "Good feelings" are not even necessarily located in the body; there is also such thing like a "mental aestheticism," that affects one's awareness of mental states or conditions. The absence of internal tensions—that are often the result of discrepancies between passionate desires and conscious spiritual targets or social norms—is commonly considered as the ideal to pursue or to maintain. However, in reality, the mind (or soul) is often a battleground for conflicting thoughts, concerns, or interests. Applying the right psychological or spiritual "strategy" is the best thing to do in such cases, so peace of mind can be established and maintained.

Self-control is an important virtue to prevent happiness from being spoiled by passions like sexual appetite or anger. Two examples might suffice to illustrate this.

> One story...tells of two monks who had gone to town to sell their handiwork. Once in town, the two separated, each going his own way. After finishing their business dealings, they got back together. But one was suddenly very reluctant to return to the desert. When the other asked about the sudden change of heart, the first confessed that he had met a woman and slept with her. So the other, to win over his friend, claimed that the

same thing had happened to him. In fact, he was innocent, but he told his friend: "Let's go and do penance intensely, and God will forgive us." And so the two returned to the desert and did penance, one for his sin, the other for the sake of his fellow monk. (Harmless 2004, 233)

The sexual passion of one monk triggers the virtue of fraternal charity in the other, just like in the case of Abbot Poemen (see Harmless 2004, 206), who, upon learning that the mistress of a neighbor-monk had given birth, sent one of his brothers over with a bottle of wine as a gift! The vice of the monk-turned-biological-father was an opportunity for Poemen to show forgiveness and magnanimity as the former's spiritual father!

Buddhist monasticism and spirituality have also made significant contributions to the analysis of the human mind and to the development of a coping strategy. As already mentioned, the roots of human misery are believed to be in desire, which is basically an urge to self-affirmation, either through pleasure or the will to live forever, or through a denial of the reality of *karma* and the unending cycle of reincarnation (*samsara*) in which each soul is rewarded or punished according to the merits of her acts in a previous life. The problematic nature of this self-expansion of the soul is that it is an illusion, as the soul itself is an illusion (*anatman*). As long as the soul is not aware of this basic truth about her, she will continue to suffer. As long as she does not embrace the eightfold path—this is the Fourth Noble Truth, prescribing to practice the right word, thought and means of existence, the right effort, attention and concentration, the right understanding and wisdom—the soul will not find any rest, nor experience liberation (Gira 1989, 52).

These examples may suffice as illustrations of the critique offered by the tradition of philosophy and spirituality against a one-sided aestheticism.

AESTHETICISM AS REDUCTIONISM

Besides the prevalent "circular" interpretation of history—for which postmodernism is strongly indebted to thinkers like Heraclitus and Nietzsche—one of the most resistant presuppositions of contemporary common culture is related to ethics. It consists in the explicit understanding of happiness—since ancient times identified as the goal of ethics—as equivalent to "enjoyment," "feeling good," "absence of pain," etc. The concept of "happiness" is herewith unilaterally reduced to its aesthetic dimension, detaching it from its intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects, in spite of the warnings issued by religious traditions against this. The ultimate moral standard is, in other words, a matter of personal physical or mental experiences, rather than of an interpersonal exchange. The importance that is nowadays given to the vegetative function in Man—with inevitable consequences for Man's ethical value scale—is not only expressed in the

ongoing success of cooking books or health-related magazines and articles, but perhaps also by the renewed philosophical interest in works like Descartes's *The passions of the soul*, which offers a theory of the mutual interaction between the human soul and the body.

Even spirituality is being craved for and digested as a consumer's product. This is especially true for methods and doctrines of "exotic"—for instance oriental—origin. One of the deeper reasons for the global success of the new age movement seems to be the need for a "healing" on the mental or spiritual level in many persons in the developed world. "Healing" may be understood here as "making whole," or "restoring something's integrity," and "neutralizing tension." The quest for Oriental wisdom and guru's advice fits, therefore, in the aesthetic project of the postmodern soul in search of happiness. The assumption hereby is that no theory or practice of life resists *a priori* an adjustment or customization to an individual's needs, tastes or preferences.

As already mentioned, philosophical and spiritual traditions tend to emphasize the need for controlling one's feelings or passions. Contemporary culture, however, easily interprets self-restraint as a form of emotional repression. Since Freud, this has been identified as the source of many psychological disturbances or forms of pathological behavior. I do not intend to question or discuss the theoretical premises upon which such insights are based. However, the impression persists that psychoanalysis—as a radical critique of mental and behavioral patterns in early modern bourgeois culture—is one of the factors that have contributed to the current climate of individualistic emotional expressionism! On the other hand, some recent studies in psychology have remarkably pointed out that the neurotic or hysterical pathologies of before, were for a good part replaced among the young generation by new pathologies, that are regressive or narcissistic in nature. The problem seems no longer to be how to cope with established normative criteria for social behavior, but how to give a meaning to one's life, given that there is precisely no standard for such meaning, except one's own. There has been a universal de-oedipalization in the social and cultural order, that is revealed, for instance, in the increasing gradual disintegration of many families and in the general depreciation of authority in many levels. Such de-oedipalization seems to have reduced classical feelings of guilt, but without necessarily substituting these with true happiness (Fornäs 1995, 266, 268).

AESTHETICISM AS LIBERALISM

As feelings remain the explicit or implicit basis for our ethical judgments—whether in relation to ourselves, to others or to society as a whole—the basis of ethics today remains utilitarian and aesthetic in nature. This "aesthetic reductionism" is, then, being coupled to a "neo-liberal minimalism," that seems somehow related to what De Dijn (2006, 29) calls

"expressive individualism." What prevails in this moral trend is the urge to profile oneself. It is thereby superfluous to ask whether an opinion is true, or whether a habit is good, as what counts is whether it helps to make one's person better accepted and more admired. The plurality of lifestyle projects that are currently being offered on the "meaning market" in many developed Western countries invites to a supermarket-style composition of one's own shopping list, where originality is the theme, based upon the invocation of the right to "self-determination."

Community ethics in the postmodern cultural climate are called "narrow" or "minimal," as they tend to reduce the number of rules to a minimum, while honoring the liberal principle of "interfering as little as possible in another's freedom of choice," in order to mutually enjoy the same freedom. The primary concern of such ethics is to create and to protect the conditions for a more or less peaceful coexistence of an unlimited number of opinions, beliefs, and practices. However, they have the side-effect of eroding the potential truth-claims of these opinions. The more opinions, lifestyles, and viewpoints that are being tolerated at a given time, the less it is possible for any of them to identify itself as the best or the most true. Charles Taylor (1994, 30) writes that a misunderstood culture of authenticity has brought lots of people to support some form of "liberalism of neutrality." One of the premises of this is that society should refuse to provide universal answers to questions like "What is implied in good living?" In other words, the community should abstain from presenting certain opinions and action patterns as "good" or "true." In the thus created vacuum, a vague notion of "enjoying oneself" tends to become the common denominator of an individual's motivating principles. This is exactly what is meant by *narrow* ethics. These are constituted by a set of guidelines that are believed to lead to an apparently free and democratic, but actually relativistic society, which is simultaneously multi-faceted and faceless. In the name of tolerance and respect of other opinions, confusion is being created about what is now finally true or worthwhile pursuing. "Large" or "wide" ethics do instead refer to the need of respect for fundamental distinctions as mentioned in the beginning of this text, those that shape a culture and its underlying value-system, such as between male and female, between life and death, between young and old.

In this context, the following statement of Basil Pennington (1998, 13), made in a work about Cistercian monk Thomas Merton, could shed light on our question:

> To throw things out because they seem meaningless to us may be a great mistake. Maybe we need to risk letting them reveal their meaning, knowing that if they do not truly have meaning, in the face of such a challenge they will fade away. We can do this only if we do not take ourselves too seriously,

but can grin at the apparent nonsense of some of the things we
do together.

Tradition has, it may be assumed, its own reasons to exist, even if we
are no longer aware of these reasons.

AESTHETICISM AS UTILITARIANISM

Aesthetic reductionism can also threaten other levels of culture than
the purely ethical one, like—for instance—education. It could, then, be
disguised as educational utilitarianism or pragmatism, that will assess
educational achievements in measurable or quantitative terms. Of course, it is
obvious that students' performances during national board exams or alumni
career and employment data do reveal something about the level of instruction
in a particular institution. However, there is always a risk that these indicators
will be isolated from other ones, precisely because of the impression of
mathematical accuracy—and, therefore, objectivity—that they are creating.
The prevalence of these indicators could, for instance, encourage policy
makers to redesign curricula, add new subjects while abolishing others or
offer certain courses rather than others, only for the sake of improving
quantifiable performance data. Such policies would echo often heard popular
remarks, targeting subjects like religion or philosophy. Such remarks are
questioning the use or social impact of those disciplines, while asking how
profitable they are for an institution, or whether attending classes in them is
funny. However, reductionism could also be applied to family relations, for
instance, in casting doubts on whether it "makes sense" to care for a sick or
elderly mother or father if this costs time and money and if there are no long-
term perspectives of total remission. If only those habits, beliefs or practices
will be declared "meaningful" that serve a stereotype form of economic or
technical development, then it seems better to talk about "professional training"
or "skills development" than about "education," while "health care" should
be replaced by "joy and productivity reduction management." In fact, a similar
form of reductionism has already emerged during the modern period and was
advocated in particular by certain governments during the French revolution,
when religion, contemplation, and metaphysics were identified as potential
threats to the revolutionaries' naïve optimism about scientific and social
progress. Scientism was, in fact, the natural outcome of positivism, that intended
to reduce reality to what was perceptible, mopping up the remaining dust and
debris of religious and metaphysical "*déjà vu.*" If, today, the only parameter to
judge the value of study and teaching is the "improvement of the people's
quality of life," it will be inevitable to reject most of so-called "pure" philosophy
and religion, or even history, literature, and art, unless the term "quality of life"
is understood in such a way that it is not limited to material or consumption-
related features. As a radical project of critical questioning, philosophy implies
a claim of universal validity, given that truth—no matter how strongly it may

be embedded in local contexts or individual minds—is always interpersonal, even universal. Whatever is universal largely escapes debates about specific practical use, as "use" is often defined in terms of local targets or contextual objectives.

POSTMODERNISM AND CHRISTIANITY

It is inevitable that today's postmodern intellectual climate also affects Christianity in countries that are dominated by this world-religion. If the current postmodern mentality has not bluntly rejected tradition but rather emptied in from within by neutralizing many of the symbolic distinctions that form its bone marrow, what is, then, its specific attitude to Christian religion?

First of all, there is a tendency to separate religion from ethics and from politics. Such is done implicitly in the name of the abovementioned "minimalism" in ethics. By detaching the basis of ethics from religion and replacing the religious foundation with a "rational" one—this is one that is not determined by divine revelation—the maximum freedom for a maximum number of individuals seems safeguarded.

In the second place, there is the tendency to distinguish between the "proper" or "universal theological" content of Christianity and its culturally determined appearance. This has repercussion for the understanding of inculturation. In an oversimplified fashion, inculturation would be understood as the "removal" of the Jewish-Greek or "Western" wrapper of Christianity and its repacking in a newly designed format, inspired by local traditions. This presupposes the possibility to "forget" about the two thousand years of tradition, that brought the message of Jesus from its Jewish-Palestinian settings, through Greek philosophical systematization into the modern and contemporary era. The almost two thousand-year-long history of interaction between Christianity and its permanently changing social, cultural, and political environment is, then, considered as secondary and basically without significance for both form and content of that religion.

That Christianity would essentially be an "abstract" and "universal" religion, without having undergone any substantial influence from its historical Judeo-European roots is at least very questionable. Therefore, attempts to inculturate "classical" Christian practices and beliefs—regardless of the legitimacy of such attempts—need to be carried out with a solid dose of realism and patience. A naïve concept of inculturation, that foregoes the resistance of a particular content against being detached from its original form and settings, might eventually not work and lead to frustration.

A REINTERPRETATION OF HAPPINESS IN THE LIGHT OF TRADITION?

Rather than to define pain as identical to "unhappiness" and good feelings to "happiness," a philosopher could place these states of mind in

a symbolic context and relate them, for instance, to showings of respect by others. Among the other non-reductionist interpretations of "happiness" figures the one that connects happiness to the experience of "meaning" in life (which we identified earlier as a fundamentally symbolic category). The semantic features of (existential) "meaning" widely exceed those of "feeling" or "use."

Happiness has something in common with luckiness, meaning that we will not be happy if respect or appreciation came too easily. For example, if a student tells me right before the exam that I am a bright and handsome teacher, I will be somewhat embarrassed or even slightly irked, as the circumstances undermine the literal credibility of the student's words. If I am granted honors as a "summa cum laude" graduate after my thesis defense, while in fact I have copied most of my text from a friend's work or from the Internet, the external effect of praise is there (my name has been mentioned in a prestigious setting), but satisfaction—not to say "happiness"—will be minimal, compared to when my thesis had been the fruit of a long and genuine effort on my side. This suggests happiness comes as some sort of a retrospective to an earlier, rather difficult performance.

Any reaction to a so-called "happy" or "unhappy" experience is often religious in nature. How often does someone not light a candle, say a prayer of thanks or a prayer for strength and better luck, even without being "very religious" in nature? Religion can in this case be understood as the "awareness of the radical contingency of human existence," that is, of human life as "depending on a framework of conditions that are beyond our power." This awareness prepares "problems," given that the latter can theoretically be solved, dissipating human perplexity. The authentic awareness of the world as a mystery also means rejecting magical formulas or practices, as these are rather trying to deny contingency, than that they are truly confronting it. Magic and occultism actually tend to cover up the "otherness" of the world, by the production of a set of formulas and ritual actions, that are meant to maintain the illusion of human power over what goes in fact beyond it. However, in a properly "religious" reaction to an important event—for instance the birth of a child or the death of a close friend or relative—expressions of admiration, thankfulness, resignation or despair may give way to traditional symbolic acts, without any ambition to manipulate or reverse the situation.

Unlike reasoning, religion is primarily a *collective* event. Rituals and celebrations were developed by a community, often over many generations. Even doctrine has made a long journey to the present day. Because of this collective dimension, religious truth is experienced as a received truth (rather than a creatively invented one). In the Judeo-Christian context, this is usually formulated in the idea of "revealed truth." God's revelation may have passed through a number of selected individuals (Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, culminating in Jesus) but it has always been addressed

to an entire people or a community of believers. As a phenomenon, it is, therefore, experienced as something "given" by God to a group of people, whose heritage it becomes.

CONCLUSION

Shall we give up renewing the expressions of our faith, be it on the dogmatic, hermeneutical, liturgical, ritual or moral level? Do we have to sack innovation for a return to tradition? Or will we remain steady in our faith by a courageous but respectful reinterpretation of tradition and its symbolic forms? The questions that were formulated in the beginning of this paper still stand at its end. However, it is obvious that a critical reflection on the implications of the late-modern or postmodern currents in contemporary global culture is mandatory for all who are involved in teaching, and especially in religion and philosophy. One thing to be remembered is that religious traditions should be respected for what they are. This means that they should not be "recuperated" by a disguised utilitarianism that wants religion to become the alleged therapy for its own excesses! Such a (pragmatic) approach would undermine religion's own specificity as a theoretical, moral, and ritual expression of ultimate truth by an entire community. Nor can religion be turned into an alternative cosmological or ethical and political world-vision that would be supposed to explain and to solve the current mysteries of the world in a pseudo-scientific fashion.

In most of the Philippines, Christians have formed the majority for many generations now. In the past, what was expected from a good Christian was more or less clear. Today, the picture appears a bit blurred, while some Christians are no longer very enthusiastic about their faith. Some have left the Church because of alleged inconsistencies between the quiet role of the church in the social machinery and the word it preaches. Sexual abuse of minors by clergymen or the reluctance of Church leaders to take a more radical stand against perceived cases of corruption and public mismanagement are among the most notorious occasions for people to turn their back to the Church. People are sometimes expressing their frustration through statements like "The Church is the work of the devil" or "There is neither something good, nor something truly Christian in the Church!" Others simply do no longer find the time to attend mass regularly because of more attractive alternative activities, or they limit themselves to a few superficial devotional practices. These developments prove that the alleged "catholic" or even "religious" character of today's Filipino should not be taken for granted. The urgent need to upgrade technical infrastructure in the light of global economic competition might direct the Philippine public opinion rather towards a modern mentality, cheering on values like "economic growth," "increased consumer spending," "affordable housing," "health care," and "education." That a well-balanced economic

progress is also desirable for this country stands beyond any doubt. However, the expansion of the middle class and the intensifying migratory movement are also paving the way for the typically postmodern moral reductionism and relativistic pseudo-pluralism. From this perspective, the country will need even more teachers, philosophers, and religious people with a wide view, founded upon solid values.

NOTE

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THE REJECTION
OF THE PROPOSITION[1]

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*Part of rethinking philosophy today, the author
believes, is to rethink our logical concepts. The author
questions the ontological existence of the proposition as
the content of sentential utterances—written or spoken—
as it was originally proposed by John Searle. While a
performative is an utterance where the speaker not only
utters a sentential or illocutionary content such as a
statement, but also performs the illocutionary force such
as the act of stating, the author reasserts John Austin's
constative as the general label (genus) of specific
utterances (species) that can be rendered true or false
such as a statement, assertion, description, and
prediction. In the remainder of the paper, the author tries
to show that it is a category mistake for someone to* assert
a statement or to state *an assertion.*

INTRODUCTION

A proposition can be a plan of action or proposal, a task to be
dealt with, a mathematical theorem, a request for sex or marriage
relations, or an item for debate or discussion (see Answers.com,
n.d.). This is not the kind of proposition we are interested in this
paper. We want to deal with the logical type of proposition, the
one which many years ago Aristotle (1941, 42) in his *Organon*
refers to the meaning of a sentence that can be denied or affirmed.
Not all sentences have meanings which are true or false but the
proposition is that meaningful content of a sentence which has a
truth value, or can be rendered true or false.

No doubt, this sentential meaningful content is sharable as
an object of attitude in the sense that it is independent of the words
used to express it. According to Aristotle (1941, 40-45), words in themselves

have no meanings unless used with a proper arrangement in a complete sentence, that is, with a subject, predicate, and verb. The proposition is, therefore, the meaning of certain types of sentences, the principal bearer of truth and falsity, and the object of attitudes rolled into one.

The Stoic word *lekta*, which refers to what is said, carries this linguistic tradition in propositional logic. The Stoics ("Propositions," 2007) distinguish between deficient or incomplete *lekta* as in words, phrases, and clauses, and complete *lekta* as in sentences. The *axiomata* as complete *lekta* are the meanings of indicative sentences that can be rendered true or false. Some medieval thinkers continue this linguistic tradition. Abelard (Marenbon 2004, 598; Lenz 2005, 377-86), for example, makes a distinction between what is said or *dicta* and acts of saying or thinking. William of Ockham (King 2005) believes that what is assented to is a token sentence that is basically mental. In early modern times, Rene Descartes (1960, 150-51) argues that certain acts of judgments are true or false and much later in modern times Immanuel Kant (1966, 1-18) considers some types of judgments, like the analytic *a priori* and the synthetic *a posteriori* judgments, as true or false. Earlier, of course, Gottfried von Leibnitz (1960, 460) talks about truths of reason and truths of fact while David Hume (1960, 322) distinguishes between matters of fact and relations of ideas: the former require confirmation by empirical observation while the latter are "intuitively or demonstratively certain."

Contemporary Times

The linguistic tradition of the logical proposition is primarily brought forward in contemporary times by Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and John Searle. Frege thinks that the proposition is the complete thought of indicative sentences. Russell and later the logical positivists (Munitz 1981, 241-42), together with the Early Ludwig Wittgenstein, hold on to the tradition of Hume on the logical proposition. Russell (1972, 58-72) as a logician argues that while there can be atomic and molecular propositions, there cannot be molecular facts but only atomic facts. The Early Wittgenstein (*Tractatus logico-philosophicus,* 1974) contends that propositions mirror or picture what is the case (states of affairs, facts, or the world).

MEANING AND UTTERANCE: FREGE, THE LATER WITTGENSTEIN, AND AUSTIN

What makes the proposition comprehensible is its meaning. Meaning, as Frege (1956, 295-96) says, is the complete thought that is expressed in a sentence. However, only indicative sentences are true or false. In the proposition, meaning is constituted by sense and

reference. He (1970, 57) rejects the referential theory of meaning which says the meaning of a proposition is its reference. Certainly, the meanings of "The morning star" and "The evening star" are different even if their reference (Venus) is the same.

The Later Wittgenstein (*Philosophical investigations,* 1989) is convinced that some states of affairs can be expressed in meaningful gestures and not in propositions. Wittgenstein (1989, 20) conceives of meaning in terms of *use.* He is prominently known for his "use theory of meaning," which rejects his earlier mirror- or picture-theory of meaning. A word or phrase has meaning depending upon its use in a given context. The drawback of this theory is its limited scope. How is the meaning of a word or phrase related to the meaning of a sentence?

John L. Austin

It is Austin's task to extend the use-theory of meaning from words to sentences. Here Austin deals with utterances. A sentence as a word or group of words with a complete thought is either implicitly *uttered* silently in thought or explicitly *uttered* in speech. For Austin (1970a, 136), what alone has meaning is the sentence and the meaning of a word or phrase is determined by the meaning of the sentence.

When an utterance is explicitly expressed in speech, it is called a speech act. The *speech act* consists of both the content with meaning and the type of the act of speaking. [Abelard has already said something similar to this.]

Constatives and Performatives

Austin (1972, 113-22) classifies utterances as constatives and performatives. A *constative* is an utterance that is true or false, such as a statement, assertion, description, and prediction. A performative is an utterance which is sincere or insincere, or in general—for lack of a better term—"happy" or "unhappy," such as a promise, warning, exclamation, proposition, and request. In a performative, when someone utters a warning he not only utters a set of words with meaning (*content*), but he also performs the *act* of warning. Austin, however, notices the same thing in a constative. When someone utters a statement-content, he also performs the act of stating. He concludes that constatives themselves are performatives. If all utterances are performatives, a new set of classification is therefore necessary.

Speech Acts

Speech acts consist of the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (see Austin 1970b, 1-167). They have their

own contents: locution, illocution, and perlocution, respectively. The locutionary act is the speaker's act *of* saying something. As a three-in-one speech act, it has as components the phonetic act (uttering of sounds), phatic act (uttering of vocables), and rhetic act (uttering of sense and reference, which together constitute meaning). The contents, respectively, are the phone, pheme, and rheme. Together, the three constitute the locution.

The illocutionary act is the speaker's act *in* saying something as when one performs the act of warning, promising, or threatening. The *force* of the utterance pertains to the type of illocutionary act performed when one utters a locution, which is an abstraction from an illocution. One and the same locution, for example, as in "It is raining," can have the force of a statement, assertion, doubt, or even a warning depending upon the context.

The perlocutionary act is the speaker's act *by* saying something. It is the intended or unintended effect one performs when one utters an illocution. By warning someone, "Watch out, the tree is falling!" one wants to *alert* (intended effect) him in order to scamper to safety, but if he is instead *alarmed* (unintended effect) and the tree falls on him, then the act of alarming him is the perlocutionary sequel.

It is readily apparent that for Austin, the locution in the form of a statement-content, assertion-content, or the like is the bearer of truth and falsity. He ignores the logical concept proposition since in ordinary discourse, as in a marriage proposition, it is not true or false. The locution—through the rheme—is likewise the bearer of meaning.

SEARLE AND THE PROPOSITION

John Searle (1968, 1969) rejects Austin's concept of the locution as the bearer of meaning. In the actual speech situation, the locution is *eo ipso* the illocution. The *force* of the utterance defines the nature of the locution and is an important feature of sentential meaning (the context in many cases determines the force of the utterance). The *force* is, at it were, the *name* of the illocutionary act performed. The locutionary rheme is therefore incomplete and incomprehensible without the illocutionary force. In rejecting the locution and the rheme, Searle introduces the logical concept *proposition* and the formula "F(p)," where "F" stands for the force while "p" stands for the proposition. For Searle, the meaning of a sentence is determined by the meanings of all its meaningful components which include the speech contour, context, words, word order, and the like.

The proposition consists of reference and predication and its corresponding propositional act, of acts of referring and of predicating.

Except in one-word utterances—as in "Ouch!" and "Hurrah!"—for as long as the utterance contains a reference and a predication, then it contains a proposition. If the reference "John" and the predication "leaving the room" are contained in a statement ("John leaves the room"), command ("John, leave the room"), question ("Will John leave the room?"), or prediction ("John will leave the room"), then these four illocutions contain *one and the same* proposition. However, it is apparent that in these four examples, only when the proposition is stated that it is true or false. The proposition is a slice of the illocution and the propositional act partakes of the nature of the illocutionary act.

REJECTION OF THE PROPOSITION

In the English language, the name of the illocutionary act is the same as the name of the illocutionary content. The act of stating, for example, is called a *statement* ["A(f)"] and the content of the act of stating is also called a *statement* ["F(c)"]. So we have a statement-act and a statement-content. The same is true with a warning, proposition, assertion, question, exclamation, and so on (see Peetz 1972). It is therefore reasonable to replace "F(p)" with the formula "F(c)," where "F" is the force while "c" is the content. In this formula, all illocutionary utterances, even one-word exclamations ("Ouch!") or sentences ("Come."), will have both force and content. If the illocution is both force and content, then this will explain why the content ("c") is a slice of the illocution ["F(c)"] and the force of the content ("F") partakes of the nature of the illocutionary act ["A(f)," where "A" is the act and "f" is the name of the type of act performed].[2] It is therefore not necessary to introduce a foreign element, such as the logical *proposition*, in this discourse (see Gripaldo 2003, 185-206). Where we have the term "proposition" in a linguistic discourse, as in a proposition or proposal to build a bridge, that proposition is neither true nor false.

Take three examples (two of which are constatives, the other is a non-constative performative) for analysis:

Statement (S) = "John leaves the room."
Assertion (A) = "John leaves the room."
Doubt (D) = "John leaves the room?"

There is nothing in common in the meanings of S, A, and D even when they have a common syntax or word order since their meanings include the respective illocutionary forces. The proposition as an abstraction from the statement-content, assertion-content, and so on, does not have a meaning by itself. The proposition's meaning is a slice, for instance, of the statement's meaning

and the propositional act, says Searle, partakes of the nature of the act of stating. However, when we call the illocution (the statement content/assertion-content/prediction-content) the "statement," "assertion," "prediction," respectively, then the proposition evaporates or disappears, or it becomes unnecessary/superfluous. If we insist on calling the varied meanings of S, A, and D as "propositions," then we have three different propositions and not one.

CONSTATIVE AS A LOGICAL CONCEPT

We now revive Austin's concept of the constative and reassert its generic status to refer to specific speech acts which are true or false. This means that we are elevating its status as an ordinary concept to a logical concept. Although a constative is a performative, it is a special one in that it refers to utterances which are or can be rendered true of false. It is possible that, depending upon the situation, utterances other than a statement, assertion, prediction, and description can be shown in certain contexts to be true or false, but in this short paper we will limit the discussion to these four only. While the constative is the *genus*, these four specific true-or-false utterances are the *species*.

Why Constative?

There are other options to the term *constative* as the logical concept that will replace the logical *proposition,* but they have limitations. The *sentence* is too broad as it includes non-true-or-false utterances. The same is true with the *illocution*. The *locution* is too narrow as it does not include the *force* of the utterance. The *indicative* or *declarative* are good options except that they have been traditionally identified with ordinary grammar rather than with logical grammar and have the usual connotation of the impreciseness of ordinary language.

Logicians usually use interchangeably the *proposition* and the *statement* in their discourse apparently as belonging to the same category. But we cannot use interchangeably the *constative* and the *statement* without qualification because the former is a genus (broad) while the latter is a species (narrow-specific). We may possibly use them interchangeably in the same context for as long as the genus-species distinction is clear in our minds, that is, that they belong to different categories. The same may also hold if we use in some contexts the *constative* and the *assertion* interchangeably. Where it is difficult to identity in the context the specific constatival utterance, then the word *constative* can be used.

Logical Acts

There are subtle differences among the logical species. What the speaker *states* in a statement is presumably a fact (what is the case) in objective reality. The contextual scenario and attitude are that one simply utters a state of affairs as a matter of fact. It has a *neutral* stance. What the speaker *asserts* in an assertion are contentious points of states of affairs. The contextual scenario and attitude are that one forcefully utters an issue for consideration. It has an *argumentative* stance. What the speaker *predicts* in a prediction is a happening that is bound to occur or not to occur. The contextual scenario and attitude are that one utters a futuristic perspective of an event. It has a *projective* stance. Lastly, what the speaker *describes* in a description generally includes an interpretative element about what is the case, whether it is an event, a material entity, a narrative, a pain, or the like. The contextual scenario and attitude are that one tells or brings out one's experience or observation about the states of affairs. It has an *interpretative* stance. (Only empirical descriptions are verifiably true or false; it is difficult to ascertain the truth value of so-called descriptions of inner feelings.)

These stances may not be absolutely exclusive as there are apparent gray areas as, for example, between a description and a statement or between a statement and an assertion. But in many cases we can distinguish, depending upon the context, between the act of stating from the act of asserting or the act of describing.

CATEGORY MISTAKES

A *category mistake* (Ryle 1970, 17-25) is a type of error in thinking that two or more terms or ideas belonging to different levels or categories are thought to belong to the same category within the same context. The intention of this fallacy is to alert and goad us to think as precisely as possible. We differentiate, for instance, between the use of the term *validity* from the use of the term *true*. We say that only arguments are valid or invalid and only constatives (statement, etc.) are true or false. We hear in daily discourse some people saying, "Your argument is legitimate; it is true" or "Your statement is correct; it is valid." These two utterances, logically speaking, commit the category mistake.

We also hear in ordinary discourse some people saying, "State your assertion," "He asserts the statement that...," or "He states the description that..." These utterances are meaningful only if we assume two levels of language. In *asserting a statement*, for example, a statement is uttered in the object-language (OL) and the same statement is asserted in the metalanguage (ML), where that statement is translated or transformed into an assertion in ML. But it would

be a category mistake to *assert a statement* or *state an assertion* within the same language level because their linguistic or illocutionary acts differ.

CONCLUSION

I conclude by saying that the logical concept *proposition* is a superfluous invention which, either as a technical term or the content of utterances, has no ontological justification. It cannot and does not exist in a linguistic discourse. Its logical function can just as perfectly be performed more accurately by the generic concept *constative*. Undoubtedly we can say that the constative is the principal bearer of truth and falsity in that within itself are types of utterance whose prominent common logical character is truth and falsity. The constative is also the object of attitudes in what we now call the *constatival attitudes,* which are a type of *psychological attitudes.*

NOTES

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2. Is there a name for both the illocutionary act ["A(f)"] and the illocutionary content ["F(c)"] together? In general, we call them a speech act or a performative. Specifically, as in a *statement* or an *assertion*, we call them together as a "statement" or an "assertion," as the case may be, because in the actual speech situation both the illocutionary act and illocutionary content go together as one.

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"The rejection of the proposition" Participants
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THE SPIRITUALIST TREND IN MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: FROM DESCARTES TO SARTRE[1]

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The contemporary debate between religion and science has its roots in seventeenth century debates on the implications of the new sciences. While Hobbes's materialism rests on the implications of the new physics, Descartes's spiritualism focuses on the radically new character of scientific thinking itself. Two opposed conceptions of God, externalist and internalist, correspond to these trends. Kant reconciles Descartes's focus on free subjectivity with materialist determinism by regarding the latter as a pragmatically useful construction of subjectivity itself. For Descartes, Kant, and Sartre, science itself rests on human cooperation in an endless pursuit of an ideal of divine perfection.

PROBLEMATIC: RELIGIOUS FAITH OR SCIENTIFIC SECULARISM?

Contemporary society is engaged in an intense debate over fundamental metaphysical frameworks. The alternative positions stand out in terms of a sharp antithesis: *either* beliefs and values founded in a traditional religious framework that transcends empirical verification *or* a version of secular scientific materialism.

But, say the defenders of religion, once God is thought to be dead, then everything is permitted. So the religionists—Jewish, Islamist, Hindu, or Christian—decry the materialism and egotism of modernist Western society which holds nothing to be sacred, which has abandoned all absolutes in the name of a moral relativism that follows in the wake of ever-shifting scientific and technological possibilities.

On the other hand, scientific materialists point to the irrationalities of religious beliefs dating back fourteen hundred or

two or four thousand years ago. How many wars have been fought as commands of the one true religion in the name of its God?

In the US political scene, individuals shift from one focus to the other, vying with one another over the profundity and efficacy of their religious convictions while dodging charges of bowing to religious authority and espousing backward beliefs. When I asked a group of freshman students whether they believe in Darwin's theory of evolution, all the hands went up. When I asked them if they believe that God created the world, all the hands went up again. My students want to have it both ways, both science and religion. But they lack the conceptual perspective for articulating this third position. And so they oscillate between the thesis and the antithesis.

The Western Worldview, sometimes called "modernity," is often identified with a materialist philosophy combined with an individualistic social and ethical outlook. And it is true that such a trend exists. It began in the seventeenth century with the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, and achieved social scientific status in the next century with Adam Smith's *Wealth of nations* (1776).

Stimulated by the great scientific discoveries of the seventeenth century, scientific materialism holds that both nature and society are governed by deterministic laws. Scientific reason is capable of knowing these laws and applying them for the betterment of humanity through the application of various science-based technologies. Such a philosophy generally holds that society is composed of self-interested individuals who can use their intellects to improve their lives. In concrete socio-economic terms, classically formulated by Adam Smith, the competition of self-interested individuals interacting in the free market stimulates the advances of material production and leads to ever greater wealth and happiness for society as a whole.

This science-based worldview first developed in the context of officially Christian societies with established churches. The early modern philosophy of science was not overtly anti-religious. Very early in the course of the modern scientific revolution and its reflections on the plane of philosophy, a division of labor was established between science and religion. Science has the task of examining material realities in the light of empirically verifiable natural laws. To religion falls the supernatural realm dealing with ultimate, unverifiable questions regarding the beginning of the universe, the final ends of life, the existence of God, the survival of the soul after death, the sinful nature of mankind, and the history of salvation through the death of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Such religion is primarily a matter of faith, but not completely. Natural theology claims to provide rational grounds for the

fundamental possibility of religion, especially. through rational
proofs for the existence of God.

THOMAS HOBBES

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes [1588-1679], writing
at the time of Oliver Cromwell's revolution in seventeenth-century
England, provides an especially straightforward and clear
expression of the materialist interpretation of the implications of
new physics. In a debate with the Church of England's Bishop
John Bramhall, Hobbes argues that the traditional concept of free
will defended by Bramhall is in flat contradiction with the new
physics of Galileo Galilei. Galileo's physics of inertial movement
holds that every body moves in a uniform straight line unless
another body acts upon it to change its motion. Material motions
have material causes. This holds for every motion of the human
body as well as of rocks and planets. To believe, as Bramhall does,
in the existence of free will is to suppose that the human individual
somehow initiates movements by a free or uncaused act of will.
But such an act of uncaused will would clearly violate this
fundamental principle of science.

Hobbes argues that in the light of the new physics all reality
must consist of physical movements and interactions, involving
law-governed (deterministic) processes. The "phantasms" of the
mind are therefore nothing but complex physical motions taking
place in the brain whose causes ultimately stem from physical
movements in the external environment. Human beings are
therefore purely physical beings, differing from others in their
complexity, but governed like all beings by the action of external
and internal physical forces.

Individualism and self-interest follow from such materialism.
Since human beings are basically individual bodies, spatially
separate from one another, each individual naturally seeks only
his or her own survival and well-being. Such egotism is tempered
by rational calculation of long-term self-interest. Ultimately we
recognize the need to live under positive civil·laws with limited
liberties backed up by the force of the State.

Hobbes's materialism does not exclude the existence of God,
but actually requires God as the First Cause of material motions.
If every event is caused by a previous event, without God or a
First, Uncaused Cause, there would be an endless chain of events,
and so nothing would really be explained. If we learn that event Z
is caused by event Y, we still cannot really explain why Z occurred.
Why did Johnny ride his bike into a tree? (Z) Answer: because he
turned the bike's handle bars in that direction (Y). But then we

have to ask, what caused Y? Why did Johnny turn the bike's handle bars in that direction? We then turn to the cause of Y, which is X. But X does not explain anything because it too needs to be explained—by W. The regression of causes is thus endless. In an endless chain of causes, the explanation keeps being postponed. So, Hobbes reasoned, unless there is a First Cause, A or *Alpha*, nothing is really explained.

"God" is the necessary stopping point in the chain of causes that makes the chain possible. God is the exception that proves the rule, because He created it in the first place. Without an ultimate beginning, the series of causes never even gets started. At some point it is necessary to stop the chain of partial or provisional explanations with an Uncaused Cause which starts the chain of causes moving in the first place: a mysterious cause that cannot itself be explained. So we find ourselves saying, without knowing what we really mean by this, that It simply causes Itself.

With this argument, Hobbes seems to contradict his criticism of free will. If there must be an Uncaused Cause, why can there not be free will? For free will is simply a cause of motion that is not in turn caused by other motions, that is, an uncaused cause. If we did act with free will, then, we too would be uncaused causes, like God. Hobbes's rejection of free will, together with his acceptance of a First Cause, therefore amounts to the following compromise: Better to have only one exception to the law of causality than billions of them: the one that sets up the system of laws and causes to begin with. God alone therefore creates by an act of free will, in accord with the *Book of genesis* where the Creator asserts, *Fiat lux*: let there be light. And there was light.

So Hobbes's materialism requires the existence of God. All we can say about the ultimate cause of the material universe, he says, is that it too must be material, since the effect must be like the cause, although the cause is infinitely greater. In this framework of thought that is sometimes called Deism, God is outside of the system of causes that is the object of scientific study. Christian theology therefore finds a rational basis in this approach: the mystery of the beginning of the universe is established by pure reason. Reason establishes a connection to the realm of the transcendent or the supernatural. There is therefore a rational ground for revealed religion to provide answers to questions that cannot be answered by natural reason: questions regarding the end or purpose of the universe, the history of salvation, etc. So we see in Hobbes's thought the philosophical establishment of the division of labor between science and religion. Science can pursue its goals of knowing the proximate empirical causes of the natural and social world without paying attention to the ultimate cause, God. But

science has its limits, and should acknowledge them. It is ringed round with unknowable, unexplainable mystery, which is the realm of religious revelation.

In today's world, this compromise position, this division of labor between science and religion, no longer seems to work. As science became more and more successful in its domain, religion comes to be regarded by ,the scientifically educated person as tenuous, unfounded, arbitrary, and irrational. Pure reason, without empirical support, comes to be regarded as empty, while rational arguments for the existence of God lose their power to convince. Science has pushed the chain of causes back to the very beginning, the Big Bang. This great achievement of modern science naturally raises the question: but what caused the Big Bang? Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow (1992, 107) concludes in his book, *God and the astronomers*:

> At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.

As this way of putting it implies, the traditional compromise with theology, even in the best of cases, is no longer acceptable to scientists. Having come to the threshold of traditional natural theology, the scientists nevertheless refuse to bow respectfully to the old Queen of the sciences. To postulate an unexplainable first cause, the God of traditional theology, is to abandon the scientific approach and affirm an ultimate unknowability and unexplainability. Uninterested in the answers of theology, and undeterred by a scarcity of evidence, scientific cosmologists are bent on investigating a spread of theories regarding how the Big Bang could have been created by natural causes out of a preceding state. Hence there is the search for enough matter in the universe to bring about a collapse of our present universe, which would then initiate a new Big Bang, in an endless cycle of expansions and collapses. If that should prove lacking, perhaps there are multitudes of universes intertwining with one another in multiple dimensions. And so on. Rather than be grateful to theology for its ready-made answer, science continues to plow ahead in its own terms. Science, it seems, is intrinsically Godless. There is no need to stop the causal chain at any point without abandoning the limitless mission of knowledge.

But if for science God is dead, does not the whole value system of Western society die as well? We must not underestimate how deeply Christian ethical values have penetrated Western culture. The division of labor between science and religion ultimately places moral values on the side of religion. If it turns out that scientific reason is ultimately godless, morality itself seems to be undermined. Then it seems that the only viable alternative to a godless and so morally bankrupt civilization are the teachings of religion— founded ultimately on the authority of tradition and the blind leap of faith. Thus if science no longer provides a foundation for religion, as in the days of Hobbes, the demand for some kind of foundation for morality seems to have taken its place.

On this question, Hobbes again is illuminating. On the one hand he argues that rational science supports the traditional morality as formulated by the Golden Rule. Enlightened self-interest will tell us that it is far better for each of us if we all help each other, than if we are always at each other's throats. If Jesus didn't put it in so many words, what he must have meant was that if I scratch your back, you will be more inclined to scratch mine. And so, out of rational self-interest, we should be helpful to one another. As a result of such morality, we agree to live under the State with its laws against murder and other high crimes and misdemeanors, backed by the threat of imprisonment and death.

But what about in the depths of the night, when no one will ever see what we are doing? If I cut your throat first, says a certain kind of rationality, you will never get a chance to cut mine. We see the logic of this reasoning operating with deadly effect today on the international level, as well as in the back alleys of our cities. Here, Hobbes argues, is where the all-seeing eye of God and the eternal punishments of religion necessarily supplement the day-time watchfulness of the State. But once a scientific materialism has cast off the specter of religion, won't just about everything be permitted? So the defenders of the religions argue that morality requires the supernatural grounds provided by some particular system of belief.

RENE DESCARTES

But this picture of the nature of Western scientific philosophy is one-sided. It essentially focuses on British empiricist philosophy, with its predominantly materialist orientation. It leaves out the alternative trend of continental rationalism, which supports a spiritualist metaphysics. Here we find the possibility of a third way between secular scientism and fundamentalist religion.

Hobbes's philosophy is externalist, and so easy for the popular imagination to picture. With René Descartes [1596-1650],

philosophy turns inward. Before we can understand the nature of science, it is necessary first of all to explore the human mind. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of heaven is within you." Descartes looks inside the human spirit for the true origin of the kingdom of science. The motive for Descartes's philosophy is nevertheless the same as that of Hobbes: to understand the meaning of the new sciences of nature.

Descartes asks: How is scientific knowledge possible? Hobbes begins with Galileo's physics, and its basic laws of motion, and concludes that such laws make free will impossible. Descartes too wants to understand the implications of Galileo's physics, but asks a more fundamental question: How is modern physics itself possible? How is it possible *to know* the laws of nature and of society?

Science is first of all a form of knowledge, and modern science implies a peculiar kind of knowing which is quite different from that of the sciences of antiquity. Such knowledge is only possible if the human mind is free. Knowledge of the laws of physics, Descartes argues, *requires* the existence of free will.

We begin with the world of ordinary experience, the world we directly perceive outside of ourselves. We see the sun rise on the Eastern horizon every morning, and set on the Western one every evening, just as regularly as day follows night. We see stars revolving in the night sky in great circles about the earth, trees blowing in the wind, fires rising to the sky above us, and waters spreading out in pools of lakes. And we feel the solid ground underneath us as we step with sure heaviness, careful not to slip and fall, up a beckoning hill.

And yet, if we hear and consider what the new sciences are telling us, none of these phenomena that we directly perceive are truly real. According to Copernican astronomy, the sun does not circle the earth. It is just the other way around. According to the physics of Galileo, fire does not rise to the heavens, nor do bodies naturally fall down to the earth. The elements of earth, air, water, and fire, plus the ethereal one in which the stars allegedly move, are all forms of one and the same kind of motion of the same fundamental element: inertial, straight-line motion of material beings.

But how could we possibly know that this is true? According to the ancient philosophy of Aristotle [384 BCE–322 BCE], whose authority in science was largely respected until the time of Hobbes and Descartes, we attain knowledge of the world around us through careful observation in which essential characteristics of things are identified by a process of abstracting the universal or essential form of things from the particulars or individuals that we directly

perceive. Knowledge is essentially a matter of contemplation, in the belief that the things that we perceive for the most part really exist outside of us the way we perceive them. If we always see the sun moving around the earth, this must be the way these things really are. What we see is what we get: the world really exists the way it appears to us.

The new sciences radically challenge this basic metaphysical principle. According to the new sciences, the world that we perceive around us is only an appearance, a kind of illusion due to the perspective of our physical bodies and our limited capacities of physical sensation. For real science to be possible it is necessary to suspend belief in these direct appearances. The mind must have the capacity to step back from the appearances in order explain them from underlying principles and laws that are hardly apparent at all. The real world of the new sciences is not abstracted from observation, but attained only through the active constructions of the mind.

So we see why Descartes insists on the method of doubting everything. It is modern science—astronomy and physics—that teaches that much of what educated people believed to be true and real was in fact an illusion of perspective. The sun does not go around the earth. Fire does not go up. There is in fact no absolute up and down. The only natural movement is straight-line inertial movement which has no inherent direction, and no ability to move itself. Nothing in fact moves itself: all motion of bodies is caused by the action of external forces pressed upon them.

So we see why the free will is necessary for modern science. For modern science to be possible, the mind of the scientist must be able to deliberately suspend judgment and break from the impressions of the senses and the spontaneous generalizations based on sensuous experiences. The mind must be able to draw back from the powerful forces of sensuous experience, to affirm as true and real only that which is acceptable to it *on its own terms*.

The method of modern science is that of analysis and synthesis. Analysis consists in breaking down the complexity and confusion of the objects of direct experience into their fundamental components: simple elements and movements. Having arrived at these simple elements and movements, the mind must reconstruct the complexity in step-by-step fashion starting from simple principles.

If we can do this we eventually return to the complexity of direct experience, no longer regarded in its immediate presence to egocentric or geocentric perception, but as the result of underlying processes not apparent on the surface of direct perception. We then comprehend why the sun *appears* to go around the earth, for the

appearance is the result of the combined movements of both earth and sun. We then comprehend why fire *appears* to go up: because of the movement of its elements under the causal action of atmosphere and temperature.

The *ultimate* starting point of all science is therefore not the deterministic movement of matter, as Hobbes argues, but the free movement of the mind, refusing its affirmation of truth and being until it is satisfied by requirements of its own determination. The ultimate basis of all science is thus the reality of the thinking being: I think, says Descartes, therefore I am. Thinking attains being or reality when it reflects on itself and its own inherent power. Here is a directly intuited, undeniable truth, on which all science is necessarily based.

Thus, following the method of universal doubt, which is a general analysis of direct experience, the mind is able to reach a truth that cannot be doubted: the existence of one's own consciousness and its various forms of activity: sensing, dreaming, knowing, desiring. Here is the simple starting point for all possible scientific knowledge.

This conclusion leads to the next step of Descartes's meditative reflections. Let us reflect on what has just taken place in our own minds. We have just moved from confusion to truth, from illusion to reality, from darkness to light, and made the discovery: I think, therefore I am. What then am I? The answer is found in the experience itself. I am a consciousness in darkness aspiring toward the light, a being in ignorance moving toward the truth. And then it follows that there exists within each of us an inner light, a capacity for distinguishing truth from illusion, an idea and ideal of truth.

It is necessary to probe the implications of this process that we have discovered within ourselves. Descartes is not primarily interested in following long chains of causes in the world outside of us. He first asks: what is the inner nature of our own consciousness as we move from ignorance toward truth, from illusion to reality? What makes this expansion of consciousness, this process of enlightenment, possible? This question is none other than that of the nature of the scientific process itself. How is this movement from ignorance to truth possible? What is its basis? The answer can only be found within us. True knowledge is possible only on the basis of an inner light and the ideal of truth with which it is connected. Without this inner light we would never think to doubt our direct experience. Like contented cows we would simply chew over and regurgitate the data of direct experience.

Science therefore presupposes an amazing inner power: the power of the human spirit to free itself from the forces of immediate

sensuous experience; the power of moving from ignorance to knowledge, from incomplete to more complete understanding of the world around us. All of this is discovered independently of empirical investigations into the outer world, for without such inner presuppositions no real, scientific knowledge of the external world would be possible.

Furthermore, science is founded on an inner ideal. The ideal of science is that of complete or perfect knowledge. No partial or half-truths can be tolerated. And so in its quest for understanding the mind keeps ascending from less perfect to more perfect comprehension of the chains of causes that produce the experienced effects. But above all the mind must understand itself as the subject of this process of scientific knowledge. Before we ask about the external causes in the world around us, we must ask what causes the inner ideal of perfect and complete knowledge that drives the seeker of truth.

What is this ideal of perfect knowledge but the idea of a Perfect Being, "God"? It is therefore not necessary for to go back through a chain of causes to find a God regarded as the all-powerful, controlling force of the universe. The true God of science is found within the scientist because all science rests on the aspiration to achieve perfect knowledge of everything. The scientist is motivated by the desire to be God.

Descartes's proofs for the existence of God have nothing to do with Hobbes's external chain of causes. They are rooted in the freedom and power of the human spirit and our ability to rise from imperfection to come ever closer to our innate ideal of perfection. If having free will means being like God, as Hobbes implies, then, Descartes replies, let it be so.

But what is God? Descartes's concept of God is radically different from that of Hobbes: the all-powerful God who creates a chain of causes that determines our lives. In the Calvinism of his day, this meant a God who predestines each to heaven or hell. Hobbes's God is an external Power, a cosmic ruler, like the State that must save us from ourselves through threats of dire punishment. Descartes's God, however, is found within. Its image is the inner light of our own minds, drawing us out of ignorance toward truth, and guiding us in our relations to one another.

Does a Perfect Being really exist? Descartes argues that it is at least necessary for us to think so if we are to be true to the nature of science. For the idea of such a perfect being is the inner driving force of knowledge. If there is nothing to this idea, if it is also an illusion, then so is science itself. We have seen that scientists as scientists are constitutionally unable to find God in the chains of external causes, for they are not even interested in trying.

Descartes would justify this orientation on the grounds that divinity is only found within the scientist as the ultimate inspiration and source of the search itself.

MORALITY

The Cartesian approach to the nature of science has profound moral implications. If Hobbes's materialism leads to a universal egotism of individual self-interest, Descartes's spiritual starting point is the basis for an ethics of shared human existence.

In his book, *Descartes's secret notebook*, Amir Aczel (2005, 2-4), tells the story of how he was once lost in a snow storm while driving in Quebec. With gas running low, his life was in danger. For the first time since he bought his new car, he punches a button on his fancy GPS, and discovers that it connects him with a woman a thousand miles away. She sees exactly where he is and directs him to the nearest hotel. A few minutes later he is safe and sound in a warm room. He realizes then that the woman was able to find and direct him thanks to the use of Cartesian Coordinates!

Here is the Copernican Revolution put to practical use for humanity. Recognizing that each of us directly sees the world from his or her distinct perspective, Descartes constructed a system for the universal coordination of an infinite number of points of view. In this way the narrow egocentrism of separate individuals is overcome by a universal system for coordinating each one's position with those of every other individual. In this way the encompassing idea of universal humanity replaces the narrow perspective of the separate individual.

Each of us sees the universe circling around his or her individual body. Immediate perceptions, however practically useful, yield egocentric illusions when taken as truth. For science to be possible, the appearances of ordinary experience need to be corrected by the constructions of the free and independent mind. There is a moral dimension to this recognition. Matter separates us, Descartes argues. The more the pie is shared, the less each person gets. Spirit, the power of attaining and sharing knowledge, brings all humanity together in a single enterprise. The more each one shares real knowledge, the more it grows for all of us. The inner light of truth, which is the perfection of divine being, unites all human beings who resist the impressions of separation stemming from their individual physical bodies. A Spirit-based theory of science thus provides the basis for an ethics of universal human cooperation.

Nothing is so universally distributed, Descartes argues, as common sense, i.e., scientifically-oriented reason. Isaac Newton

[1643-1727] asserted that if he has been able to achieve much, it was because he was standing on the shoulders of giants. One of these giants was undoubtedly Descartes, for Newton adopts Descartes's analytical-synthetic method as his own. Thanks to scientific method, each individual is capable of standing on the shoulders of the giants of the past. High-school students today are able to follow the steps of well-taught science, and so are able to outshine the greatest minds of antiquity and medieval times, steeped as they were in the illusions of direct egocentric experience.

Such universally shared scientific knowledge is the foundation of authentically democratic societies. The humblest of citizens, enlightened by a fully developed science, would be capable of accurately judging what produces the well-being of society. The founders of the French and American revolutions, inspired by Jean Jacques Rousseau [1712-78] standing on the shoulders of Descartes, enshrined the "General Will" of citizens in their constitutions. Freedom of speech, freedom from state-empowered religion, freedom of press and scientific education, are the starting points of the American Bill of Rights and subsequent constitutions modeled on this.

Thanks to the power of the free human spirit, all of humanity is capable of joining together in a common enterprise of seeking and finding truth, and so of constructing a mutually beneficial world. Recognizing the power of spirit within us and guided by its light, we come closer to realizing the ideal of Godlike being by joining in a common enterprise of mutual support and sharing. We don't need the external, Hobbesean State to protect us from ourselves. We only need to follow the light within us. It is our narrow focus on the world outside us, seen from the illusory standpoint of our separate physical bodies, that produces the war of all against all and so the seeming need for outside controls.

Hobbes's picture of a scientific worldview sees us all as robot-like beings subject to external laws. Descartes shows that scientific knowledge implies that we are fundamentally free from external forces—free like that God whose divine light dwells within us. Following the inner light of knowledge, relying on our own enlightened powers, we can liberate ourselves from the external machineries of an existence founded on the illusions of the physical separation of individuals. United together by the power of spirit within each of us, humanity is able to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth.

IMMANUEL KANT

The contrast between Hobbes and Descartes is only the starting point of what I call in my book (Lawler, 2006) the battle

of metaphysics in the early modern period leading up to Immanuel Kant [1724-1804] between the defenders of matter and those who begin with consciousness or spirit. Philosophy becomes more complex in the later developments that take place both within and between the rival orientations of thought. The rivalries continue to the present time with the contrast between the Anglo-American "analytic" approach and the continental one. Continental philosophy implicitly relies on the synthetic constructivism of Descartes even as "postmodernism" aims at deconstructing those constructions. Attacking synthesis as illusory grand narrative, continental philosophy has become a more complicated kind of analytic philosophy. Only by unraveling this history back to its beginnings, and then reconstructing it step by step, can we truly understand the contemporary philosophical landscape of the West.

Kant occupies a central place in this history. He was the first to recognize clearly the opposing trends of empiricism and rationalism, materialism and spiritualism, and then to propose a reconciliation. To understand Kant properly it is necessary to understand the prior developments beginning with Hobbes and Descartes.

Rousseau (1762) has been mentioned as a defender of Descartes's notion of a society that shares in the same spiritual goods, and so is capable of participating in a General Will. This unifying General Will, Rousseau argues, is contrary to the spurious Social Contract of Hobbes which sets up an external State as a power for constraining the warring individualities that supposedly constitute society. If the metaphysical reality of the individual consists in his or her separate physical existence, and each individual seeks to realize his or her well-being in competition with every other, then it would indeed be quite necessary to create a terrible Power to constrain such individualists from mutual suicide. However, as Rousseau argues following Descartes, the true reality of the individual is spirit, not matter. The still, small voice of spirit is the sentiment of the soul, conscience, which orients reason toward the common good of all rather than toward the calculation of the self-interests of each. Moreover, the Hobbesean State is not really even the defender of limited but equal liberties that it pretends to be. In reality, Rousseau argues, it is the instrument whereby the rich maintain their power over the poor.

The British contemporaries of Rousseau were David Hume [1711-76] and Adam Smith [1723-90]. Smith's conception of economic life starts from the Hobbesean position of separate individuals seeking to realize their self-interests, producing and exchanging goods and services as each sees fit. He shows how the entire world becomes entwined in an evolving global market which,

as if guided by an invisible hand, produces an ever-rising sea of wealth. Smith agrees with Rousseau that economic and political realities favor the rich, but even small boats rise with the tide, and the poor peasant of Europe tends, in general, to be wealthier in this system than he would be in any conceivable alternative.

It is Smith's achievement in economic science, together with the capitalist world whose system he examines and justifies, that really stands behind the charge today that the West is dominated by the secular philosophy of materialism. Hobbes's argument from the physics of Galileo and Newton no longer supports this deterministic materialism. The old physics of deterministic motion has been replaced by the new physics of relativity and the indeterminism of quantum mechanics. The seemingly solid world of matter melts before the atomic fires of energy within, while the motions of the elements turn out to be indeterminate and dependent on the observer's own choices. In the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, the free will of the experimenter is introduced into physics itself.

But while science continues its cooperative pursuit of truth, economic life divides individuals and nations into competing rivals who are engaged in a struggle for survival and an insatiable quest for gain. The outlook of materialist determinism is sustained by the fact that we continue to be subject to the driving forces of the Hobbesean war of all against all. Not even the nation state today can protect us from its global imperatives.

Kant's philosophy took shape as an attempt to reconcile the opposites, to introduce a kind of Social Contract of Metaphysics to create peace between the warring parties of Matter and Spirit. This is the meaning of the *Critique of pure reason* (1781), for Kant argues that both materialism and spiritualism can demonstrate the truth of their respective arguments with equal logical force, and yet their conclusions contradict one other. Thus it is necessary to confront the scandal of so-called post-modern philosophy that reason itself may be inherently self-contradictory.

Kant gives each party its due in his attempt to create a perpetual peace in philosophy as a necessary preliminary to the peace between nations. Thus Kant (1985a, 112) agrees entirely with Hobbes about the nature of the State, when he writes: "The problem of organizing a state, however hard it may seem, can be solved even for a race of devils, if only they are intelligent." What other philosopher has praised greed more forthrightly than Kant, where he (1985b, 15-16) writes:

> Men, good-natured as the sheep they herd, would
> hardly reach a higher worth than their beasts; they would

not fill the empty place in creation by reaching their end, which is rational nature. Thanks be to Nature, then, for the incompatibility, for heartless competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess and to rule! Without them, all the excellent natural capacities of humanity would forever sleep, undeveloped.

But Kant has not forgotten Descartes, Gottfried von Leibniz [1646-1716], and Rousseau in his recognition of his debt to Hobbes and John Locke [1632-1704], Hume and Smith. Heartless competitive vanity has indeed stimulated the developments of the vast technological power hidden within that seemingly harmless shepherd sleeping among his sheep. But to continue on this path without a radical reorientation in the direction pointed out by Descartes will certainly be our doom as a species. Kant writes that if everything should continue as in the past, wars will be fought with ever more powerful weapons and so with ever greater costs to the wealth of nations and the possibilities of civilization. The same forces of competitive individualism that brought us to our present stage of civilization are preparing for us "a hell of evils, however civilized we may now be, by annihilating civilization and all cultural progress through barbarous devastation."

The evils of lawless international development call for a federation of nations which recognizes the equality of all its members. Such a federation of states would constitute the "halfway mark in the development of mankind." Consequently, Kant (1985b, 21) writes, "Rousseau was not far wrong in preferring the state of savages, so long, that is, as the last stage to which the human race must climb is not attained."

What is this proposal other than the extension of the Hobbesean Social Contract to the international plane? And yet even with such a great achievement, Kant says, we would still be only halfway through our course as a species. We would have guaranteed the achievements of civilization against the forces of self-destruction, but we would still be far from achieving our potential as human beings. Kant (1985b, 21) goes on:

> To a high degree we are, through art and science, cultured. We are civilized—perhaps too much for our own good—in all sorts of social grace and decorum. But to consider ourselves as having reached morality—for that, much is lacking. Everything good that is not based on a morally good disposition...is nothing but pretense and glittering misery.

How then does Kant reconcile the two trends in modern philosophy? How does he create a philosophical peace between matter and spirit? Each principle has its place in the unfolding of a larger human history. Throughout the history of civilization, of course, the force of morality calls for putting what we share with one another ahead of what divides us. But this voice has always been a feeble, and essentially impractical, one. A materialist orientation, reflecting the noisy market place of separate and competing individuals, "getting and spending" as William Wordsworth [1770-1850] (1807) says, has drowned the still, small voice within us calling on us to see each other as part of the unity of humanity.

Materialists argue that such spirit-based morality is an illusion, since we are nothing but our bodies, and bodies are governed by unbreakable laws. But if this is what we appear to be, it is not what we are in reality, Kant replies. Materialism applies to appearances only. Mechanistic causal laws are instruments of human subjectivity for putting order into the chaos of sensible data. Science is a human enterprise that brings with it inherent, *a priori*, presuppositions: that discrete events interacting in space produce developments in time according to causal laws. Consequently, explanations must continue forever without any stopping point in something like the First Cause or the Free Will. But this is only our subjective way of creating an order of experience that suits our pragmatic purposes. Beyond the appearances or phenomena of such subjectively organized experience, reality as it is in itself remains unknown and unknowable by scientific knowledge.

It is intrinsic to science to resist the temptation to stop, as the scientist chases an ever-receding horizon of perfect knowledge, continually pursuing his desire to be all-knowing like God. The ideas of freedom, God, and the immortal quest of endless generations of scientists, standing on the shoulders of their predecessors, inevitably inspire the endeavors of science. But these grand metaphysical ideas must never be regarded as fully attained.

The normal unphilosophical scientists, as long as they are looking at the data of the world outside of them, are therefore programmatically Godless. Contemporary "postmodern" science does point to the freedom of the experimenter, but without providing an understanding of the basis of that freedom. But were scientists to turn inward, and examine the inner presuppositions of science, following the spiritualist trend of scientific philosophy from Descartes to Kant, they would discover the idea of freedom that makes science possible, and the transcendental ideal of perfect knowledge that forms the inspiration of the scientific endeavor. Without such reflection on the inner spiritual conditions of science,

normal science is like the eagle flying over endless lands in search of prey, able to see everything with great penetration, except its own eyes.

Kant shows that we are not self-interested beings by nature, as Hobbes argues. We *choose* to be so. The world we live in is not inherently deterministic. It is a pseudo-determinism, a heteronomy of forces produced by our basic choices. When we choose to separate ourselves from one another, we create a world in which we *appear* to be governed by outside laws. The world of competitive individuals is created by the quasi-unanimous choice of individuals to see themselves in competition with one another.

We can therefore make another choice. We can recognize the fact that we are the lawmakers for our own world as an implicitly united human species. As rational beings we inevitably universalize the goals of our individual actions. Individuals cannot help but formulate their goals in universal terms, even as they choose to see themselves as separate and opposed to one another. We are free therefore to make a different choice: to recognize that implicit universality in a conscious way, and choose to act as citizens of a world that we are inevitably creating with one another.

Now more than ever, we are threatened by our own power. It is not only nations that threaten to destroy the very nature that gave us birth. Stateless individuals are capable of it as well. Not even a federation of nations can solve our contemporary problems, which arise out of the inequalities and insecurities of our seemingly separate and conflicting existences. It is necessary therefore to make another choice. We are at a turning point in history. We have created an inherently vulnerable civilization. To secure it, we must now choose to create an age of morality.

FROM RENE DESCARTES TO JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

The main purpose of this paper is to recognize the existence of a third way in Western thought between organized religion and scientific materialism. There is a "spiritualist" trend in Western philosophy which is rooted in the nature of the new sciences, and begins with Descartes. An indirect confirmation of this notion can be found in the recent book by Eckhart Tolle [1948-], *A new earth: Awakening to your life's purpose* (2005). Tolle's book was selected by Oprah Winfrey [1954-] for her popular book club. Oprah is perhaps the most prominent American proponent today for non-sectarian spirituality. So it is especially interesting to read what Tolle has to say about the philosophical background to his teaching.

Tolle argues that what Descartes regarded as primary truth, "I think, therefore I am," is in fact the primary error: the equation

of being with thinking. As a result of this error, an authentic understanding of being has been forgotten. Tolle (2005, 55) then writes:

> It took almost three hundred years before another famous philosopher saw something in that statement that Descartes, as well as everybody else, had overlooked. His name was Jean-Paul Sartre. He looked at Descartes's statement "I think, therefore I am" very deeply and suddenly realized, in his own words, "The consciousness that says 'I am' is not the consciousness that thinks." What did he mean by that? When you are aware that you are thinking, that awareness is not part of thinking. It is a different dimension of consciousness. And it is that awareness that says "I am." If there were nothing but thought in you, you wouldn't even know you are thinking. You would be like a dreamer who doesn't know he is dreaming. You would be as identified with every thought as the dreamer is with every image in the dream. Many people still live like that, like sleepwalkers, trapped in old dysfunctional mind-sets that continuously re-create the same nightmarish reality. When you know you are dreaming, you are awake within the dream. Another dimension of consciousness has come in.

Sartre's [1905-80] insight is that when you are aware of something, you are not that of which you are aware. So if you are aware of your Ego or self-identity, in your awareness of it you are distinct from that of which you are aware. Or rather, as he puts it dialectically, you are that in the mode of not being it. Consciousness, therefore, is a nothingness in and of being, a state of not-being that of which you are conscious, which he calls a relation of internal negation. If this were not the case, you could not be conscious of something outside of yourself. Paradoxically, this not-being of consciousness is essential to the identity of knowledge with its object. Knowledge is an identity with an object that is not you. If consciousness were first something in itself, it could not identify with something else. It would simply be itself, with perhaps some inner representation of something outside of itself. Only a relative non-being, which is the spirituality of consciousness, can identify with what is not it. Spirit is therefore not another kind of substance, somehow attached to matter, but a self-negation of being which permits that peculiar kind of identification or unity with being in itself that we call knowledge. To be aware of consciousness itself, then, is to be aware of your inner essential detachment from all that you are aware of.

But is it really the case that Descartes commits the primary error of identifying thinking with being, and therefore is responsible for creating an ontology of the Ego, with all its admitted dysfunctions? Sartre calls his existentialism a humanism, but before that it is a spiritualism in the line of Descartes. Let us recall the argument regarding Descartes's starting point. Modern science requires a fundamental break not only with geocentrism, but more radically with the egocentrism of perception. The world as it is in itself is not the world as it presents itself in appearance. We are too accustomed today to the heliocentric conception of the solar system to be duly astonished at its implications regarding our ordinary experience. The world that I see around me is, strictly speaking, my world, not yours. Each of us directly perceives a separate world that we implicitly constitute for ourselves. And then we make adjustments for the fact that there are others too, with their own worlds. And so we must correct our vision to allow for that of others.

Heliocentrism and the other fundamental concepts of modern science require a thorough-going correction of direct experience. No wonder then that Descartes, in the throes of this epochal revolution in consciousness constituted by the new sciences, begins by doubting everything. All the supposedly solid truths of the millennia had been shaken to the core by the new scientific worldview.

Far from identifying thinking and being, Descartes begins by suspending or bracketing or dis-identifying from all perceptions and all thoughts. But even in his doubting, he is aware that he is doubting, and so cannot be wholly immersed in the doubt. Descartes says, "I think, therefore I am." But he could also have said, "I doubt, therefore I am," or "I dream, therefore I am," or "I desire, therefore I am." It is not the specific activity of thinking, in the sense of the discursive arrangement of concepts, that leads to an awareness of being, but any kind of self-awareness that is inherent in the various modes of human consciousness. Descartes's "I think" is detaching from all these modes of consciousness, including that of thinking itself. Of course, he is attempting to found a system of knowledge, and so he is particularly interested in thinking *per se*. But even in his formulation, "I think, therefore I am," he is distinguishing between thinking and being, not identifying them. Thinking is one thing; being is another.

Hence, in his argument for the existence of God from the contingency of being, he clearly distinguishes the *forms* of reality from their *existence or being*. The causal connections that link the present with the past have to do with the forms or structures of things, not with their existence itself. How could the being of things

now be the result of past being, since past being no longer is? I am tall because my father was tall, but my being present here and now cannot be the effect of a cause that no longer is: the fact that my father once existed back then. Separating being from the specific forms of things, Descartes concludes that being must be continually recreated. As Gerard Manley Hopkins [1844-89] (1918) would write, "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things." Being is never stale. There is only the eternal now, whatever it is that we do when we invent time. This awareness of being, what Tolle calls in the title of his first book, *The power of now* (1999), detaches us from the chain of causes and its determinism. Awareness of being is the fundamental freedom of consciousness, liberating the thinker from the immediacy of sensuous appearances and old thought schemes, so as to enable the step-by-step reorganization of the data of experience in a system of science. But this power of the consciousness of being extends beyond discursive thinking. It also allows the desiring person to reorganize his desires, and the dreamer to dream new dreams.

Descartes shows that there is an authentic spirituality of the practice of science itself. In the spirit of distinctly modern science, the scientist cannot identify with any of her thoughts, for they only have their true significance in a system that supersedes them. And this system is itself infinitely open.

Thus the scientist, following the inner light of being, has the primordial goal of becoming all-knowing like God. Sartre (1956, 724) himself continues this central idea of Descartes and Kant when he concludes that "man fundamentally is the desire to be God." The danger in such an orientation is that one will stop at some point in this pursuit and say, "Now I've made it. I have completed my being. I am something definite now." This is the identity with form that Tolle argues is at the heart of all the dysfunctions of our age. This assumption that one already has achieved God-like completion is what Sartre calls bad faith. This is the danger that every scientist recognizes, to put a stop to the chain of causes, even in God himself.

In his criticism of the argument that contingent being implies necessary being, Sartre argues that not even God can be a necessary being. For as being is the well-spring of freedom, it cannot be dependent on something else, even on Itself in the case of God as the so-called Cause of Itself. Therefore, Sartre (1956, 129) concludes, "God, if he exists, is contingent." But then, in the same spirit, it must be admitted that not even God can be God, i.e., a completed entity that causes and identifies with itself. God, if he exists, must be like us, open to an infinity of creation that never ends.

NOTE

1. This paper was presented at a conference devoted to the exploration of my book, *Matter and spirit: The battle of metaphysics in modern Western philosophy before Kant* (2006). The "James Lawler Conference on the Battle of Matter and Spirit in Modern Philosophy" took place at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, 29 February-1 March 2008.

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BOOK REVIEW

William R. Schroeder: *Continental philosophy: A critical approach*

Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing 2005, 1-428

Formally starting with brief sketches of the thinkers of the Modern Period and the issues raised therein, the book introduces and explicates the main themes that have dominated Continental philosophy for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as their main French and German contributors, though by no means limited to them. It is, as Schroeder states, a project the conclusion of which is claimed to be grounded by two objectives: first, the attempt to locate and explain the rifts among the major players in post-Kantian Continental philosophy, which are, as the author contests contemporary claims notwithstanding, still unresolved, or at least not resolved fully at the core. This the book attempts to do by examining the entire post-Kantian tradition. Second, it aims to indicate the implications and, at most, contributions of Continental philosophy to several subfields of philosophy (such as ethics, politics, epistemology, and philosophy of mind) with the further aim of opening routes for philosophers of a different tradition (such as Analytic philosophy) to tap into the resources and depth offered by Continental philosophy so as to establish a relevance of the latter to the former. In short, it is grounded on the attempt to establish and revitalize Continental philosophy in view of, on the one hand, a larger context of philosophers and, on the other, a more specialized set of readers, such as specialists and advanced students of philosophy as well as other social sciences. As such, the book claims to offer focused accounts of Continental philosophical systems, as well as accounts from a wide-angled lens so as to situate these within the tradition of Western philosophy in general, with the overall aim of providing grounds for reassessment of the contributions of one to the other, without claiming a victory of newer movements over earlier ones.

The Preface is a discussion grounded on the claim that post-Kantian philosophy is suffering a crisis of its program, to a great extent brought about and exacerbated by the withering effects of poststructuralism and postmodernism to Continental philosophy. Citing the claims and counter-claims interplaying among the two recent movements mentioned against the phenomenological tradition and its claim to self-knowledge, the hermeneutic assumption of organic unity as necessary for adequate

interpretations, the existentialist humanism and individualism as to the subject and his free will, as well as historical and material dialectics supporting systematic understanding of construction of identities, poststructuralism and postmodernism are forwarded as silencing other contenders in Continental thought. This notwithstanding, French feminist writers drew on resources from practitioners of the two fields to establish a program for renewing culture and philosophy, so as to nurture social change via a celebration of the idea of difference. However, Schroeder believes, this silencing is not fatal to Continental philosophy, as the two recent movements are themselves not without flaws, being unsound or problematic, adding to the assertion that interest in them has waned recently. The book thus takes these two movements as reference points for explication of its themes. He notes that this project is Hegelian in scope, tempered by a Foucauldian sensibility.

The Introduction is a survey divided into ten sections, each a sketch of positions relevant to the themes of the book. It starts with Descartes's system and the subsequent problems it generated as regards its foundationalism, which Continental philosophers found most contestable. The Continental philosophers hold systematic and not isolated approaches to philosophy and knowledge, and human identity (as in Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, existentialism, and hermeneutics). It moves on to a discussion of the wider contexts of Empiricism, the Rise of Science as well as Rationalism, and the different principles of order these movements raised for nature, life, and mind (as those emergent in Spinoza, Hegel, and Leibniz). The French Enlightenment and the challenges which arose to it (Romanticism and Rousseau, used later on by Nietzsche and Foucault) serve as grounds for elucidating the post-Kantian Continental themes of self-expression and harmony, and rational as well as existential bases for thought. The last four sections of the Introduction interweave Kant as well as the resulting, reparative idealism of Fichte and Schelling and serve as grounds for the later Continental thinkers—Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Lyotard—and their influence on a later Continental movement, Philosophical Anthropology. Lastly, clumped together are the systems of Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schiller, which Schroeder uses to ground the centrality of reason and philosophy over intuition and art.

Each chapter is introduced with a summary of the most vital contributions of a figure or a movement, continues with an interpretation, and is concluded by an assessment. The first chapter, focusing on Hegel and his core contributions as to Logic, Philosophy of History, Politics and Ethics, Aesthetics, Philosophy of Mind, which all constitute his system, are assessed as relevant to the book as Schroeder integrates Fichte's and Schelling's insights, while resolving the paradoxes in Kant, primarily the reason why later Continental thinkers (notably Marx, Freud, Schopenhauer, and Bergson, as well as the phenomenologists, structuralists, and both the poststructuralists and postmodernists) could

not ignore Hegel—indebted to, attempting to overcome, or to replace his system. Schroeder argues that Hegel's way of doing philosophy is both his strength and his weakness, as it, on the one hand, proffers systematic thinking though, on the other hand, it is overly optimistic as a supersession of human tragedy.

The second chapter—elucidating Marx and Western Marxism and its core contributions constitutive of Alienation and Capitalism, as well as the Materialist Conception of History, moving on to the thinkers traditionally held under the banner of Western Marxism (German, French, Italian, Eastern European, English, and American thinkers, representatives of which are Gramsci, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Habermas)—are assessed in terms of the main problem of Marxism as lacking significant implementations of its goal of social change, which Schroeder suggests as itself needing further re-thinking in terms of its justification and strategy, regardless of the Western Marxists' establishment of a Critical Theory.

The third chapter lists the core contributions of the Life-Philosophy of Schopenhauer, Freud, and Bergson and their focus on the forces of the subconscious, analogous to the dialectical philosophy of the two earlier chapters. Though these thinkers are not traditionally grouped together, Schroeder makes their affinities as mediated by Freud, in that Bergson's creative force is in contrast with Schopenhauer's will, leading to an assessment of these life-force thinkers collectively as challenging an interest-free and direct observation of the world. Nietzsche is claimed to be the culmination of these themes, which moreover are found and deepened in later Continental thinkers, specifically in hermeneutics, phenomenology, and existentialism.

Nietzsche's Critique of Morality and Revaluation of Values; his Constructive Ethics; Philosophies of Art, History, Culture, and Politics; Human Life and Consciousness; Epistemology and Metaphysics; and New Philosophers are used in the fourth chapter to ground comparisons between him and the thinkers surveyed in the last three chapters. This chapter concludes with an assessment which is dominated by a critique of the attainability of the future society and culture that Nietzsche forwards, and of the key doctrines of eternal recurrence and rank as according to typologies of virtue, as well as the status of these doctrines.

Chapter five lists the influence of philosophers of history (those included in the last four chapters) to the core concepts of Hermeneutics. This movement is claimed to have several important contributions to Continental philosophy, underscoring the complexity of experience, examining the significance of historicality and temporality to understanding in general, as well as exploring the assumptions and differences between the human and natural sciences. Exemplars of the Hermeneutic movement, though by no means reconciled to agree, are Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Betti. The assessment which concludes this chapter is largely about the hermeneutic

circle, and the limitations of the hermeneuts themselves as regards their prescriptions as to the best way to enter the circle, which is primarily the reason for the two contradicting approaches to texts and interpretations (coined by Schroeder as "traditional" hermeneutic thinkers, described by their effort to distinguish typés and regions of interpretive practice, and "philosophical" hermeneutic thinkers, who tend to assimilate interpretation to one model alone).

Another movement is focused on in chapter six, Phenomenology. It is introduced using the methods of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. This chapter addresses phenomenology on different levels and presents them accordingly, first with its vital contributions, its types, Husserl and his contributions, moving to Concrete Phenomenological Studies (as regards intersubjectivity, using Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, and Sartre; as regards perception, using Merleau-Ponty), and situating Phenomenology in Social Science as well as citing other applications of phenomenology (as in literary theory, aesthetics, and value theory). A section is devoted to the movement's traces in psychological analyses of consciousness, in hermeneutics, as well as in existentialism. The movement is assessed in terms of its weaknesses found in the very primacy phenomenologists place on the realm of experience and its underlying assumption of the self-presence of the consciousness to itself and of the primacy of conceptual background. Finally, the whole movement is claimed to have hypotheses made on metaphysical pronouncements, which is reason enough to justify a revision and supplementation of its conceptualizations.

Turning to two movements in chapter seven, Existentialism and Philosophical Anthropology, the author cites the core contributions of both movements as consisting of their attempt to overcome the dualisms that characterize conceptualizations regarding human nature, praising the plausibility of the contingency of human existence. Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre are listed under the first movement; Scheler, Goldstein, and Gehlen are listed under the second, considering its indebtedness to scientific research in biology, anthropology, psychology, culture theory, and neurophysiology, and its main assumption of persons being defined by both natural and social contexts. The assessment offers a balanced view as to the strength of both movements, especially if taken together, in terms of their provision of penetrating hypotheses regarding features of human existence; as well as their weaknesses, mainly centered around the primacy placed on authenticity as an ethical ideal.

Chapter eight lists the core contributions of Structuralism to Continental Philosophy, devoting sections to Saussure, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Althusser, and lastly Barthes's Transcendence of Structuralism in support of the claim that the movement's main goal is to reduce surface diversity through establishing systematic order derived from difference. The conclusion to this chapter consists of an assessment of the movement as regards the mixed results of studying structures and

their operational definitions. Though granting the applicability of Structuralism as an explanatory model, the movement is still limited insofar as it yields to classificatory schemes while neglecting to illuminate particular cases, as it does also have limits to understanding history synchronistically. Schroeder suggests a complement to this structuralist method: a Hegelian dialectic underlining the logic beneath specific temporal change.

Distinguishing postmodernism from poststructuralist movements (the former is incorporative of the latter), chapter nine discusses the latter as Philosophies of Dispersion—holding themes such as everything as skewed and incapable of being developed into an organic unity. Mindful of the charge against poststructuralism as destructive, Schroeder makes Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze (whom he coins as "dispersionists") hold and defend core claims and ideals, though they base these on dispersed, fragmented and perpetually self-dividing forces, as they are thinkers who limit the juridical claims made by traditional philosophers. Schroeder forwards five main characteristics of post-Kantian Continental philosophy as shown by poststructuralism: (1) a shared disdain for the transparency of the Cartesian cogito to itself; (2) philosophies showing fragmented grounds the exemplar of which is the self; (3) their focus on processes which ultimately challenge the grounds of traditional ontology; (4) the focus on power and its inevitability in every structure; and lastly, (5) the general characteristic of poststructuralists as challenging epistemological realism and foundationalism. Schroeder grants that most philosophers of dispersion critique most of the themes of the book, though he assessed them as still entrenched within value oppositions even when they reverse them, which for Schroeder hardly constitutes an ethical vision capable of withstanding criteria based on social demands. More importantly, Schroeder claims that they do not acknowledge the value of the traditional qualities they oppose, and French Feminist Philosophy is more productive in terms of the ideas of dispersion than are the philosophers themselves cited.

The core contributions of French Feminist Philosophy in chapter ten—citing de Beauvoir, Kristeva, Irigaray, and Le Doeuff as examples— are presented as influenced by the dispersionists listed in the preceding chapter, though developing them in ways that are more productive and effective as to cultural and political transformation, via a more holistic understanding of persons, with more stress on context and ethical sensitivity than on abstract principles, a proffering of more interdependent definition of humanity and nature. These, Schroeder argues, are generally wanting in existentialism and poststructuralism, though he also recognizes that the feminist thinkers mentioned contradict as to the priorities guiding the actualization of transformation.

Chapter eleven starts by criticizing Postmodernism, understood as a blanket category for contemporary thinkers, as predominantly setting itself apart from Modernity while rarely trying to explain the distinction. However, in citing the major French postmodern thinkers, Lyotard and

Baudrillard, Schroeder claims that dispersionists neglect the postmodernists' central question, which is the reason for designating them under different titles. Postmodernists, for Schroeder, attempt to address the distinctive features of the current era; they also have more modest political goals by way of hesitantly embracing the current era, disdaining transhistorical theories, as opposed to the greater criticism leveled at the present by the dispersionists. Also, postmodernists, because they exhibit less interest in past philosophies, are described to have more tentative claims, while still proclaiming a new era of philosophy, albeit with less demonstration than does the dispersionists. Taking these as his assumptions, Schroeder assesses the movement through the contradictions within the movement itself, concluding with their indebtedness to, and falling short of, Nietzsche's critique of the present.

The book's concluding chapter starts with a list of the achievements and strengths of Continental philosophy, interweaving the concern for several key features of human life as well as a systematic method for understanding and explicating these, keeping a willingness to address issues regarding contemporary times, as well as the core issues dominating Anglo-American philosophy. A section is devoted to elucidating the rifts between the major thinkers within the Continental tradition, rifts wherein Schroeder sees no compromise is likely to arise, and on which the tradition itself may depend. Generally, they happen within a metaphysical-epistemological-methodological framework, and a value-framework. He further subdivides these two into dialectic versus dispersion; ahistorical essence versus variation; interpretation versus description; expanded reason versus irrationalism; and realities versus illusions concerning the self, for the first framework, and embracing versus challenging the ideals of modernity; the capacity of higher culture to promote self-perfection; and foundational issues in value theory, for the second. The discussion in this section incorporates the major thinkers and movements which exemplify the decision-points themselves. A large part of the conclusion is devoted to addressing the questions, objections, and criticisms raised by dispersionists and their defenders as to the relevance of the facets of Continental philosophy, ultimately culminating in a general buttressing of the tradition via a defense against what Schroeder sees as overrated poststructuralist attacks. He also lists specific fields in philosophy that can be developed using the themes expounded in the book.

Schroeder offers what he says he will offer, both in his Preface and his Introduction. Discussions are well-paced, highlighting concepts which have general contextual relevance, and mentioning those which are needed for an understanding of a movement or of a thinker, while keeping them in a minimal tone if not pertinent to his assessment at the end of each chapter. The Conclusion is especially noteworthy, in that it tempers the strengths of Continental philosophy with a discussion incorporating

conceptualizations and frameworks found in other philosophical traditions, while suggesting avenues for complementation. Offering an impressive thirteen-page bibliography and an index underscoring relevant discussions in bold pagination, he succeeds in having a substantial and well-balanced account of Continental philosophy and its trajectory, offering insights as to its viable directions, while echoing, substantiating, as well as thoughtfully addressing the criticisms leveled against its main contributions by contemporary philosophical movements and practitioners. This book will be intelligible not only to those who specialize in Continental philosophy or any of its subfields, but also to those readers who are looking for the relevance of Continental philosophy to the social sciences or to philosophy in general.

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DLSU-Manila

SECOND LECTURE, 1300-1345 HRS
Ang pulitikang Filipino: Si Jacinto
at ang hindi pa tapos na rebolusyon
ni Bonifacio .... Dr. Jing Reyes
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2006 SECOND NATIONAL CONVENTION
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University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

THIRD LECTURE, 1420-1505 HRS
Soulcraft: Indigenous philosophies
as sources of culture .... Dr. Leni dlR Garcia
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