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BECOMING

by *Jeric Palada*

PREFACE

We welcome this volume with a critical appraisal of the theoretical faith that once lit up the philosophical scene of early modernity at least as far as the history of Western thought is concerned—with Kant's famous dare to the humanity of his time to utilize the full arsenals of reason. But as this *dispositif* of Enlightenment engendered paradoxical challenges to humanity, including the non-Western population of the planet, courtesy then of a tireless colonial machine, and today, the globalizing arm of finance capital, we can treat Kant's Copernican legacy with a grain of salt, if only to take advantage of what the philosopher from Königsberg missed in his famous admonition.

Our generation is in a better position to see where Kant's genius had failed after centuries of mining the epistemic and moral resources of his masterpieces have been exhausted by the same power that once put them to work. As Nietzsche had seen but which no one seemed to have taken seriously, reason has the power to regulate its essentially non-rational character. Reason has no outside. By the same token it is moralistic in the sense that it is no stranger to self-discipline. That that is the case with reason betrays its nihilistic side: it alone is responsible for its own preservation against the threat of outside forces that challenge its exercise of self-transcendence. As Alain Badiou would interpolate here, self-founding also has to imagine the possibility of a failure to continue, all the more reason to justify a continuing act of fidelity to an *ex nihilo* gesture, a founding act of knowing that, as Ray Brassier exclusively notes, can be ascribed to the lost virtue of Enlightenment yet obfuscated by Kant's annoying embrace of its principles.[1] In this volume, Virgilio Rivas's essay "Axioms of Choice" takes on a similar 'gesture' while drawing on a number of post-continental philosophy figures, namely, Deleuze, Badiou, Žižek, and Francois Laruelle whose 'non-philosophy' is starting to draw serious attention as his works have been aggressively translated into English.

Rather than identifying the zero point of all beginnings, Kant resorted to the regulative principle of reason, erasing the trace of an original nihilistic act. The 'noumenon' serves this function for Kant—it is morally bound to erase the very act that founded it. In Ray

[1]See Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Brassier's more emancipatory thought-experiment that he details in *Nihil Unbound* (his best known work so far) the Kantian noumenon is a form of 'bounded nihilism', a closed world, that only a morally free agent knows to be non-rational. Kant's admonition to humanity to use reason is hence restricted to a select few. The morally free agent is pitted against the ignorant majority with respect to the pure nihilistic kernel of human knowledge—the majority that is ignorant of the self-founding character of knowing. Against the background of this morally elitistic paradigm of self-creation, Kristoffer Bolaños's article "On Evil, Sin and the Fall: Foucault's Critique of the Christian Problematization of the Flesh" advances, among others, a creative principle of 'knowing' that encourages techniques of self-formation but which take into account the many difficult paradoxes that one confronts in choosing to "live dangerously."

It is also within the context of Kant's admonition that we can make sense of Jacques Lacan's concept of the subject, that it is the "one who knows."[2] In the same vein, it may be said that the ignorant majority are not subjects in the pure epistemological and moral sense—they simply do not know. What they are apparently ignorant of is that truth is elusive if not non-existent—there is only the being that speaks about truth. This being is that of the subject who knows, especially how to unbind the nihilistic structure of reality for its own self-preservation. In Lacan, this knowledge is acquired through the acceptance that the Real cannot be had except by way of the symbolic, the stand-in/s of the Real that is absolutely foreclosed to thought. Thus, any attempt to understand the Real as it is, independent of the fantasy through which reality makes sense, is bound to psychosis. Its socio-political and economic implications are obvious—the masses are prone to a delusion that something unexplainable, which leads to superstitious beliefs, is controlling the system that oppresses them, when in fact the system is nothing but the subject that controls the system through the economy of fantasy.

[2]See Jacques Lacan, *My Teaching*, trans. David Macey (London and New York: Verso, 2008).

This Lacanian disposition can be pitted against Jacques Derrida's notion of justice, though we also challenge the reader here to explore the nuances that unite these two figures of continental philosophy. Lacan's psychoanalytic subject is opposed to Derrida's deconstructive subject. Whereas Lacan in the end would endorse subscribing to the Law (with the 'subject-who-knows' in full knowledge of the nothingness of the Real that is also everything as far as the social necessity of symbolic language is concerned), Derrida would recommend constant vigilance of the Law whose hold on the human order is based upon contingent claims. Vigilance would then translate into 'deconstruction'. The difference between Lacan and Derrida rests, among others, upon their divergent views on the metaphysics of the Real: for Lacan, the Real is constituted within the space left unsaid by symbolic language; for Derrida, the Real is nothing but a question of justice. Despite his many insinuations, Derrida does not reduce the Real to language anymore than Lacan does. Language leaves a non-linguistic if not extra-linguistic trace that deconstruction brings to the open. If for Lacan this trace is nothing but another trace of the signifier, for Derrida the trace is always the other of language, the other of what is claimed within immanence, such as cultures and institutions. Seen in this light, Michael Roland Hernandez's essay "Derrida and the Political Possibilities of Deconstruction" takes us into the heart of understanding what deconstruction means, which in the words of one reviewer, who we cannot name here, has all the merits of a primer.

We can also emphasize here the paradox embedded in moral reason—while its intention is to harmonize the human order by invoking universal values, these values could organize themselves into a new levering machine that would divide, again and again, the human from within, the humanity from the non-human, and the human from humanity. All these divisions and/or differences established by moral reason are generated, as Hume earlier contested, through a forcible deduction of moral statements from habitually, non-rationally constructed facts, statements which are designed to put order into the human world by structuring it according to universal, apodictic and necessary truth-values, which Kant in many ways endorsed. These universal values tend to harmonize differences in terms of a forceful imagination of a universal idea of the Human, of the permanent image

of Man, a permanent realizable human potential, at the expense of real intensive differences (racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, and material/molecular differences, etc.) which always act as the foil to any attempt to universalize humanity. Jeremiah Joven Joaquin's essay "John Searle and the Is-Ought Problem" explores this paradox by way of looking into the problem of deriving moral statements from statements of facts. As Joaquin did not exactly address this problem with Kant in mind, his essay comes close to the contemporary philosophical turn to pre-Kantian themes, with Hume on the table considered from Searle's contemporary analytic lens. It is in this light that Joaquin's essay touches the core of today's speculative realism that privileges pre-critical/Kantian issues over much of philosophy that builds on the legacy of the *Critiques*.

§

At the time Kant made his famous call (*sapere aude*), the epistemic status of science was gaining popular traction in everyday life which progressively challenged the influence of clerical authority and its mundane powers over the planet that was increasingly being framed into a geo-political order. The eventual success of this geo-political framing owed much to the scientific engine of territorializing the human condition under new positive lines of (colonial) assemblages. This new territorializing machine celebrates the power of the human subject to determine the destiny of humankind through the engine of science, which is ultimately premised on the assumption that objective reality is world-less, *without a self*, as in Heidegger, completely world-less that can render the technics of manipulation of reality easy and sustainable.[3] The human subject is left to its own to constitute a world due to the opaque nature of reality. But in order to make this world intelligible and transparent, the world in principle must become an extension of the 'self'. Thus said, Marciana Agnes Ponsaran's article "Towards a Radical Reconstruction of the Human Visage: From NBIC Convergence to Singularity Talk" touches upon the problematic of defining today the "human self" vis-a-vis the technological potential of humanity to push

[3]See Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

evolution to the limit. Ray Kurzweil, an influential futurist, describes this as "evolution by other means." Ponsaran manages to situate current industrial attempts to toe the technological line of enhancing human potentials within the context that technology can alleviate human suffering, but leaves much room for critical appraisal of technology that can also threaten to dissolve humanistic values upon which modern humanity builds its self-concept. Incidentally, this is a position that Žižek would be happy to acknowledge as a valid parallactic conception of the Real, though unmentioned in Ponsaran's essay.

The emphasis on transparency and intelligibility as a model of science was already promoted by the Greeks, especially, Plato; yet Kant revolutionized this model by teaching the self to become transparent to its own creation, with a further proviso that the self must learn to tame its nihilistic instincts, forget it ever was nihilistic. Kant was underscoring the moral underpinning of transcendental philosophy that surpasses the paradoxical approach of that of the Platonic that still takes the self to be determined by a certain notion of not-self, the Forms.

The modern scientific worldview, influenced by Copernican and Newtonian science, put forward a theory of the subject that was complementary to an idea of Nature as Mind, a supreme mind that human knowledge could only approximate by mathematically intuiting how it works.[4] This gave the strongest impression that Nature is watching over us, whether one interprets it as a caring nature, or a punitive judge of human actions; all in all, the quiet penetration of human values into the objective world that gave birth to the dangerous ideology of modern-day humanism. Kant's Copernican revolution helped give rise to this modern ideology, stating that being must conform to reasoning, objects to the mind.

Although the sciences were silent about the potential humanism of their epistemic orientations that viewed the mind as a mirror of Nature, their unstated humanism influenced the philosophical appropriation of the humanistic kernel of knowledge. Kant's Copernican revolution

[4]See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978).

radicalized this scientific tendency by reversing the claim of pre-critical science, the Ptolemaic theory of the world, which states that reasoning must conform to being. Christian theologians took this 'being' to be the eternal unchanging referent of all symbolic approximations of the inner workings of reality. When Christians took this 'being' to be God the conclusion is self-evident: Man must conform to a universal design that only a god can fashion. Ptolemy was therefore abducted by Christian theology in the same manner that Copernicus was excessively radicalized by Kant who lifted the veil of its hypothetical conception of the universe (that the heliocentric theory is only a useful hypothesis to explain the discrepancy between observation and mathematical models) by assuming that the Copernican model corresponds to objective reality. Kant placed new values into the salient humanistic structure of Copernicanism, values that are in principle symbolic appropriations performed by reason, practically the *a priori* truths that a morally free agent discerns to be apodictic, universal and necessary.

When Kant puts primacy to the *a prioris* of reasoning to which objects must conform, he is not only privileging the human over the rest of creation, the rest of objective reality, but also championing the view that with the emergence of the human the universe has stopped evolving. The direction of knowing shifts from being to knowing. No longer must objective reality be explored rather the internal conditions of possibility of knowledge itself. With Kant, introspection puts the subject at the center of investigation. But not only that—the subject takes the role of the Real as there is nothing outside its auto-generating activity. For Kant this parallactic conception of reality (which Žižek, centuries later, would pontificate as the 'subject-in-the-Real') constitutes the scientific kernel of transcendental philosophy.[5] Meanwhile, the over-all impetus for this kind of auto-generation is no doubt the human capacity for speech.

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Human language, a distinctive feature of our species, was then being 'personalized' into an ideological affirmation of the human as a

[5]See Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006).

privileged spatio-temporal location of creation. Later, as Deleuze and Guattari have successfully exposed in their controversial works against the background of the dominance of structuralist and psychoanalytic discourses, the humanization of language has notoriously created a view of reality governed by immutable structures that have the power to territorialize lines of flights, escape routes into individual creations by means of sealing language against the possibility of its becoming-other.[6] The becoming-other of language has important implication for re-understanding the Kantian legacy. First, it challenges the *a priori truths* of reason that are self-replicating, which are also ahistorical in their being already validated, before the emergence of history proper, by a transcendental ego that itself occasions the possibility for these *a prioris* to be validated in concrete time. This self-validating scheme of moral reason is operationalized in and through language, which Deleuze and Guattari aptly describe as the "semiotic machine."[7] Second, the becoming-other of language targets the fundamental core of all human reasoning, namely, the morality that it privileges over technologies of enfolding individual subjectivities against the machination of the human subject according to anthropological norms. Third, the becoming-other of language takes moral reason to task in terms of unpacking the strict correlation between language and human which delineates the apodictic character of moral reasoning, in favor of the becoming-other of human in language, that is to say, by means other than the language that operationalizes the binarism of good and evil.

While the attempt to 'humanize' language was already in the works during medieval times, as Agamben notes in his influential work,[8] its rhetorical power had never been more pronounced with the advent of Copernican science (that is, as we contend, the kind that Kant describes as the true science). This 'science' was offering a new view of reality whose positive difference with theological and religious 'enframing of

[6]See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

[7]Ibid., 83.

[8]See Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999).

the human', lies in the degree to which it practically created the idea of the Human.[9] The 'human' is in-principle unknown to early or pre-critical humanity. In other words, the 'human' is a fairly recent conjecture. While the Greek humanist philosophers like Xenophanes and Empedocles, and pluralist thinkers who were also atomists (Democritus, Lucretius, etc.)[10] already had an inkling of the human that they viewed as an organism of reason, the modern conjecture that practically invented the human as we know 'it' today is so differentially constituted as to mean its most crucial separation from the animal whose mystery the premodern was rather more accustomed to nourish and retain.This explains, among other reasons, the premodern attachment to natural and organic life as opposed to the modern alienation of the human in favor of the synthetic. Unlike Plato and even to a certain degree his more realistic student, Aristotle, these humanists viewed reason as an entity dispersed through various human potentialities compared with the assumption of a single unifying *Logos*. The great levering force of language, once again, is at work here. The hegemony of the *Logos* over Greek enlightenment period was characterized by a unilateral attention to the correlation between thinking and an independent reality that can only be 'spoken about', thereby underscoring the immediate sense the Greeks awarded to the *Logos* as speech or discourse. As Nietzsche contends, the *Logos* simply validates an original founding gesture, namely, of the speaking, thinking human.

The task of contemporary philosophy then is to disown this untruthful conceit in favor of unbounded nihilism, a radical form of Enlightenment that Kant repressed by reducing the origin of reason to the absolute givenness of the non-demonstrability of its pre- and non-human origins, which also implies by way of contrast the transparency of the other standpoint of givenness, namely, Man. For Kant these non-human preconditions have no positive place in the Copernican revolution (things must conform to reason, not the reverse), which, as an ideal of science, does not allow for the necessity to explore the dimensions

[9]See Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[10]See Karl Popper, *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

in which these preconditions exist. The argument is simple—because there is no human witness to these preconditions if ever they existed at all. That being must conform to reasoning demonstrates for Kant the necessity to change the ideal of science from a pure epistemic quest into a regulative enterprise. For Kant, any genetic account of the origin of life is always already retroactively defined by reason. This would amount to saying that reason was already there in the beginning of time. In this light, the origin is not-All in the sense that it is not purely non-human, not purely past, not purely originary by virtue of the retroactive non-originary force of reason in which alone this genesis that is not-All can manifest itself. The Enlightenment that Kant promoted therefore lacked a final touch—to rid oneself of one's dogmatic standpoint, the parallactic comfort that compels him to imagine that he is always already in the Real that he intends to investigate. Unfortunately, this has been the secret premise of moral reason.

Thus defined, moral reason is a closed nihilistic method of forcing the indiscernible such as the very concept of the *human* according to which the anthropogenetic machine is created to produce what eventually became an imperialistic system of differences.

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The last article that falls under my jurisdiction to introduce (the literary section falls under the benevolent charge of my poet-mentor, Palanca laureate, Al Cuenca, Jr, or what is left of his request to do the review on behalf of the editorial working board) distinctively addresses the possibility for thinking to defy the mechanical strictures that reason imposes on the human order. This possibility may come in the form of a people to come.

But better if this people are fabulated. In his generous review of the *The Revolutionists*, Al Cuenca's attempt to demonstrate Prudente's almost Deleuzean invocation of a people to come takes us into the heart of a people's revolution. In this case, we can also almost invent Cuenca's Deleuzean enunciation of a rhetorical assemblage of revolutionists vying for the right to live a desirable future, this Deleuzean provocation of the *powers of the false*, powers that make true/false distinction irrelevant if

only to emphasize that the people have the right to invent themselves against the regime of truths!

And yet a people to come is like a being-in-the-draft, pointing towards what withdraws. Perhaps, what this being-in-the-draft[11] of the Heideggerian gesture means, this pointing towards what withdraws, is the fantasy of returning to a normal state of affairs, what in Badiou and Žižek amounts to the task of philosophy to realize amidst the precarious conditions for free thinking to engage with the turbulence of modern times. We can better understand what this normal means in the sense Agamben gives of *bare life* before the intervention of bio-politics; in the sense Deleuze gives of a *body without organs* before the investment of organs of truth-values in the body. Or, Laruelle with his notion of *pure genericity*, the human before the anthropological deduction of the subject; perhaps, the *cyborg* of Haraway, a modern articulation of the machinic anomaly that Nietzsche already described of the body before its incarceration by the *Logos*, a body heteronomous in nature and only homogeneous on the surface that serves as the common link of the inside to the outside. All these however are unpresentable descriptions of a pure generic subject—unpresentable because like ghosts they unfortunately exist. They are the ghosts that haunt the hypocritical image of the Human.

Shall we ask more then: When Jayson Jimenez in his review of Badiou and Zizek's *Philosophy In The Present* states, quoting Nietzsche, that these philosophers agree on the view that "a philosopher should be a kind of a physician that diagnoses evil, suffering and, if need be, suggest remedies in order to return to the normal state of affairs" is he not toying with the non-autistically radical ideal (as opposed to the autism of the humanist agenda) of returning to our original ghostly nature? All these against the background of the question of what philosophy can do.

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[11]Ibid.

MAJOR ARTICLES

AXIOMS OF CHOICE

Or, what post-continental philosophy has to say about the lived axioms of decision-making

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We commence here with an axiomatic assumption: All forms of historical reporting are employed from an empty frame as in set-theory. From there it is possible to say that history can be treated as an object of historical analytic but only from an ahistorical genealogical standpoint, a decidedly null point. Once this is allowed, by proceeding from a hyper-real point of singularity, a decision to elect a point of beginning from among existing, even non-existing, non-localized points and multiplicities, we can build an algorithm of the motion of points within a local domain of narration.

Historians of philosophy can then singularize the contemporary turn of philosophy towards a more attentive discipline. Philosophy has never been this attentive and sensitive until it starts to acknowledge that there are forces at play cognizable in principle but still pose a challenge to thinking in terms of concretizing them via a generic form of abstraction. Genealogically speaking, philosophy has acknowledged the existence of these forces from a transcendentally non-philosophical standpoint that expresses the ahistorical, axiomatic frame from which any singular history like philosophy can be objectively recognized.[1] Yet, on the side of

[1]Our non-philosophical standpoint is inspired by François Laruelle, the originator of the concept itself (non-philosophy). Among other places where he discussed the concept at length, we are quoting the following passages describing the relation of non-philosophy to philosophy in a yet unpublished English translation of one of his major works *Principles of Non-Philosophy* (the following translation is from Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith which became available to the author in the course of an online seminar on Non-philosophy):

> "When non-philosophy ceases to designate a simple philosophical relation to the extra-philosophical in order to designate a relationship to the philosophical itself in its

the ahistorical, the singularities that make up the philosophical tradition from the ancients (the Orientals and the Greeks) to the contemporaries are brought to light in the sense that the generality of philosophy as a discipline can now be recognized to be simply a *virtual synthesis*. What actually bring the synthesis to bear on our conception of a unity of philosophical tradition are the disjunctive and conjunctive points of singularities, pure multiplicities enfolded into creative assemblages, each has its own line of origin, a line of flight, as Deleuze would have it.[2] The same applies to our conception of life. From the standpoint of the existence of pre- and non-human singularities, their invisibility if not tacit visibility on the horizon of meaning the human is constituted—

> identity and ceases to be an attribute in order to become a subject, it speaks of a thought which, without being subsumed again into philosophy, is no stranger to it, of a new relationship to it and of a new practice of it. It is philosophy which then becomes an object of non-philosophy, of a pure and no longer metaphysical or ontico-ontological "non" transcendental...It is concerned with a new practice of philosophy, more universal than this, because it has liberated itself from certain postulates of philosophy—in particular that of its correspondence to the Real, of its convertibility with the Real" (François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith, unpublished).

[2]Gilles Deleuze describes a line of flight in terms of its immanent relation to something posited as impossible: "Without a set of impossibilities, you wouldn't have a line of flight, an exit into creation" (Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. M. Joughin [New York: Columbia University Press, 1995], 8-9). On other occasions Deleuze also describes a line of flight as deterritorialization (See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi [Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987]). In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari define a plane of consistency in a creative yet tensional relation to non-objectified multiplicities, how the complete strangeness and chaotic nature of multiplicities can be singularized into lines of flight where multiplicities are brought into play, creatively tamed, so to speak: "Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialisation according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities" (9).

the human from the side of what does not impose itself upon the continuum of human perception, the entirety of things with their own lines of assemblages that are yet to be reduced to correlates of thought, to presence-at-hand.[3] As long as nature allows this non-interference of the force of pure multiplicity, the immensity of Chaos, so to speak, we are guaranteed of relative stability in our everyday life in terms of sheltering the infirmity of human existence, at least for now.

Similarly, what in Heidegger is described as the taken-for-granted 'ready-to-hand' structure of things here becomes constitutive of that which affords epistemological consistency to presence-at-hand. Presence is guaranteed by absence. In the following passages, Graham Harman summarizes the relationship between ready-to-hand and presence-at-hand, which divides Heidegger's and Husserl's conceptions of the 'thing' (Husserl is more accustomed to reduce the thing to a correlate of consciousness, ontologically splitting the thing into the conceptual and the real):

[3]In describing the origin of the analytic of being as presence in the ancient notion of *parousia* or *ousia* Heidegger takes note of the correlation of outwardness and evidence as key operational principles that render being as presence: "The outward evidence of this—but of course only outward—is the determination of the meaning of being parousia or ousia, which ontologically and temporally means "presence" ["*Anwesenheit*']. Beings are grasped in their being as "presence"; that is to say, they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time, the present" (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time. A Translation of Sein und Zeit,* trans. J. Stambaugh [New York: State University of New York Press, 1996], 22). As strictly correlated to present and outwardness, being becomes a correlate of thought/consciousness that projects being into the outside world in a mode of reflection that proceeds from the world and towards the world in a way that enhances our conscious relation to it. In Harman's reinterpretation of Heidegger, presence is argued to be connotative of a more fundamental operation of withdrawal. Harman summarizes his own interpretation of the notion of withdrawal as follows: "Instead of thinking extra-mental reality is founded on what appears to consciousness, we must join Heidegger in concluding the opposite, while also agreeing with him that what withdraws from consciousness are not lumps of objective physical matter. Instead the world in itself is made of realities withdrawing from all consciousness access" (Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* [Alresford, Hants, UK: Zero Books, 2011], 37).

> At any rate, present-at-hand and ready-to-hand are not two different *types* of entities. Instead, all entities oscillate between these two separate modes: the cryptic withdrawal of readiness-to-hand and the explicit accessibility of presence-at-hand...Whereas for Husserl the hidden hammer-at-work might be brought into consciousness whenever we feel like it, Heidegger finds it impossible *in principle* to make the withdrawn reality of hammer fully reveal its secrets. There will always be a subterranean depth to the world that never becomes present to view.[4]

For quite some time, thought has accustomed itself to identify these unknown assemblages as chaotic and therefore must be strictly avoided by depriving them of sufficient planes upon which their supposed consistencies as assemblages can take shape. But with philosophy's turn towards more "attentiveness to the letters"[5] the historiography of thought is now compelled to take the autonomy of objects or things into account. What sets this attentiveness to work within the tradition of philosophy, nonetheless, is beyond Heidegger's intuitive *break* from the humanistic preoccupation of phenomenology. The "other beginning" of philosophy that Heidegger announces in the *Kehre* should in fact be the hyperreal, axiomatic beginning of Thought, a thought-without-philosophy, what in François Laruelle is axiomatically described as the "True-without-truth," genealogically speaking, the truth that "does not want" Man.[6] But instead of framing it within a quasi-Nietzschean genealogy, Laruelle places this axiomatic standpoint of truth within a more generic location, in the full radicality of Man, Man as the possessor and implementer of genericity: "Genericity is the property of being able to communicate

[4]See Graham Harman, "Technology, objects and things in Heidegger," in *Cambridge Journal of Economics* (2009): 3.

[5]See Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 242.

[6]François Laruelle, "The Generic as Predicate and Constant: Non-philosophy and Materialism," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne, Australia: re. press, 2011), 253.

truth or rather the True-without-truth to a thought that does not want it."[7] Here, Laruelle is positioning himself within a post-phenomenological view that dispenses with the idea that Man will always be correlative of truth. Where the correlation is at stake, Man is condemned to communicate the truth but is also already condemned to conditions of expressing it of which he has no control (in both Kant and Heidegger, the over-all condition is finitude).[8] Laruelle's provocative stance rather puts Man on the side of the unilateral indifference of the Real but only to the extent that the Real has to be developmentally uncovered to be Man himself. The notion of Man-as-Real eliminates the problem of phenomenology by assigning Man its radical singularity, irreducible to even the words this Human utters, irreducible to truths. At the same time Man is also uncovered to be the real generic standpoint according to which any notion of transcendental reality makes sense as a result of an objectification.

Laruelle, nonetheless, avoids getting into the age-old Cartesian hang-up by taking this objectification to be devoid of any truth-value. Man-as-Real becomes an axiom of decision that does not expect any form of redemption. The Man-as-Real is the last-instance objectified material of Man's generic self-reduction in light of the discovery that there is nothing beyond this objectification. "The human is therefore without-Being (or without-World) but it determines-in-the-last-identity the subject-in-struggle with that which, from Being or from the World, can alienate it."[9]

Laruelle does not deny that there is reality out there, independent of the Human. The point is that *that* reality is indifferent and is unilaterally touching us without promising anything, which beyond all

[7]Ibid.

[8]Lee Braver has authored an important work on the enduring influence of Kant on this aspect of human finitude as it has transformed the way Western philosophy has understood 'realism' or undermined its own attempt to be realistic. See Lee Braver, *A Thing of this World: A History of Continental Anti-realism* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

[9]François Laruelle, *The Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), 9; emphasis mine.

logical expectations provides an ontological incentive to humanity to confuse its hallucinations (its way of visioning the Real) with the Real itself. Finally, having this impasse in mind, Laruelle says:

> Human beings have a problem which only they can solve: what to do with the World? Salvation or rebellion? Exploitation or therapeutic? Consumption or consummation?[10]

A Decision On the Side of the Void

How not to change tone? Yet more, for the past months we have been digging in our heels to a tough vision called 'epistemic community.' What to make of it? How to dig it with a hammer?

The words to dig, the keywords to hammer out are all familiar to us now—"clearing the paths while laying new foundations towards building an epistemic community." These words are put to use chiefly against the background of 'want' and 'scarcity', which have 'molecular' implications on 'performance'.

'Molecular', 'performance'—another keywords that have influenced the lexical terrain of recent continental thought, courtesy of the Deleuzean century, though more inclined to unmask the "retro" dynamics of sexuality and the new war machine against culture, against the Name-of-the-Father, against the signifier, against Oedipus. Those keywords ("molecular," "performance") now constitute the new semiotic machine that will take us to a new plateau of existence against an infinite number of plateaus that would have found territorial spacing in one Man's vision of PUP, as Deleuze found his Body without Organs against an infinite number of lexicons to choose from.

In more practical terms—important steps (words are steps, 'exits' to creations) for the University to make a significant presence in global transformations.

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[10]Ibid., 113; emphasis mine.

From a strict axiomatic standpoint, a certain level of imagination is required: To start from degree-zero, from an empty set of existence.

Ray Brassier, building on Alain Badiou's difficult mathematicized presentation of ontology in his phenomenal work *Being and Event,* summarizes (among other places, in a footnote) what this empty set means in relation to ontology, the study of Being: "Being is simply a proper name—that of an empty set, Ø—for the unpresentable."[11] Badiou renders this empty set to be unpresentable as "space or extension," but "can be qualified as unique (...) as a punctuality."[12] (In mathematics punctuality is defined as a point in space, which we can interpret in Deleuzean terms as a singularity). Badiou is here reacting to the Aristotelian dismissal of the existence of the void, the unpresentable empty set.

> The reason for this dismissal is that it is unthinkable for him (Aristotle) to completely separate the question of the void from that of the place. If the void is not, it is because one cannot think an empty place. As he explains, if one supposed the punctuality of the void, this point would have to 'be a place in which there was the extension of tangible body'. The in-extension of a void does not make any place for a void.[13]

But why start with the Void? It is here where Brassier summarizes the materialist position of philosophy (a unified theory of science and philosophy on the side of materialist metaphysics or speculative physics) premised on the idea that nothing is guaranteed—"The principal task of contemporary philosophy is to draw out the implications of the logic of Enlightenment," this logic being that which summons materialist

[11]See Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 250, n. 10.

[12]Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York and London: Continuum, 2005), 77.

[13]Ibid.

metaphysics "to uncover the objective void of being."[14] A more helpful guide originally came from Nietzsche—because God is dead nothing is guaranteed except that which allows Man to start all over again from the void. The objective void that Brassier identified to be the task of philosophy to uncover is in Badiou the equivalent of in-extension, the unpresentable, presentable but rather in-consistent. Nonetheless, it is the in-consistent/non-being that makes any consistent/being thinkable. Any consistency or being always supposes a radical outside. The possibility of being is realistically speaking the result of an impossible operation involving the handiwork of non-being. Only impossibility can make the possibility of something like being. "[It] is necessary to think, under the name of the void, the outside-place on the basis of which any place—any situation—maintains itself with respect to its being."[15]

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Expressed in terms of a localizable void, the foundation of an institution in time and space is subtracted from an empty-set, yet already counted as a set that precedes the rising forth of a proper set that institutes the formal beginning of the count.Counting from its empty-yet-counted-as-one-foundational-set, the University, a localizable void, is counted as a 108-year old institution, which can be held in common sense thinking as a set of 'multiple, one-hundred-eight, counts'. Lorenzo Chiesa's essay on Badiou helps us radicalize the connection we are pursuing here:

> For Badiou, the one is not, yet it exists as an operation, the count-as-one. The count-as-one is not a presentation either: what presents itself, a situation, is multiple. However, every situation is *structured* by means of the operation of the count-as-one. Thus, the relation between the multiple and the one is *retroactive*: the multiple will have preceded the one only after having necessarily been structured by means of the count-as-one.[16]

[14]Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 25.

[15]Badiou, *Being and Event,* 77.

[16]See Lorenzo Chiesa, "Count-As-One, Forming-Into-One, Unary Trait,

The beginning of the count in the present erases a memory in the past in favor of the axiomatic founding memory where the count ought to authentically begin. From where the count necessarily divides the past and the present, an aleatory time is considered as the point of beginning, a time that is neither past nor present, even still, not a future. The founding as counting of the beginning of the University changes the absolute memory of its origin in 1977 into a hyperreal, authentic origin in 1904.The beginning of the University 'was' set from an impossible point in the future (in 1904) which necessarily 'suspends' the time at which it made a decision (in 1978, the year PUP was officially named as Polytechnic…). The time at which the decision is made is therefore split into an active (the founding in the present) and passive moment (the founding in the past). The time at which the decision to found is made is the time-between, the in-between time, itself necessarily folded. This is the fold that Deleuze spoke of: The fold as the impossible site of creation.[17]

Thus stated, the succeeding stages of the count will always be deducible from the first (rather inconsistent but axiomatically decided) count by means of a radical practice of imagination as the count is arbitrary relative to a fundamental metaphysics of time.[18] The decision qua count is an act of creation, the act of voiding what precedes the count: what precedes it is also necessarily counted already. Anything that disrupts the count is necessarily no longer a part of the continuum of the axiom of choice. Imagination is therefore expected to exhibit its fidelity to a founding force of thought/count. In a similar Badiouan conceptualization, Brian Anthony Smith connects the axiom of choice

SI," in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 2, (2006), 1/2: 70-71.

[17]I rely entirely on Deleuze's Foucault for this conceptualization of the Fold. See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[18]The law of the count is therefore a "metastructure, another count, which 'completes' the first in that it gathers together all the sub-compositions of internal multiples, all the inclusions." Badiou further stressed: "The power-set axiom posits that this second count, this metastructure, always exists if the first count, or presentative structure, exists" (*Being and Event*, 83).

to "a forcing of its own failure" in which a radical form of imagination is required in order to sustain an original decision by forcing its continuity:

> The proof of the independence of the Axiom of Choice clearly falls into the correct use of the Axiom of Choice; it inaugurates a subject through an intervention…[The] Axiom of Choice is a necessary axiom in the forcing of its own failure, but this does not stop it from being a valid instance of a set of theoretical forcing.
>
> The forcing of the failure of the Axiom of Choice works by adding non-constructible sets of a certain type to a situation.[19]

A university administrator is thus compelled to keep the myth of the empty set functioning, auto-generating. In the same manner the future of an administration will rest on either its fidelity or infidelity to a fundamental axiomatic imagination, which will always take the form of a decision, either in favor or against it, a form of subtracting the axiomatic kernel of fundamental imagination from the Event that Change tosses on the plane of immanence or Life. This will have enormous implications as to how a university, necessarily compelled to take on the aleatory, the 'uncertain outside' it is obliged to enfold to itself, forced by Change to create an inside of the outside, can reflexively accommodate that which can potentially disrupt the continuum of its foundational axiom of choice.

[19]Brian Anthony Smith, "The Limits of the Subject in Badiou's Being and Event," in *Cosmos and History*, vol. 2 (2006), 1/2: 155-56. In a previous passage, Smith underscores fidelity in the following Badiouan formulation: "The task of the subject is to make the truth of the event consist within a situation, to build the relation between the indiscernible and the undecidable…The key example is the proof of the independence of the Continuum Hypothesis, by demonstrating that there is a consistent situation in which this hypothesis fails. For Badiou, this process is experienced immanently from within the situation, a subject whose endless task is motivated and completed by this external supplement" (Ibid., 149).

Folding the Outside in the Inside

We can reasonably state here that the problem with past approaches to academic response to global change is that they exhibit a certain form of naive captivity to the mantra of globalization, a kind of naivety that exults in the positivity of the *telos* of human activity, an offshoot of scholasticism, at the expense of the importance of 'process'.[20] What is clearly missed out by this approach is that globalization is not about carving out a virtual space or virtual proximity to fashionable zones of possibilities, which have assembled into spectacular constellations of possibilities drummed up by globalization gurus, constellations of global production and management of knowledge that break the traditional barriers of time and space, that which aim to perfect human freedom. From the standpoint of the molecular (in Deleuzean terms), constellations are no less constitutive of concrete individual possibilities, possibilities of making one's life, one's cause, one's vision or program, even one's symptoms relevant, useful and beneficial, yes, in this age of constellations.[21]

[20]Here, our inspiration is Alfred North Whitehead whose neglected process-philosophy is gaining renewed attention in light of the earth's deepening ecological crisis as a result of human hubris. Humans tend to ignore the autonomous process of things as they continue to supplant their internal temporal structure in favor of a positive time measurable by technical values. It is interesting to note here that Whitehead is a strong influence on Harman. For a dependable introduction to Whitehead's process philosophy see C. Robert Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead* (West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008).

[21]Deleuze and Guattari alert their readers: "Keep everything in sight at the same time—that a social machine or an organized mass has his/her own pack unconsciousness, which does not necessarily resemble the packs of the mass to which that individual belongs; that an individual or mass will live out in its unconscious the masses and packs of another mass or another individual" (*A Thousand Plateaus,* 35).

Indeed the passion to imitate the universe is the mimetic structure of the logic of human survival that has never been more plastic and transparent—'mimesis' as a technique of coming-to-be reminiscent of how the universe came about, and is continually coming to be. This includes how the universe disposes of its physical wealth, immediately in the form of 'solar capital' from which all forms of capitalization become possible, from which all forms of general economies on earth are possibilized.[22] In this light, globalization is a local name (relative to our planet) that stands for that cosmic operation that continues to fascinate us from down below, from a sublunary but expedient point of observation.

The universe unfolds 'there' as it offers models of elaborating what constellations mean for subjectivities, how they can be localized into creating networks and assemblages, of regionalizing other possibilities for interaction among humans, even between humans and their radical alterities in objects and things.[23] The latter suggest of possibilities of interaction between humans and nonhumans (animals, stones, etc.), which suggest of the possibility of what in Marx's unappreciated work *Gründrisse* may closely approximate the meaning of 'general intellect' as the capability of Man to fully synthesize with His radical alterity, a

[22]Building on Georges Bataille's theory of general economy, Nick Land exposes the immanence of death as the driving force of terrestrial life that is ironically dependent on the sun's decomposition: "Life appears as a pause on the energy path; as a precarious stabilization and complication of solar decay. It is most basically comprehensible as the general solution to the problem of consumption. Such a solar- or general-economic perspective exhibits production as an illusion; the hypostatization of a digression in consumption. To produce is to partially manage the release of energy into its loss, and nothing more" (Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* [London and New York: Routledge], 1992), xviii.

[23]Deleuze would even extend this mimetic activity to the cinema. Bogue argues that the mimesis at work in Deleuze's concept of the cinema is at best heuristic in purpose. The mimesis works, Bogue emphasizes, "by means of envisioning what cinema presupposes and brings into existence: the cosmos as acentered flux of image-matter" (Bogue, "Word, Image and Sound," in *Deleuze's Wake: Tributes and Tributaries* [New York: State University of New York, 2004], 121).

"species-being" (a position of Marx greatly influenced by Schelling).[24] Species-being is a unilateral duality of freedom and limitation whose final limitation, but also the opportunity for ecstatic liberation, is the point of absolute negativity in which the absolute does no more possess of a positive value worthy of thought to chase; indeed, a form of being at peace with a unilaterizing universe which can only be approached via a radical form of imagination vis-a-vis the power of the universe to withdraw from human access. In the final analysis: paradoxical possibilities for connecting to the Great Outdoors, the Universe from whose standpoint, the standpoint of the last instance, everything is unilateralized as a thing, that is to say, equal to zero.

Mimesis as Enfolding

The mimesis at work here can be radicalized into a negative unilateralization of everything into the Thing. Negative insofar as it is the human mimicking the cosmos. More so, insofar as it is mimetically performed existentially wise, existence is returned to its radical source, to its being-unilateralized by the Thing—the Thing that affects us without the guarantee of truth, even of falsity, hence, the impossibility of redemption (=zero). In all histories of the material speculation of Thought, the Thing is said to acquire its first name, the One.[25] As One it is already counted, hence, the One as the Man-in-One where Man is counted-as-one. How is this?

Insofar as Man performs the count in mimicking the Cosmos His being counted-as-one is transcribed into the One, yielding a generic concept of Man-in-One where the in-One is the last instance determination of to 'ex-ist'. 'Ex-ist' is here transcribed into in-One (the generic concept of the One is produced by an act of mimesis). Man-in-One is therefore the generic concept of the One/Real in terms of a radical mimesis of the One/Real. The act of mimesis is here transcribed by Laruelle as the visioning-in-One.

[24]See Karl Marx, *Gründrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1963).

[25]See Laruelle, "General Formation of First Names," in *Future Christ*, xxvi-xxx.

'Other first names' are well-known: God, State, Capital, or History. But all these names which carry no truth-value are derivative of the most radical visioning possible, the most radical practice of thought in the form of a vision-in-One, not *of*-One because the One is totally foreclosed to thought, therefore, cannot be held as a property. The One unilateralizes—it goes in one direction and does not return. The vision-in-One is the generic form of thinking from the One (or Real) which is not without a struggle "determined by Man who gives himself his reality and prevents it (his reality) from returning to him."[26] The vision-in-One is a struggle to achieve knowledge of the Real which, as 'real', is unilateral. Laruelle also describes the vision-in-One as the knowledge of "unlearned knowledge," the knowledge that we are unilateralized by the Real instead of constituting the Real. This radical form of knowing was insinuated by Socrates within the practice of philosophy but fell short of its genuine expression because philosophy is still premised on the hallucination that it can constitute the Real in terms of the apriori structures of philosophical reasoning (the *Logos*) vis-à-vis the unilateral reality that it is the Real that constitutes us. Genuine knowledge of the Real can only be non-philosophical, or accessed from outside the tradition of philosophy.

On the absolute side of the Real, the One is ontologically neutral. The vision-in-One, the ultimate form of philosophizing, pushed to its ultimate vector to extract a thought from the One, generates without being able to possess it the image of the Thing in its last determining instance, the One-in-Void, the being-nothing of Nothing. This 'being' of Nothingness is a positive axiomatic material, the final instance of the something-ness of nothing beyond which the 'real beyond' unfolds without an audience, but counted-as-One-for-the-future-audience, posthuman human.[27]

[26]Ibid., 11; emphasis mine.

[27]Laruelle's notion of the Stranger-subject is close to the post-human sense we are pursuing here. See Katerina Kolosova, "The Figure of the Stranger: A Possibility for Transcendental Minimalism or Radical Subjectivity," in *JCRT* 11 (2011): 3.

Nonetheless the logic of mimesis or 'cloning' through the vision-*in-One* is obscured by localizations into zones of territorialising, which necessarily involve decisions. Cloning is theoretically the 'in-One' of the vision-in-One.

> More exactly, a thinking-*in-identity*. "In-One" says identically the transcendental clone as if received by way of the Other but not constitutive of the One… Only transcendental identity can be called "in-One" and also real "in-the-last-instance," and the other (aprioritic) representations [philosophy and science and other regional knowledges] are only such within the measure of the transcendental that is their essence, under threat of inherence of an irreality of the Real in the Real. The a priori non-philosophical representations thus are not in-One except in-the-last-instance…."Determination-in-the-last-instance" tells us the only possible relation of the empirical or of philosophy to the Real which is not a refusal or a "forgetting" of being-foreclosed of the Real but a thinking based on that "criteria" of foreclosure.[28]

It is therefore according to how one decides to territorialize a mimetic model of the cosmos that outcomes of seizures, of appropriating the Event, the throw of the dice of Time that they become available to moral judgment. On the one hand, the 'throw' (from the unilateral place of the cosmos) is translatable into solar emissions, into multiplicities of options for appropriating solar waste which also correspond to multiple varieties of species on earth. On the other hand, the 'throw of the dice' (from the terrestrial site of the vision-in-One) may be translated into self-mastery and mastery of others in terms of the network of capital relations that are forged from the waste of the sun, which, as these relations are reducible to consuming goods manufactured from the solar anus, create paradoxical forms of self-stylization, an aesthetics of existence, of living on 'end times' as the sun is dying in the sense of its excessive emission. It is in the above sense that existence thrives upon the life-giving power of

[28]François Laruelle, "Theory of Cloning," in *Problematic of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (unpublished).

death. Existence, human or non-human, territorializes death that makes (existence) an existence.

In the same manner zones of possibilities are territorial which have built-in mechanisms to isolate those forces or relations of forces that have yet to form themselves into new zones of possibilities.[29] Seen in this light, globalization can easily wipe away those forces that have yet to develop 'creative folds' (in the same manner as the universe gobbles up weak gravitational spaces) or possibilities for creative intervention, for sorting elements of change from those that tend to unbind creativity from the zone one has created for oneself.The elements of change that are still unformed, unrelated, relations without purposes, without zonal territories in which they can take positive shapes, are those elements utilized by the unilateralizing agency of globalization that builds on the totalizing power of capital, namely, the singularity of market forces. Market forces are one but dominant and pervasive zone of possibilities whose function is to territorialize and enclose forces without zonal affiliation/inclusion. Yet zones of possibilities are as multiple as the forces of life are which no single zone can totalize. A *thousand plateaus* are still waiting to be formed into positive relations of forces.

Fidelity to an Empty Set

The Fold, once again: a technique of folding the outside in the inside; a method of invaginating the inside from nonrelational singularities and multiplicities, transforming them into formalizable coordinates, self-localizable algorithms or fields of one's fulfillability, within which one exhibits her aleatory progress within a plane of inconsistent consistency, what with our perennial Deleuze is called the plane of immanence or life. Yet, the creation of the fold itself begins with a theoretically decided structure, a *substance* of which the world is made.

Expressed in terms of the University's vision and mission this substance is that into which its promotion of 'scientific humanism'

[29]Bogue, "Deleuze, Foucault, and the Playful Fold of the Self," in *Deleuze's Wake*, 43-60.

necessarily results, that is to say, in service of the radical human.[30] From the standpoint of its vision and mission, the University has already decided what this substance is. It has already taken sides on what the world is. That world is a zone of possibility that the University has long ago created. It has preserved its substance in that paradoxical pair of statements, its vision and mission, forged from out of a certain notion of plasticity.

[30]See Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 156. Negri and Hardt's rendition of the notion of the poor as definable in terms of 'possibility' rather than of 'lack' is closer to our preference for the use of Ordinary Man. (See also Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Commonwealth* [Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009], xi). "The poor, in other words, refers not to those who have nothing but to the wide multiplicity of all those who are inserted in the mechanisms of social production regardless of social order or property" (40).The 'wide multiplicity' here can be further radicalized in terms of the unilaterality of the Real. From the standpoint of the Real, humanity is a subject-in-struggle regardless of differences in class which defines poverty and richness in terms of property relations. More radically expressed, humanity is poor relative to the foreclosed essence of the Real whose unilaterality nonetheless is the source of infinite wealth (as we mentioned in a short passage from Bataille, *cf.* n. 22). One may not be surprised if we hear more of Negri and Hardt, stating: "In each and every historical period a social subject that is ever-present and everywhere the same is identified, often negatively but nonetheless urgently, around a common living form. This form is not that of the powerful and the rich: they are merely partial and localised figures, quantitae signatae. The only non-localisable "common name" of pure difference in all eras is the poor. The poor is destitute, excluded, repressed, exploited—and yet living" (Ibid., 156)! This looks like Negri and Hardt were insinuating the genericity of the poor. Laruelle has a similar quantum of thought in which the poor is rendered generic, nay, as the ordinary, the last instance knowledge of the humanity/subject-in-struggle through the vision-in-One/Real (we are also noting here that the struggle is in the last instance definable in terms of the objectification of the Real by knowing, in general, through philosophy and science): "[It] will be a question of rediscovering *the identity of the generic in a new combination of its two symptoms-sources, man coming from philosophy and the subject or object coming from science, both transformed, something like the identity of the human middle, of 'ordinary' man and, in particular, the labours of the latter*" (Laruelle, "The Generic as Predicate and Constant," in *Speculative Turn*, 239).

Plasticity is what is left in the aftermath of destructive and deconstructive reduction of reality, 'destruktion' and 'deconstruction' (in the Derridean sense) as another first names for that truth-procedure called invagination, folding the outside in the inside, taming its monstrosity into an aesthetic artefact that refracts any attempt at final reduction as it has become a pure image.[31]Plasticity is what is left after transforming a former void into a new void but this time within sight, within reach, within grasp.[32] Our beginning as a University is traceable to a point of radical zero, a beginning that takes its source to be that of the void, a foundational hypothesis of emptiness, of an *ex nihilo* kind, through which the possibility of every beginning unfolds, but which guarantees neither truth nor redemption. No doubt, institutions need to set goals for themselves—their visions and missions conjuring up their significance on the side of nothing.

Out of our paradoxical pairing of being-nothing, our vision and mission, is thus generated the image of the ordinary Man whose generative power owing to her closeness to natural life, her capacity to erupt, her power to determine a zone of possibility in the last instance, without being formally taught, demonstrates axiomatically, historically, and no doubt, praxiologically, why it is that she constitutes the very 'fundamental possibility of every humanity'. The ordinary Man is the hypothetical axiom of expressive nullity—who has nothing to lose but her chain, the chain being a falsely abstracted condition of poverty that is not the poverty proper to human existence. The poverty she is forced to experience is not radical enough; it is a kind of poverty alien to her. The true axiomatic experience of poverty is the source of all human freedom—poverty before the Void whose richness is unbearable, whose wealth to offer is too huge to accommodate. The ordinary Man alone is in possession of this knowledge, the absolute knowledge that Socrates only discovered later—that one can know the radical source of knowing in being-nothing from which it is now possible to say one cannot know

[31]See Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction and Deconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[32]To a certain degree, also the general motif of Brassier's book *Nihil Unbound*.

everything, where everything is still not-All vis-a-vis the unilateral void where the subject is in the last instance unnecessary.

But against the background of this unilaterality, Nick Land, reporting on Bataille's theory of religion, offers a therapeutic reading of the non-value of humanity (thus called a *negentropy or negating entropy* in the guise of forcing a value to human existence):

> If the strictly regional resistance of everything that delays, impedes or momentarily arrests the movement of dissolution is abstracted from the solar flow it is interpretable as transcendence. Such abstract resistance to loss is characterized by autonomy (freedom), homogeneity (all-humanity is free), and ideality (the potentiality of the soul to become immortal)...
>
> The inevitable return of constricted energy to immanence is religion, whose core is sacrifice, generative of the sacred...
>
> .... [But this] humanizing project has the form of an unsustainable law.[33]

The pessimism of Bataille, though powerful in its critique of Kantian morality, is only half-way to truth, half-the-truth-of-the-True-without-truth. Land, while sympathetic to Bataille, identifies a possible therapeutic location of human happiness in the knowledge that the Real is foreclosed. This knowledge is of an object-oriented kind, not necessarily in the order of things Harman gave of the in-themselves of things and objects, rather the kind of order in which everything saturated by matter, though equal to zero in the sense that nothing promises any kind of redemption, does not have to be necessarily null. That everything does not promise anything is understandable from the point of absolute contingency, chaos and complexity. It is the same absolute which tells us that everything does not have to be as it is. As Quentin Meillasoux puts it, if everything is contingent, nothing possesses of absolute reason

[33]Land, *Thirst for Annihilation*, xix; emphases mine.

why it has to exist as it is.[34] As such, even solar decay cannot reduce us to real imprisonment in the world, 'real' in the sense that its unilateral combustion ascertains extinction. Land argues: "It is only because our bodies are weak and die that it is impossible for there to be a perfect cage, or for the sun to be interminably locked in fascist health. To be protected by something more than zero is the final term of imprisonment."[35]An impossible thing happens here: we are in-existent or we are ghosts, in/consistent zeroes, un/presentable entities resulting from contingency. Paradoxically, because we can die, which is the ultimate source of hope, that which protects our existence from being "protected by something more than zero," which means the possibility of living an eternal life, entropy cannot perfectly imprison us. Extinction is not-All; otherwise, if it is All, we must also be capable of living in eternity, an imagined logical necessity that is absolutely prohibited by the ultimate logic of absolute contingency.

Excursus 1

Here, we should not be misled in re-committing ourselves to standard phenomenology. Things can only be left to themselves from a position of axiomatic nullity.

A thing is equal to ontological zero: indeed, insofar as any 'thing' "[withdraws] from mutual contact" with another, and "encounters [another] only as translations or caricatures."[36] On the level of cosmic assemblages, any 'thing' mirrors the Thing-in-itself, not the Kantian thing, but rather an aleatory process that always precedes it (it even precedes the known universe still officially created out of the Big Bang); a pure Outside that persists diagonally opposite the enfolding of the outside in the inside, hence opposite the fold. That which precedes the enfoldment is the pure Outside that is yet to be enfolded to creative singularity, the

[34]See Quentin Meillasoux, *After Finitude. Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008).

[35]Land, *Thirst for Annihilation*, 139.

[36]Graham Harman, "Time, Space, Essence, and Eidos: A New Theory of Causation," in *Cosmos and History. The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 6 (2010) 1: 14.

throw of the dice whose essence is derivative of the superimmensity of chaos that precedes territorial spacing, including human spacing of time as well as the becoming-time of space. Incidentally, this is what Derrida would describe as the very operational principle of deconstruction.[37]

But this only illustrates that deconstruction cannot account for the anteriority of a time before the territorial spacing of time from the standpoint of being-with-thought. The anteriority is the pure outside that is strictly undeconstructible precisely because there is no human in it. Deconstruction is possible only within a correlational reality where the subject thematizes the deconstructible conditions of its possibility at the same time that its irregularity and aleatoriness shape the outside world by invaginating itself from the pure Outside based on its belated self-enfolding.

The subject, due to its belated emergence, can only virtually affect things and realities. The same applies to nonhuman things themselves, yet due to a more metaphysical determination—these things operate on foreclosure. Altogether, no being can absolutely affect another, human being, nonhuman being like animal and stone. All are beings in the unilateral sense of being as that which non-causally affects another. Nonetheless one can attract another, thereof producing a virtual unity of affects as shown, for instance, in the synthetic combination of hydrogen and oxygen. Each is foreclosed to the other. Yet, this very foreclosure grounds the possibility of accidental attraction in a plastic material called water which holds two autonomous things together by the sheer force of process *qua* event, a sheer accident or chance. Water is the unforeseeable new that changes the degree of individual autonomy of hydrogen and oxygen. That each is foreclosed to the other proves quite intriguingly that only accident can make a unity out of them, yet a unity that is internally resisted by foreclosure. The unified material (subject or non-subject) always runs the risk of breaking apart.

[37]Hägglund, however, asserts that Derrida ignored the radical potential of this concept. See Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 2.

Excursus 2

There are forces at play that sustain our conception of reality, forces that are by nature withdrawn from our view. Whereas for Heidegger this interplay of withdrawal and transparency would constitute the mystery of the Thing itself, for post-continental philosophers like Badiou and Žižek the total mystery is the Subject itself. In Heidegger and post-continental philosophy (at least to the degree that it is represented by Badiou and Žižek) the mystery can be resolved through human acts. For Heidegger, it requires a certain degree of human comportment to let the thing *thing* itself, to unfold its dimension other than its being enframed into presence-at-hand, its being a correlate of consciousness. For both Badiou and Žižek, the mystery on the side of the subject invokes human acts to seize an event, a quasi-Deleuzean folding of the outside in the inside with the intention of making events mutate, on a minimal pragmatic and technical level, from its nonfunctionality to a certain kind of functionality that can be inscribed for human purposes.

As these philosophers share one thing in common, specifically, about the role of the subject, the trajectories of human intervention are differentiated. For Heidegger the subject lets the thing *thing* in service of a much broader letting-be of being (*seinlassein*) in the form of *Ereignis*, the kind of unfolding of the Real with minimal historical intervention; for Badiou the subject seizes the opportunity in the form of an unanticipated event if only to exhibit fidelity to the conditions of truth according to which the subject exercises her being free for science, art, politics, and love.[38] The subject seizes the events to keep these conditions alive. Even so, we are not sure if Badiou is aware of the tautology of seizing the Event.

Excursus 3

Any seizure is a particular occasioning of each of the four conditions of truth such that one seizes a scientific event, a political event, an artistic event, an erotic event.The subject is transcendentally

[38]See Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

predefined by certain conditions of expressivity. If one seizes a particular event to keep a corresponding condition alive, which demonstrates for Badiou a fidelity to a certain event *qua* a specific occasioning of freedom, it would seem then that an event is not completely unforeseeable. By deciding to keep the conditions of free thinking alive in each of the four domains of truth where one is existentially situated—science, politics, art, and love—the destiny of the event is partly foreseeable. The subject can in fact exert influence upon the actual shaping of the event—any kind of event can only come from a specific domain of manifestation of truth. What would strictly qualify as unforeseeable is the outcome of the seizure according to which one's act may be proven to be faithful or unfaithful, but, just the same, it goes against the grain of the Badiouan fidelity to the event-in-the-last-instance: the subject is compelled to remain faithful to the special character of the event (whether scientific, political, artistic or erotic) regardless whether the event no longer communicates a linear relation to the domain from which it is supposed to emerge. The crux of the matter is that Badiou expects this linear relation. Thus, a forceful inversion is necessary. The subject must force that event to remain faithful. Here, the Maoism of Badiou rears its ugly head. Badiou affirms this inversion in the following passages from *Being and Event*: "That it is almost necessary to tolerate the complete arbitrariness of a choice, that quantity, that paradigm of objectivity, leads to pure subjectivity."[39]

These passages are symptomatic of what is amiss in Badiou, his strategy of putting the subject in the last instance. This position of ours is not tantamount to rejecting our earlier formulation that the subject in its radicality can only be exposed as the last instance of the Real. Our position takes its source from that side of Badiouan fidelity to the Event which properly exposes, without hesitating to reduce it to a symptom, the full ir-responsibility of the subject vis-à-vis the Real that has no use for it. We contend that Badiou is unsure about the fundamental character of the subject as the generic enforcer of the indiscernible, an empty foundational set.

In Badiou, the subject is particularized in terms of its positionality in one of the four conditions of truth. Obviously, the subject cannot take

[39]Badiou, *Being and Event*, 280.

all positions at the same time. It is rather realistic to say that the subject can be ideally faithful to an event within a single domain of truth. A realistic Badiouan subject is too limited to perform a generic forcing of the indiscernible, a voiding of the Void which requires a general and comprehensive view of the four conditions of occasioning the events of truths. One has to be realistically outside the constellation of these conditions, an option available to a mathematical subject. But the mathematical subject has its own limitations despite its universalizable property compared with other subject positions. Simply put, the mathematical subject has no formal event to be faithful to because it is purely a subject-without-conditions. Without an event to be loyal to the mathematical subject regresses into a floating signifier. The axiomatic project of Badiou is therefore incomplete.

The process of truth manifestation in Badiou's operation cannot sufficiently expose the radicality of the subject in the last instance. Rather, as Laruelle would have it, any truth process is fundamentally a result of an operation that precedes even the voiding of the Void from a particularized condition of truth that objectifies truth's last instance according to the unique algorithm of a particular occasioning of the Real. The reverse is otherwise affirmed by Badiou in the following passages from *Theory of the Subject*:

> The subject is subjected, insofar as nothing is thinkable under this name except a regulated place--a splace. And also inasmuch as what the subject destroys is at the same time that which determines it in its being placed.
>
> The fact that the subjective process occurs from the point of interruption indicates the law of the subject as the dialectical division of destruction and re-composition.
>
> This is what guarantees that the subjective process in part escapes repetition. The effect of the Same is destroyed, and what this destruction institutes is an *other Same*.[40]

[40]Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (New York: Continuum, 2009), 259.

We can radicalize the post-evental affirmation of the Badiouan subject in terms of occasioning an 'other event' of the Event within its being-placed in a particular domain of truth into a subject that does not need to undergo this process in order that its radical strangeness can be perfectly guaranteed. *For us this is precisely the generic subject*. It does not even need to repeat itself differently in the full repetitive implication of destroying one's being-placed in the form of being-other-than-oneself-as-being-necessarily-placed, which affords it the chance to affirm the condition that subjects it. One simply has to feel the brunt of reality when one's desire for something is thwarted by forces she cannot explain. (That is why psychoanalysis is still important for any attempt to do ontology). It is precisely that experience of being-thwarted that repetition is set to work. The exact moment of the thwarting occasions the originary fold, a first-order invagination upon which all enfoldments of later experiences will build on. The memory of the first institution of memory, an absolute memory—this is the experience of radical strangeness that all forms of truth manifestation which culminates in seizing an event will seek to re-occasion.[41] The Badiouan point of interruption is precisely localizable in this site.

The interruptions available for radical experience across the domains of truth are derivative of the first enfoldment of absolute memory—the desire to repeat it which properly defines existence. In other words, human existence is not radical enough in the face of the Real that does not have any use for its repetitive, machinic replication. Human existence is always an existence that it can exist-for, namely, the conditions of truth. But juxtaposed to the unilaterality of the Void the *existence-for* of existing becomes superfluous. Hence, the 'inexistent' of Badiou, notwithstanding its proximity to the superfluity of the radical subject, which he describes as "being nothing," cannot in the last instance

[41]In principle any enfoldment allows for some degree of reterritorialization by the elements of the enfolded outside. In Bergsonian philosophy that which is reterritorialized is memory. Bogue summarizes this aspect of Deleuzean reterritorialization: "The Outside ... is retained as past, its retention constituting a folding of the Outside, and its forgetting as unfolding. One may say, then, that the forgetting or unfolding of the present is that which is folded within memory" (Bogue, "Deleuze, Foucault, and the Playful Fold of the Self," in *Deleuze's Wake*, 58).

communicate the axiomatic nothingness proper to existing-for.[42] As Badiou would insist, "an inexistent argues for its multiple-Being in order to declare that it shall be absolutely."[43] But the multiplicity of being is a needless excess, a solar waste, an irremediable fate. Its multiplicity is derivative rather than a proto-reality attributable to the unilaterality of the Void. What Genet said of his personal triumph over the global, molar and arboreal character of existence, "My victory is verbal"![44] (which Badiou took to be an example of the radical inexistent), is shy of the radicality it claims to be, in that we can oppose to *Genetian* verbal assertion of positive multiplicity against global existence the statement that inexistence is not the existence proper to the voiding of the Void. What Badiou did not see is that the kind of existence proper to the voiding of the Void is the one that ex-ists outside the conditions of truth, namely, the existence of the stranger-subject.[45] Meanwhile, this radical subject that suffers a certain form of disinclination on the part of Badiou becomes in the hands of Žižek an iconic regression to Kantianism via a curious Hegelian *Aufhebung*. For Žižek, the subject seizes the event to keep herself away from the entrapment of desire that *desires* the total experience of the Thing, or the absolute comprehension of primordial Being vis-a-vis the ontological fact that *that* Thing/Being only exists in as far as it is invested in the symbolic order of language. (We will discuss Žižek at length in Excursus 5).

[42]Alain Badiou, "Homage to Jacques Derrida," in *Adieu Derrida*, ed. Coustas Douzinas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 45.

[43]Ibid., 44.

[44]Ibid., 46.

[45]The stranger-subject is originally developed by Laruelle. We are thus departing from the academic and professional rivalry (between Badiou and Laruelle) that has exacerbated their differences at the expense of exploring the common thread that sutures each other's undeclared affinity to the same concept of the Event (for Badiou, that which is unpredictable, for Laruelle, to a certain degree, that which is unpredictable by virtue of a more generic occasioning of the Real that is foreclosed to human thought).

Excursus 4

The aleatory process that has the capacity to hold the universe together is itself a result of the natural voiding of the Void, a pure physical process that is not in our power to comprehend yet, but that it is 'there' does not discount the fact that it is knowable *contra* Kant. The Void is unilaterally released to human wonder, which has reached us from a scientifically imaginable point of anteriority, a 'beyond' but a *diagonal* beyond, not the painfully unreachable beyond of Kant. It is an epistemic assertion of a beyond that by its own axiomatic decision refracts an eschatological invitation to embrace the mystic's position. It is a beyond that itself withdraws from our assumption that it withdraws (it withdraws from a thetic kind of withdrawal, an activity that thought assumes on behalf of that which withdraws), but also allows us, by virtue of the alterity that defines its self-withdrawal, to recognize a certain rising forth that gives itself to be seen as pure withdrawal, the pure as the not-All seen as the last-instance-objectification of a subject to whose gaze the Thing it desires does not promise it any form of actual redemption, hence, the pure withdrawal as the last instance this subject can extract of the Thing. But everything here if it must sink in to thought has to be axiomatically decided.Thought can hold on to axioms so as not to lose itself, faced with the serious task of thinking.

Excursus 5

The Thing-in-itself is the thing that ex-ists from its own condition of self-foreclosure; its existence is a self-legitimating act on the side of nothing.

This 'withdrawing essence' provides philosophy a tool to understand what is at stake in our attempt to comprehend our relation to things. Kant did not have an idea of this withdrawal but rather an assumption that understanding is always already situated within finitude. Finitude is always already wrong if not ignorant of the essence of things in themselves. This argument simply exposes the illogicality of a leap from finitude to infinitude. To avoid that kind of illogical leap Kant had to fall back on finitude, this time to thematize what would appear to be its own infinite conditions of possibility, but infinite only

to the extent that in light of the possibility of getting it all wrong or the possibility of real ignorance vis-a-vis the unknowable an immanent form of infinity need be introduced: Infinity can be immanently attained by the three postulates of moral reason (freedom, immortality, and God's existence).

Moral reason becomes, what in Lacanian psychoanalysis stands for the "metonymy of desire," an objectification of the impossibility of penetrating the Thing-in-itself by reducing it to the function of the Symbolic.[46] Such trajectory for Kant reassures philosophy that more work has to be done by objectifying the "metonymy" of the impossible or the unknowable as a stand-in for the noumenon.What is clearly emphasized here is the possibility of breaking the impasse that confronts finite knowing that has prematurely posited an absolute limit to its capability to radicalize thought. Nonetheless, we can treat this to be a special case of thinking rather than what might suggest itself to be a topological form of premature non-ejaculation, if such a thing exists. But as a way of transposing this Kantian problem to a properly Lacanian framework we can instead establish a topological similarity between the noumenon and the primal object of desire, the Thing/Real itself. Slavoj Žižek has an interesting take on this topological similarity:

[46]Slavoj Žižek, "A Plea for a Return to *Différance* (with a Minor Pro Domo Sua)," in *Adieu Derrida*, 130. Žižek also discussed this Lacanian concept in an unpublished lecture manuscript (which contained excerpts from his newest book *Less Than Nothing: Hegel in The Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*) that formed part of the summer school reading at the University of Bonn (Third Annual International Summer School in German Philosophy with the theme "The Ontological Turn in Contemporary Philosophy, July 2 to 12, 2012; henceforth, *Reader Summer School Bonn*). A colleague of mine who is starting to do her work on speculative realism via Lacan secretly provided me the copy. As of this writing she is at Bonn rubbing elbows with Slavoj Žižek, Markus Gabriel (who co-authored a work on German Idealism with Žižek), Martin Hägglund (who is working on post-Derridean philosophy, an avid critic of speculative realism), and three prominent members of the school of speculative realism, namely, Graham Harman, Iain Hamilton Grant, and Ray Brassier. Meillasoux, whose theory of correlationism set off speculative realism, did not make it to the seminar.

> [Why] this constitutive withdrawal from reality of a part of the Real? Precisely because the subject is part of reality, because it emerges out of it....We can also see in what way two lacks overlap in this impossible object (the *Real*): the constitutive lack of the subject (what the subject has to lose in order to emerge as the subject...) and the lack in the Other itself (what has to be excluded from reality so that reality can appear).... So the Real is not some kind of primordial Being which is lost with the opposition of subject and object (as Hölderlin put it in his famous *Ur-Fragment* of German Idealism); the Real is, on the contrary, a product (of the overlapping two lacks)...[47]

Žižek finishes off with a final blow:

> The Real is the point at which the external opposition between the symbolic order and reality is immanent to the symbolic itself, mutilating it from within: it is the non-All of the symbolic. There is a Real not because the symbolic cannot grasp its external Real, but because the symbolic cannot fully become itself.[48]

With his correlationist stance in favor of the ironic lack that constitutes the subject—correlationism being the mutual dependence of the subject and object from the encompassing standpoint of the subject in which the subject can play the role of either the victor or the victim, the strong or the weak, the master or the slave, etc., which in the last instance grounds the lack that is also constitutive of the Thing/Real, the radical trans-inclusion of the subject in the object which legitimates the expression that the Real is not-All because the subject is in it— Žižek ends up supporting Kant, that the thing-in-itself is unknowable, but in a way that radicalizes what Kant missed in his own brand of correlationism, that the thing-in-itself is simply unconscious of itself.

[47]Žižek, "How to Break Out of Transcendental Correlationism," in *Reader Summer School Bonn,* pagination not applicable.

[48]Ibid.

Francois Laruelle, the originator of non-philosophy and a rather difficult theorem of the One-in-One, is more to the point when he states that the Real is the Man-in-Man (contrary to Žižek's subject-in-Real, or Man-in-Real): the in-Man being the product of the doubling of Man's self-objectification of the Real in which the doubling proceeds from Man to the Real whose foreclosure and anterior temporality deflect/return the objectification to Man performing the vision-in-One.[49] By arguing that the Real is the product of two overlapping lacks (the subject and the Thing itself) Žižek proposes to solve the Kantian dilemma by simply demonstrating that there is no such thing as an independent reality in the sense that it is foreclosed to the subject. Žižek would also appear to deny that there is a pure Outside such as the existence of an observable physical dimension called the Universe—an unpredictable result of the temporal eventuation of the throw of the dice.[50] Schelling and Badiou are

[49]This notion of doubling is initially worked out by Laruelle on his now accessible book *Philosophies of Difference* in terms of how this doubling has caught the entire tradition of philosophy under a notion of philosophical decision which, in a nutshell, constitutes philosophy's illicit election of transcendence into a position of singularity that transcends even its own ground, the ground it grounds that it believes to be inferior to the transcendental deduction. The election of an autonomous transcendence is possible in terms of an operation (in philosophy, that which constitutes the kernel of its decision) that eliminates the pre-transcendental ground and arrogates it to itself which gives philosophy the privilege, not without an obvious degree of hallucination, to constitute the Real. See François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy,* trans. Rocco Gangle (New York and London: Continuum, 2010).

[50]Žižek relies heavily on Karen Barad's reading of the philosophical implications of quantum mechanics. See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Elsewhere in *Less Than Nothing,* Žižek quotes Barad, which exposes his bias in favor of an enigmatic Real that to him psychoanalysis is in a position to address: "There is simply no outside to the universe for the measuring agencies to go to in order to measure the universe as a whole... since there is no outside to the universe, there is no way to describe the entire system, so that description always occurs from within: *only one part of the world can be made intelligible to itself at a time, because the other part of the world has to be the part that it makes a difference to*" (Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 350-51). Anyone familiar with Žižekean ontology can immediately identify

more subtle; for them the pure outside constitutes a proto-reality in the form of pure multiplicity, an atemporal void that breaks out of itself by sheer absolute contingency towards which human knowledge behaves in the form of acknowledging the un-reason that underlies everything, namely, that everything has no reason not to exist otherwise.[51]

Žižek wants us to believe that the Universe in the transcendental ontological sense of the Real is the product of the failure of the symbolic order (our speech, our writing, knowledge in general) to become fully symbolic. Our stance is clear: there is the Real, an independent reality, but contrary to metaphysics, this Real is not absolutely unknowable which metaphysics (and the parallax as a recent addition) defend on the assumption that our finitude is incapable of making a fully symbolic leap, which is also another way of saying that there is always the possibility of ignorance, a limit imposed on knowing the very origin of which as a technique of regulation, or what Foucault would not hesitate to say as a regime of truth-making, can be traced to the motives of the early prophets who wrote the Bible—only God knows. But if only for a fully symbolic leap we can properly make the necessary leap to infinity or absolute knowledge relative to what can be temporally ex-posed as knowable by the Universe that as Real unilaterizes objective reality by affecting it through the throw of the dice. This is explainable in chaos theory which demolishes the principle of sufficient reason that metaphysics attributes to the Universe. One simply has to radicalize or accentuate the full symbolic or speculative direction of thinking. In this light, Meillasoux has an interesting formulation:

> The unequivocal relinquishment of the principle of reason requires us to insist that both the destruction and the perpetual preservation of a determinate entity must equally be able to occur for no reason. Contingency is

these lines with his own brand of philosophical quantum, namely, the subject-in-Real. For an introduction to Žižekean ontology see Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

[51]Meillasoux, *After Finitude*, 54; also, Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 66-7.

> such that anything might happen, even nothing at all, so what what is, remains as it is.[52]

Rather than the principle of sufficient reason inscribed by the correlation of subject and object (in Žižek, always from the standpoint of an incomplete subject, yet a subject in the last instance that must decide to be a subject vis-à-vis the Real) contingency or unreason allows what 'is' to be what it is. The very contingency or the withdrawing essence of the Real allows the subject to either objectify the Real through the Kantian-Lacanian metonymy of the Void/Noumenon or negate the autonomous persistence of the Real *ala* Žižek. The 'symbolic failure' of the symbolic order only comes later, indeed, as a unilateral excess of the Real-as-the-objectified-material of the vision-in-One, which only unequivocally proves that the Real unilaterizes/affects the subject without redemption. The subject has never been in the Real *contra* Žižek.

More to the point—Žižek's transcendental correlationism (the subject-in-the-Real, the kernel of the parallax) becomes an unwitting defender of culture industry that ensures the steady supply of fantasmatic objects that generate a kind of fetishism analogous to necessary illusion. Central to this Žižekean apology is the Lacanian differentiation of 'object-loss'(where the drive is central in displacing desire from its fixation on the Thing to the enjoyment of its stand-in) and 'object-cause' (where the drive is radically seduced by desire, also a drive but one that attempts to move beyond the pleasure principle, to seek the Thing itself, to seek more than enjoying partial objects).

> To put it more pointedly, the object of the drive is not related to the Thing as a filler of its void: the drive is literally a counter-movement to desire, it does not strive towards impossible fullness and, being forced to renounce it, gets stuck onto a partial object as its remainder—the drive is quite literally the very drive to break the All of continuity in which we are embedded, to introduce a radical imbalance into it, and the difference between drive and desire is precisely that, in

[52]Meillasoux, *After Finitude*, 57.

> desire, this cut, this fixation onto a partial object, is as it were "transcendentalised," transposed into a stand-in for the void of the Thing.[53]

Žižek was reacting to what he believes is a wrong notion (apparently by Freud himself) that there is such thing as pure death drive, a drive that can ecstatically radicalize itself into self-annihilation, an im-possible will to self-destruction. In short, the drive guarantees the preservation of a unique psychic force of sanity.

> The drive is not a universal thrust (towards the incestuous Thing) checked and broken up, it is this break itself, a break on instinct, a break on "stuckness"... The elementary matrix of the drive is not that of transcending all particular objects towards the void of the Thing (which is then accessible only in its metonymic stand-in), but that of our libido getting "stuck" onto a particular object, condemned to circulate around it forever.[54]

But is not the persistence of 'partial objects' onto which the subject is necessarily stuck, which keeps its symptom at a sustainable level on the side of the "metonymic figurations of the void," itself the kind of persistence that sutures the experience of 'object-loss' to the unbroken chain of consumerism?

Excursus 6

All these varied forms of subject intervention (Heidegger's poetic subject, Badiou's axiomatic inexistent, Žižek's parallax, and Laruelle's stranger-subject), give and take their potentials for excess and rhetorical strengths, are herein acknowledged as radical approaches towards the

[53]Žižek, "How to Break Out of Transcendental Correlationism," in *Reader Summer School Bonn*.

[54]Ibid.

Real, the Outside, the Event, from an over-all minimalist ontological framework.[55]

This minimalism is not to be confused with a certain weakness or refusal to engage with the outside world, rather, the opposite. Minimalism is a radical form of doing ontology. Until Badiou introduced the significance of axiomatic decisions in post-continental philosophy minimalism was a kind of logical opposition that favoured the inscription of a higher function over the weaker, a form of relationality endorsed from above, from a transcendent function looking over the superficiality of immanence. With Badiou a certain subtraction starts to operate: The immanent subtracts from the transcendent that disrupts its hegemonic presence. But there is more. On the side of transcendence, transcendence becomes not-All, its rule is questionable. On the side of immanence, subtraction reveals the revolutionary character of lower functionality. Whereas in principle transcendence cannot transcend itself or it will self-destruct (transcendence necessarily adheres to an internal economy), immanence can transcend itself by infracting its correlational dependence on transcendence.

One can notice the Hegelian flavor of this subtractive ontology in terms of the master-slave dialectic which culminates in the negation of the negation (*Aufhebung*) whose resultant relation becomes one of absolute negativity. This negativity is expressed in terms of another form of correlation: the self-satisfaction of the slave is inversely proportional to the master's loss of self-meaning. Its difference with Hegel rather lies in the Badiouan postulate of the Void that is more transcendent than any form of transcendence. For Badiou it is the Void that subtraction proceeds from, an impossible operation that only reveals the radical side of the subject performing subtractive ontology. In Hegel, the Void is simply the equivalent of Nothing that Being necessarily absorbs by way of negating itself in terms of the exercise of self-alienation essential to the consciousness of the Absolute, the unity of Being and Nothing which is

[55]This is the subject of Sam Gillespie's pioneering exposition of Badiou's philosophy. See Sam Gillespie, *The Mathematics of Novelty: Badiou's Minimalist Metaphysics* (Melbourne, Australia: re.press, 2008).

not exactly a unity of two ontological opposites but a unity within Being that splits itself into two entities in a dialectical fashion.[56]

It is now possible to say here that Being is not-All because it is fundamentally inscribed in a non-relation to the Void. This Being that is not-All is precisely the subject. It does not matter whether this subject is that of the master or slave. Both master and slave are generic subjects. The revolutionary character of subtractive ontology nonetheless lies in its attempt to correct the conservative outlook that the master has the sole privilege to become a subject but also to repair the assumption that the slave has the moral privilege to be so. Historically, subtractive ontology is a partisan of the generic right of the slave for it is they who have been most deprived of the experience of genericity. The free conditions of being, its being-free-for science, art, politics and love are the exact conditions that subtractive ontology champions on behalf of the genericity of the slave. Even so, the full force of criticism falls on the side of this practice of genericity for it is there where the seizing of events are most vulnerable to malpractice. Isn't it that all revolutions were initiated by slaves who later became masters?

But there is also the side of criticism that falls on the generic complacency of the master. It is here where Derrida is right in criticizing Hegel: The Hegelian *Aufhebung* in the last instance serves the purpose of the master; its loss of self-meaning is reappropriated in the practice of amortization.[57] The master loses itself, but risks a radical part of itself,

[56]The famous opposition between being and nothing can be retroactively understood to be an identical relation. Jean Hyppolite observes: "But that is due to the fact that it is the self that has posited itself as being and that this positing is not tenable; it engenders a dialectic. The self is absolute negativity and this negativity shows through in its positing itself as being. If the self is being, that is because being as such negates itself, and if being is the self that is because it is in-itself this negation of itself" (Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology*, trans. Samuel Chernak and John Heckman [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974], 590).

[57]In *Glas* Derrida takes a swipe at Hegel: "The *Aufhebung* is the dying away, the amortization of death. That is the concept of economy in general in speculative dialectics…The economic act makes familiar, proper, one's own, intimate, private. The sense of property, of propriety, in general is collected in the *oikeos*…

by loaning, by lending a part of its constellation of meanings that has yet to be penetrated by the absurdity of his historical situation. That way the master believes there is still a chance to escape his superfluous existence. One can also say here that the master loans a part of himself before the full force of absurdity gobbles him down. The master also loans a fraction of his wealth to the historical refinement of the "true-without-truth" (through sponsoring public enlightenment and education, read: commercialization of education), ironically, the truth that "does not want" the master for truth is an ontological excess indifferent to the subject-for-truth, that which claims what does not want it.[58] The master leases his private space to create public spaces for the propagation of this emancipatory knowledge by sustaining his excess as a subject-for-truth (the truth chased by the master hoping to find redemption compared to the happiness of the slave in *Aufhebung*).[59] This subject-for-truth has become the single encompassing narrative of all narratives of modern progress—that humanity is measured against the rule of truth which states that truth wants humanity, in that humanity must chase this truth,must give itself to a measure of perfection. All these become clear from an ahistorical, axiomatic, genealogical standpoint that exposes this single narrative thread from outside the historical standpoint of truth, what else but the history of the master justifying his meaning against the background of the dialectical dissolution of meanings.

One can recall with Hegel that the slave's happiness in absolute negativity would have given the master unquestioned right to transcendence. The slave accepts her fate. However, the master's recourse to amortization, which shows that he still chases after truth, desires to

The *Aufhebung* [becomes] the economic law of the absolute reappropriations of absolute loss" (Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand [Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1986], 133).

[58]Laruelle, "The Generic as Predicate and Constant," in *Speculative Turn*, 253.

[59]The school, the factory, the halls of justice, the judiciary, the congress, the senate, etc., which are all transcendentally mediated by a certain practice of truth and its production and consumption, its distribution and circulation within a network of signs, symbols, and enunciative sub-fields of rationalisations that in the last instance are codified into valid experiences.

become the subject for truth despite the truth that 'truth does not want it', proves that the master is irredeemable. On both sides, however, it only shows that *Aufhebung* is a historical process to which no one could gain access and of which no one has control.

In light of subtractive ontology, the kind of historical transcendence that is at work in the master-slave dialectic can now be reinscribed in terms of the autonomy of the Real itself. But this autonomy as Nick Land argues is premised on the fact that "we can die." This is how the autonomy works: the chaotic essence of the Void allows the non-absolute unilateral moment of the Void as this moment reaches the subject yet always in a late en/folding which corresponds to the belated emergence of the subject that enfolds. In this sense, the Void cannot absolutely void the subject—the Void is slow in reaching us, but it will reach our planet anyhow—besides the fact that the subject is mortal which renders the void's threat of extinction logically useless.

Back to Things Themselves

As we have previously emphasized, the withdrawing essence of the thing itself constitutes for thought an anomalous process. As such, a pre-existing universe, the being-nothing of the Void, surprises thought: It is the limit to the inconsistent objectification of thought's self-professed poverty. Socratic humility is not enough to fully understand this poverty for what lies at the heart of this in/consistent humility is a consistent withdrawal from the thought of ordinary man that he claims to champion.

The thought of the ordinary man, her generic character, radically articulates the essence of poverty proper to thought's relation to the Thing. The ordinary man is the kind of person that is always already extracted in the last instance as the most basic model of substance as a decision, echoing Badiou's Spinoza.The radical subjectivity of this ordinary man is that which makes her the first name of the Real itself, the "Human-in-the-last-instance."[60] The last instance that makes her genericity rise forth as axiomatic knowledge has something to do with

[60]Laruelle, *Future Christ,* 9; Kolosova, "Stranger Subject," in *JCRT*, 60.

the same comportment she exhibits in relation to the One-Real, a certain attitude that determines the One in its last instance. Obviously, it is a form of determination that may first be executed with a force proper to thought but in the end is also an occasioning of the Real in the form of exposing the weak unilateralized status of the subject that the One *actually* determines in terms of demonstrating its decisively foreclosed essence, which becomes intelligible by the retroaction of the force of thought that sought to determine the One according to some active force of thinking.

Knowledge started with the Heraclitean maxim that "nature loves to hide herself" to which Laruelle, our ambivalent guide here, responds by stating the obvious: "Because it (*physis*) is foreclosed to thought, the Real or Man loves to open itself."[61] The Real is Man herself. Her generic character is already present for acknowledgement in the ancients but was obscured by historical denials of the questionable status of Man (the illusion of anthropocentrism). The knowledge of this genericity in the last instance is raised to its idempotent character, its capacity to remain unchanged even when already needlessly multiplied in terms of diverse multiplication of the powers of Man, from the objectifier of stone to the subject that replaces the position of God who is dead, a subject who is hailed as the subject for Truth, who has so much interest in Truth. But as Laruelle wonderfully puts it, this subject-in-subject, the Man-in-Man has the property of genericity, "the property of being able to communicate truth or rather the True-without-truth that does not want it."[62]

This inimitable power of the ordinary man nonetheless always risks itself being made into an object-cause of the politics of truth by the non-ordinary subject of non-axiomatic politics, by contrast a subject who is deeply involved in truth, the activist of truth, one whose self-proclaimed mission is to represent the genericity of the non-truth subject by means of exhausting his concept of truth to the last political instance. In contrast, the University risks representing the ordinary Man by reclaiming her ordinariness from non-axiomatic truths through re-

[61]Laruelle, "The Generic as Predicate and Constant," in *Speculative Turn*, 248.

[62]Ibid., 253.

training the soul in the autonomous light of the Real. It is in this sense that the absolute goal of the University is to redeem ordinary men, make them reproduce their authentic radical possibilities.

Voiding By Way of a Conclusion

Axiomatically we can now speak of the ordinary Man as humanity's possibility, as the possibility of erupting from a condition of non-relationality, of being unformed, unstated, unspoken. Her condition before the fissuring of the Void—that is what the singularity of market forces aims to signify into a category that requires an external operation. By taking a stand in favor of the generative power of the ordinary man, the real and unquestionable poor whose poverty is also the poverty of Humanity, the University has chosen its fate to defend and nourish a zone of possibility for a section of this underprivileged; empower them with tools of developing creative folds, techniques of invagination, accommodating the outside in the inside from the outside; also, modes of conscious subjection to a set of norms and body of truths as useful fictions, modes of elaborating one's participatory relation to the preservation of substance as an *epistemic community*—a community that is axiomatically an inconsistent clone of the One/Void.

Yet zones of possibilities are not eternal. They are better sustained by the same passion of eidos that has caused their very possibility to erupt from a condition of nonrelation. As they take the place of the traditionally conceived substances, eidos are acts that engage change in the form of subtracting themselves from the events that this change brings forth like a throw of the dice, unpredictable yet determinable in terms of their being properly objectified as 'last instances', namely, as 'challenges'. For quite some time, relative to our academic life, the passion of the eidos has calmed down, threatening to dissolve our creative assemblages, our ways of justifying our existence as a result of an empty meaning, a hypothesis of the null which has given us the radical possibility to determine our destiny deducible from a foundational empty set. The idea here is that by desiring to be recognized as a globalized university we have created unnecessary planes of consistency and modes of subtracting the relevance of our substance from Change. This is objectively expressed in terms of the demand of techno-singularity, a powerful side of globalization, that

is, to leave the eidos to their ideal worlds, separate them from the life that has made them capable of gathering us as a unified substance as if eidos truly belong in these worlds. These eidos are now deprived of their proper planes of consistency.

The disregard for discourse in terms of narrowing the space for creative and spiritual engagement with the eidos is obviously a generous response to this separation. The machination goes on: Indifference to paradoxicalities, lines of flight that attempt to speculate the noncapitalized unformed Outside, the untested, the unspeakable, the unimaginable. From the standpoint of sterile eidos, these are unprofitable, non-viable ways of subtracting the meaning of our substance from what else but the voidal power of substance out of which life is axiomatically, mathematically, erotically, sin/*thomatically* decided (a play on the word 'symptom' which enhances here the subtle emancipatory meaning of 'sin').

EPILOGUE

What then can we find here? What can take place here if not a sort of appeal: To revive a culture of fidelity to an empty meaning, or, nothing will have ever taken place.

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On "Evil, Sin, and the Fall": Foucault's Critique of the "Christian" Problematization of the Flesh

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I know some muddle-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure were bad in themselves. But they were wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves the body—which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body…

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

The aim of this paper is to lay emphasis on at least two modes of problematization concerning the body described by Michel Foucault (1926-84) in his work *The Use of Pleasure*. This is possible only through an exposition of his comparative treatment of two types of moral life: one is generated by our immersion into the programmatic and calculative thinking of our day, a moral life that, for Foucault, is characterized by an obsession for discipline and strict adherence to external codes, one that sways Christianity into embracing unreflective and uncritical moral predispositions—among them, the notion that the human body is born of "evil, sin, the fall, and death"[1]; the other is the ethical practice of mastering one's bodily pleasures and positive energies,

[1]"Christianity associated [sexual activity] with evil, sin, the fall, and death" (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Vintage Books, 1990], 14).

understood by Foucault as the ethics of the concern of the self rooted in Greek antiquity.

We do not intend to show that the Christian account of sin or sinfulness is outright mistaken, however, part of our task is to seek out what conditions made it possible for Christian teachers to revitalize the thought that the human body is corrupt or that the flesh was born of sin (contrary to the teaching that the body, although liable to sin, was actually created out of goodness), a notion that a number of scholars associate with some Lutheran protestants in the sixteenth century. Doubts may be raised, and rightly so, on the claim that this principle, "body equates to sin," originates from Christianity itself, if it is not already a corruption of the biblical account of the body. However, like a malignancy that escaped early detection, this faulty precept was able to creep into some of the major areas of religious ministry and education. Its debilitating effects on the moral perception of a number of believers today are quite obvious; it manifests as hatred of oneself, despise towards life and the world, not to mention hostility towards the body and all its pleasures. These are the very characteristics of an extreme and self-destructive form of "asceticism" that the philosopher Nietzsche warned us about.[2] So in the face of this rather infirm and gloomy moral disposition, we seek in line with Foucault whatever means and possibilities are there that would enable us to learn once again how to become accountable to our own selves and perhaps rescue us from this kind of hostility brought to bear down on the body and its pleasures. In so doing we open once again an avenue where it becomes sensible to ask, is not man already a work in progress? In this undertaking, we are compelled by Foucault to go and revisit various forms of ethical practices in history and among these is a Greek tradition that was quite preoccupied with the art of governing the self and the pleasures of the body.

[2]"Even in your folly and contempt, you despisers of the body, you serve your self. I say unto you: your self itself wants to die and turns away from life. It is no longer capable of what it would do above all else: to create beyond self" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York: The Modern Library, 1995], 35). The despisers of the body are killing all forms of creative potential in the self.

But as a caveat, Foucault quickly says he is not espousing Greek ethical practice as the alternative to Christian or biblically based morality, but rather uses both styles, along with other moral practices in the past, as points of departure necessary for a more innovative task of thinking, that is, of rethinking ourselves.[3] He is, in fact, proceeding by way of critical interrogation of different moral practices in the hope that we might come up with other ways and means of stylizing our own lives. In other words, what Foucault hopes to pursue in *The Use of Pleasure* was the cultivation of a kind of aesthetic of existence that would encourage us to explore different ways of speaking and thinking about ourselves, which is also a form of engagement of oneself on oneself, a critical reflection, and dialogue with oneself. He wishes to rekindle philosophy the way it was done in the past in the mode of *ascesis*, characterized by him as the "exercise of oneself in the activity of thought."[4]

One can of course argue that this spirit of *ascesis* somehow already resonates in Greek thought if only to the extent that, for them, the ethical person engages his own desires in moments of struggle and resistance, not in order to fully extinguish these desires (because they are not in themselves evil) but to master them by means of certain strategies and techniques. But Foucault was aiming at something more than a mere repetition. We want to be at the frontiers of the traditions he was describing; we want to be experimental, or rather, we must under our present circumstances come up with new forms and techniques for self-formation. Of course there is much to learn from the ways of the old. What we must not lose sight of is the fact that in the Greek model and in many other models in antiquity, ethics was still "personal ethics," a relation with the self, a form of active thinking concerning oneself. In modern practice, however, such accountability over oneself was outmoded by a compulsion to "a unified coherent, authoritarian moral system" that practically insists sameness in thought and that

[3]"They are the record of a long and tentative exercise that needed to be revised and corrected again and again…the object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 9).

[4]Ibid.

demanded a specific form of telling the truth about oneself.[5] And so we simply submit to rules, prescriptions, or external codes. To be "ethical" in our day is not so much a question of how to master one's own desires but rather a question of how to practice austerity on desire "through a long effort of learning, memorization, and assimilation of a systematic ensemble of precepts, and through regular checking of conduct aimed at measuring the exactness with which one is applying these rules."[6] Today's Christian instruction confines itself precisely to teaching programmatic and repetitive thinking. We will elaborate on this later.

After careful examination of Christian texts, as we shall see later, Foucault reveals that the ethics of the early Christians up to the seventeenth century still bears an unmistakable mark of the tradition of concern for the self, even if self-moderation was practiced within the context of a faithful attempting to rise above his fallen state into a more perfect state where he has reclaimed an original beauty or immortality in spirit. Back then, some Christians were still concerned with the personal struggle of minding one's own thoughts and actions, and this ethics coexisted with the aforementioned ritualistic and code-based form of Christian morality. The succeeding centuries favored the latter over the former. Our entrance into the age of discipline, roughly the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, necessitated the gradual transformation of Christian moral practice (including whatever element of *ascesis* that still lingers within) into a kind of morality that would fit the new political economics: disciplinarity as the task of fostering, maintaining and administering populations through the use of an array of strategies and techniques ranging from spatial organization, to regulation, to policing and surveillance. In our day, Foucault says, it is not surprising to see that sex became a major area of concern of institutions, even of the church,

[5]Ibid., 21. Sex was to be "inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge…we demand that sex speak the truth… and we demand that it tell us our truth, or rather, the deeply buried truth about ourselves which we think we possess in our immediate consciousness" (Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Vintage Books, 1990], 69). This is the way we constitute ourselves today as sexual subjects.

[6]Ibid., 27.

because by studying the biological potentials of the body, we can draw out techniques that will enable us to generate more mechanically efficient, docile and productive bodies.[7] Consequently, the church/pastoral ministry too felt the need for new forms of administering so that apart from laying down an external moral code and hearing confessions in order to seek out sexual sins residing in the deepest and remotest regions of an individual's soul, it must now partake in the further proliferation of discourses concerning sex and sin, in stirring up the most peculiar and probing ways of speaking about the flesh—some Christian teachers gave a new meaning to the notion "body/sex is sin" and decided to turn such notion into an indispensable ingredient for bible indoctrination.[8] This is the recourse of a church that is operating at the backdrop of a modern civilization that, to put it severely, was becoming obsessed not only with setting traps, arresting misbehavior, and punishing even the least of transgressions but also with harnessing, multiplying and enhancing our productive energies. And in line with these new social demands, schools came up with even more clever pedagogic devices, among these was discipline by way of implantation of the notion of guilt/sin into human consciousness through the pastoral use of fear; "sin" is forced into innocent young minds who have hardly any understanding of scripture in order to condition their thinking and to open up a field of

[7]Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, 139, 141, 145-6.

[8]In Genesis, for instance, Adam and Eve's act of "eating the forbidden fruit," is interpreted by many as "engaging in sexual intercourse." Furthermore, some believe that when God clothed them with coat of skins, it would mean that after the fall their bodies became vile, unclean, and abominable their bodies, especially their sexual organs, must be kept covered (See Genesis 3:21). Despite their popularity, however, these notions were not left unchallenged. Among the authors who strongly opposed these views was C.S. Lewis who asserts that man's first sin, call it "the fall" in Christian language, has nothing to do with sex but has a lot to do with the human ambition to take the place of God himself, to be "like gods," or rather, to attempt to find happiness for oneself outside the spirit of love, community, and fellowship in the arms of God; only through this can we properly explain "all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery" (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1952], 38-9). C.S. Lewis's view appears at least to be more faithful to the biblical text than the first two mentioned above.

intervention by the educator, the clergyman, the parent, even the school principal.[9] But how can this contribute precisely to the realization of modern objectives? Is it because the idea of sin makes indoctrination more efficient? Perhaps the model of the "immaculately clean" and the "spotless Christian" helps in generating more psychologically motivated and productive citizens? But let us take a bite into what Foucault has to say about the matter first.

How Disciplinarity Altered Christian Moral Practice

In this section let us take a glimpse of Foucault's elaboration of disciplinary society and how it shaped the moral character of our day. Our study will underscore the ways through which the Christian morality of our day diminished, rather unfortunately, into an unreflective mode of existence that simply confines itself to rituals and to an external code without cultivating an *ascesis.* It is our task to elucidate, proceeding as genealogists, the motivations behind the preference, or the compulsion, to fashion ourselves and our lives around disciplinarity.

Foucault's genealogical approach causes us to seek and expose the hidden schemes, events, confrontations and maneuverings that instigated our so-called modern civilization but which appear for some reason to have eluded the eyes of the historian. Foucault rejects precisely the tale we often hear from traditional historians: a story of our passage into a modern society that, for them, was bound to raise itself according to the ideal of humanization, a society that they deem to have been arranged in order for us to finally realize the dream of every human creature that is to live a dignified, valued and enlightened existence, an

[9]Theology writer Dick Westley points out that implanting "sin" and the need to confess and do penance is one of the most ingenious inventions of Christian education. It became the religion teacher's "solution" to the problem of how to introduce "moral evil" to children who have scarcely any experience of such. It was done so despite the fact that the "moral evil" they imagined arises out of a rather rudimentary and crude approach to the book of Genesis. Hence, in order to justify the solution, they had to "give us the problem" (Dick Westley, *Morality and its Beyond* [Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-third Publications, 1984], 53).

existence that is proper to man.[10] And so, rather than settling on this inaccurate depiction of history, Foucault breaks free from it, directing his readership towards the profound societal transformations starting from the penal reforms of the eighteenth century. Foucault reports in *Discipline and Punish* about a shift from one modality of power to another, that is, from a monarchical justice system that displays its authority through public executions to a new penal system that incarcerates an offender but also introduces techniques that reform and modify his behavior. He discovers that what motivated this shift was not the spirit of respect for the humanity of the condemned, but a need for a more finely tuned justice system designed to arrest even the most negligible forms of offenses.[11] Disciplinary techniques that were already in place in schools, military barracks, and workplaces found their way to the modern prison. The need for a more rigorous form of regulation demanded the invention of the *panopticon* whose very architecture ensures maximum surveillance and an automatic functioning of power in the prison system.[12] It was now possible to administer punitive measures within a mechanism of constant supervision and correction without resorting to costly public rituals. But what is most peculiar about this new arrangement is that it situates the body precisely in an economics of conditioned responses, rendering it docile, functional and exploitable as a means of production. Foucault writes,

> [T]he Panopticon was also a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behavior, to train or correct individuals. To experiment with medicines and monitor their effects. To try out different punishment on prisoners, according to their crimes and character, and to seek the most effective ones…[but it also aims] to strengthen the social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread

[10]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 74-76.

[11]Ibid.

[12]See Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Miriam Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995).

> education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply.[13]

Hence, the panopticon benefitted the prison not only with the means to block and sanction offenders but also with the capability to discipline them, that is, to intensify and boost their productive energies, to make them more efficient in their tasks, to reconfigure their thinking in such a way that they can easily be trained and instructed. This is perhaps the biggest reason behind the continued existence of the prison in our day notwithstanding its letdowns; everybody knows that it has not been able to deter crime, and worse, it even encouraged recidivism. But nobody will object to its promise of productive disciplinarity. And so with much enthusiasm, the panoptic schema was introduced into institutions outside the prison, among its key functions was to micro-manage individuals in their spaces—patients, schoolchildren, factory workers, employees, even the mentally ill.

Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* underscores as well a number of disciplinary strategies that were typically used in disciplinary institutions of the eighteenth century. Understanding the art of distributions is one. Enclosures were common in environments that aim to minimize theft, interruption and violence. Partitioning as well became an effective strategy for mastering individuals in space; not only that it will eliminate the possibility of collective dispositions; but it will also facilitate the documentation of absences, misconduct, or acts that deserve merit. We can even achieve a lot more if this analytical arrangement of space is applied to the panoptic mechanism of hospitals, schools, and workplaces:

> It makes it possible to draw up differences: among patients, to observe the symptoms of each individual, without the proximity of beds…among school-children, it makes it possible to observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying), to map attitudes, to assess characters, to draw up rigorous classifications, and, in relation to normal development, to distinguish

[13]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 203, 208.

> 'laziness and stubbornness' from 'incurable imbecility'; among wor-kers, it makes it possible to note the aptitudes of each worker, compare the time he takes to perform a task, and if they are paid by the day, to calculate their wages.[14]

The classroom indeed became the perfect site for experiments on individualization and classification of human subjects through spatial distribution. One of the pioneers for this type of project was Jean-Baptiste de La Salle who envisioned a classroom arranged in such a way that in one sweeping gaze, an instructor is able to record, manage and organize each student's progress, character, cleanliness, orderliness, even a pupil's level of integrity resulting from a routine background check often involving the reputation of his parents.[15]

The application of body-activity correlation also became an indispensable disciplinary strategy. Even schoolchildren were taught a form of handwriting that resembles proper marching posture and rifle handling of the military: "the pupils must hold their body erect, somewhat turned and free on the left side, slightly inclined, with the elbow placed on the table…a distance of two fingers must be left between the body and the table…the right arm must be at a distance from the body of about three fingers and be about five fingers from the table."[16] The need to achieve maximum efficiency of workers necessitated modification of machine and tool handling using the same body-activity correlation principle.

But that is not all. We have also discovered that work efficiency, regularity of movement, and continuous productivity can be achieved by means of mental habituation, of conditioning behavior to the linear, repetitive and progressive nature of disciplinary time. One effective technique used in eighteenth century schools and is still evident today

[14]Ibid., 203.

[15]Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Conduite Des Écoles Chrétiennes*, B.N. MS. 11759, 248-9 in Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 147.

[16]Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Conduite Des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 63-4 in Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 152.

is the arranging of time into successive segments, so that each segment specifies a number specific tasks and activities that students must perform, and the end of each segment will culminate into a major activity, usually an examination.[17] These segments will be arranged in a row from the one with the simplest assigned lessons to the one that holds the most complex, so that the level of difficulty increases in the course of a school year. Strict monitoring and reporting of individual progress become the means to differentiate and hierarchize subjects in relation to one another. More importantly, from this arrangement will emerge what is to become the standard of various institutions: a new kind of reward/penalty system that makes use of temporality, one that is highly "calculative," one that guarantees awards and merit as well as sanctions ranging from minor physical or psychological injury/humiliation to debit, deduction of points or wage, even removal from office, depending on how subjects behave.

> The workshop, the school, the army were subject to a whole micro-penality of time (latenesses, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body ('incorrect' attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency)…It was a question both of making the slightest departures from correct behaviour subject to punishment, and of giving a punitive function to the apparently indifferent elements of the disciplinary apparatus: so that, if necessary, everything might serve to punish the slightest thing.[18]

This creates in the subject the impression that he is caught up in a punitive mechanism that is universal in scope and that arrests all forms of transgressions from the most negligible to the most scandalous. In other words, the subject sees himself being chased by a "punishing

[17]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 156-62. Foucault maintains that this was the case in the Gobelins School conceived sometime in 1667.

[18]Ibid., 178.

universality" that constantly reminds him to measure up to the rules.[19] This requires, of course, that the subject internalizes the code, its boundaries, and the forms of punishable behavior it defines. The subject becomes accustomed, therefore, to programmed response, to automatic compliance, to repetition. No wonder our education system today prefers endless memorizations to other instructional procedures. Not only does it provide a means to measure and evaluate; it engenders sameness and uniformity of thought and puts an end to diversity.

In early Christian education, we will find a deployment of the same disciplinary strategies supplemented by various forms of pedagogical tools. Pupils are required to master church catechism by means of memorization and repetition. Non-conformity will be subject to a procedure that is also repetitive but at the same time corrective: "when a pupil has not retained the catechism from the previous day, he must be forced to learn it, without making any mistake, and repeat it the following day; either he will be forced to hear it standing or kneeling, his hands joined, or he will be given some other penance."[20] But Christian schools have also learned to exploit the element of fear to facilitate learning. This point was brought up in Dick Westley's book *Morality and its Beyond* in which he expressed his misgivings about the "pastoral use of fear":

> From a pastoral point of view, one must ask whether it is useful to preach hell in our day, and human wisdom tends to respond, no. True traditional wisdom has thought otherwise. Certainly, it is always better to come to Jesus because of love, but fear is capable of leading to love, even fear of hell. It is necessary to temper that fear with love, but it is also necessary to engender love of God through fear of His chastisements, and to avoid sin by the thought of the divine sanction, i.e. hell. Now

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., 179.

> that fear is just as necessary today as it was of old, because human nature is always basically the same.[21]

Let us consider for the moment the far-reaching consequences of the use of fear to moral theology. Our more composed theologians are aware, of course, of the dangers of this approach. For sure, obedience is fostered through fear of God, but at a price; since we are repetitively infusing and giving the right of way to the image of a "terrifying God" in the minds of imaginative young learners, the image of a merciful God is overshadowed. The "God of mercy," an important theological concept, suddenly fades out of the picture, notwithstanding its appearance in the Exodus account of God and in the narrative of the coming of Christ. Following Westley's account, the image of a God of mercy/love comes way too late in the process of indoctrination, resulting into an outright misinterpretation of who God is—we end up with a fearsome and tyrannical God who is "of quick temper and short fuse."[22] (A rather immature and childish notion, that is to say the least, of which many of us fail to outgrow!). In this manner of proceeding, one finds himself compelled into believing that he is being condemned by God to live in fear, that he is caught up between God's eternal vigilance on sin and the devil's wicked machinations, that "this life is not what is really worthwhile," that it is nothing but "war, struggle, a vale of tears, and a time of perilous dangers," and so there is no comfort for us all except "the life that we have to live after the war."[23] This collection of negative thoughts, therefore, develops into a kind of hatred and hostility towards earthly existence, towards life, towards the body that struggles with sin, until one longs only for the afterlife. There is little doubt now that the old notion that the body is "born of sin," that the body was brought into existence as already immersed in sin, that is, "body=sin," is given a new life in a misguided theology. What emerges is a brand of withering asceticism that deliberately degrades and devalues the body and its pleasures and at the same time dismisses all possible human potential.

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[21]"Hell," *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique,* 1913 edition, Vol. V, col. 118-119, in Dick Westley, *Morality and its Beyond* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-third Publications, 1984), 128.

[22]Westley, *Morality and its Beyond*, 56-57.

[23]Ibid., 55, 58.

Because of their acquiescence to disciplinarity that assigns to them the task of fostering docile and obedient subjects, a number of religion teachers have overlooked the aforementioned drawbacks, the foolishness and the absurdity, of the use of fear and this childish notion of sin. As a matter of fact, the schools grant them authority to use these methods to their fullest extent, even if it means accommodating to error, confusion and misinformation. For what better way can we convince children that they really need to do penance, if not, as Westley puts it, to infuse the consciousness of sin: "The teacher [thought] that he had [the] solution—the sacrament—for a problem that we did not yet have. So the only thing to be done was to give us the problem!"[24] Most peculiarly, once this thought of sin however crude it might be is implanted in a child's consciousness, it will be difficult to break free and disengage from it. Many of us carry it even into adulthood. Hence, the doctrine of fear/sin has become an ingenious device, a pedagogical tool. It is an improvisation of the disciplinary technique; it gives new meaning to the disciplinary procedure, the formation and the compliance to a code as well as the internalization of every form of transgression that subjects will be made liable to.

These developments will only confirm Foucault's account of the Christian morality of late, a morality whose precepts tend to be "compulsory" and whose scope was thought to be "universal," a morality "organized" as a "unified, coherent, and authoritarian" system "that was imposed on everyone in the same manner."[25] It becomes a morality that yields to disciplinary productivity; the institution upholds it by dressing itself up precisely as a punishing universality. What we have been trying to show all along is that as long as it is guided by the rigors of this morality, the school system will do everything to intensify productivity even if it means resorting to methods, even to rash and faulty pedagogical devices, that aim to ensure calculated responses, docility through sameness of thought, rather than to enhance the quality of minds (they were not designed for humanization). This explains precisely why the system insists on teaching us "what to think" rather than teaching us "how to think." In more ways than one disciplinarity has influenced and

[24]Ibid., 53.

[25]Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 21.

modified important fundamental attributes of Christian moral practice. All efforts now aim at prodigious production.

Society must maintain disciplinary productivity if it means to foster and administer its population. This is exactly the direction society took in the seventeenth century, manifesting itself as a "power over life" that "evolved in two basic forms" or "poles"—the first one centered on "disciplining" the body, on "the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility," while the second focused on the "the species of the body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity."[26] Foucault maintains that this power to foster life, or biopower as he calls it, is indispensable to capitalist society.[27] In fact, all that transpired in modern history from the penal reforms to the panopticon to the installation of disciplinary techniques in institutions were driven by bourgeois impulses: "the adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of the capital, the joining and growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the different allocations of profit."[28] Fueled by the same motives, the prison, the workplace, the school, the hospital, and other institutions now constitute the very foundations of disciplinary society.

The Ethics of the Concern of the Self in the Greek and Christian Traditions

It is in *The Use of Pleasure* that we will find Foucault's masterfully exhaustive elaboration of the ethical practice that can be properly attributed to the ancient Greeks, particularly their ethics of the concern for the self characterized by mastery of the self, the body, the pleasures of the body by way of techniques of moderation, resistance, and temperance. This ethics is embedded already in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the former building around the Socratic understanding of virtue—the practice of virtue, as Socrates suggests in the opening book

[26] Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, 139.

[27] Ibid., 140-41.

[28] Ibid., 141.

of the *Republic*, is a practice of pursuing excellence of the soul which is necessary for good governance of the *polis*, of one's community, even of one's household. We draw a line between this kind of ethical practice and the morality of our age that is based on one's relation to a punishing universality, precisely because the ancient Greeks were much more preoccupied with engendering excellence in their lives, in their craft, even in the performance of civic duties internally, and this demanded special care and attention to one's own desires. This entails self-motivation rather than simply addressing pressure from outside oneself.

Accordingly, the way this Greek ethical practice anticipates the problem concerning the body, sex, and its pleasures is quite different from how we moderns problematize them. In the first place, the ancient Greeks did not speak about "sin," or sins of the flesh, and they have no interest in scandalizing or branding people who commit sexual misconduct (the way some of us do today) while still reminding citizens about the undesirable effects of immoderation and misuse of pleasures. Not one among them intended to degrade the body as a piece of matter that is wretched and vile; none of them spoke as if sex and the pleasures of the body were evil in themselves. They will teach instead about excess/vice, about lack of moderation, even about a certain cowardice born of one's refusal to resist certain pleasures whenever necessary.

Even for Socrates, virtuous life already requires that one cultivates excellence or *arête* in oneself, an excellence that could manifest when a person becomes mindful over his thoughts, actions and desires, that he might be able to take into account of what is most advantageous not only for himself but for others as well. The *arête* of a man of virtue, Socrates of the *Republic* suggests, is not to make anyone worse of, but rather to make anyone, this be a friend or an enemy, better of.[29] Plato does a remarkable job in further illuminating the Socratic "pursuit of excellence" by way of underscoring the role of reason in the maintenance of composure, level-headedness, and self-control. In his dialogue, Plato, through the voice of Socrates, envisaged a city that is composed of three classes, each representing a particular form of virtue: the guardians or rulers representing wisdom, the soldiers representing courage, and the

[29]Plato, *Republic*, I 335d.

artisans representing temperance. Justice, he says, rests in the harmony of the three classes; in emphasizing the differences between them Plato asks whether or not harmony can be achieved through distribution of activities specific to each class so that they will not interfere with each other's affairs.[30] With this, Plato works his way into his analogy between the city and the soul of man. He suggests that the soul, not unlike the city, is composed of three elements, as implicit in the question Socrates throws to Glaucon, "Do we learn with one part of ourselves, get angry with another, and with some third part desire the pleasures of food and procreation and other things closely akin to them?"[31] In other words, the soul is construed as having reason, will, and the appetites. Reason is responsible for knowledge, intelligence and right belief, the will is that which drives man to seek for honor and dignity (but also compels him towards anger when frustrated), and the appetites is associated with bodily pleasures.

Foucault stresses that Plato was among the Greek thinkers who taught that *enkrateia* or mastery of the self can be achieved by way of moderating and, at times, silencing the will and the appetites through the exercise of reason.[32]*Enkrateia* is tantamount to having composure as opposed to having no shame. *Enkrateia* is also the resilience, the audacity to overcome weaknesses that may lead to enslavement to pleasures. Plato often contrasts this to cowardice or defeat, as mastery of the self also necessitates that one's soul must be fit to take on and subdue the "hordes of pleasures and lusts that entice towards shamelessness and wrongdoing."[33] The victory that ensues can only be the outcome of hard work, of an agonistic relation to oneself, or as Foucault puts it, [*Enkrateia* is] a term for designating this form of relationship with oneself, this "attitude" which was necessary to the ethics of pleasures and which was manifested through the proper use one made of them… [it] is located on the axis of struggle, resistance and combat; it is self-

[30]Ibid., IV 441c-442d.

[31]Ibid., IV 436b.

[32]Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure,* 63-70.

[33]Plato, *Laws*, I 647d.

control, tension, "continence"; *enkrateia* rules over pleasures and desires, but has to struggle to maintain control.[34]

"Continence" in *enkrateia* requires not so much that one's desires be completely extinguished, which is next to impossible, but that he no longer allows himself to be defeated by them by any means. In other words, a continent one is able to master his own desires, and through rational means, even with regard to timeliness and right quantity, he is able take charge of them, to use them, deploy them appropriately. One important skill to learn is to learn the art of delaying one's gratification. Foucault calls to mind the same idea of the continent man resonating in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> [I]n Aristotle's analysis, *enkrateia*, defined as mastery and victory, presupposes the presence of desires, and is all the more valuable as it manages to control those that are violent. *Sophrosyne* itself, although defined by Aristotle as a state of virtue, did not imply the suppression of desires but rather their control: Aristotle places it in an intermediary position between a self-indulgence (*akolasia*) in which one gladly abandons oneself to one's pleasures, and an insensitivity (*anaisthesia*)—extremely rare, it should be added—in which one feels no pleasure, the moderate individual is not one who has no desires but one who desires "only to a moderate degree, not more than he should, nor when he should not."[35]

This *enkrateia* as a form of *ascesis* was perhaps the most important undertaking of an Athenian who is being groomed to become a guardian of the *polis*, though ideally it is applicable to everyone. *Enkrateia* might have given style, form and materiality to what Socrates envisioned as the practice of virtue which is excellence on the level of the soul. Foucault is quick to say, however, that the mastery of oneself (one's

[34] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure,* 63, 65.

[35] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 2, 1146a and III, 11, 1119a in Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 69.

soul) is analogous to the mastery of others, insofar as "one was expected to govern oneself in the same manner as one governed one's household and played one's role in the city."[36] There is continuity, therefore, in these three forms of life—care for the self, care for one's estate, and care of the *polis*. Socrates's politics of the soul becomes the very basis of external politics. This isomorphism, or continuity, indeed was the central theme of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, as Foucault recapitulates

> The young Critobulus declares that he is now capable of ruling himself, that he will no longer allow himself to be dominated by his desires and pleasures (Socrates reminds him that the latter are like servants who are best kept under supervision); therefore it is time for him to marry and with the help of his wife to administer his household; and, as Xenophon points out several times, this domestic government—understood as the management of a household and the cultivation of a domain, the maintenance or development of an estate—constituted, when given the right amount of dedication, a remarkable physical and moral training for anyone who aimed to fulfill his civic obligations, establish his public authority, and assume leadership functions.[37]

The aforementioned continuity elucidates precisely the essentials of a special concept borrowed by Foucault from the Greeks: *epimeleia heautou*, or care for the self. This care of the self already presupposes *enkrateia* as its precondition; *enkrateia* under-stood in this manner becomes the prerequisite to both domestic and public governance, so that before one becomes qualified to attend to others one must already have mastered himself, one must have already attended to oneself or have become mindful of his own comings and goings.

An emphasis was given by Foucault on the distinction between ancient philosophy (a way of thinking that is deeply immersed in

[36]Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 75.

[37]Ibid., 76.

epimeleia heautou) and modern philosophy (characterized by Cartesian rationalism) in terms of how the knower relates to "truth"—Foucault's usage highly suggests the "truth" we constitute about ourselves, about who we are. In antiquity, as suggested by the famous Socratic principle, "virtue is knowledge and vice is ignorance," one cannot accede to truth without first taking on the ethical; knowledge for the ancients necessitates *ascesis*. Modern thought in the tradition of Descartes, however, heeds not to *ascesis*; it is simply forgotten if not entirely lost, so that we can to accede to truth, apparently, by way of evidence. Foucault explains,

> Even if it is true that Greek philosophy founded rationality, it always held that a subject could not have access to truth if he did not first operate upon himself a certain work that would make him susceptible to knowing the truth…Descartes, I think, broke with this when he said, "To accede to truth, it suffices that I be *any* subject that can see what is evident." Evidence is substituted for [*ascesis*] at the point where the relationship to the self intersects the relationship to others and the world…It suffices that the relationship to the self reveals to me an obvious truth of what I see for me to apprehend the truth definitively. Thus I can be immoral and know the truth. I believe this is an idea that, more or less explicitly, was rejected by all previous culture. Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth. With Descartes, direct evidence is enough. This change makes possible the insti-tutionalization of modern science.[38]

What we have today, then, is the acquiescence to the procedural and the undermining of the ethical, even if this will be understood as our scientific manner of proceeding. It is a condition of capitulation to a collection of rules, prescriptions, codes, of society, of scientific or religious authority—precisely the very sources for evidence concerning ourselves ordained by self-grounding reason. Our relation to truth in our

[38]Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 279.

day is not so much determined by our striving towards it; it appears that our excessive confidence has obscured the old ethical theme of man as a work in progress, one who constantly modifies and reorders himself in relation to what he can know. Reason or rationality no longer reminds us that we can only do as much, that indeed "we are not gods," the way it did for the ancients.[39]

And so Foucault draws a line between two types of truth obligations: one involving techniques of domination, or discipline, and the other involving techniques of the self (*ascesis*). Now, Christianity is a curious case; Foucault's genealogy shows its involvement in both ensembles of obligation:

> Now what about truth as a duty in our Christian societies? As everybody knows, Christianity is a confession. This means that Christianity belongs to a very special type of religion—those which impose obligations of truth on its practitioners. Such obligations in Christianity are numerous. For in-stance, there is the obligation to hold as truth a set of propositions that constitute dogma, the obligation to hold certain books as a permanent source of truth, and obligations to accept the decisions of certain authorities in matters of truth. But Christianity requires another form of truth obligation. Everyone in Christianity has the duty to explore who he is, what is happening within himself, the faults he may have committed the temptations to which he is exposed. Moreover, everyone is obliged to tell these things to other people, and thus to bear witness against himself…[t]hese two ensembles of obligation—those regarding the faith, the book, the dogma, and those regarding the self, the soul and the heart—are linked together.[40]

[39]Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in Ibid., 226.

[40]Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," in Ibid., 178.

We will not be surprised, then, if we stumble upon specific practices of the self that involve *askesis* but that properly belong to the history of Christianity. And this is where Foucault's research deserves much credit. Foucault tells us that eight centuries after Socrates taught his fellow citizens to "take care of themselves," as we recall it in the *Apology*, the spirit of *epimeleia heautou* was revitalized in the work Gregory of Nyssa, this time using the irony of "self-renunciation," which is, for him, not a form of self-annihilation but a striving, a path to rebirth:

> [O]ne finds [*epimeleia heautou*] in Gregory of Nyssa's treatise, *On Virginity*, but with an entirely different meaning. Gregory did not mean the movement by which one takes care of oneself and the city; he meant the movement by which one renounces the world and marriage as well as detaches oneself from the flesh and, with virginity of heart and body, recovers the immortality of which one has been deprived. In commenting on the parable of the drachma (Luke 15:8-10), Gregory exhorts man to light his lamp and turn the house over and search, until gleaming in the shadow he sees the drachma within.[41]

This so called "detachment from the flesh" differs from self-nihilism and deserves further interpretation. This "asceticism" of Gregory requires not that one should burn or kill the body but rather it encourages one to reinvigorate the soul, and consequently to set the body free from its old bondages, in order recover its original efficacy that, for him, was granted by God. On occasion, we commit mistakes that obscure this efficacy, so the task of the Christian was to revive it. This requires that one must turn the house over, that is, one must search every corner of the soul to recover this treasure[42]—this already requires a personal striving that requires not a "method" but constant practice.

[41]Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in Ibid., 227. Foucault cites as reference Gregory of Nyssa, *Treatise on Virginity*, trans. V.W. Callahan, in *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1966).

[42]Ibid.

This is a lifelong process, and if one was to take care of the self, one must pick himself up every time he stumbles; one must have the courage to endure.

And Gregory of Nyssa's is not the only religious text that takes on the theme of *epimeleia heautou*. Foucault calls attention to the work of Philo of Alexandria entitled *On Contemplative Life*. In this book, Philo highlights a special religious group deriving from Hellenistic and Hebraic culture called the *Therapeutae*, whose seemingly commonplace practices—reading, meditation, prayer, spiritual feasts—become the means for them to secure the health of the soul in a lifetime of endeavor and striving.[43] We know, of course, about the profound transformations introduced by Philo's thought on ensuing generations of Christians. Foucault has made the claim that Christianity and ancient Greek philosophy have been, at a specific period of history, placed under the same sign—the care of the self.[44] They have been singing the same tune, so to speak, but before we knew it, the original voice of Christianity that sang the *epimeleia* was subdued and silenced.

CONCLUSION

We have learned that the *epimeleia heautou* for the ancient Greeks serves as a constant reminder for men, young and old alike, who are to become rulers of the *polis*; Socrates in *Alcibiades* and even Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* will greet them, "If you want to become a politician, to care for the city and to care for others, you must have already taken care of yourself," and this reminder suggests that *epimeleia* for them was a pedagogical, ethical, even an ontological condition for the development of good rulers.[45] Moral practice in our day defined by discipline, despite its initiative for productivity, is deficient of this *epimeleia heautou*, and we might even say that it does not aim to promote ethics in the first

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, 293.

place. And from the secular, disciplinarity extends all the way into the religious sphere so that it must affect Christian moral practice. The lack of initiative for *ascesis*, for self-reflection and active thought has led to undesirable consequences, among them, the faulty consignment of the body to futility, the very problematization of it as "born of evil," or at least the lack of interest in exploring the defects of the old notion, body equates to sin.

Foucault, when asked whether he offers Greek philosophy as a solution to modern problems, says, "No! I am not looking for an alternative; you can't find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by other people…I would like to do the genealogy of problems…My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do."[46] Foucault is not offering the Greek model as the solution itself, but we might as well learn from it. Athens was not exactly a perfect society. But from the Greek model, we can identify a number of techniques for the self we need in order to constitute ourselves as ethical individuals. However, the world has changed so much that we need to discover our own techniques for self-formation. Gregory of Nyssa and the like have offered other situations, even in the confines of Christianity, where concern for the self will find its use; through him we learn as well that Christianity need not be nihilistic if it should make profound spiritual transformations in a person. Nothing stops us from discovering our own techniques of the self. And all the more, in the name of philosophy, nothing stops us from intervening into culture whenever we see fit; in line with Foucault, we must defend society from mental stagnation. Borrowing Nietzsche's words, "To be physicians here, to be inexorable here, to wield the knife here—that pertains to us that is our kind of philanthropy, with that we are philosophers."[47] Ethics is activity, not passivity. As philosophers, we must become physicians of an ailing culture.

[46]Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 256.

[47]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1968), 129.

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Derrida's Impossible Justice and the Political Possibilities of Deconstruction*

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Thinking between Metaphysics and Politics

To think the relation between Metaphysics and Politics is to encounter the age-old problem that links the essence of the philosophical with the political. It is to think, following the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, the nature of the *polis* (or city-state) from the perspective of the truth as expounded by philosophy and as ideally ruled by philosophers. Within the ancient Greek schema, such reflection on the nature of the political is itself grounded on the metaphysical notion of the Platonic Good as it should be manifested in the *polis.* In Plato's *Republic,* the good of the *polis* can only be determined in terms of the demand for the good of each individual citizen. But these particular goods in themselves are participations in that ideal universal Good which serves as the source of everything.This gesture implies, for Plato, that ethics (which is about the self and its relation to the other) is essentially structured for politics and these two together, in turn, require Plato's metaphysical concept of the Good in order to determine their own proper objects, namely, the good of the self in relation to the other and the common good. That politics depends on metaphysics is ultimately, however, just another expression of the truth that inseparably links the nature of philosophy with the political. Philosophy has always been political through and through and it is this relation that we want to understand in this paper.

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Every discourse necessarily has its own political agenda. Even in a small philosophical conference like this, the attempt to understand political issues from the perspective of philosophical *episteme* and not only from ordinary political opinion [*doxa*] is the metaphysico-political gesture *par excellence.*"Every philosophical colloquium necessarily has a political signification"[1] and this is not only due to what has linked the essence of the philosophical with the essence of the political but because political implications give philosophical truths more weight, makes them appear more serious, and somehow endows them with a profound character or identity. Philosophically, then, to speak of political themes is a very difficult task for this entails that one be a real philosopher and an expert on political affairs. I must caution you then that I am neither both. Although this constitutes an effective disclaimer, I wish to emphasize though that the task of thinking about politics is incumbent not only upon us philosophers but on all of us citizen-dwellers in the state. It is from this responsibility that I get the audacity to speak before you today.

As a student of both philosophy and of law, I cannot but be incessantly concerned with what concretely happens in the social and political spheres. The many social and political pathologies of our time demand an ever-increasing commitment to the demands of both philosophic reflection and concrete involvement. This means that we must not only be content in contemplating the eternal truths of being but must also translate these truths into concrete social and political action. With these in mind, I wish to propose to you this afternoon Jacques Derrida's deconstruction as an alternative way by which we can look at our present social and political experiences.

Having been dubbed as the likely heir to the masters of suspicion—Marx, Nietzsche and Freud—Derrida arguably stands as one of the most enigmatic and controversial philosopher of our present time. His deconstruction, incorrectly understood by "conservative know-nothings"[2] as *primarily* a method or a strategy for reading

[1]Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982), iii.

[2]This description is provided by Richard Rorty in his polemic both against

texts, has almost always been viewed with suspicion by traditional philosophers who see in him nothing but a despiser of common sense and the traditional democratic values of truth, reason, and objective knowledge. Such reduction of deconstruction into "some sort of entirely formalistic method based on an unproven philosophy of language" is what characterized the appropriation of deconstruction by generations of scholars in the humanities.[3] For this reason, this charge of semiotic reductionism tended to confine deconstruction into the realm of the philosophy of language that ultimately has nothing to do with the concrete conditions of human life. More specifically, this means that deconstruction as the "sort of thing Derrida does" has little or no practical value in the realm of politics. Might this not therefore confirm Richard Rorty's initial impression about Derrida being good as a "private ironist" but insignificant as a "public liberal?"[4]

It is at this point that I wish to address the temptation to consider Jacques Derrida's deconstructive project as a relapse back into political quietism and despairing resignation from the horrors of politics. Following Simon Critchley's suggestion, I will also advance the idea that it is possible to conceive of deconstruction as important in articulating the source of a concrete moral obligation and political disposition to help alleviate the other's suffering.[5] But in order to do this, it is necessary to

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Derrida's critics and fans in the Anglo-American tradition that confines Derrida and what he does to that sort of "deconstruction" that seeks binaries in texts, overturns the hierarchical relation and pronounces that there is contradiction within the text which serves as its central message. Rorty claims that this thinking produced tens of thou-sands of readings which are formulaic and boring. (See Richard Rorty, "Some Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe [London: Routledge, 1996], 13-18; 15).

[3]Simon Critchley, "A Dedication to Jacques Derrida-Memoirs" in *German Law Journal* Vol. 6. No. 1 (2005): 26.

[4]Rorty, "Some Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism,* 17.

[5]Simon Critchley, "Is Derrida a Private Ironist or a Public Liberal" in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, 19-40; 33.

clarify what deconstruction is all about, the *end* or goal at which Derrida aims, and the political possibilities arising from these considerations.

In what follows then, I will first provide Jacques Derrida's brief biographical sketch that insinuates his perennial political concerns. Second, I will provide a description of deconstruction as something that takes place within the text following Critchley's suggestion of deconstruction as a kind of "double reading." And third, I will relate this movement to the problem of justice and to its resulting political possibilities.

Derrida's Political Concerns

Jacques Derrida was born in 1930 in El Biar, in French-occupied Algeria to Jewish parents. Being Jewish, Derrida realized at a very young age the problems connected with specific identities and racial discrimination. As a young kid, he was forced out of school on several instances because only a 7% limit on the school population was allocated for Jewish students and on another occasion, he had to withdraw from school because of anti-semitic practices. Moving from Algiers to France as a teenager, he was twice refused entrance into the prestigious *Ecole Normale Superieure*, the school of France's elite.

Eventually however, he was admitted into the *Ecole* at the age of 19 and began working with the leftist journal *Tel Quel*, a group that espoused radical reforms from the government in favor of the marginalized. Although his early training was in phenomenology, Derrida acknowledges Nietzsche, Freud, Saussure, Heidegger and Levinas, as among those who largely influenced his thought. He credits the above mentioned thinkers in the development of his over-all approach to reading texts—what was to be later called "deconstruction."

It was in 1967 however when Derrida acquired his status as a philosopher of worldwide importance. He simultaneously published three books: *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomena*, where he discusses what would be later termed as standard deconstructive vocabularies such as logocentrism, phonocentrism,

metaphysics of presence, trace, supplement, and the infamous "*différance*."

In these works, he sought to question the traditional privileging of the authority of presence and Being [*Sein* or *esse*] and the values of truth, rationality and knowledge. Such gestures put him as one of the leading figures, together with Michel Foucault, of what was labeled as 'French post-structuralism.' As a prolific writer, Derrida wrote many important works which would range from topics of metaphysics and epistemology to question of aesthetics, culture, and politics. It was however in his discussion of Marx and his later works on friendship,[6] democracy,[7] law,[8] political decision,[9] apartheid,[10] sovereignty, nationalism

[6]See Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 1-74.

[7]Ibid., Chapter Four: "The Phantom Friend Returning (In the Name of Democracy)," 75-106. Also Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, 77-88.

[8]See Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority" in 11 Cardozo Law Review [1990], 920, 967. The above is a 1989 lecture during a conference on deconstruction and justice convened by the philosopher and legal theorist Drucilla Cornell that was subsequently published in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, [edited by Drucilla Cornell, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3-67; also published in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, edited with an introduction by Gil Anidjar (New York, Routledge, 2002), 228-298]. In this lecture, Cornell asked Derrida to address the question of "deconstruction and the possibility of justice" where he had to address a text by Walter Benjamin on violence.

[9]Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, Chapter Five, "On Absolute Hostility: The Cause of Philosophy and the Specter of the Political," 112-133; see also Derrida's dialogue with Giovanna Borradori in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 130ff. Henceforth PTT.

[10]See Jacques Derrida, "Racism's Last Word" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, Volume I, trans. Peggy Kamuf, 377-86; and "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration," trans. Mary Ann Caws and Isabelle Lorenz, Volume II, 63-86.

and cosmopolitanism,[11] hospitality,[12] the university and the teaching of philosophy,[13] terrorism[14] and many other socio-political philosophemes, that strategically demonstrates the potent force that deconstruction acquires when it links "the essence of the philosophical to the essence of the political."[15]

Here, it would be a mistake to trace or reduce Derrida's political concerns to his biographical life. But it is obvious that his early experiences of discrimination in life were to play a large part in his promotion of the cause of the marginalized "other" in his later thought. If there is one positive thing that Derrida is telling us about deconstruction, it would be the claim that deconstruction is about the other, an opening to "an alterity which necessarily calls, summons, and motivates it."[16] Deconstruction has always been about the other whom we must address as a matter of justice. Contrary then to the claim that deconstruction is an "enclosure in nothingness," Derrida offers deconstruction as a way out of this enclosure within linguistic subjectivism and theoretical solidification.

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[11]See for instance Borradori, 130-134; also Jacques Derrida, *Schurken* [Rogues], (2003). Not yet translated into English at the time this article was written.

[12]See for instance Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror,* 125-130; also Jacques Derrida, *On Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[13]See for instance Jacques Derrida, "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils," trans. Catherine Porter and Edward Morris, *Diacritics,* 13 (1983): 3-20.

[14]See Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 113ff.

[15]Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 111.

[16]Jacques Derrida, "Deconstruction and the Other" in *Dialogue with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, ed. Richard Kearney (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 118.

Deconstruction as Double-Reading

At this point, we can use Critchley's characterization of deconstruction in terms of double-reading as a heuristic device in presenting deconstruction as something that happens within texts. Accordingly, deconstruction is "something that takes place in a text" as in a text that *loses its own "construction"* so as to open itself to a multiplicity of meanings.[17] For Critchley, what is first involved in this process is to provide a "patient, rigorous, and *scholarly* reconstruction of a text" as a powerful, primary layer of reading that remains faithful to original context of the text and intention of the author in the form of the dominant commentary.[18] From this first layer of reading, a second moment of reading is opened up by interpretation where the text's intended meaning [its *vouloir-dire*] is purportedly contradicted by certain "blind spots" in the text.[19] This opens up the text into a multiplicity of meanings other than that sanctioned by authorial intent. But this "rupture" is something that is sanctioned from within the text itself rather than imposed from the outside. It is this opening up from within the text itself which characterizes deconstructive reading as parasitic: "the reader must both draw their sustenance from the host text and lay their critical eggs within its flesh."[20] Deconstruction then can be conceived as a subject-less process in the sense that "the text deconstructs itself rather than being deconstructed."[21] Within Derrida's intention, a deconstructive reading therefore is an ambiguous gesture since while it must necessarily carve itself out of a *structuralist problematic*, it nevertheless remains, more importantly, as an antistructuralist gesture.

Considering deconstruction as double-reading, one can see that what Derrida philosophically exemplifies is a patient, meticulous, scrupulous, open and questioning engagement with texts. This means

[17]Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston, Il: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1-5; 2.

[18]Critchley, "A Dedication to Jacques Derrida-Memoirs," 26.

[19]Ibid., 26-7.

[20]Ibid., 27.

[21]Ibid.

that the activity called deconstruction is not some form of nihilistic textual free play that threatens to undermine our traditional values of rationality, morality and other values of Western liberal democracy. Rather, it is a careful reading and thinking of texts considered as an ethical demand.[22] Deconstruction in fact, as Critchley insightfully claims, is pedagogy[23] inasmuch as it teaches us to deal with texts responsibly as a matter of justice.

In this context, we can see that deconstruction, as something that takes place within the text, is itself the ethical gesture that lets the text be structurally open to the other. Here, the other must be understood as that which has always been appropriated and therefore neglected by the whole philosophical tradition. By opening a text to its other, deconstruction opens up the space for the possibility of justice, that is, the possibility of addressing that which tradition has always thought to be "impossible" as the not-possible, beyond possible—beyond thought, language and presence. Here, I am taking broad strokes in delineating how Derrida's deconstructive project can be related to the exercise of justice and hence, to political decision. Inasmuch as it opens up the space for the possibility of addressing the other, then, deconstruction is itself justice.

Deconstruction is Justice

What does it mean to say that "deconstruction is justice?" Derrida explains this assertion in the context of the tension between law (*droit*) and justice. In his essay "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," a lecture delivered during a conference organized by the philosopher and legal theorist Drucilla Cornell in 1989, Derrida sets out to distinguish between law and justice. Accordingly, law refers to the history of right, of legal systems, and justice. As such, the law could be deconstructed.[24] There is a history of legal systems, of rights, of laws, of

[22]Ibid., 28.

[23]Ibid., 27.

[24]Jacques Derrida, "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida" in John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 16.

positive laws, and this history is the history of the transmutation of laws. The law can be improved and replaced by another one. Every time you replace the law by another one, a system by another one, or you improve it, that is a kind of deconstruction and critique. As such, the law can be deconstructed and has to be deconstructed.[25] This is the condition of historicity, revolution, morals, ethics and progress. But Derrida says that "justice is not the law;" and he goes to explain:

> Justice is what gives us the impulse, the drive or the movement to improve the law, that is, to deconstruct the law. Without the call for justice we would not have any interest in deconstructing the law. That is why I said that the condition for the possibility of deconstruction is a call for justice. Justice is not reducible to the law, to a given system of legal structures. That means that justice is always unequal to itself. It is non-coincident with itself.[26]

The unfolding of justice as the motivating force or impulse for the deconstruction of presence clarifies the question of "what is deconstruction all about?" If we are to make any theoretical or practical sense of "what is there to" or "the point about deconstruction," it would to be this sense of justice that serves as its goal or end. Deconstruction is all about justice and Derrida expresses this claim within the context of the law:

> Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice.[27]

In order to understand this better, Derrida makes a distinction between justice as the relation to the other and the idea of justice as law or as right. Justice as law or right is justice as it is dispensed by the legal

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 16ff.

[27] Derrida, "Force of Law," 14-15.

system. It is limited to what the law, understood as the history of rights and legal systems, defines and calculates in terms of an economy of reciprocal duties and obligations. What can be calculated within the law is the existence of rights that grounds certain privileges such as the right to property, education, etc., and the determination of "justice as right" that results from the correct application of particular legal principles to specific situations. What is right can be calculated, as when we say that this deed deserves one month, two years, three decades, or four centuries of imprisonment based on a certain set of laws. In this way, one can determine within the law whether one is just, i.e., in terms of what is right or not when his actions conform to the norm or not. As such, right is reduced to a matter of calculation. However, the fact that a decision is rightly calculated does not mean that it is just. Derrida explains:

> Law is an element of calculation, and it is just that there be law, but justice is incalculable; and aporetic experiences are the experiences, as impro-bable as they are necessary, of justice, that is to say of moments in which the decision between just and unjust is never insured by a rule.[28]

Justice is not a matter of theoretical determination and goes beyond the certainty of theoretical judgment or knowledge. To illustrate this, Derrida gives the example of a judge, who, in order to be just, must not be contented in the mere application of the law.

> To be just, the decision of the judge, (...) must not only follow a rule of law or a general law but must also assume it, approve it, confirm its value, by a reinstituting act of interpretation, as if ultimately nothing previously existed of the law, as if the judge himself invented the law in every case. No exercise of justice as law can be just unless there is a "fresh judgment."[29]

[28]Ibid., 14.

[29]Ibid., 23.

The judge therefore

> [Has] to reinvent the law each time. If he wants to be responsible, to make a decision, he has not simply to apply the law, as a coded program to a given case, but to reinvent in a singular situation a new just relationship; that means that justice cannot be reduced to a calculation of sanctions, punish-ments or rewards. That may be right or in agreement with the law but that is not justice.[30]

Justice, then, ultimately is not the law and "law (*droit*) is not justice."[31] For this reason, as long as one remains on the level of legal application, one cannot be "sure" that he is just. One can never say that someone is just or a decision is just *in the present* as long as he does not leave the current system of the law in order to treat each case as an "other." Since justice has to do with the absolutely other, every case requires a decision based on "an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely." Thus, one can only say that he is "legal or legitimate" i.e., "in conformity with a state of law, with the rules and conventions that authorize calculation but whose founding origin only defers the problem of justice,"[32] but he can never claim to be "just."

In short, for a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy or suspend it enough to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, at least reinvent it in the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle.[33]

In this case, the kind of justice found in the present order or system of the law is always a limited justice that ought to be supplemented

[30]Derrida, "Villanova Roundtable," 24.

[31]Derrida, "Force of Law," 15.

[32]Ibid., 23.

[33]Ibid.

by the idea of justice as relation to the other. This justice as relation to the other operates from the outside of the law in order to open its inside towards that which it is unable to say or capture within the system. The law is a closed system, "finite, relative and historically grounded," and it is only opened up by an infinite and absolute justice that "transcends the sphere of social negotiation and political deliberation."[34] As such, this [j]ustice if it has to do with the other, with the infinite distance of the other, is always unequal to the other, is always incalculable. You cannot calculate justice.[35]

Justice as Gift

That justice is incalculable brings us to the conclusion that justice is not a matter of reciprocation. Justice demands that it not be reciprocated and for this reason must be seen outside the economy of exchange. Justice is therefore like the gift: both go beyond calculation and resist appropriation. For Derrida, the gift is something that can never be appropriated.[36] It never appears as such and is never equal to gratitude, to commerce, to compensation, or to reward. The gift is beyond the circle of gratitude and reappropriation and for this reason; no gratitude can be proportionate to a gift. One cannot even be thankful for a gift. As soon as one says "thank you" for a gift, the gift is erased, is cancelled, is destroyed. "A gift should not even be acknowledged as such."[37] If something is given, it should not appear as such to the one who gives it or to the one who receives it. This is paradoxical, but that is the condition for the gift to be given. In *Given Time*, he explains:

> For there to be a gift, *it is necessary* [*ilfaut*] that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted

[34]Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror,* 164.

[35]Ibid., 24.

[36]Derrida's most comprehensive account of the gift is contained in his book *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[37]Derrida, "Villanova Roundtable," 18.

> a debt. (...) The donee owes it *to himself* even not to give back, he *ought* not to *owe* [*il a le* devoir *de ne pas* devoir] and the donor ought not count on restitution...[38]

The gift calls upon us for expenditure without reserve, for a giving that wants no payback, for distribution with no expectation of retribution, reciprocity or reappropriation. "To give a gift requires that one then forgets and requires the other to forget, absolutely, that a gift has been given, so that the gift, if there is one, would vanish without a trace."[39]

> It is thus necessary, at the limit, that he not *recognize* the gift as gift. If he recognizes it *as* gift, if the gift *appears to him as such*, if the present is present to him *as present*, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift. Why? Because it gives back, in the place, let us say, of the thing itself, a symbolic equivalent. (...) The symbolic opens and constitutes the order of circulation in which the gift gets annulled.[40]

This is the same condition in which justice must share. A justice that appears as such, that could be calculated, a calculation of what is just and not just, that says what must be given in order to be just, is not justice at all. Rather, justice must partake of the idea of a gift without exchange, of a relation to the other that is utterly irreducible to the moral rules of circulation, gratitude, recognition as symmetry.[41] As beyond calculation, it partakes of the structure of that which is to come, going beyond the comprehension by ordinary theoretical knowledge and the

[38]Derrida, *Given Time*, 13.

[39]Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell,* 144.

[40]Derrida, *Given Time*, 13.

[41]Derrida explains that economic calculation has to do with priority of absolute subjectivity. Thus to speak of a justice as gift is to go beyond the authority of subjectivity, beyond any egoism, and also of any reciprocity, much like in the manner of Christ's sacrifice. (See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995], 102.

language of presence. A justice that does not become a gift, in the end, becomes mere social security and economics.

To speak, then, of justice as the relation to the other is to emphasize that element of incalculability which is not found in the experience of justice as law or justice as right. This "incalculable justice" is what we refer to as the "point" to deconstruction. It is that on account of which we embark on the endless and difficult task of examining, clarifying, and criticizing texts in order to open it up and articulate what has always been repressed, displaced, or margi-nalized by the tradition. This enunciation of the plight of what is continuously marginalized within the structures of *present* history, politics, economics, law, and so forth, follows Levinas' definition of justice as the relation to the other.[42] This relation to the other, Derrida claims, is all that there is to justice and he explains this thus:

> Once you relate to the other as other, then something incalculable comes on the scene, something which cannot be reduced to the law or history of legal structures. This is what gives decon-struction its movement, i.e., to constantly suspect, to criticize the given determinations of culture, of institutions, of legal systems, not in order to destroy them or simply to cancel them, but to be just with justice, to respect this relation to the other as justice.[43]

An (Im)possible Justice to Come

Justice calls us to respond to the call of the other, which, as radical alterity, is that which exceeds the totality of presence. But to respond to the other as other, in terms of the language of the other, is to open up to the experience of justice as an impossibility. Justice moves us to respond towards something which is not present, is not *in* the present, and can never be fully realized in the present. The call of

[42]See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 89.

[43]Derrida, "Villanova Roundtable," 18.

justice moves us to respond towards an other that is never present but can only be hoped for in a future to come. Justice is impossible because it is to come; it is a hope and a waiting directed to an otherto come in the future. This impossibility is what makes deconstruction as a passion for the impossible, a desire which we desire beyond side, what we love like mad.

> And deconstruction is mad about this kind of justice. Mad about this desire for justice. This kind of justice which isn't law, is the very moment of deconstruction at work in law and the history of law, in political history and history itself...[44]

"Justice is an experience of the impossible,"[45] Derrida claims, and it requires the experience of the aporia as a "non-road," as "something that does not allow passage," outside the scope of any calculation. Without this experience of the aporia, "[a] will, a desire, a demand for justice (...) would have no chance to be what it is, namely, a call for justice."[46] Justice as an impossible experience of the aporia is situated outside the element of calculation within the legal system. It is this justice beyond calculation, and even one that resists calculation, which gives the law its impetus to be always on the way for a greater appropriation of justice. Justice comes to the law as its impossible condition, i.e., a condition which the law cannot capture and can never justify before itself. Thus, justice is something that cannot be determined by the performance of obligations or duties that one is bound to do under the law. Justice is the condition without which there would be no law, or the possibility of the law. Here, we can say that the essence of justice is to have no essence, to be in disequilibrium, to be disproportionate with itself, never to be adequate to itself, never identical with itself. Having no essence, justice therefore never exists and the fact that it does not exist is essential to justice. Since it has no essence and does not exist, justice can never be calculated and demands that it not be calculated. And since it cannot be calculated, justice is therefore undecon-structible.

[44]Derrida, "Force of Law," 25.

[45]Ibid., 16.

[46]Ibid.

Justice is not deconstructible and this goes hand in hand with the deconstructibility of the law. In this "*interval* that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of the law,"[47] deconstruction takes place to punctuate the law in order to safeguard the possibility of justice. This point is what answers the question about the connection between deconstruction and the possibility of justice: deconstruction is what opens up the possibility for justice and this possibility is that which prevents the law from being legalistic, from being a closed system concerned only with legitimation and with rectitude. Such undeconstructibility clarifies an important point about the *nature* of justice: justice is not a thing, among others, that we subject to unending deconstruction. While it is true that there is no end to deconstruction and every*thing* is deconstructible, justice

> (...) if such a 'thing' 'exists,' is not a *thing*. Justice is not a present entity or order, not an existing reality or regime; nor it is even an ideal *eidos* toward which we earthlings down below heave and sigh while contemplating its heavenly form. Justice is the absolutely unforeseeable prospect (a paralyzing paradox) in virtue of which the things that are deconstructed are deconstructed.[48]

The fact that justice exceeds law and calculation however does not mean that we could not or should not calculate. Left to itself, this incalculability of justice might be reappropriated for the worst cases of calculation within institution, states, and others. Instead, Derrida insists, "incalculable justice *requires* us to calculate" not only within the law but also in those other fields that cannot be separated from it.[49] In fact, we "have to calculate as rigorously as possible." However, "there is a point or limit beyond which calculation must fail, and we must recognize that."[50] He continues:

[47]Derrida, "Force of Law," 15.

[48]Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 133.

[49]Derrida, "Force of Law," 28.

[50]Derrida, "Villanova Roundtable," 19.

> Not only *must* we calculate, negotiate the relation between the calculable and the incalculable, and negotiate without the sort of rule that wouldn't have to be reinvented there where we are cast, there where we find ourselves; but we *must* take it as far as possible, beyond the place we find ourselves and beyond the already identifiable zones of morality or politics or law, beyond the distinction between national and international, public and private, and so on.[51]

By setting the calculability of the law and its institutions against the incalculability of justice, an important point is clarified in this relation between law and justice. Incalculable justice is beyond the law but it strategically remains as law and politics' inexhaustible demand. Justice is always *à venir*, to come, and its structural possibility as an imminent future is what continually moves both law and politics always toward a fuller precipitation of justice. Law and politics must therefore always look upon justice as that which is to come, *à venir*. This is because the legitimacy of the legal order cannot be offered except in retrospect, i.e., force and violence are what is present at the founding moment of the law and justice only comes afterwards as its justification.[52]

Thus, we see that Derrida's passion for impossible justice is what makes deconstruction as a movement towards, as a kind of waiting for, an (im)possible future.[53] Deconstruction itself is "a movement towards the future,"[54] which can only operate on the basis of this idea of impossible justice, i.e., an "infinite 'idea of justice'." Derrida explains:

> [T]he deconstruction of all presumption of a determinant certitude of a present justice itself operates

[51]Derrida, "Force of Law," 28.

[52]Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 164.

[53]See John Caputo, "Introduction" in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), xvi-xxvi; 1-6.

[54]Ibid., 131.

> on the basis of an infinite "idea of justice," infinite because it is irreducible, irreducible because owed to the other, before any contract, because it has come, the other's coming as a singularity that is always other.[55]

This impossible justice, identified here with the infinite "idea of justice," is what characterizes deconstruction as a deeply affirmative enterprise. It is therefore a vocation, a response to a call and for this reason, can never be merely negative. Deconstruction is therefore an enterprise whose affirmative character is beyond being positive, beyond the distinction between positive and negative. And it owes its affirmative character to this undeconstructible, infinite "idea of justice" that is owed to the other and hence

> [Irreducible] in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition or gratitude, without economic circularity, without calculation and without rules, without reason and without rationality.[56]

Such impossible and infinite justice is, Derrida continues, what we can recognize, indeed accuse, or identify as "madness," and "perhaps another sort of mystique."[57] Mad and unpresentable though it may be, however, this justice which impassions us to deconstruct towards the future doesn't wait. "It [justice] is that which must not wait."[58] Justice is therefore imminent and this imminence is what agitates the coherence of the present in order to show its structural inconsistency. For this reason, justice plays a part in a future which must be distinguished from a future that can only "always reproduce the present."[59] In fact, it is this futural dimension that is inseparable from the very idea of a deconstructive justice.

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[55]Derrida, "Force of Law," 25.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., 26.

[59]Ibid., 27.

> Justice remains, is yet, to come *à venir*, it has an, it is *à-venir*, the very dimension of events irreducibly to come. It will always have it, this *à-venir*, and always has. Perhaps it is for this reason that justice, insofar as it is not only a juridical or political concept, opens up for *l'avenir* the transformation, the recasting or refounding of law and politics. (...) There is an *avenir* for justice and there is no justice except to the degree that some event is possible which, as event, exceeds calculation, rules, prog-rams, anticipations and so forth...[60]

This "to come" of justice is the structural orientation that moves it along towards the future, making it unpresentable, uncalculable, undeconstructible, and impossible. As such, the future is what disturbs the present beyond itself so as to open itself to the call of justice. Here, to say that justice is present is to do the most unjust thing since this amounts to a closing off of the future, and consequently, to the ultimate impossibility of justice.[61]

The Gift of Messianic Justice

In this vein, we can see that the irreducible structural futurity of justice is what ultimately constitutes the enigma of finite human responsibility. If justice is to come and deconstruction is a waiting for an impossible future, does this not condemn us to a useless, passive, and non-committal quietism that merely awaits the fatalistic coming of the inevitable 'unthinkable, unnameable, undeconstructible, unpresentable, impossible?' On the contrary! The deconstructive waiting for the coming of impossible justice is precisely what opens us to the experience of singular responsibility. This impossible justice is what calls us and provides that interruption of the present so that we can move with responsibility towards the future. Because of this responsibility, it is possible to move towards the experience of justice, which as *à venir*, is what keeps us ready to receive that which is to come. For Derrida, deconstruction as a kind of waiting for the impossible is precisely possible

[60]Ibid.

[61]Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 81.

because of this openness to receive the coming of the other in a future justice to come. This openness paves the way for a responsible answer to an "unforeseeable future" which, as called forth by justice, partakes of that "universal structure" in our *present* experience that readies the human person for the reception of that which is to come.

> As soon as you address the other, as soon as you are open to the future, as soon as you have a temporal experience of waiting for the future, of waiting for someone to come: that is the opening of experience. Someone is to come, is *now* to come. Justice and peace will have to do something with this coming of the other, with the promise. Each time I open my mouth, I am promising something. When I speak to you, I am telling you that I promise to tell you something, to tell you the truth. Even if I lie, the condition of my lie is that I promise to tell you the truth. So the promise is not just one speech act among others; every speech act is fundamentally a promise. This universal structure of the promise of the expectation for the future, for the coming, for the fact that this expectation of the coming has to do with justice…[62]

This universal structure is what Derrida calls as the "messianic structure" since it is *that which is in our present experience* that readies us for the reception of that salvation that comes from a justice to come, an other to come, and ultimately, a Messiah or a God who is to come. The "messianic" has to do with the "absolute structure of the promise, of an absolutely indeterminate, (…) a structural future, a future always to-come, *à venir*."

> The messianic future is an absolute future, the very structure of the to-come that cannot in principle come about, the very open-endedness of the present that makes it impossible for the present to draw itself into a circle, to close in and gather around itself. The

[62]Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 22-3.

> messianic is the structure of the to come that exposes the contingency and deconstructibility of the present, exposing the alterability of (…) the "powers that be," the powers that are present, the prestigious power of the present.[63]

The messianic is a structure of experience which *prevents* our present experience from being self-contained in its present. The messianic is what allows us to encounter the other, as "something that we could not anticipate, expect, fore-have, or fore-see, something that knocks our socks off, that brings us up short and takes our breath away."[64] By virtue of the messianic structure, it is possible for us to address "god" and the "other" with the word: "Come" [*Viens*]. It is what enables us to always pray, plead, and desire the coming of the Messiah.

Epilogue: In Lieu of a Conclusion

To speak of the political possibilities of deconstruction is to speak in general terms of how deconstruction, as such, can become relevant for our actions in the political sphere. As what I have tried to show, deconstruction as an openness to the other is a positive response to the ethical demand occasioned by the "that-which-is-to-come." That which is to come is the other to whom we must respond in justice and infinite responsibility. To address the other requires the experience of justice which is not limited to what the law dictates or provides but to that experience of justice as relation to the other—beyond law, conventions, and institutions. This notion of justice beyond the law, beyond the rules of reciprocity is what Derrida aptly characterizes as impossible. Such impossibility is what ultimately characterizes deconstruction as an impossible enterprise but nevertheless gives it an internal dynamism as a movement towards the future. This movement towards the future is what makes the deconstruction of the political sphere a search for that non-violent and non-appropriative relation that finds its model in Derrida's

[63]Ibid., 162.

[64]Ibid.

understanding of friendship. Such ethical relation can be construed as the basis for a political decision that aims at an ever-fuller experience of justice. To speak then of the political possibilities of deconstruction is to recognize that deconstruction, like philosophy, is essentially political through and through. And this deconstruction of our being political is one of the responsible ways to exercise our wonder in being human and the fact of our being-with-others.

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John Searle and the is-ought problem[1]

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One problem in moral philosophy is how to explain the process of moral reasoning; how we arrive at our moral judgments and how we provide reasons for such judgments. This problem was first introduced to philosophy by David Hume. The modern formulation of this problem, which was devised by R. M. Hare, is the so-called is-ought problem: how it is possible to derive an ought-statement (value statement) from a set of is-statements (factual statements). For a time, many philosophers hold that the correct solution to this problem is to hold the "no ought from is" principle, which implies that it is impossible to derive an ought-statement from an is-statement. John Searle is one of those philosophers who tried to resist this solution. His main contention was that there is a counterexample which could put into question this principle. Furthermore, he claims that the underlying assumption of the is-ought problem (viz. fact-value distinction) is false, or at least can be resisted. In this paper, I shall examine and evaluate Searle's solution to the is-ought problem. Furthermore, I shall emphasize the importance of his main thesis to moral philosophy.

[1]This paper is a product of numerous discussions with Rolando Gripaldo and Raj Mansukhani. I am most indebted to Napoleon Mabaquiao and David Botting who read and commented on a version of this paper. I also extend my thanks to the participants of the Moral Philosophy lecture class I gave in the second term of the academic year 2009-2010 at De La Salle University, and the Council of Filipino Philosophers Pre-Congress held at November 2008 at Miriam College where I gave a version of this paper. Finally, I dedicate this paper to my wife, Gin, and to my daughter, Amanda.

I

One of John Searle's contributions to philosophy is his solution to the so-called is-ought problem. This problem was first introduced to philosophy by David Hume. In the early part of the 20th century, the modern formulation of this problem gave rise to a new branch of moral philosophy known as metaethics. The is-ought problem is the problem of explaining how we arrive at our moral judgments from a set of judgments about facts. Since Hume, it was already commonplace to claim that it is impossible to derive an ought-statement (a statement about values) from a set of is-statements (statements about facts). This claim, however, has an underlying assumption; viz. that there is a logical gulf between statements about facts and statements about values. Many philosophers, including Searle, questioned this main assumption. For Searle, we should reevaluate the assumption about the distinction between descriptive and evaluative statements, or between facts and values, because we could devise a counterexample which puts it into question.

In this essay, I would like to present and evaluate Searle's solution to the is-ought problem by doing four things. First, I shall show what the is-ought problem is all about namely on Hume's classical formulation and R. M. Hare's modern formulation. Second, I shall present Searle's solution and how he developed his counterexample. Third, I would present some of the main criticisms against Searle's solution and how he addressed them. I would also show that these criticisms were unsuccessful because they failed to see his point concerning the is-ought problem. Finally, I would show Searle's main thesis in his solution to the is-ought problem and why it is important to moral philosophy.

II

We should first understand what the is-ought problem is all about before we can come into terms with Searle's solution to it. The is-ought problem starts with the assumption that there is a logical distinction between the set of statements about facts and the set of statements about values. The former set is called *descriptive* statements; while the latter is called *evaluative* statements. Given this logical distinction between these two sets of statements, we can assert that no set of statements about facts,

by themselves, *entails* a statement about values. That is, we can never derive an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statements.

The distinguishing feature of a descriptive statement is that it is formulated in the "is" formulation; while an evaluative statement is formulated in the "ought" formulation. Thus, the statement, "That tree *is* green," is a descriptive statement; while the statement, "We *ought* not to cut down trees," is an evaluative statement. Formally speaking, descriptive statements are judged to be true or false; while evaluative statements are not. With this additional component, we can reformulate the is-ought problem in its modern formulation this way: "Can one reasonably derive an ought- statement from a set of is- statements?

Consider the following descriptive statements:
(1) Two persons are taking money from a bank.
(2) The money they are taking is not theirs.
(3) This act is called "stealing."

Basing from these statements alone, it is asked whether we could arrive at the claim that what they are doing is *wrong* or that they *ought* not to do what they are doing. Can we derive an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statements?

Some metaethicists would claim that, basing from the facts alone, we could only conclude that what those persons are doing is stealing. We cannot conclude that what they are doing is wrong, or that they ought not to do it. We can only derive a statement about wrongfulness or oughtness only if we add another statement in the set we have so far. Such a statement could be of the sort like "Stealing is wrong," or "Such an action ought not to be done." Statements of this sort, basing from the definitions about the two kinds of statements above, are also evaluative ones. Hence, we can only derive an ought-statement (evaluative statement) from a set of descriptive statements (is-statements) on the assumption that there is an implicit (or explicit) evaluative statement in that prior set.

The formulation of the problem of deriving an ought-statement from is-statements is often attributed to Hume's observations about the manner by which people often make ought-statements:

> In every system of morality…I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary ways of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, that expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given; for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.[2]

There have been many debates about the interpretation of this passage—a debate which I would not delve into in this paper.[3] But in this paper, I will assume a particular interpretation of this passage, an interpretation which implies that it is impossible to derive an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statement. This interpretation is known in the literature as the "no ought from is" principle. One noted philosopher who made explicit use of this way of understanding what Hume meant in the passage above was R. M. Hare.

Hare took Hume's observation as a necessary truth about moral systems, in general, and moral arguments, in particular. Hare saw that

[2]David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Penguin Books, 1965/1740), 521.

[3]For details of the exegetical debate see Hare, R. M., *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); A. N. Prior, *The Logic and Basis of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), and Nowell-Smith, P. H., *Ethics*, (London: Penguin, 1954).

if Hume's observations were taken at face value, we would arrive at a general claim about all moral arguments: viz. that we could not derive an ought-statement from an is-statement. This led to the famous "no ought from is" principle. The idea behind this is the plain fact that under no circumstance could we derive an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statements. Because of this general claim, Hare was able to devise a particular metaethical theory, which later came to be known as universal prescriptivism. The main theses of this theory are the following:

(1) Moral judgments are nothing more than pres-criptions of actions.
(2) As prescriptions, such judgments are neither true nor false.
(3) Moral judgments are either applicable universally or not.
(4) Evaluating moral arguments are done by first looking at the facts concerned. Such facts do not necessarily entail moral judgments.
(5) Since these facts do not necessarily entail moral judgments, to evaluate such arguments, one needs to see the underlying moral judgment that is either implied or assumed in the argument.

I will not go into Hare's theory in detail here. But it goes without saying that for a time Hare's theory became the canonical view of moral philosophy; his name became synonymous with "metaethics." But such reverence to a philosophical system does not go by without its critics. And by the mid-20th century, a new wave of philosophers criticized the very assumptions held by Hare's metaethical theory. One such criticism came from John Searle.[4]

[4]For other attempts to resist the "no ought from is" principle see G. E. M Anscombe. "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958); Philippa Foot, "Moral Arguments," *Mind* 67, no. 268 (1958), Bernard Williams, "Aristotle on the good: A formal sketch," in *Philosophical Quarterly* 12, no. 49 (1962), A.C. MacIntyre, "Hume on 'is' and 'ought'," in *Philosophical Review* 67, no. 4 (1959), and Jeremiah Joven Joaquin, "Dissolving the is-ought problem: An essay on moral reasoning," [article on-line]; *Philpapers: Online Research in Philosophy.* February 5, 2010; available from http://philpapers.org/archive/JOADTI.1.pdf; accessed 18 August 2010.

III

It is clear from Searle's own words that he was not attacking Hume's observations about moral reasoning directly; what he was after is the modern conception, which Hare made explicit. Searle's point is to put into question the fact/value distinction which lies in the heart of the modern formulation of the is-ought problem. He did this by presenting, in his own words, "a plausible counterexample" against the current principle about moral arguments; i.e. "no ought from is":

> …[I]f we can present a plausible counterexample and can in addition give some account or explanation of how and why it is a counterexample, and if we can further offer a theory to backup our counterexample—a theory which will generate an indefinite number of counterexamples—we may at the very least cast considerable light on the original thesis; and possibly, if we can do all these things, we may even incline ourselves to the view that the scope of that thesis was more restricted than had originally supposed.[5]

Let us try to unpack what Searle is trying to say here. There are three important concepts to notice here:

(i) plausible counterexample;
(ii) an account or explanation of how and why it is a counterexample; and
(iii) a theory to backup the counterexample

(ii) points to a logical fact about counterexamples. If it were possible (in the logical sense) to derive an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statements, then it would show that the "no ought from is" principle is false, since there is an instance where the general claim is false. Such derivation is what is called for in (i). If such derivation were possible, then another theoretical justification should be given; since the

[5]See John Searle, "How to derive an 'ought' from and 'is'," in *The Philosophical Review* 73, no. 1 (1964): 43.

distinction between descriptive statements and evaluative statements necessarily entails the "no ought from is" principle, and if such derivation were possible, then another theory should support it.

What was the plausible counterexample? Searle tells us to consider the following set of statements:

(1) Jones uttered the words "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars."
(2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.
(3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
(4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
(5) Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.

He claims that the statements (1)-(4) more or less entail statement (5). Such entailment might not be a logical entailment, but nonetheless we can arrive at (5) from (1) to (4) by appending some other non-controversial statements.

What is the relationship between (1) and (2)? We can say that the relation is one of entailment if we add two other statements in between them:

(1a) Under certain condition C anyone who utters the words (sentence) in (1) promises to pay Smith five dollars; and,
(1b) Condition C obtains.

If we add these two statements to (1), we thus arrive at this derivation:

(1) Jones uttered the words "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars."

(1a) Under certain condition C anyone who utters the words (sentence) in (1) promises to pay Smith five dollars.

(1b) Condition C obtains.

(2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.

That is, statements (1a) and (1b) when added to (1) entails (2). If such derivation were to be accepted, then we could ask what is the relationship between (2) and (3)?

Searle takes that the act of promising (which is what you are *doing* when you utter "I promise…") is, by definition, an act of placing oneself under an obligation. So, (2) entails (3). This entailment can be shown if we add a generalization about promises to the effect that all promises are acts of placing oneself under an obligation to fulfill the thing promised. This generalization may be labeled as (2a). Thus, from (2) and (2a) we could arrive at (3):

(2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.
(2a) All promises are acts of placing oneself under an obligation to do the thing promised.

(3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.

But what is the relationship between (3) and (4). Again, Searle asserts that this one is an entailment. If one places himself under an obligation to do something, then it follows that he or she is under such an obligation. But to ensure this, Searle adds another uncontroversial generalization to the effect that all those who place themselves under an obligation are, *ceteris paribus*, under an obligation. This appendage is (3a). So (4) is derived from (3) and (3a).

(3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.

(3a) All those who place themselves under an obligation are, ceteris paribus, under an obligation.

(4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.

Let us now consider the relationship between (4) and (5). Searle again asserts that this one is an entailment. If one is under an obligation to do something, then it follows that he or she ought to do it; since, and this is another appendage, all those who are under an obligation, *ceteris paribus*, ought to fulfill that obligation. This appendage is labeled as (4a). So the derivation of (5) from (4) and (4a) can be shown as:

(4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.

(4a) All those who are under an obligation, *ceteris paribus*, ought to fulfill that obligation.[6]

(5) Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.

Thus, we could arrive at an evaluative conclusion from a set of descriptive statements as premises without using an, implicit or explicit, evaluative premise. The complete derivation is as follows:

(1) Jones uttered the words "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars."

(1a) Under certain condition C anyone who utters the words (sentence) in (1) promises to pay Smith five dollars.

(1b) Condition C obtains.

(2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.

(2a) All promises are acts of placing oneself under an obligation to do the thing promised.

[6]There is a problem with this appendage, however, because it seems that (4a) is an evaluative statement. If (4a) is indeed an evaluative statement, then the derivation is only possible because there is a hidden evaluative statement in the set of premises. As such, this still vindicates the "no ought from is" principle, which Searle was trying to show to be false. Although this seems to be a real worry, I think that Searle's main thesis is not about how to derive an ought-statement from a set of is-statement. His main concern is the fact/value distinction. This claim is something which I will discuss later.

(3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.

(3a) All those who place themselves under an obligation are, ceteris paribus, under an obligation.

(4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.

(4a) All those who are under an obligation, ceteris paribus, ought to fulfill that obligation.

(5) Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.

If we could thus produce such a derivation, then, as Searle claimed, we have shown that there is at least one counterexample that could be produced against the "no ought from is" principle. If such were the case, then it would have been sufficient to question the very assumptions underlying such principle.

IV

Searle produced and answered several possible objections against his proposed solution. These objections can be classified into three general types: (a) Objections against the *ceteris paribus* clause; (b) Objections regarding the unclear distinction between reporting the use of a word and the usage of it; and finally, (c) Objections about the implicit evaluative statement in the derivation.

The first objection goes this way: There are two questionable steps in Searle's derivation. Those steps which employed a *ceteris paribus* clause—viz. statements (3a) and (4a)—seem to imply evaluations. If such were the case, then the derivation of (5) from (1) - (4) involves two evaluative statements; thus contradicting his main goal of deriving an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statements. But why did Searle use these clauses in the first place?

Searle used them in the entailments of (3) to (4) and (4) to (5) in order to eliminate the possibility of extraneous events, which might

come into play. Two possibilities might void a particular promise. First, the *promisee* (the person given the promise to) removed the obligation of the *promisor* (the person who gave the promise). Second, the promisee releases the promisor from his obligation. That is, unless we have some reason for supposing that the obligation is void, then the obligation holds and he ought to keep the promise. Thus, Searle claims that the *ceteris paribus* clause is not necessarily evaluative. He concedes, however, that when we decide whether this clause is satisfied often involves evaluation.

A variant of this objection is the question of whether one should keep a promise of doing something wrong. Suppose that you have promised some that you will have them (eat them) for dinner. Should you keep this promise? Given the *ceteris paribus* clause, you should not; since the promised action involves something utterly wrong, and since wrongful actions should not be done, therefore you should not keep promises of doing wrongful actions. But the reasons given here are already evaluative judgments. Hence, Searle's derivation rests on the assumption that the *ceteris paribus* clause is already an evaluative statement. It also follows that Searle's solution is wrong.

Searle replied to this objection as follows: There is no established procedure for objectively deciding such cases in advance, and an evaluation (if that is really the right word) is in order. But unless we have some reason to the contrary, the *ceteris paribus* condition is satisfied, no evaluation is necessary, and the question whether he ought to do it is settled by saying "he promised."[7]

The second objection runs this way: The derivation uses only a factual or inverted-commas sense of the evaluative terms employed. Statements (2) - (5) are in *oratio obliqua* (reports), which are disguised statements of facts, in which the fact/value distinction remains unaffected. Hence, (5) is not an evaluative statement; it is rather a report of events. It follows that Searle did not derive an evaluative statement from a set of descriptive statements; he stated a series of reports.

[7]John Searle, "How to derive an 'ought' from and 'is,'" in *The Philosophical Review* 73, no. 7 (1964): 47.

Another was of formulating the objections is as follows: Searle's move from (1) to (2) is fallacious, unless we take (2) as an *oratio obliqua.* Searle confused the distinction between "a detached report on the meanings which some social group gives to certain value words" and "the unreserved employment of these words by an engaged particular." That is, Searle confuses the use and mention of statements. Thus, we cannot derive (2) from (1) unless (2) is merely a report. If (2) were a report, then so is the rest of the statements (3)-(5). In such a case, no derivation was made.

Searle's reply to this counterargument seems to be inconclusive: This objection fails to damage the derivation, for what it says is only that the steps *can* be reconstructed as an *oratio obliqua.* But what Searle was arguing is that, taken quite literally, without any *oratio obliqua* additions or interpretations, the derivation is valid. That is, even without translating the statements in reports the derivation could still be made. But Searle's reply here is wanting since the point of the counterargument is to show that the statements (1) - (5) are mere reports. But later we would see that the derivation is not Searle's main concern after all.

The third objection is something that one can notice if she looks closely at statement (4a).[8] This could be made explicit as follows: The idea that "if one is under the obligation to do something, then she ought to do it" seems to be an evaluative thesis; and since this is added in the set of statements (1) - (5), then an evaluative statement is derived from a set of descriptive statements and an additional evaluative statement. This however is the main point of the is-ought problem. Thus, Searle did not really solve the problem. This objection can be restated as follows: Since the first premise is descriptive and the conclusion evaluative, there must be a concealed evaluative premise in the description of the conditions in (1b).

Searle replied to this objection as follows: This argument merely begs the question by assuming the logical gulf between descriptive and evaluative which the derivation is designed to challenge. That is, the objection rests on the assumption that there is a clear distinction between

[8]Cf n. 4

descriptive and evaluative statements. But this is the very distinction that Searle was trying to go against.

Another formulation of this objection is as follows: All you have shown is that "promise" is an evaluative, not a descriptive, concept. That is why (5) follows from the rest. Searle again has a ready answer for this: This objection again begs the question and in the end will prove disastrous to the original distinction; since (2) already is evaluative, and this objection grants that (2) follows from (1), then this already shows that *there* can be an ought from an is.

The last formulation of this objection seems revealing of the motivations behind the "no is from ought" principle: Ultimately, the derivation rests on the principle that one ought to keep one's promises and that is a moral principle, hence evaluative.

Again, Searle gives a reply: I don't know whether "one ought to keep one's promises" is a "moral" principle, but whether or not it is, it is tautological: All promises are obligations. And one ought to keep one's obligations.

There seems to be an insistence among philosophers who reacted against Searle's solution that there is a real distinction between evaluative and descriptive statements. If such were readily made, then it would follow that no evaluative statement is entailed by purely descriptive statements. However, and this is Searle's complaint, we can never really establish a clear-cut demarcating line between evaluative and descriptive statements since we can accept that "one ought to keep one's promises" is indeed a tautology. That is, all promises are obligations. But whether this statement is a descriptive statement or not is no longer the concern.

The point of Searle in his counterexample is that if we were to accept this, then we should be willing to reexamine the main assumptions that were held in the "no ought from is" principle. And one of the most important assumptions made there is that there is a clear-cut distinction between facts and values; i.e. between descriptive and evaluative statements. However, even though it could be pointed out that his derivation is not one of logical entailment, it should not hinder

us from reexamining our assumptions about facts and values. This latter, I think, is Searle's main point.

Searle asked one of the important questions about the dichotomy between facts and values in a form that would surely infuriate other philosophers; and this question is, "Why do philosophers insist that promises do not entail obligations?" Searle gave two reasons why philosophers often insist on this: The first is about the philosophers' failure to distinguish external questions (Why do we have such an institution as promising) from internal questions (Should you keep your promise?) about promises. "Ought one to keep one's promises?" (internal question) is often confused with "Ought one accept the institution of promising?" (external question). Internal questions are about promises, not the institution of promising. "Ought one to keep one's promises?" is as empty as the question "Are triangles three-sided?". To recognize something as a promise is to grant that, other things being equal, it ought to be kept.

The second is the philosophers' tendency to over-generalize cases: from cases where we do not need to keep our promises to all cases of promising. There are situations where we are no longer obligated to fulfill the promise. Such cases often override the promise made. But this is where the *ceteris paribus* consideration applies. But even without the *ceteris paribus* consideration, we do in fact have those obligations. The fact that obligations can be overridden does not show that there were no obligations in the first place.

However, Searle points to a more specific theoretical foundation of his derivation. He pointed to the speech act nature of making a promise. Making a promise (I promise to do X) is a performative expression. In making promises, one performs, but does not describe, the act of promising. When you utter a promise, you are accepting an obligation. If one thinks making a promise is a peculiar kind of description—of one's mental state—then the relation between promising and obligation is going to be very mysterious. So, the theory behind Searle's derivation is very important to specify since it was the point he wished to make explicit.

V

What is the theory behind the derivation of (moral) oughts from speech acts (like promises)? Searle was quite clear that the is-ought problem is really a problem of language. The distinction between facts and values rests on a certain view of the way words relate to the world. Hence, Searle's counterexample may seem inadequate if we insist on the classical way (i.e. the assumption that there is distinction between facts and values) of looking at things.

The classical fact/value distinction rests on the idea that descriptions (such as, "Jones is six feet tall") can be judged as either true or false; while evaluations (such as, "Jones ought to pay Smith") are deemed as moral prescriptions, or else expressions of emotions. Descriptions are often described as objective; while evaluations are subjective. From these prior sentiments it is concluded that there is a logical gulf between them. And since this gulf exists, it seems to follow that we can never derive one from another.[9]

Searle complained about this classical distinction. He remarked, "No doubt many things are wrong with it." His main complaint was that this distinction fails to account for notions such as commitment, responsibility, and obligation. We can easily make evaluative statements about these notions. Yet, at the same time, we could make descriptive claims about them. The problem is that there is no clear-cut boundary between facts and values with regard to these notions.

But what were the grounds for Searle's derivation? This question is important to answer because this is where we can see Searle's theoretical apparatus. The elements of his theory are simple and easy to follow. First was the distinction between brute facts and institutional facts. Second was the distinction between, *a la* Kant, regulative and

[9]I'm not sure about this claim. Hume asked why we arrive at oughts from isses. But could we not ask how can we arrive at isses from oughts? This is inquisitive. Suppose we have the following evaluative statement: "Jones ought to pay Smith;" what descriptive statement can we derive from it? Perhaps we can derive "There is a person, Jones, and there is another person, Smith." But how is this possible?

constitutive rules. And finally the tautological result that "all promises are moral obligations." Let's go through the elements one by one.

It seems that there is no clear-cut boundary between facts and values in the first place since there are different types of descriptive statements, hence different facts of the matter. Consider the following statements:

(1) Jones is six feet tall.
(2) Smith has brown hair.
(3) Brown has an oily face.
(4) Jones got married.
(5) Smith made a promise.
(6) Brown hit a homerun.

The first three examples are paradigm cases of descriptive statements. That is, they can be objectively judged to be true or not. The latter three, however, may be seen as descriptive statements, but we surely do not know why they are as such. Here, Searle alludes to Anscombe's distinction between brute and institutional facts.[10] Statements about someone's height, hair color, or facial niceties are statements about brute facts. Statements about marriage, promises, and homeruns are statements about institutional facts. Brute facts are facts that are independent of any institution. The fact that Kelly's log is brown is independent of the conventions we make about politics, religion, etc. Institutional facts, on the other hand, are facts whose existence presupposes certain institutions. Without these institutions, these facts would cease to exist. Without the game (institution) of baseball, there would be no sense to say that someone hit a homerun.

The classical view makes a distinction between statements of fact and statements of value. But this distinction cannot account for the existence of institutional facts. It cannot account for the existence of statements such as, "Jim got married" or "Johnny failed the exam." Since this view cannot account for these statements, they have a problem accounting for utterances that presuppose institutional backing. As

[10]See Anscombe, "Brute Facts," in *Analysis 18,* no. 13 (1958).

such, it also could not account for promises and obligations, both of which presuppose an institution. Searle's point regarding the is-ought problem is now obvious. Since the is-ought problem presupposes this classical distinction, which is not theoretically sound, then, on the face of institutional facts (or statements about them) we should yield to another theoretical grounding. This theoretical grounding rests on the assumption that there are facts that are dependent on institutions. And in order to account for these facts, we should know how they are made (or how they function). This is where the distinction between regulative and constitutive rules applies.

Institutions are made by us, human beings. We make them by instilling rules or conventions. However, there are two kinds of rule-making: viz. regulative rules and constitutive rules. Regulative rules are rules that regulate activities whose existence is independent of the rules. This kind of rules is made to impose certain normative behaviors to already existing practices. Thus, making a rule about "polite" table manners is a regulative rule; since it only makes certain impositions to a behavior (eating) which we already know to exist prior the rules about polite table manners. Constitutive rules, on the other hand, are rules that regulate and constitute the forms of activities whose existence is logically dependent on the rules themselves. Thus, the rules of chess do not only regulate the way we play the game; it also makes the game of chess the game it is.

Like all human institutions the institution of promising is governed and created by a set of constitutive rules. It is thus the case that human institutions, like promising, abide by the constitutive rules that make them possible. Searle furthers by saying that "once we recognize the existence of and begin to grasp the nature of such institutional facts, it is but a short step to see that many forms of obligations, commitments, rights, and responsibilities are similarly institutionalized."[11]

[11]We remember Hume saying, "a promise would not be intelligible, before human conventions had established it" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 568).

Searle started his derivation with a brute fact, viz. Jones said "I promise…" Then, he invoked the institution of promising, which is created and governed by constitutive rules. The constitutive rule that governs promises is that when someone promises someone else, he or she took an obligation to fulfill that promise. Hence, if you promise someone something, you ought to keep it. Thus, we could start with statements about facts (brute or institutional) and derive a statement about values from them. When you say, "I promise…" you are undertaking an obligation to fulfill this promise. Hence, you ought to do what you have prsomised. This is governed by the constitutive rules of this institution.

Searle's conclusions about the matter are as follows:

(1) The classical picture fails to account for institutional facts;
(2) Institutional facts exist within systems of constitutive rules;
(3) Some systems of constitutive rules involve obligations, commitments, and responsibilities; and
(4) Within those systems, we can derive ought-statements from is-statements on the model of the first derivation.

Thus, the assumption of fact/value distinction is here questioned. This amounts to possibility of deriving an ought-statement from a set of is-statements.

Searle's solution to the is-ought problem is an indirect result of his critique of the fact/value distinction. The speech act theory he helped developed asserts that the illocutionary component of speech is all that is being distinguished in descriptive and evaluative statements. This consideration would help us understand how we use words and sentences in producing arguments, including an argument having descriptive statements as premises, and an evaluative statement as a conclusion. We can have many other derivations of oughts from isses, and this is not the problem. The problem only comes in when we uncritically assume the classical fact/value distinction in our moral reasoning.

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Towards a Radical Reconstruction of the Human Visage: From NBIC Convergence to Singularity Talk

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The unprecedented advancements in science and technology in the last two decades gave rise to two major currents that undergird the transition from transhumanism to posthumanism. The first technological trend involves the convergence of technologies while the second trend projects the dawn of the Age of Singularity. The U.S. National Science Foundation used the phrase "convergent technologies" to refer to the synergistic combinations of (a) nanoscience and nanotechnology; (b) biotechnology and biomedicine, including genetic engineering; (c) information technology, including advanced computing and communications; and (d) cognitive science, including cognitive neuroscience. The complementarity of these technologies in the NBIC is summed up by Wallace in the following supposition: "If Cognitive Scientist can think it, the Nano people can build; the Bio people can implement it, and the IT people can control and monitor it." This converged platform, with particular emphasis on the collusion of information and cognitive science, will have a profound impact on our concept of what it means to be human. As Kurzweil projects it, by 2040, human intelligence will be multiplied in a billion-fold. The further miniaturization of computers will make their integration with human bodies and brains highly plausible. Man will have the capacity to transcend the limits of human nature. In the light of these developments, how we would paraphrase the concept of the human person?

The paper will principally examine the emergent societal and ethical issues and concerns of the NBIC Convergence and the Age of Singularity. One of the areas which appear to be ethically problematic is

the blurring boundaries between nature and artifact. It will have significant repercussions on what it means to be truly human. The unbounded possibilities poised to introduce a rupture in understanding anthropology will engage us in serious reflection. How will man-machine interface affect our concept of the human person? How much nano-implants and nano-prostheses will make man non-human? How will neural implants impact our concept of freedom and autonomy? If these brain implants influence our capacities and functioning as human beings, do we assign a moral status to them? Can we hold them responsible for unethical and illegal human activities?

Introduction

We have witnessed how technologies in the past have changed the way we think and live. These technological leaps and milestones were conveniently referred to as technological ages like the Industrial Age, Atomic Age, Space Age and Nuclear Age; and nowadays, we talk about the Digital or Information Age, Biotechnology Age and Nano Age. As previous technologies have transformed every fabric of human society in ways we have never thought possible, emerging technologies such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, and information technology are likely to have greater and more profound societal impacts and intergenerational implications. Modern technologies have not only become pervasive but more and more invasive as they are now integrated into our bodies, thus, blurring the fringes between the natural and artificial. Transhumanists are convinced that this will commence at much faster pace with the idea of interdisciplinary approaches and convergence of technologies towards the improvement of human performance and unparalleled increase in society's productivity. In Kurzweil's prognostics, Age of Singularity is drawing near.

In this paper I intend to discuss the meaning of convergent technologies based on the NBIC report, elaborate on the Kurzweilian idea of Singularity, extrapolate the concept of the ideal man in the NBIC Project and in Kurzweil's vision of singularity, demonstrate nanomedicine as a test case for developing potential applications of converging technologies and lastly, examine the broader societal and ethical implications of convergence and singularity.

The Nano-Bio-Info-Cogno Convergence

It would appear that the idea of convergence was first used in the report entitled *Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance: Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology and Cognitive Science*. This was based on a conference co-sponsored by the National Science Foundation and Department of Commerce, held in 2001. It was edited by Mihail Roco and William Sims Bainbridge and was published in 2003.The report defines "convergent technologies" as the synergistic combination of (a) nanoscience and nanotechnology; (b) biotechnology and biomedicine, including genetic engineering; (c) information technology, including advanced computing and communications; and (d) cognitive science, including cognitive neuro-science.[1] Initially, it proclaims the dawn of a new age:

> We stand at the threshold of a new re-naissance in science and technology, based on a comprehend-sive understanding of the structure and behavior of matter from the nanoscale up to the most complex system discovered in the human brain. Unification of science based on unity in nature and holistic investigation will lead to techno-logical convergence and a more efficient societal structure for reaching human goals.[2]

In the same report it was asserted that "sciences have reached a watershed at which they must combine in order to advance most rapidly."[3] It also maintained that humanity will benefit from the convergence of technologies within 10 to 20 years. The task is metaphorically articulated as rekindling the spirit of the Renaissance, where holism reigns supreme

[1]Mihail C. Roco and William Sims Bainbridge, ed. *Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance - Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology and Cognitive Science*, NSF/DOC-sponsored report, ed. National Science Foundation, (June 2002, Arlington, Virginia), 11; available from www.wtec.org/ConvergingTechnologies/Report/NBIC_report.pdf, 1; Internet; (cited hereafter as *Converging Technologies).*

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

over specialization and intellectual fragmentation, anchored in the fundamental unity of natural organization. The report likewise cited that the unification of science and technology is based on four major principles[4]:

1. *Material unity at the nanoscale and on technology integration from that scale.* This means that technology harnesses the use of natural processes to create new materials, products and devices from the nanoscale up
2. *NBIC transforming tools.* This emphasizes an inter-disciplinary nature where previously separated fields can now interface with one another using the same scientific instruments and methodologies
3. *Complex hierarchical systems.* This refers to understanding research problems as an integrated enterprise and allows for synergy with other areas
4. *Improvement of human performance.* The convergence aims to meet social, economic and political challenges by enhancing human mental, physical and social abilities.

In order to accomplish this gargantuan feat, strategies of transformation were formulated. These include focused research and development, increased technological synergy, developing interfaces among areas in science and technology and a holistic approach to monitor societal changes. Apart from these schemes, the report also emphasized the need for education and training in multidisciplinary research and development as well as addressing legal and moral concerns. Given these transforming tools, what are the possibilities that are poised to create an impact on the image of man? The NBIC report envisions the following possibilities:[5]

- The human body will be more durable, healthier, more energetic, easier to repair and more resistant to many kinds of stress, biological threats and aging processes
- A combination of technologies and treatments will compensate

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., 5-6.

for many physical and mental disabilities and will eradicate altogether some handicaps that have plagued the lives of millions of people

- National security will be greatly strengthened by light-weight, information rich war fighting systems, capable uninhabited combat vehicles, adaptable smart materials, etc.
- Instantaneous access to needed information, whether practical or scientific in nature
- The ability to control the genetics of humans, animals and agricultural plants

Based on these projections of human enhancement goal, the report prefigures and suggests the normative concept of the future visage or the image of the ideal human being and well as his desirable values. By looking at the research priorities identified by the workshop participants, we can delineate the ideal human beings as 'technosapiens', beings with expanded cognitions, with enhanced sensory capabilities, ready for brain-to-brain and brain-to-machine interfaces. The image is far removed from the creative, impassioned and self-motivated man of the Renaissance which it tries to reinvent. Schummer painted this image or model of man as possessing "an almost complete lack of emotional, moral, and political capacities, while social capacities are reduced to the exchange of information, obedience to a kind of totalitarian order, and the removal of disagreement by unified indoctrination.[6] Further, he argued that the ideal human being is the paragon of the perfect soldier in combat and made reference to the summary of military workshop section of the same report to illustrate how convergence will operate:

> *Applications of brain-machine interface*. The convergence of all four NBIC fields will give war fighters the ability to control complex entities by sending control actions prior to thoughts (cognition) being fully formed. The intent is to take brain signals (nanotechnology for augmented sensitivity and nonintrusive signal detection) and use them

[6]Joachim Schummer, *From Nano-convergence to NBIC-Convergence*, 2008 [journal on-line]; available from http://www.joachimschummer.net/papers/2008_Nano-NBIC-Convergence_Maasen-et-al.pdf; Internet; accessed 23 July 2010.

> in a control strategy (information technology) and then impart back into the brain the sensation of feedback signals (biotechnology).[7]

Approaching the Age of Singularity

Ray Kurzweil boldly proclaims that 2045 is the Age that man becomes immortal.[8] He is convinced that the exponential growth in computing technologies following Moore's Law is the key to the transition from our age to the Age of Singularity. And by that he meant that "the moment when technological change becomes so rapid and profound, it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history."[9] Like all other transhumanists, Kurzweil believed that technological singularity is man's destiny and in order to prepare for this inevitable future, he founded the Singularity University Training Center intended for corporate executives and government officials dedicated to "assemble, educate and inspire a cadre of leaders who strive to understand and facilitate the development of exponentially developing technologies, and apply, focus and guide these tools to address humanity's grand challenges."[10] When the time comes, man will transcend the limits of his nature by having smarter-than-human intelligence and faster-than–human-intelligence. This is essentially Kurzweil's prototype of the Transcendent Man.

While there is disparity of opinions between singularitarian and other transhumanist groups as to when and how Singularity will develop, there is a consensus among them regarding their unshakeable belief in the power of technology to shape the future of humanity which will allow us to overcome our feeble nature. This is the vision conjured by the National Science Foundation through the rhetoric of converged platform of technologies for the improvement of human performance. I

[7]Roco & Bainbridge, *Converging Technologies*, 329.

[8]Lev Grossman, "2045 'The Year Man Becomes Immortal," *Time Magazine*, 21 February 2011.

[9]Ibid.

[10]See Singularity Institute for Artificial Intelligence, available at http://singularity.org/; accessed on 18 February 2012.

would like to believe that singularity, if it is going to happen at all, will be a sudden and abrupt phenomenon, but in order to make it happen, society must take a conscious and deliberate choice. One way of enabling the transition is by blurring the boundaries between the natural and the artificial. Human enhancement technologies will contribute greatly to the erosion of these boundaries. It will be impossible to tell when nature is artificialized or artifacts are naturalized.[11] Nanomedicine and nanomedical technologies will broaden the overlap between the natural and the artificial.

The exponential rate of increase in information technology, the remarkable progress in cognitive science, particularly in AI research and nanobiotechnology which is the subset of the converging technologies, blur the boundaries between human and non-human, between life and non-life. Based on the study of Lin and Alhoff, scientists have created and successfully mimicked nature through artificial noses with nano-sized sensors that can sniff out smells that are otherwise imperceptible to humans, artificial compound eyes and artificial skin to mimic the sensitivity of touch.[12]

Transhumanists placed their hopes on Genetics, Nanotechnology and Robotics (GNR technologies),[13] as catalysts of the new Age of Singularity. The potential for these technologies to extend life span by reversing aging and eliminating diseases and ultimately death has reinvigorated enhancement and therapy debate. What has been previously imagined as science fiction has established scientific grounds with the rapid advances in nanomedicine and medical nano-technologies? The use of nanotechnology will enable site-specific treatments by packaging or encapsulating the active ingredients of

[11]Xavier Gutchet, "Nature and Artifact in Nanotechnologies," *HYLE* 15-1 (2009); [article on-line]; retrieved on 13 October 2009 from www.hyle.org/journal/issues/15-1/guchet.pdf; Internet; accessed 2009.

[12]Fritz Allhoff and Patrick Lin eds., *Nanotechnology and Society Current and Emerging Ethical Issues.* (USA: Springer Science, 2009), XXV.

[13]GNR technologies were cited in the article of Bill Joy. See Bill Joy. *Why the Future Does Not Need Us*; [article on-line]; available from www.aaas.org/spp/rd/ch3.pdf; Internet; retrieved 7 November 2009.

drugs to be delivered in the precise location where and when they are needed. Targeted drug delivery system will make treatment of diseases highly efficient and effective since nanoparticles remain undetected by the immune system and able to penetrate biological barriers without the risk of side-effects.[14] At the same time, findings in pharmacogenetics reveal that drug efficiency is affected by genetic factors. This opens up the possibility for tailored therapies or individualized medicine.[15] It is called tailored treatment since it is addressed at a specific disease process (like a person's genome) and customizes treatment based on the patient's response. The use of RFID devices or chips as human implants has been widely commercialized. An example of this is the VeriChip, a human implant, which is approximately the size of the grain of rice and is injected in the fatty tissue below the triceps.[16] It is designed primarily to access medical records in order to provide prompt quality care for patients in emergency cases.

The Broader Societal and Ethical Implications

As technology becomes integrated into our human bodies, neural implants or computers chips in the human brain can become a reality. Human enhancement is not just a matter of personal choice. It will have intra-generational and inter-generational implications.[17] Modern societies have been used to pacemakers, implants and prostheses. We cannot relinquish these technologies. However, the basic question that we really need to address is how far should we go in enhancing ourselves?

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[14]See Fritz Allhoff, *The Coming Era of Nanomedicine*; [journal on-line]; available from http://files.allhoff.org/research/Coming_Era_Nanomedicine.pdf. Accessed 6 August 2010. Also, see Harry Tibbals, *Medical Nanotechnology and Nanomedicine*, (New York: CRC Press, 2011), 110.

[15]Tibbals, *Medical Nanotechnology and Nanomedicine,* 476-79.

[16]Fritz Allhoff, et al, *What is Nanotechnology and Why Does It Matter? From Science to Ethics* (UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2010), 204.

[17]This means that our decisions about enhancement technologies will affect not only the present generation but will have far-reaching implications into the future. These concerns were addressed by the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) and argues strongly for the adoption of Precautionary Principle.

The blurring boundaries between the natural and the artificial are feared as the "conjurer" of eugenics by the backdoor.

Allhoff and Lin maintained that enhancement will broach certain issues concerning freedom, health and safety, fairness and equity, social disruption and human dignity.[18] Pro-enhancement advocates claimed that enhancing oneself is a matter of choice, an exercise of human freedom. However, this freedom is never absolute. Certain limits have to be defined to guard against conflict with the freedom of others. With neural implants and mood altering drugs, which may influence or interfere with our deliberative process, are we really acting as free agents? How will neural implants impact our concept of freedom and autonomy? If these brain implants influence our capacities and functioning as human beings, do we assign a moral status to them? Can we hold them responsible for unethical and illegal human activities?

Human enhancement technology appears to be risky and it is rather early to adjudicate that it cannot affect the germ line or that enhanced traits cannot be passed on to the next generation. Some of the effects may be indirect or may not even be visible in the short-term. Extending the life span of an individual may be good for that individual but an aggregate scale may create a problem to the society.

Likewise, enhancement technologies will widen the socio-economic disparity in the society. Only the wealthy can have access to enhancement technologies and can enjoy the benefits and advantages of being enhanced. This will create social and economic disruptions. High paying positions will be reserved only to those who have the powers of the enhanced. Hence, it is very likely that it will result into the "tyranny of the enhanced." Lastly, the sternest resistance to human enhancement technologies is its impact on human dignity and the essence of being human. How much nano-implants and nano-prostheses will make man non-human? If morality and fallibility add a dimension of meaning

[18]Patrick Lin and Fritz Allhoff, *Untangling the Debate: The Ethics of Human Enhancement*; [journal on-line]; available from http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=phil_fac; Internet; accessed 17 September 2010.

in human life, will we lose our humanity when we become immortal? Will omniscience and omnipotence affect human striving and will to meaning?

CONCLUSION

Insofar, what we have done in this paper is to present the vision of National Science Foundation on improving individual performance and that of the society through converging technologies, then to juxtapose it with Kurzweil's vision of singularity. The assumptions and claims by Roco, Bainbridge and Kurzweil that were presented herein will have significant implications on redefining the idea of the human person. While the NBIC Report made no explicit mention of posthumanism, it reverberates on the same chorus sung by Kurzweil and other transhumanists. The attempt towards a radical reconstruction of the human visage, as we have demonstrated in this paper may be direct or overt as the Kurzweilian discourse publicly professed and propagate or it would be as subtle or covert as the vision of the National Science Foundation. Simply put, the convergence of nano-bio-info-cogno will hasten the transition to posthumanism or Kurzweil's Singularity Age. This subtle and encrypted rhetoric expressed in vision and goals will redefine our normative understanding of what it means to be human. Thus, the tenor of discourses in both projects focuses on man as feeble and faulty.

If and when Singularity occurs, it will broach ethical and societal concerns which we must consider seriously. This paper presented some of these moral quandaries. Modestly, we have barely touched the surface of highly complex and interdisciplinary issues and concerns. An earnest reflection and an active engagement of the society in the ethics of emerging technologies will be the initial step towards responsibly charting man's future.

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BOOK REVIEWS

What Can Philosophy Do in the Present?

A Reading of Badiou and Zizek's "Philosophy in the Present"

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What can philosophy do in the present? Can *she* intervene in the state of affairs, in political, social or philosophic situations? In a public conference held at Vienna in 2004, Žižek and Badiou contemplated on the idea of how philosophy mediates in the contemporary time and surprisingly both agree on what philosophy has to offer.

Badiou began the discourse with his speech on *Thinking the Event.* A philosopher, he alludes to, intervenes in the present as an inventor of new problems in a setting he called 'a philosophical situation.' He listed three forms of philosophical situation. First, it is a situation in need of a choice or decision, for instance, the relation between Socrates and Callicles, a relation premised on mere 'confrontation'. Philosophy herein arbitrates between two non-related viewpoints that are exactly different in both form and content. Second, a situation where there is a distance between power and truth. Here, Badiou cites a Roman Soldier beheading the intellectual Archimedes for not responding to his questions. The third philosophic situation implies a value of exception by means of an event of love. He describes a love story depicted in Mizoguchi's film *The Crucified Lovers.* A young woman married to a shop owner fell in love with their employee. They absconded to the woods and the husband makes excuses to his relatives to defend his wife's reputation. However, the law prevailed at the end and the condemned lovers were crucified leaving the audience with a 'smile.' The film, meanwhile, told us of the opposite perception: that love resists death (the film in literal sense gave us a view of dead lovers punished by the society). As Badiou says, "Between the event of love and the ordinary rules of life there is no common measure (…) what will philosophy tells us then? It will tell us that 'we must think the event' (…) we must think the exception (…)

we must think the transformation of life" (7). Love is being determined into an 'undecidable' event which values exception even in the rigid enforcement of laws in the society.

Badiou adds that if one desires to have a meaningful life through the guidance of philosophy one should think the event (exception), the distance between power and truth, and lastly, should be firm in all decisions.

Between Callicles and Socrates one should choose. On the other hand, if you take the side of Archimedes, you will be against the side of the Roman Soldier. Similarly, if you follow the lovers, then your action is adamantly hostile to the conjugal rule. As Plato would say, philosophy is an awakening. It is a seizure that would break the sleep of thought. And it would be legitimate to say that whenever there is paradox of any forms—then Philosophy takes place. This is the function of philosophy. Seizure implies a side to take, a selection that creates a break between choices, that is, the power of choice is the element of philosophy.

Badiou stressed that a philosopher must commit himself to a choice or decision in the name of universal principles. He demonstrated eight. First: *Thought is the proper medium of the universal.* By Thought, Badiou means the precondition of the possibility of being a subject at the local level before constituting a universal. Second: *Every universal is singular, or is a singularity*. The universal presents itself not as regularization of particular or of differences, but a subtraction from identitarian predicates, that is, in a form of singularity where the logic of the forms of knowledge describes particularity not in the lens of an "indescribable figure of universal itself." Third: *Every universal originates in an event, and the event is intransitive to the particularity of the situation.* This *eventual revisionism* is explained by Badiou through negation of political universalism by declaring, say, that the French Revolution was a vain attempt and the May 1968 student movement was never a national emancipation but a sexual liberation. Fourth: *A universal presents itself as a decision*. Badiou emphasized the unfolding of the universal by drawing all consequences of evental statements. There are events that are encyclopedic such that we understand these events only when predicated of knowledge that enjoins us to decide. Fifth: *The universal*

has implicative form. This implicative form verifies the consequences that follows from an evental statement, for instance, the *undecidability* of the French Revolution whether it is successful or not in its objectives to which the missing event is indexed. This event remains in the political category (that of political universality) even if one thinks that there is no revolution. Sixth: Badiou explains that: *The universal is univocal.* Every statement in a given situation is undecidable. One has to conform to a choice as logical necessity, either affirming or denying the situation. But what occurs in the event has nothing to do with the meaning or the beings of the event; whereas any previous events that are undecidable will have to be decided in favor of truth. But if there is an event seemingly "devoid of any significance," it would have to yield to exceptions on decision. Consequently, it is clear that what affects the evental statements is the "act" whose nature is univocal. Seventh: *Every universal singularity remains incompletable or open*. Badiou's com-mentary here is about the *subject-thought* whose localization is bound to infinitude, that is, "the ontological view of being-multiple" which cognizes the possibility of conforming to infinite affirmations that uncloses the universal singularity. Eight: Badiou's last thesis on the universal: *Universality is nothing other than the faithful construction of an infinite generic multiple*. Generic multiplicity expounds the non-determination of any predicates of encyclopedic knowledge whose membership requires non-identity, or non-possession of any proper-ties that mark the differences in the group in a given situation. Universality arises in the faithful construction of such generic multiple that leaves the subject-thought open. It would culminate in the invention of consequences that will initiate multiple possibilities.

For his part, Žižek contends that philosophy is not a discourse of everybody longing for home. Philosophers are called to intervene; however, his task has something to do with changing the concept of the present situation. Philosophers, more often take the side of an alternative in solving a problem. This gesture however complements the most typical characteristics of philosophy, being a non-dialogic discipline. Žižek mentioned that political agreements among philosophers (like Derrida and Habermas along with other American philosophers on the summer of 2003 calling for a New Europe) betray something on their own philosophy.

Philosophers often give 'fast food philosophical answers' which Žižek characterizes as "a philosophical confusion, a type of politico-ontological short circuit" (32). This enables us to think that philosophy nowadays (Žižek refers to Postmodernism) performs the act of pseudo-transcendental category which evokes "immediate ontological unveiling" (33). In this light, Žižek stressed the ano-malous place of Neo-Kantianism through its representative, Habermas. For Žižek, Habermas's 'state philosophy' enunciates this form of thinking which provokes a somewhat totalitarian position of science in the society. He defined state philosophy in the Habermasian sense as the "endorser of development necessary for capitalism, science and *etcetera"* (34). On the contrary, Žižek pro-posed a new definition of "state philosophy" as a "philosophy which tacitly tolerates scientific and technical progress, while on the other hand, it tries to control its effects on our socio-symbolic order, that is, to prevent the existing theological-ethical world picture from changing" (35).

What is then the role of philosophy?

Philosophy, Žižek answered, "hardly plays a normal role in the sense that it is merely a philosophy." It habitually lodges in the position of other fields or subjects. By stating an example, he mentioned that German Philosophy was brought by the non-appearance of revolution by that time. Thus, we should be awakened from our dream of having a normal philosophy because it is anomalous par excellence! Žižek adds that philosophy "literally exists with its excessive connection to external condition which is of amorous, political or *etcetera"* (49).

Following Kant's notion of "public and private use of reason" Žižek gave emphasis on intellectuals engaging in public philosophical debates. Like Badiou, he buoyed the participation of singularity in universal by means of overcoming humanism (universality) through disposing the singular non-human (inhuman). 'Inhuman' is a terrifying excess that resists symbolization and should be evaded. Žižek offered an astonishing proposal: a redefinition of 'inhuman/non-human' via humanization or the universal idea of being human. One can be human without a race difference: German, French, and English, for example. The fundamental message of philosophy, according to Žižek, is the immediate participation in the universality, beyond particular

identifications (40). This would sufficiently support the premise that even Žižek, in this book, would conform to a need for timely philosophy that is, in nature, emancipatory.

Badiou and Žižek both agree that philosophers themselves *should* intervene in the process of paradoxical thinking, the idea that contradictions occur in light of choice, power and exception.

Echoing Nietzsche, both agree that, "a Philosopher should be a kind of a physician that diagnoses evil, suffering and, if need be, suggest remedies in order to return to the normal state of affairs" (46).

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The Beloved Idiom

A Reading of Villafania's Pinabli & Other Poems

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In his memoir *Elegy for Iris*, John Bayley revealed that the young Murdoch wanted her first novel to have "something for everybody." This was, at least for Bayley, akin to the very spirit of Shakespeare's corpus. Likewise, I find this phrase the best way to describe Santiago Villafania's latest book. For in terms of language, advocacy, and aesthetic vision, *Pinabli & other poems*, indeed has something in hand for everybody.

"Pinabli" is the Pangasinan word for beloved, perhaps a single beloved, but the reader will find that the direction of this passion disperses. This book extends itself, encompassing the country, the waxing and waning of its literature, blessing the Pangasinan language, embracing languages in their plurality and mutability (for – as a proper banquet – this book is generously attended by the translations of distinguished well-wishers into Filipino, Ilocano, English, Spanish, and Italian), drawing inspiration from Jose Rizal, Sappho, and Cirilo Bautista, and singing of many personages, among them Jaime P. Lucas and Levi Celerio, a soulmate too, and an unnamed rebel poet.

However, in the same way that so many varied adventures lead to the fulfillment of a single quest, all these loves seem to pour into one overarching *pinabli: Caboloan*, that is, the ancient name of Pangasinan. To oversee this scheme, the poet chose the magnificent Urduja to recur as a figurehead, the heroine and muse.

In her introduction, Dr. Florangel Rosario Braid quoted Dr. Ricardo Nolasco's remark that Villafania has produced models for succeeding writers. I followed this lead and found, happily, how judiciously Villafania orchestrated the commingling of many poetic forms with the different languages, for example, how a Pangasinan tongue-twister assumed the form of a sonnet, how the *anlong* caught

Jose Garcia Villa and Leonard Cohen unawares, how the haiku – in a pas de deux with Pangasinan – yielded to the cummings-type lyric that sought to cut in.

I can imagine how a reader can find fault in the scatter of these mass of poems. In my view, what the collection lost in terms of cohesion and elegance, it gains in sweep and ambition. Villafania needs such vision and range to translate poetic forms across the shores of cultures. He must willingly import and export these forms and languages, wholesale, so to speak, in order to assure the continuity of Pangasinan literature. If he wishes to increase the repertoire of this particular literature, he must endow it with new methods of drawing breath.

The present collection proves Villafania equal to the challenge he set for himself.

Something in this book for everybody, I said, but what's in it for me? There is this one poem, and I had the good fortune of hearing the poet read it himself, his delivery almost as sombre as his black shirt. *Dalityapi sa Huling Paglalakbay* speaks of the final journey of the cattle-caravans (those lovely cow-drawn shops laden with brooms, clay pots, toys, and many other products from the provinces) toward the city that decided to shun them. Villafania leads with this stanza:

ang mga bumabaroy ng Caboloan
ilang salinlahi din silang naghari
sa mga daan at lansangan upang sundan
ang bakas ng kanilang mga ninuno
at haraya ng lalawigang pinagmulan

Here is the penultimate stanza of the second movement:

sa ngalan ng paglago at pagbabago
ngayon ay mga dumi sila sa paningin
sa mga lansangang ipinagbabawal nang apakan
sa mga bayang pilit iniluluwa
ang kanilang kaluluwa pabalik sa silangan

Prudente as Revolutionist and Prophet

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In his essay "Literature of Knowledge and Literature of Power," Thomas de Quincey did not anticipate the rise of revolutionary literature as instrument for radical change.

Dr. Nemesio E. Prudente's "The Revolutionists" is a novel of ideas based on his life as a political detainee for six years and as a refugee in the heart of rural Philippines opposed to Marcos' martial rule. It tells about the adventures of his alter ego and the novel's protagonist, Dr. Dencio "*Ka* Edong" Noble, who immersed himself in the ever growing revolutionary clamor in the countryside as poverty intensified, as politics became more and more authoritarian, and as people of mixed ideologies, particularly the youth and studentry, transformed themselves into self-taught armed cadres and partisans inspired by grassroots wisdom, simplicity and honesty.

It tells about *Ka* Edong holding court with the college dropouts, activists and unlettered farmers while on the run from the military. This sets the novel apart from the other Filipino works, which are mostly picaresque or novels of manners, with the possible exception of Rizal and Amado V. Hernandez. Here we note a marked difference: Prudente's novel does not only explicate on the human condition, it stirs men to action.

In the last chapter of Rizal's *Fili*, we see Father Florentino and the dying Simoun discussing good and evil. In chapter five of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* we see Ivan Karamazov in his delirium indicting Christ again for coming back and not putting an end

to human suffering. With Dostoevsky again, in the last chapter, we see Father Alyosha Karamazov, like Father Florentino, talking of the eternal human condition.

Prudente does not moralize. In stirring men to action, he also takes a glimpse of the future. In fact, many of the events taking place today have been predicted by him in his own introduction to the book, as well as in its epilogue, such as the downfall of Erap Estrada and Marcos before him, the highs and lows in the Cory Aquino and Fidel Ramos administrations, the military role in the ousting of two presidents, the continuing CPP-NPA threat, the significance of EDSA 1 and 2, and the stirring call to arms at the end of the book: "Stay awake Filipino nationalists, progressives and democrats! Our job is far from done!"

The rise in terrorism has been predicted by Prudente but he warns against confusing terrorism with revolution. Asks student leader Vicky in chapter five: "In a revolutionary struggle, in particular armed struggle, where is the dividing line between terrorism and revolution?"

State terrorism, *Ka* Edong answers, is institutional violence, extreme poverty and misery, and assumes varied forms like a court order upholding a land-grabber and setting him free. Is fighting for justice an act of terrorism?

In the same chapter five of the novel, which is practically a book within a book in terms of ideas, Prudente goes farther than Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and Albert Camus's *The Delicate Murderers*. He asks: "How would the selective assassination of the enemies of the people range against the revolutionary's principles of morality, decency and respect for human life.

He adds: "If the communist parties and their controlled governments are anti-people instead of pro-people, then I believe that one of these days they'd be confronted with people's revolutions."

What is the solution?

The student leader Vicky again says: "*Ka* Edong is for the establishment of a people's democracy in the country, in contrast to the elitist democracy which existed before martial law. Yet, he admits that even the elitist democracy is preferable to a fascist dictatorship. He stresses, nevertheless, that going back to the elitist type of democracy should be avoided. For him, a people's democracy must rise from the ruins of the dismantled dictatorship. Returning to the pre-martial law elitist democracy would merely restore the old problems, not very different form the problems we're now facing."

Well said.

LITERARY

Preface to the Literary Contributions

ALFREDO O. CUENCA, JR.

It is interesting to discover that we have in our midst a number of poetic voices to herald the new issue of our academic journal Mabini review. Then, as now, the world over have spearheaded the growth and development of the arts and the humanities, the technological and scientific culture of the age. Nowhere has this been more felt than in the academe, with such venerable reviews as the Sewanee Review; the Harvard advocate (which saw the early works of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound); Botteghe Oscure; New Mexico Quarterly; Texas Review, which explicated on the works of D.H. Lawrence and the Farleigh Dickenson review of Wisconsin U.S.A. which at one time featured Filipino poets like a certain Alfredo O. Cuenca, Jr.

With this issue of the PUP Mabini Review, we expect to be around for quite a time, with its new poetics exemplified by its three contributors: Elaine Lazaro (very sharp), Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo; and the bilingual poet MJ Rafal, who reminds us of the multi-lingual Federico Licsi Espino, Jr., language-wise, of course. We would be immensely pleased to see the emergence of more poets in the PUP campus, and perhaps lay the seeds of greatness as with the Literally Apprentice of the University of the Philippines.

New Poetics

The three new voices featured here typify the search for the new poetics which is also the expression of the modern temper that, on the whole, offers the world with a heightened awareness of the potentialities of language. If the new politics "shattered every accepted standard of verbal behavior" (a line by this author on the works of Alejandrino G. Hufana) the reader must realize that the old

and oft-repeated archaic tools like music, beat, rhythm and meter are also present but better felt, heard and seen in the new poetics, physically and metaphorically. For this reason, the new poetics provide both the discovery and the judgment that make for a new experience, a new etymological comprehension and rejuvenation of words.

Lazaro/Rafal/Aguinaldo

The three poets featured here should be able to write more, and not think of the critics such as T.S. Eliot, who once wrote on the so-called "Three Voices of Poetry," with the first voice centering on private or personal lyricism, the second voice as something beyond the personal or private, and the third comprising the terms "objective correlative."

The last stanza in Elaine Lazaro's "The Height Of …" says: "but the height of contentment/smiling hands/" reminds me of a line in another poem by Simeon Dumdum, Jr. a Palanca awardee and Silliman University Writers' Workshop fellow, this wise: "a coffin is not a work of art." Nice, says Cirilo F. Bautista of the line.

Poet Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo is versatile and provides the reader with a heightened appreciation of the potentialities of language.

Poet MJ Rafal also reminds us of the bilingual novelist Vladimir Nabokov (*The Defense, Speak, Memory, Lolita*) who warns us against creative translation from one language to another. He wants a literal translation.

On the other hand, Ezra Pound, in a somewhat akin move, wants a ruthless editing of anyone's work. It was he who reduced T.S. Eliot's "the wasteland" to skin and bones.

Take a bow, PUP Mabini Review.

Ulat Sa Tula

MJ Rafal

Irap ng Pari ang asim sa misa.
May tama ng rikit ang tirik na mata.

Lampas ang sampal ng baril noong Abril.
Lugod ang dulog ng mga liblib na bilbil.

Parang bigwas ng bagwis ang lagay ng layag.
Kung ugod na ang dugo wala nang yabag ang bayag.

Kupit lamang ang tipak ng kapit na putik.
Wala nang tikas ang salag kung lagas na ang sakit.

Mugto sa gutom ang tabain na binata.
Bugso sa busog ang alagad ng dalaga.

Tingi sa ngiti kung lima ang mali
Sa tipo na pito na kayliit ng tili.

Sipat at pitas, pisil sabay silip sa pula na lupa.
Ngunit sala pa rin sa lasa ang payapa na papaya.

Ubos sa subo kung lungkot ay tungkol
sa patay na payat na hatol ay tahol.

Hindi ba angat ang tanga kung salat ang talas?
Pangil ang lingap sa sapakat na kapatas.

Hindi kinaya ng iyakan ang ipis sa sipi.
Usap-pusa ang asal-sala na siping ng pisngi.

Tigil na ang gilit kung ligtas nang saglit.
Sasukal ng luksa pilat ang palit.

Sagip daw sa pigsa ang langis ng lasing.
Dusa daw ang usad kung may sigla ang galis.

Laksa ang sakla sa lamay na walang malay.
May ilap ang pila sa yakap na pakay.

Awatin ang awitan! Pahiram daw ang mahirap
Ng ligtas na saglit sa pakpak ng kapkap.

Wagi ang agiw sa sagwa ng wagas.
Aliw ang ilaw sa salamin na minalas.

Awat-tawa, agaw-gawa! paskil ng piskal.
Labag nga ba ang bagal sa lawak ng kawal?

Tigib ang bigti kung may alat ang tala.
Sulit ang tulis kung tama ang mata.

Kulob at bulok ang kahoy na hayok.
Ang angas ng sanga ay kupkop ng pukpok.

Sandal lamang sa landas kung tagos ang sagot.
Paksa dapat ay sapak kung gusto ng gusot.

Mula habag ang luma nang bahag.
Lapat ang tapal sa pagal na lapag.

Sapat ba ang patas kung may bawas ang sabaw?
Italas ang salita, ang wika ay ikaw.

Mahalan ang halaman, isumpa ang umpisa.
Dilig-tubig sa gilid ay hindi ubra sa bura.

May pahid ng hapdi kung hula ang luha.
Walang sutla ang lutas kung daya ay adya.

Sikat sa tikas ang tuhog at hugot.
Tabig sa bitag, tukod sabay dukot.

Sa kalat ng takal, banat ang banta.
Sobra ang braso kung said na ang isda.

Walang talab sa balat kung bakli ang libak.
Pula ang ulap sa batak na tabak.

Sa kuta ng utak, may bagsik ang bigkas.
Patis sa pista ang pilas nang lipas.

Suntok sa kutson ang patak ng tapak.
May silbi ang bilis sa kati ng itak.

Tangi ang ingat kung kutkot ang tuktok.
Pisi ng isip ay kulog ng gulok.

May asam ang masa.May alab ang bala.
Banal ang laban na ang alay ay laya.

Ars Poetica Ng Makata Sa Karsel Ng Sarili

MJ Rafal

...Parang mga makatang labis na naaaliw sa pagkatula ng kanilang tula at walang pakialam sa damdamin at pag-unawa ng mambabasa.
–Reuel Aguila

(aaminin ko, oo, minsan
oo, minsan, wala akong
pakialam sa damdamin
at u na wang u mu nawa ng mam
ba
ba
sa
bagsak sa pamantayan ko ang kanilang
kakayahan na umintindi, intindihin
ng ,ang
metapora, simile, paradox, irony
prosody: metro ritmo intonasyon
mga pantigan at patnigan
tetrahexaiambicdactyltrocheeanapestspondeepyrrhic
tugmaan ballad villanellle oda soneto
jintishi haiku tanka
ghazal bersolibre
assonance consonance aliterasyon
estropa couplettripletquatrain

hindi nila ito magagagap bakit ko ilalantad sa kanila
ang aking nalalasahan ni nadarama nakikita ni
nalalanghap
indibidwal at personal ang lahat lahat
sa akin
may musa akong pinagsisilbihan

ano pa't naging makata?
ang tula ko'y tula at tula

lamang
wala akong pakialam. walang makikialam.
...for art's sake!)

Kung Ita-tag Mo Sila, Makikilala Kang Makata At Sisikat Sa Tula

MJ Rafal

siyento-porsyento, garantisado makakukuha ka
ng mga mata at daliri at makaiintindi sa
tula mong tumatalakay sa alienation at sa kailaliman
ng soul at ego at ng angst at metapisikal something
ng malalalim mong tugmaan

proseso: itaya mo muna ang hiya, umangkas
sa balikat ng namamayagpag na makata sa FB
add as friend hintayin mong makilala ka niya then
penetrate his/her world, virtual world tandaan mong tulay
ang kaniyang pangalan kilalanin mo ang kaniyang kaibigan
add them as a friend at matutong mag-tag
tag-tag-tag-tag-tag-tag-tag i-tag
ang tula mong nakangiti
at nagsasayaw sa hangin ng ilusyon at ma hika wait a minute
like is like a likeable thing
aangat ang ego at ang angst at ang confidence mo
makakainuman mo ang iyong mga iniidolo inside the literary scene
ng Philippine Pilipinas Pilipino Filipino
malaki ang chance waiting for godot masusungkit mo
ang grandest ever award basta't tandaan alisin mo muna ang hiya

walang hiya-hiya at delikadesa at kung anu-ano pang dahilan
upang mapigilan kang mamayagpag hello hello hey hi
ang tula ay kahalihalina kung ihahain sa kailaliman ng lupa
at itatabi sa kepler 22b ang tula ay tulay na tuluy-tuloy sa
tuluyang
like like like is like a likeable thing

kung matututo ka lamang mag-tag
babasahin ka di nga comments and suggestions positibo
negatibo kakatamin ka yeso ba o marmol narra pa
lo tsi na

siyento-porsyento, garantisado makakukuha ka
ng mga mata at daliri at makaiintindi sa
tula mong tumatalakay sa alienation at sa kailaliman
ng soul at ego at ng angst at metapisikal something
ng malalalim mong tugmaan

manalig
naghihintay ang stardom.

Bread and Fish

Elaine Lazaro

I had been trying to explain what philosophy is to you for an hour, but you keep on telling me that it is a loaf of bread. I said it is something that you are not supposed to eat. 'But it should taste something, doesn't it?' You keep on asking me if I have ever, fishing, caught Thales. I told you he is a philosopher, a Milesian; and disappointed, you almost smirked: you had been thinking that he was a fish, this Thales. I whispered: it is a word, philosophy. You frowned, '*Just* a word? *Just* a word?,' so you asked me ten more times making sure that it really is not baguette or cinnamon bread. Ten more times I had to confirm that Descartes was not a carp; Heidegger not an oyster and Sartre not your mother's milk fish. Thrice I repeated that my bait never caught any of the golden Milesian fins.

The Height of...

Elaine Lazaro

The height of ignorance:
fingers counting limited
to one, two, three.

The height of poverty:
too poor to pay the ransom
for one's own poem.

The height of loneliness:
the sound of a raindrop falling
on a tin can.

The height of uncertainty:
off to the brink
of indifference.

The height of absolute freedom:
the inanity of existence;
an eagle soaring without a prey in sight.

But the height of contentment:
smiling lips on the deathbed,
with weary eyes closed
and praying hands.

Kulam

Elaine Lazaro

Fifty—they counted it and made sure each of
it died. These cockroaches, who are sending
them, who? Nita's belly is swollen; her mouth
puffy and red. The smell of her breath like a
mice dead. Nita, she was an hermana and then
twenty—they drowned all of them. Ten more
worms are coming out from her ears. Nita was
a beauty, crowned—now crowned with a water
snake and decorated by the blood dripping from
her nostrils. Our mamang called for the mambabarang.
She is stubborn, our sister Nita: we have all warned
her that the new seamstress is mangkukulam; her
daughter is a basketful of envy. She should have
just given her the five mangoes and three orchids.

I Wonder How Real Writers Write

Elaine Lazaro

I

I wonder how real writers write. Not that there are counterfeit made of synthetic leather patched. Not too that there is a demarcation line saying: Here you have finally reached the end of the line. For still, are not all acts of writing a reaching for some other end? Or at least some catching? Look! at that boy yonder, he is keenly watching the fandango of the Maya bird. He would lure those wings intro a trap he plotted the night before. At the moment, he is feeding her with crumbs from a week-old slice of bread. He stole it from his grandmother's jar of biscuit, by the way.

II

I heard of a girl who listened to how a poem (or something like a poem) would sound. And only until later would she patch and stitch the holes between the terms. I heard of a girl who alters the trail of thought for the sake of rhyme; meaning to say, she would replace the l of luck with the f of fuck if the replacing would sound lighter. I wonder if she was trained to play the cielo as a child, to what songs she listens to, or if her tricks were first heard from the chimes.

III

Yeah, I wonder: How real writers write? Someone named me a poet; I forgot her name. She was said to have gazed at the ceiling all night and day. She was born at the time when men mistook the universe as inside the labyrinth of the brain. She filled tatters of papers with nouns, bouquets of adjectives, and dancing verbs. Surprisingly, despite the life bestowed, the leaves/birds didn't flutter outside her windows.

June 2011

Days of Going Nowhere

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

Dad bought the chair for his father
after Tata's body stopped moving.

We kids took turns adjusting the bar on the pegs
for Tata's back: upright, lean back, prop up,
lay down. We were careful, slow.

Aunts and uncles told us when to raise or lower him,
but Tata himself would not tell us he was comfortable.
No nod or smile at the flexing of our arms.

After Tata died, his children divided his house.

We kids commandeered the chair under their noses.

We played cards or jackstones for the right to ride
the driver's seat, what was Tata's footrest.
Losers rode rear. The body of the great rattan car.

The winner headed to the moon or under the lake.
The rest declared speed by raising, lowering the bar.

Foreparents

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

Along roads wet with August we drove the kids
to see the grandparents, to compare the width
of wrists, draw around feet, measure, measure up.

At the sight of pencils – blunted, unbroken –
        I missed, suddenly, the parents of my parents,
the three I remember, the three,
the two, the one, the none.

On our last night, we drew letters on the backs of the kids,
sang them to dreams, inhaled the sour of their napes.
Mama asked my wife to leave a child behind.

My father made coffee stronger than the dawn,
then helped me load the car under the pour.
        We tiptoed on the water: my shoe,
his slipper, my shoe. Together

we let the sky speak its volumes.
Believing our scalps too good for the rain.

Portrait, after 31 years

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

My father, 66,
asked my daughter, 3,
who she thought was on the picture
hanging over his door.
My daughter said it was me,
would not believe otherwise,
but it was my father
sitting on the stripes of the sofa,
his leg over his knee,
pleats over pleats,
flanked by the plant whose name
he knew, whose water
was his to give.

I would have been the last thing I'd see
in that handsome frame, withdrawn
thin smile, a knot of
tie, that belt incompletely
concealed, and sleeves long enough
for the rolling, for what
labors a city would unfurl.

There had to be shoes
somewhere, off-frame, aglow
with destination, the taking of this
picture a scheduled bother—
we had to be on time
for the place in his mind.

And somewhere else,
clutching his jaw, sitting on his shoulders,
answering the question
unasked for was my daughter:

age of mischief,
tiara of plastic,
her mother's eyes.

The Grandfather Lullaby

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

These years have held stones so smooth
They should never have tasted breaking
These years have known hearts so pure
Have felt the warmth of a hand
Have come to hold you

My humming kisses your humming
Throat to toy
A world must close its eyes

These arms have been burned by veins
By nerves hissing, leading to the goose-skin
The reddening of the face
The spew of water and calamity
A choke of tears and ash, of ash, of salt

My rattling kisses your rattling
Throat to toy
A world must close its eyes

Hushed or no, your wisdom shall govern
This long world, that holy mountain
Maybe I shall hear you say "break the bread"
Then shall you lick your lips
Then shall it be broken

My humming kisses your humming
Toy to throat
The moon comes to a close

Let me tiptoe outwards like an echo
Of what I have long ago destroyed
What crying thing you have yet to disfigure
Unclench, my child, let loose the clouds seeking sky
The dreams asking you, tonight, to sleep.

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo teaches literature and mythology at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. He has been publishing his creative work online and offline for the purpose of improving his teaching methods. His main drafts are available at tekstong bopis.blogspot.com.

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Mj Rafal. Pangarap niyang maging arkitekto, pero naging guro; gustong maging kwentista pero nahumaling sa tula, si M.J Rafal ay madalas na makikitang naglalakad sa Recto at Quiapo, sa Divisoria at Cubao upang maghanap ng mga kayamanan tulad ng 'ngiti sa labi ng pulubi'. Nag-ugat at namumugad sa Tundo, dito na siya tinubuan ng pakpak at sungay. Paborito niyang quote ang "Poetry, like bread, is for everyone" ni Roque Dalton.

Virgilio A. Rivas is the Director of the PUP Institute of Cultural Studies and concurrently Chief of the Center of Social History. He is the Secretary of the Philosophical Association of the Philippines, and a lifetime board member of the Philippine Association for the Sociology of Religion. He holds a masters degree in philosophy.