

# TALISIK

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# TALISIK

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Department of Philosophy  
Faculty of Arts and Letters  
University of Santo Tomas



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## ABOUT THE COVER

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The cover illustrates the capacity of philosophy to understand our thoughts, navigate our minds, and strengthen our convictions through reading and writing. Particularly, the ripples illustrate how philosophy encourages self-reflection and introspection of one's own ideas and motivations. Meanwhile, the man with the rake depicts our own attempts, as philosophy students, to organize our thought processes by logically and systematically evaluating them. This is why, in many ways, the cover represents the Deutsche term, *Bildung*, which emphasizes the significance of education in personal development and cultural refinement.

*TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy*, 10:1 (August 2023)

Cover design by Mr. Timothy John C. Santiago

# ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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**TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy** is the laboratory undergraduate journal of Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy ([www.kritike.org](http://www.kritike.org)), the official journal of the Department of Philosophy, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines. As a laboratory journal, TALISIK is the publication and research arm of the AB Philosophy Program of the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters. It is designed as an innovative pedagogical tool that aims to cultivate skills related to editorial management, research, and publication practices. Ultimately, through TALISIK, the Department of Philosophy fosters its research culture among the undergraduate students of philosophy of UST, as well as other academic institutions. The journal seeks to publish articles across the whole range of philosophical topics, but with special emphasis on the following subject strands:

**Anglo-American Philosophy**  
**Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy and Scholasticism**  
**Continental European Philosophy**  
**Contemporary philosophical issues and trends**  
**Feminism and Postcolonial Theory**  
**Filipino Philosophy**  
**Oriental Thought and East-West Comparative Philosophy**

**TALISIK** is a Filipino word. It is a contraction of “Talas” [Keeness] and “Saliksik” [Search]. **TALISIK** then means “Katalasan ng isip na umunawa ng anuman” [Keeness of the mind to understand anything] and “Malaliman at matalinong pagdalumat sa kahulugan ng anuman” [In-depth and intelligent search for the meaning of anything]. Based on the definition of TALISIK, the Editorial Board intends to demonstrate the acumen of undergraduate students of philosophy through their research undertakings. The journal primarily caters to the works of the UST undergraduate students of philosophy and welcomes contributions from other fields and institutions. Today, the organization also envisions expanding its academic channels not only through publication but also with discursive spaces that will allow curiosity and polemical research to develop.

**TALISIK** publishes issues annually.

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# FOREWORD

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It has been ten years since the first publication of TALISIK. While I may have forgotten a lot of things along the way, I still remember that one afternoon when I went to the UST Main Library and browsed an old and dusty Tagalog dictionary, trying to find a word that befits a philosophy journal. A journal name must be remarkable – one word is ideal – and it must encapsulate the journal’s vision and mission. Yet, how do you find something you do not even know?

Skimming words starting with “a,” I realized that I might graduate first before I get through all the words in the dictionary. Almost giving up, I thought of philosophical terms and their synonyms in different foreign languages while turning dictionary pages mindlessly. By chance and maybe luck, I found the word *talisik*. It comes from *talas* or keenness, and *saliksik* or search. *Talisik* is then defined as *katalasan ng isip na umunawa ng anumang* (keenness or acumen of the mind to understand anything) and *malaliman at matalinong pagdalumat sa kabulugan ng anumang* (in-depth and intelligent search for the meaning of anything). *Talisik* is both an adjective and a verb. It is an old word no longer commonly used. Because it is old, it sounded odd to the new generation of students trying to make sense of the world.

*Talisik* might seem odd, but it is also familiar since it is what philosophy teaches us and what we have been doing (or should strive to do) all along. We try to understand complicated matters and ideas because of the ‘love of wisdom’ and ultimately share what we find with others through articulation. The creation of TALISIK embodies that goal, a reminder that wisdom is futile if it is only kept in ivory towers.

The beginning is almost always the most challenging. During the preliminary stages of creating the journal in 2013, we envisioned it would institute a culture of research and publication among the Department of Philosophy undergraduate students. We were also aware that the journal might cease after a few issues or even the inaugural issue. However, the important thing was to begin, even if the task seemed great. Everything necessary to start is at hand, and anything that might be needed can be learned along the way. Thus, TALISIK was launched in 2014 and is now in its tenth year.

This would not have been possible without the hard work and perseverance of the students who kept the journal alive throughout the years. From being a journal that caters to the Department’s undergraduate students, TALISIK now accepts submissions from undergraduate students from different institutions and organizes conferences. The variety of its themes and journal articles tend to address practical issues instead of focusing on esoteric topics. If one looks for ‘undergraduate journal of philosophy in the Philippines’ online, the first result is TALISIK’s website. Indeed, they continued the legacy, surpassed what had been made, and improved what was lacking. The word *talisik* no longer sounds odd or only familiar to a few.

The lesson remains after a decade – come equal to the task before your eyes. So, I congratulate everyone who took on the task: the faculty advisers and leads, contributors, and, most importantly, the editorial boards. The tenth volume is an achievement made possible by the 2022-2024 Editorial Board led by Carla Jane C. Zitazate. Congratulations on a job well done.

There is so much possibility for the future and work to be accomplished, but for now, we celebrate this milestone. Here’s to ten years and hopefully more. Cheers!

**Zhea Katrina R. Estrada, Ph.D. (Cand.)**

April 2024

# LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

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TALISIK published its first issue in March 2014. Now, it has been ten remarkable years of continued commitment to the cultivation of a culture of academic research among undergraduate students of philosophy in the Philippines. As we celebrate the efforts of all editors, reviewers, authors, and many other individuals who contributed to the journal, without whom this milestone would not be possible, it is only appropriate to retrace TALISIK's history in retrospect:

It was in 2013 that Concilium Philosophiae, the recognized organization of the Department of Philosophy, envisioned the creation of a new journal of philosophy to encourage students into writing philosophical papers. Through the efforts of the officers of Concilium and the editors of TALISIK, particularly the initiative of Ms. Kristine Angela C. Surla, the Councilor for Academic Affairs, Ms. Beatrice Anne D.C. de Guzman, the Committee Head on Academic Development, and Ms. Zhea Katrina R. Estrada, the Editor-in-Chief, that TALISIK came into fruition and its first issue was published in March 2014. In its early years, the journal's manuscript submissions were by invitation based on the recommendations of professors from high-scoring papers in their undergraduate and graduate courses, and the evaluation of all manuscripts were solely accomplished by its editors. Occasionally, assistance is sought from professors in reviewing and copyediting manuscripts. Meanwhile, it is through the generosity of Dr. Roland Theuas D.S. Pada that the journal obtained its Internet domain, which will be utilized for the publication of its eight issues. TALISIK would continue to publish the works of Thomasian students of philosophy in Volume 2 (2015) and Volume 3 (2016) focusing on diverse themes and topics such as the works of modern and contemporary philosophers and discussions on feminism, existentialism, and phenomenology to name a few. It was not until Volume 4 (2017) that TALISIK features its publication of two journal articles from the University of the Philippines – Los Baños. This is to be the first time that TALISIK showcases articles by philosophy students from another university. In the same volume, the journal would have its first featured article by Br. Romualdo E. Abulad, SVD, Ph.D., and an interview with Dr. Leovino Ma. Garcia. Notably, in Volume 5 (2018) and Volume 6 (2019), TALISIK only published papers presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Undergraduate Philosophy Conference of the De La Salle University – Manila in July 2017 and published theses that garnered high remarks during the Undergraduate Research Colloquium in May 2019, respectively.

As TALISIK continues to mature and extend its influence outside the University of Santo Tomas, it has adapted various modifications to its editorial roles, review process, and journal sections. Specifically, it has introduced Faculty Leads who will supervise the editors on behalf of the Department. To ensure the quality and validity of research, the journal has adopted a double-blind peer review process from which manuscripts will be initially evaluated by the editors and then submitted to external reviewers for further deliberations. External reviewers typically come from students at the UST Graduate School. This was officially enforced in Volume 5 (2018). Moreover, in Volume 7 (2020), the Agora section of the journal was founded, and its first Agora paper was published. This was to be an avenue for philosophical articles beyond the usual confinements of academic discourse. Meanwhile, in Volume 8 (2021), the journal has introduced its 1<sup>st</sup> Undergraduate Philosophy Conference of TALISIK: Envisioning the Philippine Socio-Political Landscape in the Post-Pandemic World and conducted a series of reading sessions to foster research and reading culture among

undergraduate philosophy students. Finally, in Volume 9 (2022), TALISIK published its first book review and officially became a part of KRITIKE as its laboratory journal.<sup>1</sup>

With this, TALISIK becomes a testament that the philosophical community among undergraduates persists despite these turbulent times in our society. Thus, the editorial team is pleased to announce that the present volume consists of six journal articles and one Agora paper. The papers in this issue focused on a plurality of philosophical themes, both established and emerging, such as alternative readings of Marxism, disability studies, gender studies, Filipino philosophy, Rawlsian political philosophy, Bikol philosophy, and French Critical Theory. First, Mr. Zedric Nicholas S. Bisenio's article seeks to "locate the perverted drive of capital within Marx's critique of political economy" through a different reading of Marxism. Second, Ms. Beatriz A. dela Cruz touches upon the emerging trend of disability studies through a critique of Philippine legislation and its failure to realize disability laws through the lenses of Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory. Third, Mr. Reinier Gabriel R. dela Llarte analyzes the concept of *biya* in relation to queer identity. This is followed by Mr. Nathanael V. Navarro's article that works on the possible effects of John Rawls' failure "to question how truth affects the prioritization of some human values over the others." Meanwhile, Mr. Renz Adrian G. Ronda gives insights into Bicolano's philosophical way of understanding death through the notion of *kapahingaloan*. Lastly, for the Agora, Ms. Mikhaila Sarita claims the importance of political-economic analysis in the study of madness in Michel Foucault's work.

We, the Editorial Board of TALISIK 2022 – 2024, present this current volume as our contribution to the continuing commitment of the journal to cultivating a culture of research among undergraduate students of philosophy. The present volume would not have been possible without the people behind this publication: all editors, authors, reviewers, and many others who have contributed to the journal in the past ten years. To be more specific, we convey our sincerest gratitude to the guidance of our mentors, namely, Ms. Paula Nicole C. Eugenio, M.A., and Mr. Jessie Joshua Z. Lino, M.A., for their expertise and encouragement in all the endeavors of the editorial board for the past two years. As TALISIK becomes part of KRITIKE: An Online Journal of Philosophy, we would also like to thank all its editors, particularly Prof. Paolo Bolaños, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof. Roland Theuas D. Pada, Ph.D., and Mr. Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland, Ph.D., without their commitment to guiding us navigate through the difficult field of publication, none of this would have been possible. Likewise, we are indebted to Prof. Marella Ada Mancenido - Bolaños, Ph.D., the Chair of the Department of Philosophy, for her solicitude and generosity, which she has extended to the editors in various ways. Most importantly, we thank all the reviewers for extending their time and expertise to ensure the quality of all manuscripts and we wish to congratulate all the contributors whose works are published. Lastly, the Editor-in-Chief would like to personally thank Mr. Timothy John C. Santiago for his loyalty and assistance in designing the cover for two issues; Ms. Zhea Katrina R. Estrada, Ph.D. Cand., Ms. Raphaella Elaine R. Miranda, M.A. Cand., and Mr. Patrick Andre C. Mencias, M.A., for their valuable insights in tracing the journal's history during their time as editors; and to the hard work of the whole editorial team who, for the past two years, has grown closer to her heart: Mr. Bryan Patrick B. Garcia, Mr. John Aaron Gabriel M. Borlas, Ms. Phoebe Cyrill Zuleika Cuachon, and Mr. Lian Benjamin P. Lim.

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<sup>1</sup> The presentation of the history of TALISIK were obtained from the information provided in the past volumes particularly the Editor's Notes and Letters from the Editorial Board. Other information was based on personal research by and stories shared to the Editor-in-Chief. Lastly, valuable insights were also given by Ms. Zhea Katrina R. Estrada, Ph.D. Cand., Ms. Raphaella Elaine R. Miranda, M.A. Cand., and Mr. Patrick Andre C. Mencias, M.A., who served as editors of the journal for multiple publication years.

To conclude, as TALISIK celebrates its tenth anniversary, in the words of Ms. Zhea Katrina R. Estrada, Ph.D. Cand., the first Editor-in-Chief of TALISIK, “to surpass what has been made and improve what is lacking,” the present editorial team has worked strategically to continually expand and diversify the influence of TALISIK to other universities, both locally and internationally. As a result, submissions in the tenth volume increased by twice the amount received in the last volume. The journal has also held a research seminar and is presently organizing reading sessions to encourage a productive reading and writing culture among the undergraduate students of UST. Finally, TALISIK is set to publish a Special Issue with the theme, “Magkatagpo ang Tomasino túngo sa Pagsulat at Paglikha ng Pilosopiya.” This is to be the first consecutive issue of TALISIK, as it initially only publishes one issue in each volume. All these, including the recent integration of TALISIK with KRITIKE coinciding with its tenth anniversary, may symbolically represent the journal’s broader intellectual engagement, signaling a new era of interdisciplinary discourse and scholarly collaboration.

**The Editorial Board 2022 – 2024**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The present issue is dedicated to all members of TALISIK over the last 10 years; without the commitment and efforts of all thirty-seven editors, as well as the guidance of the journal's Advisory Board and Faculty Leads from 2014 – 2024, such milestone will not be possible. Most importantly, it is through the support of all undergraduate students of Philosophy at UST and other universities in the Philippines with their submissions and interest in the journal that TALISIK continues to become an avenue for undergraduate academic research endeavors. Therefore, it is with great admiration that the Editorial Board 2022 – 2024 presents the following individuals who have contributed to the journal in the last ten years:

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## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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**ZEDRIC NICHOLAS S. BISENIO** finished his undergraduate degree in Philosophy from Ateneo De Manila University (ADMU) in 2023. He has already presented at numerous local and international conferences. His current theoretical project is focused on circuiting the castration to  $\emptyset$  in both the history of ideas and the infinite production of Capital.

**BEATRIZ A. DELA CRUZ** is currently completing her undergraduate degree in Philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas. She held the Top 1 position in her undergraduate Philosophy batch in her third year. She has presented papers at various conferences, notably during the *8th Annual De La Salle University Philosophical Conference* and the *Bulan Paper Conference* at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. She will soon present another paper on *Disability, Technology, and Digital Inclusion in Southeast Asia* at the University of Sydney. Similarly, Ms. dela Cruz is one of the junior commentators during the *Resilience: A Workshop for Women Doing Philosophy* at the University of the Philippines - Los Baños. Her research interests revolve around intersectional feminism, disability studies, and crip studies.

**REINIER GABRIEL R. DELA LLARTE** finished his undergraduate degree in philosophy at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB). He served as the Chief Archon of the Philosophical Society of UPLB from AY 2022 - 2023. He also had multiple speaking engagements at various conferences, where he presented a paper at the *7th Annual De La Salle Undergraduate Philosophy Conference*; and *Women's and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines Annual Conference 2023*; also, he participated in a roundtable discussion organized by the Philosophical Society of Philippine Normal University (PNU). Finally, he looks forward to furthering his studies in the field of Philosophy of Love, Queer Theory, and Filipino Philosophy.

**JUSTINE JULIAN O. INOCANDO** is an undergraduate in Philosophy at the University of the Philippines – Los Baños. Prior to his transfer to UPLB, he had two years of residency at the San Carlos Seminary. In 2022, he presented a paper at the COMIUCAP World Congress Manila on the challenges and opportunities of a dialogue between Feminism and Catholicism in the Philippines. His research interests include existentialism, feminism, Filipino philosophy, decolonial philosophy, comparative philosophy, Ferriols, Mercado, and Kierkegaard.

**NATHANAEL V. NAVARRO** is an independent researcher. He completed his undergraduate degree in Philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas – Manila, Philippines, in 2022. His research interests include comparative approaches in metaphysical investigations, democratization, philosophical issues on sustainable social development, and cultural studies. Aside from managing his business enterprise, he is currently engaged in a number of community development programs and projects in various civil society organizations.

**RENZ ADRIAN G. RONDA** recently obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from Bicol University (BU). Notably, his research paper titled "Kapahingaloan: The Bicolano Indigenous Way of Philosophizing towards Death" received several recognitions, such as Best Thesis within the Philosophy Department of the said university, and Winner for the Southeast Asian Paper Award during the *8<sup>th</sup> Annual De La Salle University Undergraduate Philosophy Conference*. His current research interests are the phenomenology of death, aesthetics, theodicy, and now on pragmatic philosophy in relation to seminary formation, as he is a current seminarian/aspirant of the Order of Friars Minor in the Province of San Pedro Bautista at the Our Lady of the Angels Seminary.

**MIKHAILA SARITA** is currently taking BA Social Sciences, Major in Anthropology and Minor in Philosophy at the University of the Philippines – Baguio (UPB). They are interested in disability studies and activism, as well as Cordillera studies. Likewise, they believe that disability rights and justice are not separate from other social issues, and as a Baguio-based student activist, they support Indigenous People's rights to self-determination. They also call for the junking of the Anti-terror Law. Finally, Ms. Sarita has three cats and contributes their time to shadow libraries for the democratization of knowledge.

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## Marx and the Materialist Implosion to Zero: An Introduction to the Groundless Configurations of Political Economy

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Zedric Nicholas S. Bisenio  
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**Abstract:** The resuscitation of the New Left from unilaterally reducing Marx into a study of labor exploitation, cultural hegemony, and the deprivation of the human has to be read as the problem of those conditions in confronting capitalism's exposure of its own deadlocks in crisis. As an alternative, the move of this article is to introduce an alternative reading of Marx's materialism in its faithfulness towards capital's perverted drive to suspend its own elementary conditions for its functioning (the cessation of production and circulation processes). The drive for capital to exceed its own conditions will forever be postponed through a bad infinity but then this irresolvable defective drive will always be immutable. Marx already hinted this in his close reading of Feuerbach's critique of religion by simply retaining the very illusions of religion as affirmative of the ontological reality of capital's sublime perversion. In his mature writings, this theme becomes surfaced throughout his engagement with Ricardo and Bailey's debate concerning the absolute value of the commodity. Marx's move here is to disclose the formulation of the theory of value through labor exploitation (Ricardo) and social relations among commodities (Bailey) only by rejecting the illusory dimension of capital's perverted drive (which in *Kapital I* and *II* is the rejection of the fetish quality of money). What Marx discovered instead, at the end of this article, is the infinite reproduction of the commodity to *want to be itself* through a leap toward the systems of equivalences. But only can this theory be fleshed out once the starting point of materialism has to be the critical moment when the commodity has lost its own bearings within production and circulation processes: the moment of *zero*.

**Keywords:** *Zero, Salto Mortale, Suture, Deadlock, Trieb*

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*The event is itself a splitting off from, or a breaking with causality; it is a bifurcation, a deviation with respect to laws, an unstable condition which opens up a new field of the possible.*<sup>1</sup>

- Gilles Deleuze

*The commodity to be exchanged may possibly be the product of some new kind of labour; that pretends to satisfy newly arisen requirements, or even to give rise itself to new requirements. A particular operation, though yesterday, perhaps, forming one out of the many operations conducted by one producer in creating a given commodity, may to-day separate itself from this connexion, may establish itself as an independent branch of labour and send its incomplete product to the market as an independent commodity.*<sup>2</sup>

- Karl Marx

### Introduction: Marx without the Zero

The motifs of contemporary Marxism schematize itself — when being met with the never-ending exposure of capital's deadlocks — returns to a tragic political resignation in three fronts: on one hand, one will return to Orthodox Marxism; that is to say, a reimposition of a naive disposition of *givenness*: the way to resolve the failure of transposing speculative criticism towards praxis must be read as the opposition between metaphysical and scientific thinking; hence, the solution becomes the dissolution of the current order by reducing dialectics towards the scientific motion of historical, sociological and economic studies *à la* Engels. On the other hand, Cultural Marxists deploys another deadlock within Orthodox Marxism which in Lukács' "*What is Orthodox Marxism?*" explains an innovative expansion of industrial capitalism: the structural obfuscation of workers' consciousness lies in the gap between the scientific construction of capitalism — superstructures reifying social relations as natural facts — and the dynamic historical development of modernity;<sup>3</sup> that is why his response to Engels' opposition between metaphysics and scientific Marxism as the obstruction of workers' consciousness in the *Anti-Dühring* is that the return to the latter becomes another *illusory content* of isolating facts from their corresponding social reality. But on another front is this ongoing resignation to Heideggerian Marxism: the recoiling towards scientific facts and the urge to shatter illusions *à la* Brecht becomes another ontic affair; if the radical restructuring of the given order becomes another problem of metaphysics, then the persistence of capital lies in the failure of conjoining the ontic dimension of concrete reality and the engagements of the ontological in which the solution for this gap is to reduce the problem into politically translating the ontological thrownness of being into its ontic historical operations (being-historical). The political project here becomes the benign restructuring of capitalism to secure the placements of meaning-giving: the return to the primordial "sendings of being" (*Seinsgeschick*). In Bloch's *On Marx*, he acutely criticized those three fronts as *Marx without the zero point*. "The zero point of the most extreme alienation, as represented by the proletariat," Bloch argues "becomes the point of dialectical reversal."<sup>4</sup> And here, it must be cautioned that what Bloch meant by "dialectical reversal" is not so much the historicization of Marx under existing structural entanglements but it is this reversion to this zero as a pure "nothingness"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2003), 116.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *Kapital*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887), 72.

<sup>3</sup> Gyorgy Lukács, "What Is Orthodox Marxism?" in *History and Class Consciousness*, (Marx-Engels Internet Archive, 1967) accessed July 19, 2023. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/orthodox.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Bloch, *On Marx* (London: Verso, 2018), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Bloch, *On Marx*, 12.

— escaping categorizations while still circumscribed within the immanent — transcribed as the “plane of concrete possibility.” As a consequence, the zero which is resolved with its religio-generic entity is formalized by Bloch at the end of the chapter, “*Karl Marx and Humanity: The Material of Hope*.”<sup>6</sup> becomingness is less about the rejection of metaphysics’ sclerotized tendencies than the metamorphosis of all things existing as being mediated by an empty indeterminate space; the concrete is spoken as an “objective non-warrantability” of the future to arrive. Thus, in his radical construction, Bloch formulated a materialism without any rigid ties to sociological and historiographical tenets: the concrete is always in its ‘unfinished state’ that obstructs the infinite processes of “drawing near a goal.”<sup>7</sup>

A new question then has to be formulated: if there is a sheer encounter of deadlocks on all established Marxist studies, then isn’t the more perverted problem this *drive to clear from the zero*? Or when a new diametrical opposition emerges, the move becomes a unilateral recoiling towards one than the other (which in this case is the heavy favoring of scientific nature, theory of reification, and the liberation from the techno-think (*das Man*) more than the others)? The missing link, however, in Bloch’s formulation of the *zero* is its relation towards contemporary ideology: the reinforcement of nonbelief.<sup>8</sup> If the illusory contents of reality (here this must include the rejection of both the suprasensible discussions of the divine and the fetish quality of the commodities) must be disavowed, then why does the faculty of reason still remain stubborn in reconstructing the outside even when it’s impossible to conceive it in moments of despair? The alternative therefore is to locate the mad drive of capitalism as synonymous to the eternal defect of reason itself. The direction of this paper is to locate the perverted drive of capital within Marx’s critique of political economy as an extension of his critique of religion; to simply put it, the *zero* of capital qua religion is the drive to violate its own elementary conditions for its own expansion in the same way that reason has an internal perverted drive to negate its own conditions to achieve a sense of wholeness. And just like the tragedy of reason reaching its own meltdown towards the *Outside* within the immanent, the internal structuring of capital is in its schizophrenic implosion *ad infinitum*, forever breaching towards non-symbolic coordinates but bearing no signs of decay.

### **Materialist Implosion to Zero: The Theological-Metaphysical Niceties of the Rational Miser**

Rehabilitating the *zero* without favoring the libidinal domains, economic signifiers, socio-historical relations, and structure-superstructure impositions must require finding its theoretical genesis in Marx’s reading of Feuerbach’s critique of religion. Recall when Feuerbach argued in the chapter “Contradiction in Revelation of God” that the expression of divine revelation is this split contradiction between objective historical disclosures and subjective rational affirmation.<sup>9</sup> But what he is truly after here is not to speak of this as mere distinction between divine nature which is outside the reach of the human condition and the faculty of reason to attribute human signifiers to God but that this divine revelation qua split is derived from the internal malfunction of reason itself (not in the fallibility of reason but the very obsession of reason to lunge towards both the indiscernible and the drive for its own destruction); this defect reproduces the compulsion of reason to drive itself towards its own negation; towards anything that self-destruct human essences. The temptation here, in which Engels fell upon, is either 1) resolving this split towards the classic restoration of human species-

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<sup>6</sup> Bloch, *On Marx*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Bloch, *On Marx*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Einstein and Todd McGowan, *Rupture: On the Emergence of the Political* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 46.

<sup>9</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (Walnut: MSAC Philosophy Group, 2008), 163

essences vis-à-vis a materialist reversion consisting of socio-historical totalities and natural-scientific progressions; shunning down any trans-human realities in favor of material sensuous reality. “With irresistible force,” Engel argues in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, “Feuerbach is finally driven to the realization that the Hegelian pre-mundane existence of the “absolute idea”, the “pre-existence of the logical categories” before the world existed, is nothing more than the fantastic survival of the belief in the existence of an extra-mundane creator.”<sup>10</sup> The materialist suturing between God and human reason — which impels the subject to project itself to the divine — lies within the identical relation between God and man; the human reflection of God within the planes of determinate reality will not contradict the nature of God while the placement of God without its distinction from material reality does not intrude the generic essence of the human. Or 2) reject the deadlock altogether as an empty illusory “nothing” which obstructs the unification between divine and human identity. In this manner, Feuerbach describes the knowledge of God being the projection of human knowledge not as the simplistic alienation of man from his own internal nature but as the fatal drive of reason to reinstate the *gap*. But here Feuerbach extends this *gap* in the next chapter “Contradiction in the Nature of God”: the antagonism as “nothing” theoretically shifts from God-human distinctions towards the “highest degree of resemblance”;<sup>11</sup> the pure absence of distinction — outside God-human unification — away from a radical solipsism: the suppression of the doctrines of reason itself; the zero point for reason to make distinctions between God and the subject. And yet, looking back on the chapter “Creation out of Nothing,” this absent center from making any significations is precisely what activates the whole play of human subjectivity: the infinite drive for reason to keep up with itself; the “nothing” which compels the stubborn attempt of reason towards a sense of wholeness.

To speak is an act of the will; thus, creation is a product of the Will: as in the Word of God man affirms the divinity of the human word, so in creation he affirms the divinity of the Will: not, however, the will of the reason, but the will of the imagination — the absolutely subjective, unlimited will. The culminating point of the principle of subjectivity is creation out of nothing.<sup>12</sup>

The missing link therefore in Feuerbach’s reading is that this deadlock as “nothing” is expressed as the defective compulsion of reason towards an indiscernible category as *excess* deeming it scandalous to the discourse of reason (i.e., the disposition that something can be created out of nothing is folly from the position of rationality) instead of simply positing a suprasensible space that exceeds the human. This elucidation is similar to that with the correspondence between Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin where Scholem speaks the “nothingness of revelation” as a “zero point” only insofar as the absence of contents *disappear* but at the same time *appearing* as zero within the immanent.<sup>13</sup> Here Todd McGowan supplements it by deriving the assertion of the “nothingness of revelation” from the overarching incompleteness of significations which demands to hide the zero by asserting “endless proliferation of signifiers.”<sup>14</sup> It must be then necessary to reverse Feuerbach’s formulation on the self-alienation of religious experiences: God as the missing signifier does not simply affirm its own internal cartography whereby the sublime encounter of the suprasensible activates human projection towards the divine but it is this empty signifier that grounds the basic

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Marx-Engels Internet Archive, 1994), accessed September 20, 2023, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/>.

<sup>11</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 180-181.

<sup>12</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 63

<sup>13</sup> Gershom Scholem, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem. 1932-1940*, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 142.

<sup>14</sup> Einstein and McGowan, *Rupture*, 43.

ontological reality of structures, that is, religion affirms the incompleteness of everything but at the same time reproduces the drive for its own completion. The culmination therefore of the splitting between the divine and the discourse of reason is the very *failure* of reason to attain its own infrastructures instead of the epistemological failure of reason to reach divine terrains; the impossibility of the subject to retain its own generic essence. The modeling of religion now becomes torn between two problematics: on one hand, the mysticism of religion — in which Engels, Feuerbach, the early Marx, and Brecht concern themselves with — as either veiling the historical-natural interplays in concrete reality or remaining indifferent to human essences and on the other hand, the mysticism of religion as illusion positively affirms the perverted drive of both reason and structures themselves. To put it simply, the former is concerned with historicization while the latter is concerned with the infinite drive [*Trieb*] to suture deadlocks in its encounter of the zero. So, the real theoretical trap here is that the *zero* qua religion is not suppressed by the self-alienation of the human from his/her generic essence but by the total rejection of the deadlock as an *illusion* by either returning to the socio-historical structures of the concrete or to designate the *zero* as another sociological category: the error of secularizing the *Outside* as zero within the discourse of the *Inside*. Marx here intervenes with two shifting theoretical attitudes towards religion:

- 1) In the preface of *Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, it is axiomatic to read Marx's criticism against Feuerbach's reversion towards religious anthropology as just another derivation from philosophical speculation. But away from the putative scholarly analysis where Marx's analysis of alienation is simply read as the deprivation of the subject's generic essence through labor, what he truly contested, especially in the chapters "*Wages of Labor*" and "*Estranged Labor*," was that the reversion towards the material conditions *à la* Feuerbach never reveals the process of alienation as an *abstracted* process waiting to be realized within commodities; it can reveal the material processes of capital, private property, and labor which leads to *estrangement* (e.g., explaining the alienation through a computed and concealed difference between market-price and natural-price), but it can never reveal the eternal split between labor and what it produces.<sup>15</sup> The early Marx's interest with Feuerbach's critique of religion is not therefore the lack of praxiological contents but it is that the materialist reversion *does not go far enough*. And so, the focus here should not be that Marx's approach to religion is similar to Feuerbach's critique through the theoretical retention of human essences, but instead the interesting divergence between the two is that the latter plays with alienation through this subjective projection as being derived from the abstractive split between God and man (and hence rejecting the alienation by returning to naturalistic explanations of reality) while the former formulates alienation not as mere illusions but as an abstractive split between worker and produces being *materialized*. What the early Marx meant in "*Estranged Labor*" that "the more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself" is not *estrangement* as simply a moment of despair where the subject's human essence becomes absent in exploitation but it is when the *split* being abstracted by capitalists — rendering laborers as workers — eventually becomes

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<sup>15</sup> "Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property, but it does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulae the *material* process through which private property actually passes, and these formulae it then takes for *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws — i.e., it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property" See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1973), 69-70.

materialized as a *total loss of reality*;<sup>16</sup> alienation qua religion is less about static miseries than the objective world which loses its own bearing from the position of the proletariat.

- 2) In *Kapital I*, although Marx abandoned capital as another machinery that alienates subjects from their labor, he nonetheless extends the critique of political economy as another religio-generic entity. Interestingly, what he criticized in David Ricardo and Adam Smith is that they both removed the illusory contents of money and gold altogether (similar to that of Feuerbach) and thereby resorting to the theories of political economy as either a reduction of capital towards labor exploitation or the interrelation of use-value and exchange-value in disclosing the mode of general equivalences which makes the exchange of commodities possible. Marx's novels move through religion was neither to favor capital as a category of labor expenditure or the social qualities of commodity which makes the whole enterprise of exchange concealed but, by retaining the fetish quality of money, what he arrives at is the description of capital as the reproduction of the "rational miser" which interests themselves in "accumulating riches in heaven."<sup>17</sup> Karatani's *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* describes this Marxist formulation of capital's religious content as that of a "sublime perversion"<sup>18</sup> which cannot be exposed with historical materialism. The "perversion" for Marx is the eternal drive for capital to exceed its own functioning — which thereby contradicts — the fundamental conditions for commodity exchange and expansion in Industrial capitalism. What Marx described capital as a "theological and metaphysical niceties"<sup>19</sup> — while retaining its economic coordinates — must be read as the interminability of this perverted religious drive of capital to self-expand (without the need for private property and labor exploitation) in the exposition of capital's deadlock in crisis; if the commodity remains unsold in its *zero* baseline where production and circulation processes are temporarily suspended, then commodity becomes what it is *even* when it does not meet the conditions of exchange but only in virtue of capital to reproduce new forms of expansion — in crisis — without classical modes of domination (e.g., an example is introducing credit systems).

The *zero* qua retaining the illusions of religion in both cases is that the main conditions for capitalist expansion are always both *groundless* (deprived of any substantive contents such as structure-superstructure relations) and *worldless* (deprived of any socio-historical bearings). Its point of expansion is neither within the concrete conditions of political occurrences being tied to superstructural impositions nor the economic conditions for capital to follow the logic of labor, rent, and imperialism. Instead, it is found within a critical space between two modes where the synthesis of values can be

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<sup>16</sup> "This fact expresses merely the object which labor produces — labor's product — confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realization of labor appears as *loss of reality* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*." See Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 71.

<sup>17</sup> Kojin Karatani, *Transcritique. On Kant and Marx* (London: MIT Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 209.

<sup>19</sup> "A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour." See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 46.

achieved for exchange and the case when the synthesis of values becomes interrupted but is still necessary for its own functioning; the “accumulation of riches in heaven” is synonymous with the internal defect of reason to infinitely drive itself towards its own self-negation in order to breach into indiscernible territories: *the perverted drive of capital to both establish its own conditions for its expansion and to violate those very conditions itself*. Marx already hinted this in the fourth chapter of *Kapital I* titled “*The General Formula of Capital*.” The transformation of money into capital cannot be located within the moment of consumption; that is to say, the deficiency in explaining capital as C-M-C (Commodity sold to sustain purchasing powers to acquire another commodity) is that the process contains no mystery of capital; it only ends when the transaction falls out from the circulation process — towards consumption — with the general equivalence of two commodities in order to satisfy a definite want. But with the process of sales as M-C-M (Money not being spent unlike in C-M-C but *advanced* within the circulation process), a “reflux of money”<sup>20</sup> occurs without a final phase when the rules of general equivalency among commodities become disintegrated: the synthesis of values becomes lost in the circulation process.

The character and tendency of the process M-C-M, is therefore not due to any qualitative difference between its extremes, both being money, but solely to their quantitative difference. More money is withdrawn from circulation at the finish than was thrown into it at the start. The cotton that was bought for £100 is perhaps resold for £100 + £10 or £110. The exact form of this process is therefore M-C-M', where M' = M + D M = the original sum advanced, plus an increment. This increment or excess over the original value I call “surplus value.”<sup>21</sup>

Surplus-value, in this particular case, becomes the zero point that violates the general rule for equivalences. The reselling of cotton in this example has to be incremental by reinstating an excess value (which in Marx’s specific example is the retention of the same surplus-value of £10 being incremented towards the shifting quantitative value of a £100) in contrast with the rules of consumption in C-M-C where, although the quantitative difference between two commodities can persist, the qualitative value between two commodities should still be equivalent (e.g., the value of a yarn is different from the value of a cotton but the labor power needed to produce one article of yarn and cotton has to be the same). What is the difference between the lack of equivalency made by surplus-value in sales and the lack of equivalency in purchase? It is that the latter can be self-corrected to presume the circulation process towards its ends in the consumption phase (e.g., if 1 cotton is not enough to be exchanged with 1 gold then it is necessary for the qualitative and quantitative property of 1 cotton to be altered until the subject can acquire 1 gold) while the former is *infinitely irresolvable*. Marx’s move here is to locate the transformation of money into capital without the classical formulas for wealth accumulation. Instead, he locates the transformation into capital as the *infinite compulsion to repeat the interminable* qua surplus-value.

The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or main-spring of the circulation M-C-M, becomes his subjective aim, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more and more wealth in the abstract becomes the sole motive of his operations, that he functions as a capitalist, that is, as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will. Use-values must therefore never be looked upon as the real aim of the capitalist; neither must the profit on any single transaction. The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at. This boundless greed after riches, this passionate chase after exchange-value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a *rational miser* (Emphasis added). The never-ending augmentation of exchange-value, which the miser strives after,

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol.1, 103.

<sup>21</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol.1,10.

by seeking to save his money from circulation, is attained by the more acute capitalist, by constantly throwing it afresh into circulation.<sup>22</sup>

What Marx did in this passage was not to abandon the logic of wealth accumulation in wholesale, but this perverted drive of capital wishes to partition itself by exceeding the rules of wealth accumulation; the strong compulsion to expand itself by being unconnected to the material categories of capital (i.e., labor, theory of reification, and etc.). In this precise sense, the theological category of capitalism is the drive to expand — activated by its zero qua the irresolvability of the split between exchange-value and use-value — without the *desire for material*. That is why Karatani's reading of Marx ends with an antinomy: commodity can be achieved and unachieved even when the general rule of equivalence within the exchange proper still remains (*Ex Post Facto*).<sup>23</sup> A commodity can be what it is even when the equivalent values remain unfulfilled or violated: it becomes commodity as *Ex Ante Facto*. That is to say, the commodity in this position can be expressed as not-yet becoming a commodity; the possibility of the commodity to be what it is even when the synthesis would impossibly be met. The final expression therefore in constituting a commodity is that when the basic rules of production and circulation become interrupted, *the commodity wants to be itself*; establishing the synthesis of values as another signifier to recover its own defect and incompleteness. The rational miser who wishes to “accumulate riches in heaven” becomes the zero cartography of capital for its functioning *without the need to own*: without any reference to consumption, equivalences, and production. “All nations with a capitalist mode of production” argues Marx in *Kapital II* “are therefore seized periodically by a feverish attempt to make money *without the intervention of the process of production* (emphasis added).”<sup>24</sup> That is why when the cracks of capital qua the defect within the synthesis between exchange-value and use-value become surfaced in crisis, capital redeploys this zero point in order to recreate new structures of social relations to fulfill its own incompleteness but at the same time eternally preserving its own cracks: *a materialist implosion to zero without any moment of collapse*. The strong alternative, therefore, against naive Scientific Marxism and Historical Materialism is to theorize a radical form of materialism which is focused on capital's drive to impossibly resolve the zero but also the impossibility to imagine its own demise: *capitalism as a living dead*; it can never catch up to itself but also infinitely reproducing its own mode of existence. That is why in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, capital's response to the growing economic recessions in France leading to 1968 is to reintroduce *a new form of subjectivity*:<sup>25</sup> neo-liberalism becomes reproduced by appropriating the demands of leftist trade unions and students; capitalism becomes a *liquified reversal* of traditional power imbalances. It now becomes possible for capitalist machinery to expand itself by embracing class struggle; that is to say, national industrialization and the need for creative and sexual autonomy can be deployed *without quitting the rules of the democratic game* of capital. This new form of subjectivity becomes the total annihilation of radically restructuring social relations in favor of building models of meaningful participation of individuals — being assured of freedom from domination — within the public sphere (e.g., sexual liberation movements, experimenting with direct representation of laborers in workplaces, creative expression of human subjectivity, reverting back to ‘authentic’ forms of living, and etc.). No wonder Deleuze provocatively argued that “May ‘68 did not take place.”<sup>26</sup> There is a ‘social mutation’ that was “irreducible to social determinism”; a creative reinforcement of a new existence without

<sup>22</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol.1,105.

<sup>23</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Marx, *Kapital* vol. 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1999), 234.

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 116.

purely siding with orthodox Marxism or cultural Marxism. The very impasse to resolve the economic recessions is precisely what created the new spirit of capitalism.

### Marx's Intervention in the Ricardo-Bailey Debate and the Zero Cartography of Political Economy

Marx's appropriation of religion as an extension of his critique of political economy — if we relate this back to Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* and *Kapital* — exposes the tension between classical economics (in which it relies solely on Ricardo's theory of value) and neoclassical economics (its credence to Bailey's theory of value). With regards to the former, Ricardo relegates the realization of values only in the production process.<sup>27</sup> His rationale behind it is that if exchange-value is determined by labour-time then 1) the quantity of distribution relies on the value of the commodity in relation to its exchange value that is computed in parallel to its labour-time, and 2) the value must be intrinsic within the commodity itself; the relational structure among commodities "absolutized" in the form of exchange-value.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, Bailey's critique of Ricardo counter-argues that value can only be found within the relations of commodities. What Bailey did was not to discard Ricardo's theory in wholesale but instead, he begins by accepting that the default appearance of political economy is exchange-values being drawn from expended labor;<sup>29</sup> but for Bailey, the mistake of classical economy is that 1) it ended there without probing the structures of political economy behind this mechanistic appearance, and 2) Ricardo's theory of value has no theoretical capacity to surface the value of a particular commodity even when it has the same quantity of exerted labor-power and physical properties with the same commodity. Marx uses a scenario where it takes forty yards of linen to make two coats with the same quality;<sup>30</sup> the trouble here according to Bailey is that only in Ricardo's theory can we express the value of those coats as an equivalence towards the value of the forty yards of linen, but it cannot explain the value of a single coat without constantly referring to the value of the linen. Hence, Bailey's solution is to theorize a new system of value that is dependent on the social form that is expressed within the relation between a commodity and expended labor; or to borrow from Marx's interpretation of Bailey, the "form of the manifestation" expressed within the "phenomenal form."<sup>31</sup> The absolute expression of commodity as extracted labor being relativized into

<sup>27</sup> "Ricardo, the economist of production par excellence, whose object was the understanding of the distinct social structure of modern production, for this very reason declares that distribution, not production, is the proper subject of contemporary political economy." See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1970, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/pol-econ/appx1.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> "The author of "Observations" and S. Bailey accuse Ricardo of converting exchange value from something relative into something absolute. The opposite is the fact. He has explained the apparent relation between objects, such as diamonds and pearls, in which relation they appear as exchange values, and disclosed the true relation hidden behind the appearances, namely, their relation to each other as mere expressions of human labour. If the followers of Ricardo answer Bailey somewhat rudely, and by no means convincingly, the reason is to be sought in this, that they were unable to find in Ricardo's own works any key to the hidden relations existing between value and its form, exchange Value." See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 45.

<sup>29</sup> "The author of "Observations" and S. Bailey accuse Ricardo of converting exchange value from something relative into something absolute. The opposite is the fact. He has explained the apparent relation between objects, such as diamonds and pearls, in which relation they appear as exchange values, and disclosed the true relation hidden behind the appearances, namely, their relation to each other as mere expressions of human labour." See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 58.

<sup>30</sup> "For instance, forty yards of linen are worth — what? 2 coats. Because the commodity coat here plays the part of equivalent, because the use-value coat, as opposed to the linen, figures as an embodiment of value, therefore a definite number of coats suffices to express the definite quantity of value in the linen. Two coats may therefore express the quantity of value of forty yards of linen, but they can never express the quantity of their own value." See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 37.

<sup>31</sup> "The first peculiarity that strikes us, in considering the form of the equivalent, is this: use value becomes the form of manifestation, the phenomenal form of its opposite value. The bodily form of the commodity becomes its value

‘use-value.’ Marx’s latent concern is that Bailey’s critique and Ricardo’s theory of value are conceptually created only when *it resolves the splitting between exchange-value and use-value*; the exchangeability of commodity being finalized to either its equivalence to labor-time or to its relation to other commodities reduces the structure of political economy to either the production or circulation process. Although Marx understood that Ricardo’s theory of value opened class antagonism as the new specter of political economy<sup>32</sup> and also Bailey’s critique of Ricardo contributed to a new dimension of commodity exchange without having a fixed center to determine its value (heterogeneous equivalences between two commodities that has the same expended labour-time and material property),<sup>33</sup> Marx’s baseline critique towards Ricardo and Bailey is that both of them mistaken labor value or use value as the real value of the commodity. And here it is imperative to take a step further than schematizing the problem as simply that of reducing political economy to either exchange-value or use-value: the theoretical defect here is that Ricardo’s reduction of commodity as “magnitude of value” must consist in *repressing the study of commodity in line with the origin of value* itself while Bailey’s analysis of commodity exchange — without being determined by an absolute value — has to *repress the immanent value of the commodity*:

[On Bailey] The few economists, amongst whom is S. Bailey, who have occupied themselves with the analysis of the form of value, have been unable to arrive at any result, first, because they confuse the form of value with value itself; and second, because, under the coarse influence of the practical bourgeois, they exclusively give their attention to the quantitative aspect of the question. “The command of quantity ... constitutes value.”<sup>34</sup>

[On Ricardo] Ricardo never concerns himself about the origin of surplus value. He treats it as a thing inherent in the capitalist mode of production, which mode, in his eyes, is the natural form of social production. Whenever he discusses the productiveness of labour, he seeks in it, not the cause of surplus value, but the cause that determines the magnitude of that value. On the other hand, his school has openly proclaimed the productiveness of labour to be the originating cause of profit [...]. Nevertheless, Ricardo’s school simply shirked the problem, they did not solve it. In fact these bourgeois economists instinctively saw, and rightly so, that it is very dangerous to stir too deeply the burning question of the origin of surplus value.<sup>35</sup>

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form. But mark well, that this quid pro quo exists in the case of any commodity B, only when some other commodity A enters into a value relation with it, and then only within the limits of this relation. Since no commodity can stand in the relation of equivalent to itself, and thus turn its own bodily shape into the expression of its own value, every commodity is compelled to choose some other commodity for its equivalent, and to accept the use value, that is to say, the bodily shape of that other commodity as the form of its own value.” See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 37.

<sup>32</sup> “Let us take England. Its Political Economy belongs to the period in which the class struggle was as yet undeveloped. Its last great representative, Ricardo, in the end, consciously makes the antagonism of class interests, of wages and profits, of profits and rent, the starting point of his investigations, naively taking this antagonism for a social law of Nature.” See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 11.

<sup>33</sup> “If we mean that, we do not mean that and vice versa. Our ‘meaning’ has nothing at all to do with the essential character of the thing we consider. If we speak of the value in exchange of a thing, we mean in the first instance of course the relative quantities of all other commodities that can be exchanged with the first commodity. But, on further consideration, we shall find that for the proportion, in which one thing exchanges with an infinite mass of other things, which have nothing at all in common with it—and even if there are natural or other similarities between those things, they are not considered in the exchange—[for the proportion] to be a fixed proportion, all those various heterogeneous things must be considered as proportionate representations, expressions of the same common unity, [of] an element quite different from their natural existence or appearances.” See Karl Marx, *1861-1863 Manuscripts* (New York: Prometheus Books), 315.

<sup>34</sup> See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 54.

<sup>35</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 358.

Thus, the appropriate method to classify their theoretical deficiencies is not their internal error to describe socio-economic realities exhaustively but their theories on value were presented as *a repression of this unbearable antagonism* — as zero — outside production-circulation processes. That is why Karatani argued that this antagonism is formed through repressing this third mediating entity that disrupts the direct exchange among commodities.<sup>36</sup> There is a third figure that makes the exchange possible even without referring to the value being formulated by labor-exploitation nor the direct equivalences among commodity's values. On a basic level, Marx too has already written an explanation of such dilemma in *Kapital* which is similar to that of suppressing multiple bifurcations (but without the repression of the 'third space' that was directly supplemented by Karatani): on one hand, the problem of classical economy is that its theory of values can only be created by repressing the twofold character of labor: a suppression of the splitting between labor value that occurs during the production process (absolute labor value) and the labor value that is determined when the commodity exchange becomes finished (social labor value).<sup>37</sup> The significance of this antagonism for Marx is not to simply argue that labor-value has to undergo a shift in its own magnitude since it has to acquire its use-value eventually (if that were the case, then Marx would have repeated the same error with that of neoclassical economics by reducing the split into use-value) but instead he exposed the enigma of capitalist productivity: *the magnitude of labor-value cannot be quantitatively determined, even in the production process, until there is a 'price' — in its religious-fetish form — that expresses the commodity's 'equivalency'*.<sup>38</sup> And the

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<sup>36</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 34.

<sup>37</sup> "The insufficiency of Ricardo's analysis of the magnitude of value, and his analysis is by far the best, will appear from the 3rd and 4th books of this work. As regards value in general, it is the weak point of the classical school of Political Economy that it nowhere expressly and with full consciousness, distinguishes between labour, as it appears in the value of a product, and the same labour, as it appears in the use value of that product. Of course, the distinction is practically made, since this school treats labour, at one time under its quantitative aspect, at another under its qualitative aspect. But it has not the least idea, that when the difference between various kinds of labour is treated as purely quantitative, their qualitative unity or equality, and therefore their reduction to abstract human labour, is implied. For instance, Ricardo declares that he agrees with Destutt de Tracy in this proposition: "As it is certain that our physical and moral faculties are alone our original riches, the employment of those faculties, labour of some kind, is our only original treasure, and it is always from this employment that all those things are created which we call riches... It is certain, too, that all those things only represent the labour which has created them, and if they have a value, or even two distinct values, they can only derive them from that (the value) of the labour from which they emanate." (Ricardo, "The Principles of Pol. Econ.," 3 Ed. Lond. 1821, 334.) We would here only point out, that Ricardo puts his own more profound interpretation upon the words of Destutt. What the latter really says is, that on the one hand all things which constitute wealth represent the labour that creates them, but that on the other hand, they acquire their "two different values" (use value and exchange value) from "the value of labour." He thus falls into the commonplace error of the vulgar economists, who assume the value of one commodity (in this case labour) in order to determine the values of the rest. But Ricardo reads him as if he had said that labour (not the value of labour) is embodied both in use value and exchange value. Nevertheless, Ricardo himself pays so little attention to the twofold character of the labour which has a twofold embodiment, that he devotes the whole of his chapter on "Value and Riches, Their Distinctive Properties," to a laborious examination of the trivialities of a J.B. Say. And at the finish he is quite astonished to find that Destutt on the one hand agrees with him as to labour being the source of value, and on the other hand with J. B. Say as to the notion of value." See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 56.

<sup>38</sup>"In a sense, it is correct to say that Marx sought to push the Ricardian labor theory of value even further than Ricardo. On the other hand, facing an impasse, Ricardo partly revised his theory and had it that value is not determined solely by invested labor, except for within those departments that have a standard composition of capital and a standard turnover term. As I have already said in the context of Bailey's criticism of Ricardo, however, Marx was no longer of the opinion that each commodity internalizes its own value. The value of each commodity is given only when the relationship between commodities forms a system; if so, even if the value substance of a commodity is the invested labor, it would be the labor value that has been repositated and adjusted in the exchange with money. In other words, it is the "social labor-time" or the "abstract labor-time," as Marx put it. Marx's social labor time is distinct from the actual labor time expended to produce individual commodities; it is rather the labor time that is discovered belatedly within products after being socially constituted via the exchange with money. The value vis-à-vis labor time—either via commodity exchange or

point here is not to determine ‘equivalency’ as the social relation among commodities and labors that is needed for the direct exchange but rather as the withering of absolute labor value (and yet paradoxically that expended labor time is needed to determine the value of the commodity in the exchange proper) whereby the ‘price’ has to resolve such contradiction by precisely establishing its equivalence vis-à-vis the socialization of the commodity which was provoked in the moment of exchange itself.<sup>39</sup> The problem with neoclassical economics is that, though their starting point is the exchange-value as the given appearance of political economy, they still classify labor only in the level of the ‘seeming’ (*erscheint*)<sup>40</sup> and therefore must be unmasked into its essence qua social forms. Marx argues that Bailey’s gesture which absolutizes use-value represses the manifestation of political economy as the antagonism between manifestation (*Erscheinung*) and essence (*Wesen*);<sup>41</sup> as Marx would argue in *Kapital I*, exchange-value only stands for the “equal quantities”<sup>42</sup> that are common to the commodities in the exchange process but use-value becomes constructed after the successful equivalences (in the level of having the ‘natural properties of the commodities’ being equal) among commodities— hence, what Marx would call as the “total abstraction”<sup>43</sup> that parted ways from the intrinsic property of the commodities. However, Marx’s formulation remains incomplete because it has not yet explained the moment of ‘split’ qua *zero* being repressed. The closest to where Marx would explicitly get to is that the culmination of the commodity exchange is the irreconcilable division between exchange-value and use-value as soon as its concrete and abstract labor remains ‘out of sight’ in consumption (commodity exchange operates when its exchange-value manifests as independent from its use-value since exchange-value is the only form where the value of the commodity can appear).<sup>44</sup> Althusser, in *Reading Capital*, went further by interpreting the division between consumption

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capitalist production—cannot be measured quantitatively by any means whatsoever. What we can know is only price. And what is certain is that capital is deadly serious about the reinforcement of productivity; that this is realized only by shortening the necessary labor time; and that the difference of productivity determines the hierarchy of value systems of world nations.” See Karatani, *Transcritique*, 337.

<sup>39</sup> “Also in *Capital*, Marx says he assumes “simple labor”; this is for convenience’ sake and the “simple” has nothing to do with the kind of labor. The diversity and complexity of labor as use-value cannot be measured quantitatively. But it is in reality quantified—as the amount of wages—only after being socialized by the commodity exchange. Therefore, intellectual labor comes to be quantitatively compared with simpler labors. It is not that the labor time expended for the production of commodities places them in equivalency, but that placing them in equivalency determines the social labor time expended for the production. The quality of labor does not matter in this. And there is no need to revise the previous analysis; even in the face of a shift of major labor forms from, for instance, the second industry (manufacturing) to the third industry (service).” See Karatani, *Transcritique*, 337.

<sup>40</sup> “Exchange-value appears (*erscheint*) first of all as the quantitative relation, the proportion, in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind. This relation changes constantly with time and place. Hence exchange-value seems (*scheint*) to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value [...] seems (*scheint*) a contradiction in terms.” See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 26.

<sup>42</sup> “Let us take two commodities, e.g., corn and iron. The proportions in which they are exchangeable, whatever those proportions may be, can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron: e.g., 1 quarter corn = x cwt. iron. What does this equation tell us? It tells us that in two different things – in 1 quarter of corn and x cwt. of iron, there exists in equal quantities something common to both. The two things must therefore be equal to a third, which in itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange value, must therefore be reducible to this third.” See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 27.

<sup>43</sup> “This common “something” cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities. Such properties claim our attention only in so far as they affect the utility of those commodities, make them use values. But the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a total abstraction from use value.” See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 27.

<sup>44</sup> “We have seen that when commodities are exchanged, their exchange value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use value. But if we abstract from their use value, there remains their Value as defined above. Therefore, the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange value of commodities, whenever they are

and production not as a strict separation but as a culmination towards a *new condition* of commodity relations. His main points are 1) the split between consumption and production created a new method — as the pure relation between the two opposing fields — for realizing values without having to integrate the commodity within the circulation process only for the sake of meeting human needs. This ‘pure relation’ created a new motif of capitalist expansion as wealth accumulation<sup>45</sup> apart from anthropological needs (however Althusser’s scientific Marxism allows him to refer this ‘pure relation’ as a structural determination): the location of productivity is therefore not within concrete labor exploitation but as a *pure relation* that escapes consumption and production domains and yet it determines the whole play within consumption and production processes. A novel interpretation of capitalist expansion is therefore not anymore, this obscuration of exploitation within commodity exchange but a suturing of this production-consumption split. No wonder that in “*The Elements of the Structure and their History*” Althusser’s student, Etienne Balibar, hinted the function of structural determinisms not simply as the application of a universal mechanistic law towards commodity relations (e.g., laws of supply and demand, and etc.) but as the resolution of production-consumption relations (which is innately expressed as antinomic) being expressed within the social form of commodity relations.<sup>46</sup> 2) Althusser argued that the new conditions in both circulation and production should be expressed as the unity of social relations. But what he meant here is to argue that the result of relating all elements under the political economy discloses ‘pre-existing elements’ that exists in the form of gap (i.e., *Reading Capital* has several references towards discussing the abstract social form of the commodity by beginning with a split: examples in the text includes the split between buying and selling,<sup>47</sup> between law and tradition,<sup>48</sup> and etc.) instead of simply discussing commodity as a ‘combination’ (*Verbindung*)<sup>49</sup> of all social elements required to establish the values (whether exchange-value or use-value) needed for the direct exchange to occur. What Karatani did, however, is to raise the concerns of this third mediating site to the level of ‘crisis’; if the relation between buying and selling remains nullified in crisis (“the moment of fantasy collapses”),<sup>50</sup> then, for Karatani, people would still flock back to a theological illusion qua *money*:<sup>51</sup> all in virtue of this incessant drive to resolve this unbearable antinomy. But the difference now is that 1) the drive towards the monetary system under a traumatic encounter to this third space cannot be described within the same categories of wealth accumulation since the artificial chain of payments that are necessary to own anything becomes defunct—the value of the commodity in crisis vanishes (here we must recall of this critical moment, which was also anticipated by Marx’s *Kapital*, as the fragile cessation of production and circulation processes).

In a crisis, the antithesis between commodities and their value-form, money, becomes heightened into an absolute contradiction. Hence, in such events, the form under which money appears is of

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exchanged, is their value. The progress of our investigation will show that exchange value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed. For the present, however, we have to consider the nature of value independently of this, its form.” See Marx, *Kapital* vol. 1, 27.

<sup>45</sup> “The proportion between these two departments is governed by the *structure* of production which intervenes directly to determine the nature and the quantity of a full part of the use-values which never enter consumption for need but only production itself. This discovery plays an essential part in the theory of the realization of value, in the process of capitalist accumulation, and in all the laws that flow from it.” See Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital* (London: NLB, 1970) 165-166.

<sup>46</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 231.

<sup>47</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 177-178.

<sup>48</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 228.

<sup>49</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 175.

<sup>50</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 153.

<sup>51</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 153.

no importance. The money famine continues, whether payments have to be made in gold or in credit money such as banknotes.<sup>52</sup>

2) in this sense, if commodity acquisition becomes null in a crisis, then Karatani's conceptualization of money is not that of a material medium in which it serves as both the "denominator of value"<sup>53</sup> (in terms of labor time) and the means of payment but it is an *imaginary* locale (what Marx described surplus-value as possessing "all the charms of a creation out of nothing") — in the same manner as to how Feuerbach posited the nothingness of the God-subject split as another activation of the perverted drive of reason — which expresses the subject's drive for a clearing after a traumatic encounter of this excessive third space (and this is what sets apart from Althusser's formulation where he reduced the antagonism between production and circulation as a part of capitalism's drive for productivity.<sup>54</sup> Specifically, the spirit of capitalism mutates its own conditions of expansion without the drive to acquire goods; the beast enlivens even without having to be motivated by economic needs nor having the drive to ownership). What Karatani implicitly points out here is crucial: this absent site that bares itself from the total operations of political economy is the *sine qua non* condition for the subject to *integrate* into the sphere of capital through the help of this inherent drive to stabilize the asymmetric relation within the system of values (where the irreducible antinomy discloses itself through a rupture). The purpose being that 1) the object, whose transposition towards being inducted into the modes of circulation was temporarily suspended during crisis, successfully becomes a commodity without any deterrence, and 2) capital needs to generate a new condition of commodity relations by both establishing alternative modes of commodity production and circulation (Althusser already hinted this when he argued that capitalism mutated when the very condition of how the production process functions — in its abstractive sense instead of producing goods in reliance to the quantity of supply and demand — can also be reproduced without having to rigidly apply it to production processes which require labor exploitation).<sup>55</sup> Simply, in the normal operations of political economy, money stands as the mediator for commodity exchange.<sup>56</sup> But in times of crisis, money negates the condition for commodity exchange because *it fabricates the subjects' drive to integrate within the equivalent-form* (or the abstract relations where it is possible to acquire the right to own anything only when the purchaser possesses an entity which has the proportional value with that of the commodity in transaction). Yet here Karatani expressed another note in line with Marx's critique against Bailey and Ricardo: classical and neoclassical economics are complicit in *repressing* this third mediating site and the rupturing effect of this irreducible antinomy (again, this antinomy was already presented as "equivalency" among commodities being expressed as the contradiction between extracted labor and the vanishing of labor value and 'use-value' constructed out of the attempt to resolve the antagonism between *Erscheinung* and *Wesen*) because they both neutralized 'money' as a fetish quality that remains as an illusion. For Ricardo, money is only secondary (while the main 'value substance', for them, should be labor) insofar as it only functions as an index for the equivalences among commodity values that have proportional relations of labor value.<sup>57</sup> The issue of money is minimal in Bailey's formulation

<sup>52</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol. 2, 87-88.

<sup>53</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 165-181.

<sup>55</sup> Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 165.

<sup>56</sup> "Classical economists and their critics, neoclassical economists, overlooked the enigma as to why exchanges could occur only by way of money. For they took money either as a measure of value or as a means of exchange." See Karatani, *Transcritique*, 333.

<sup>57</sup> "All commodities are mutually interrelated, but only mediated by money qua the general equivalent. Ricardo considered labor-value substantial and money secondary, while tacitly relying upon the being of money. All commodities

for the following reasons:<sup>58</sup> a) for him, equivalences between two commodities that have the same use-value is already enough for the direct exchange without accounting money as the mediator of value relations,<sup>59</sup> and b) money, in a neoclassical sense, functions to commence the exchange only when the commodity's value successfully relates itself into value relations. Karatani's intention was to expose the common defect of those two theories; that the empire of capital corrodes when we begin to denounce both its fetish qualities (the critical attitude in unveiling the structural gestures of capitalist productivity) and its totalitarian drive for self-expansion. In Bailey and Ricardo's positions, they fell for those theoretical traps because they only conceived of an object's transposition into commodity exchange within the circulation process.<sup>60</sup> Strictly speaking, their attempts to uncover the pathology of capital, by either rejecting the illusory dimension of money or analyzing money as expended labor, is just the dissolution of capital only within the level of production and consumption processes. This is why Karatani constantly upholds Marx's critique of political economy as a metaphysical affair in contradistinction to both Engels' claim that Marx's dialectics are meant to be materialist and Lukács' argument that Marx's method is aimed to critique totalizing systems of knowledge.<sup>61</sup> If critique in the sphere of production-circulation processes (labor exploitation and theory of commodity fetishism) remains insufficient inasmuch as it underestimates the mysterious movement of capital's internal drive to self-produce itself outside those two processes, then Karatani's close reading of Marx lays out a groundwork of a novel caricature of critique (borrowing from Žižek)<sup>62</sup> that retains this empty *form* that is responsible for sustaining both capitalist illusions and the shattering of its own mystifications (in the form of a suturing).

### Conclusion: The Genesis of Capitalism as the Infinite Reproduction of the Negative

What must be resisted in Marx's critique of classical political economy and industrial capitalism is unilaterally favoring either labor exploitation (in the side of production) and commodity fetishism (in the side of consumption) and instead, confront its ontological emergence: *the origins of industrial capitalism — in a metaphysical sense — is the critique against illusory productions made by a fixed center*. The contours of capitalism in the *Communist Manifesto* are the *profanation of the holy*; but when the perverted drive of capitalism qua religion becomes confronted the dictum must be said in its reversal: *the sacralization of the profane*. The main injunction of capital is not anymore under a static instrumentalization of a center (whether capitalism shifts under the methods of technocratization or empowering human subjectivity) but it is to *negate this center* as another *illusion* which distorts the concrete conditions of socio-historical conditions. So instead of rejecting capital's 'inescapable mad drive' as a mere illusory content and returning the enterprise of philosophy to socio-historical relations,

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are mutually interrelated, but only mediated by money qua the general equivalent. Ricardo considered labor-value substantial and money secondary, while tacitly relying upon the being of money." See Karatani, *Transcritique*, 194.

<sup>58</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique*, 6.

<sup>60</sup> "Marxists typically held that the economic domain was a base structure, while state and nation were superstructure. Furthermore, they restated that the superstructure nevertheless was relatively autonomous to, though determined by, the economic base. First, the very notion that the capitalist economy is base or infrastructure is itself questionable. The world organized by money and credit is rather one of illusion, with a peculiarly religious nature. Saying this from the opposite view, even though state and nation are composed by communal illusion, precisely like capitalism, they inevitably exist thanks to their realistic grounds. So it is that we cannot dissolve them by saying that they are illusory." See Karatani, *Transcritique*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> G.H.R. Parkinson, *Georg Lukács* (Routledge: London, 1977), 41.

<sup>62</sup> "Marx's basic move is the opposite one, the move back to the secret of the form itself. The key trap is not to be blinded by form, but to reduce form to a "mere form", that is, to overlook how the secret essence *needs* this form, how the form itself is essential" See Slavoj Žižek, "The Parallax View," *New Left Review* 25, no. January/February (2004), 55.

what must be done is to treat this as a crucial substance for the emergence of the capital: 1) the secularized diminution of illusion, as another religious-fetish content, which represses capital's internal splitting qua *zero* and 2) the very failure and lack of Capital to reach outside its own limits is its emerging moment itself. Marx's reading of Bailey's critique of Ricardo (that there is no fixed center for the systems of equivalency (labor exploitation, for Ricardo, being the universal essence) to function) should be read both as the rejection of money and the internalization of value within the commodity as illusions. Marx's first remark in "*Section 3: The Form of Value or Exchange-Value*" is that if these 'illusions' are removed, then what can only be explained is a new form that makes the relation of commodities discernible but it will be impossible to explain this empty 'thing' that indicates and signals the direct exchange and the commodity relation itself; this very 'illusion', for Marx, is what completes the exchange. Hence, the problematics regarding capitalism as requiring both a synthesis that ends in an equivalence among values and the negation of the synthesis of values altogether in integrating the commodity within the systems of equivalences should be reinterpreted as:

- 1) The question of how the self-expansory movement of capital should be within the scaffolding of an invincible signifier that resists any correspondence to the empirical realm of social conditions.
- 2) The furnishing of the 'social character' of a commodity is only transmitted and spoken through this empty site that, paradoxically, resists the 'social character' of the commodity itself.

This absent site — yet still maintaining its location in material reality — from any reference to the 'social character' of the commodity vouches for what Marx explicitly discovered in surplus-value and its exploitations. At the first level, they are not under the classification of production process but under an irruptive *splitting* among value systems, buying and selling, and the processes of circulation and production itself. But on a more complex level, the logic of 'difference' among values that is synonymous with the 'splitting' in Marx must be this *empty interstitial gap* (this is not to mean of a higher supra-natural reality of course) *between objects that generates the mode of equivalentiality*; the irreducible force that stands within this 'empty gap' is *the motion of integration*. The empty site where it contributes to the heart of the beast. This gap is the recollection of what Marx relayed in *Kapital I*: the unity of exchange-value and use-value is only fulfilled by its own antinomy; the twofold character of labor value that appears in the commodity.<sup>63</sup> A synthesized value that is ready for the exchange is always mediated by a value-form that stands for the withering of the physical internal properties of the commodity as the main procedure of supplanting the subject into the general equivalent. But in the *Grundrisse* specifically on "The Chapter on Capital", this 'gap' becomes a reinforcement of capital's internal madness: *Capital lies in its special character as the relation of production or circulation to itself but also not within its internal special character that composes labour production or circulation.*<sup>64</sup> Perhaps this is the route in which historical materialism presents its own limits because history as modified feudal relations cannot speak of the 'thing' that obstructs all forward correspondences to any immanent contents but at the same also establishes its own relations to the material. In short, it can't explain the mad drive of capital outside of the domains of productivity and domination. When tasked with how surplus-value can be expressed even without the need to integrate within the circulation process, Marx also insisted in *Kapital I* how surplus-value cannot locate itself within the circulation process because the logic of equivalences as

<sup>63</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol.1, 29-30

<sup>64</sup> Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1973), 186-213.

the conditions for the exchange has no capacity to create values but at the same time it also expresses the value of congealed labor (since equivalences only function to guarantee symmetry among value relations).

It is therefore impossible for capital to be produced by circulation, and it is equally impossible for it to originate apart from circulation. It must have its origin both in circulation and yet not in circulation... The conversion of money into capital has to be explained on the basis of the laws that regulate the exchange of commodities, in such a way that the starting-point is the exchange of equivalents. Our friend, Moneybags, who as yet is only an embryo capitalist, must buy his commodities at their value, must sell them at their value, and yet at the end of the process must withdraw more value from circulation than he threw into it at starting. His development into a full-grown capitalist must take place, both within the sphere of circulation and without it. These are the conditions of the problem. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*<sup>65</sup>

So how does one read the mad drive of capital as both within and outside circulation and production processes? The clue is in the last line *Hic Rhodus, hic salta* (Rhodes is here, here is where you jump!). The expression of capital's madness in Marx's discernible antagonisms within surplus-value is through a *leap*. 'Leap', in *Kapital I*, is theorized to discern surplus-value being realized (the transubstantiation of money to capital in commodity exchanges) as a transition from exchange in its 'larval form' (meaning, a commodity has to begin with following the 'immanent laws of exchange') until it evolves into a 'butterfly' — the exchange now becomes fulfilled by escaping away from those laws of exchanges not to simply speak of transposing towards another rule of exchange viz. circulation process but that exchange, in its final form, is the retraction from all laws of exchange. No wonder Marx prudently pointed out that though the exchange ends in drawing "more value from circulation than he threw into it at starting" the exchange still *must, and yet must not* "take place in the sphere of circulation." Marx's attitude here under the pretext of commodity exchange qua leap, in this sense, has to fully operate under the lack of any positive identity towards both the production and circulation process; this 'leap' being under the denomination of a microscopic difference (the absent locale) between production and circulation. The fascination here is that *suturing* qua leap is not the masking of this 'absent locale' away from social reality but instead this resistance against the positive affirmation of both circulation and production processes are still part of capital's *constant variable* for its functioning: the integration of the absent site as another general system of sense. The alternative move here is not to simply return back to cultural criticism to unmask these malaises (which is another form of *suturing* in a sense that it has forgotten the production aspect of political economy) but to return to the condition of the object who has undergone the traumatic encounter of this 'absent locale' that resists the whole functioning of political economy. From the position of the object who encountered the traumatic suspension of its transposition towards being a commodity, it must be argued that the highest expression of the object should be an inherent *split* that resists its own unification of values: on one hand, the object remains hysterical as it loses its bearing within the production-circulation process; while on the other hand, the exposure of this deadlock reproduces the drive to reconcile both its own innate splitting and the absent site of political economy in the form of *wanting to be a commodity*—the site of *suturing*.

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<sup>65</sup> Marx, *Kapital* vol.1, 114.

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# The Subjection of Disability to the Subaltern in the Philippine Landscape

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**Abstract:** The impairment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) does not lie in a self-evident, physiological, natural, or biological human characteristic but rather lies in the power structures of history and society that normalize certain bodies to abnormalize others in service to the dominant state. This system of power is produced and shaped toward strategic and political ends that create an alienating exclusion to PWDs that are *agency-less*. PWDs as a minority group are evidently underscored in Philippine laws; despite this, their subjection to the subalternity remains through legislators and government agencies that downplay, if not remain blind, to the partial execution of infrastructures and healthcare policies that should have been brought to completion if its framework was motivated by the welfare of PWDs. As a result, they are robbed of their agency because of insufficient health services and ableist infrastructures; these are formulated through the societal norm of a standard body understood as an abled body. Despite the enactment of disability laws, this paper claims that the backbone of its partial materialization draws from the convenience of inaction, incorporating action into the materialization of these policies is a step outside the comfort zone of abled persons and into the reality of discrimination against PWDs that have faded into fiction. This paper will utilize Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern theory to analyze their subalternity as defined as their removal from all lines of social mobility by global, academic, economic, or political structures of power. In this, the underlying barrier of the public perception of inconvenience of any perimeter beyond ableist comfort prevents the embodiment of disability rights from theory into reality. Systems of ableism materialize in the Philippine landscape to replace the lack of full actualization of disability laws. The movement for disability inclusion demands to be situated beyond ableist convenience, its fruition must come from the recognition of the disability as one of the elucidations of the human body. This empowers engagement in disability discourses that will transform society into an environment that is inclusive of human variations.

**Keywords:** *disability, Philippines, Spivak, inaction, laws*

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## Introduction

The inequality in the disproportionate balance between persons with disabilities (PWDs) and abled bodies is analogous to the inequality in their ability to make their perspectives known to themselves and others. Disability cannot be excluded from the human experience; however, it is not included in the whole equation of what constitutes culture as a whole. More so, in the discussion of cultural representations wherein PWDs are excluded from a full share of its making, the lack of disability as the ideal human condition is treated as a positive and universal experience, whereas the experience of disability symbolizes negativity, limitations, impairment, and lack of reciprocity. Such experiences are isolated and individualized, thus denying their right to speak on their subjective reality.

Therefore, the experiences of PWDs are inseparable from the preconditions set by the society from which they belong because of the disablism and discrimination that are embedded in the social framework and the public attitudes that it associates with. Ultimately, PWDs are surrendered to the subaltern, which makes it difficult for them to incorporate their experiences in research, theories, and philosophies outside the discussions of how abled people perceive disability. The Philippine legal landscape has enacted laws such as Republic Act (R.A.) 7277: The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons and the *Batas Pambansang Bilang 344: An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to install Facilities and Other Devices or Accessibility Law* to champion disability rights, however, it is yet to fully materialize into reality as accessibility to infrastructures, health and rehabilitation centers, and auxiliary services remain inadequate.

The paper will use the definition of disability as utilized in Republic Act 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. It states that disability is (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more psychological, physiological, or anatomical functions of an individual or activities of such individual; (2) a record of such impairment; or (3) being regarded as having such an impairment.<sup>1</sup> The laws that serve as the primary policy framework for disability inclusions are R.A. 7277 and *Batas Pambansa Bilang 344*. On one hand, R.A. 7277 states that it is the duty of the state to: (1) ensure the attainment of a barrier-free environment that will enable persons with disabilities to access public and private buildings, and features and devices that promote the mobility of persons with disabilities, (2) provide auxiliary devices and services to restore the functioning and participation of disabled people to the community, (3) provide access to quality education and opportunities to develop the skills of persons of disabilities and take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all persons with disabilities, (4) promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities to access health services at an affordable cost; ensure that the national health program provides services for prevention, early identification and intervention, and establish rehabilitation centers in the government hospitals, (5) ensure that persons with disabilities are not denied access to employment opportunities because of their impairment, persons with disabilities have equal access to employment opportunities, remuneration and benefits and promotions; and that persons with disabilities be given proper accommodations in the workplace, and (6) recognize and promote the rights of persons with disabilities to exercise their political and civil rights by being able to vote, and assemble and organize to advance their welfare and interest. It also highlights the provision for the appropriation of program implementations of respective government agencies and the penalties for the violation of the act.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, *Batas Pambansa Bilang 344* promotes the access of persons with disabilities to the physical environment in order to allow them to realize their rights as active participants in society. It provides the minimum requirements for accessibility for buildings, institutions, establishments, and public utilities for persons with disabilities through the installation of accessible features and facilities such as graphic signs. Public transportation systems in the Philippines, such as national agencies, are required to comply with the accessibility requirements for PWDs.<sup>3</sup>

The experiences of PWDs as the subaltern are alive and working through the power structures of society that will continue to be a struggle as it is not limited to social relationships but infrastructures as well. It is essential to discern cultural, economic, and political struggles through the lens of disabled

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<sup>1</sup> Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, Republic Act No. 7277 (1992).

<sup>2</sup> Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, RA 7277.

<sup>3</sup> *Batasang Pambansa Bilang 344: An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments, and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices*, BP Blg. 344 (1982).

subalterns to attain an authentic liberation that ultimately envelopes the liberation of all. The Philippines has decreed a number of policies and laws that align with the rights of PWDs and nurture their independent agency. However, I argue that these policies advocate for the rights of disability but halt at the culmination of its full institutionalization because it becomes inconvenient, and pointing one's finger at the advocacy for disability rights causes the concept to vanish. The vibrance of the spectrum of disability depicts its conglomerate of different identities that make unjust treatment harder to resist. Therefore, using the subaltern theory of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the paper aims to address how public attitudes and the legal landscape of the Philippines inhibit PWDs from fully attaining civic agency. It argues that the lack of priority and understanding of disability in the Philippine legal landscape that protects the ideologies of abled bodies led to their sense of superiority and dehumanization, not only within themselves but also dehumanizing PWDs to inferiority through the ableist conditions that operate against them. This argument will be supported by (1) the analysis of Spivak's subaltern theory through the lens of disability, (2) the injustices that Filipino PWDs experience through the lack of actualization of disability laws as mandated by the Philippines, (3) and finally, the underlying barrier of inconvenience of any perimeter beyond ableist comfort that prevents the embodiment of disability rights from theory into reality. Power has always been in the grasp of abled people. Thus, they hold the flow of discourse that takes away the voice of disabled subalterns. Likewise, they hold the power to create opportunities to learn and engage in disability discourses that can help transform themselves and society into an environment that is inclusive of human variations.

### Analyzing Spivak's Concept of the Subaltern

The subaltern is generally understood as the marginalized group or lower classes that are alienated from society's institutions for political representation thus, they are left unheard. They are subjected to the inferior rank, may this be because of their race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion. Through this, they are denied their agency because of their social rank. The term "subaltern" was first coined by Marxist philosopher and theorist Antonio Gramsci to refer to the proletariat or the working class that stands on unequal power against the dominant ruling or bourgeoisie class. It is any group or person of low status under the hegemonic domination of the bourgeoisie that denies them the right to the total share of contribution in the making of history and culture. Nothing can escape the ruling class's eyes insofar as it exists within their language of history, Gramsci refers to the ruling class's assertion that their history is considered legitimate and official, whereas the history of the subaltern is redefined, reconstructed, and rewritten in the lens of the ruling class. According to Gramsci, the history of the subaltern groups is sporadic, periodic, and disintegrated as they are subject to histories of the dominant classes.<sup>4</sup> He centered his attention around the study of the subaltern classes of consciousness and culture to ensure that they would not be left unheard instead of focusing on the historical narrative written by the state, which truly consists of the history of the ruling and dominant classes that hold power.

However, Indian feminist critic and post-colonialist theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory on the subaltern became applicable to the expansion of disability studies as she went beyond boundaries and criticized cultural texts that the Western culture had shifted their attention away from. Since the 1970s, the term "subaltern" has been used to refer to the colonized people in Southern Asia as it analyzed their narrative, or lack thereof, in culture, history, human geography, sociology,

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<sup>4</sup> Hemangi Bhagwat and Madhavi Arekar, "On the Margins: Theorizing Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", *Ars Artium: An International Peer Reviewed-cum-Refereed Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 6 (2018): 38-44, <https://vpmthane.org/jbcapp/upload/m6/30.pdf>.

anthropology, and literature. Marginalized groups such as peasants, laborers, and workers were subjected to the subaltern position. She disapproved the first place of Gramsci's assertion of the autonomy of the subaltern groups. Spivak believes that this autonomy results in the homogeneity of the subaltern group and the subaltern subjective identity.<sup>5</sup> She developed this by drawing on the life and experiences of the subaltern women that Indian history has consciously ignored and failed to recognize. Moreover, her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" analyzes the ability of subalterns to speak but focuses on whether they can be *heard*. She states that there are various influences that restrict this, such as when those who hold power in society—politicians, academics, religious leaders, or the privileged—speak for and over them. Through this, the elite take away the voice of the subaltern and replace it with their own. The word "speak" is not limited to having something to say but also to having one's message acknowledged. Moreover, any efforts made by whoever holds the dominant hand to recognize subalterns as one group or to contain a collective speech will further misrepresent their needs, again preventing the subalterns from their right to speak for themselves.

Spivak focuses her theory on the subaltern on issues of gender, specifically Indian women during colonial times, such as the ritual system of *sati* women as abdicated by the British colonial rule. The ritual of *sati* represents the extraction of the widow's identity because she exists within her husband only, deceased or not, who maintains his power beyond death. The friction between two polarities spurred through the humanist arguments of the British for individual freedom and the Hindu law that states that the woman's decision to take part in the ritual system is voluntary through the hope that she may have a happier and better incarnation. Stephen Morton, echoing Spivak's stance that Western perspectives are only justifications of colonialism, "By representing sati as a barbaric practice, the British were thus able to justify imperialism as a civilizing mission in which [...] they were rescuing Indian women from the reprehensible practices of a traditionally patriarchal society."<sup>6</sup> The West perceives their voice as critically superior to that of the subaltern—they must use their power to speak for those who cannot. In the lens of subaltern and colonial discourse, white men are not "saving brown women from brown men" but are denying their right to speak. As the development of subaltern studies progresses, it has grown to become an umbrella concept that ranges from a marginalized person or group being rendered to a subaltern position as they are being silenced. Their voices are being replaced by so-called intellectuals as they are being denied their agency and rights because of their inferior rank.

Spivak argues that the ethical problems that arise when representing others or speaking in their place, especially when it comes from a voice outside of their own space, are also a problem. This is a controversial take because representation of the subalterns is imperative to attain a better footing in society. However, she expands her argument by highlighting that an individual, specifically one with privilege, speaking from the outside space of the subaltern removes the voice of the subaltern for self-representation. Speaking from a subaltern's position in society dismisses the actual subaltern's opportunity to be heard. This problem is aggravated in the situation of PWDs when policymakers who enact laws for their rights not only speak for their needs and craft one-for-all bills that do not recognize the need for explicit provisions but do not urgently see its full actualization to reality.<sup>7</sup> Disabled people occupy the space of intersectional minorities by virtue of being doubly disadvantaged

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<sup>5</sup> El Habib Louai, "Retracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications," *African Journal of History and Culture* 4 (2012): 4-8, doi: 10.5897/AJHC11.020.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Chkravorty Spivak*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2002): 63.

<sup>7</sup> Cruz et al., *Philippine Disability Sector Research: An Initial Analysis of Access to Social and Public Services, Education, Work, and Employment, and Civic Participation and Governance* (Mandaluyong City: The Asia Foundation, 2022): 68.

not just as a result of their impairment but also from the ‘disabling’ experience of having their voices being left out of the politics of impairment, which must be recognized and understood within their own social dynamics.<sup>8</sup> Spivak’s work highlights the value of the humanities while also recognizing problems that affect the economically disadvantaged and marginalized.<sup>9</sup> Her theory on the subaltern fittingly identifies PWDs as subalterns who have no access to resources that fulfill their civic agency as the implementation of Philippine disability laws is left incomplete.

### Disability as the Subaltern in the Philippine Landscape

The inconvenience of implementation that is seemingly the core reason for the non-fulfillment of disability rights is geared towards ingraining the mindset that disabled people must prioritize realigning themselves and undertake life-altering adjustments with existing institutional and economic conditions to indulge the society that created and grew comfortable with ableist norms. Economic rehabilitation appeared possible only because it had been thoroughly deracinated.<sup>10</sup> It is sustained that the language of disability is overlooked in the distribution of public resources that may be an excess to some bodies but has historically and contemporarily been scarce for disabled bodies. The experiences of poverty, race, and gender are included in the assemblage of disability issues.

The claim of inconvenience is built on the discriminatory attitudes that PWDs experience in the Philippine public and private spheres that resulted in their alienation from society. These attitudinal barriers may seem to be factors that can be ignored; however, they are tangibly felt and weaponized as PWDs are forced to stay within the limitations of their homes because of shame and/or fear of judgment from people that dehumanize disability.<sup>11</sup> Derogatory attitudes toward PWDs materialize into physical barriers that block them from their right to accessibility, support, and services from infrastructures and institutions. For example, Organization of Persons with Disabilities (ODPs) expressed that service providers from Philippine institutions refuse to create a disability-inclusive environment because it is *additional work*.<sup>12</sup> The void of this recognition is filled with the derogatory notion that anything beyond the standard-abled body is additional work. The space of difference in bodies and the distinct needs they require connect to a negative perception of additional needs that are seen as unnatural and inhuman.

Disability studies and the approach to laws, infrastructures, and proposals are imperative in discerning the misalignments of the Philippine landscape that condemn PWDs as subalterns. May it be that disability is perceived as an individual anomaly, they should be identified as a minority group that has the right to live in independence, comfort, and integration. However, discrimination and the lack of action toward the rights of disability are so normalized that, occasionally, their experiences of prejudice are no longer seen with discomfort or anger that should be their drive to correct such injustices. In effect, policies are left unfulfilled, suspended, and unsigned. Without proper access to the physical environment, modes of transportation, information and communication, education, employment, health and rehabilitation, and participation in the enactment of disability rights, their agency is hindered. A disability-inclusive environment should include accessible roads, sidewalks,

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<sup>8</sup> Prayathna Kowitz, “Spivak and Rethinking the Agency of Disabled Children,” *The International Journal of Disability and Social Justice* 2, no. 1 (June 2022): 32. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48676195>

<sup>9</sup> Kowitz, “Spivak and Rethinking the Agency of Disabled Children,” 33.

<sup>10</sup> J. Logan Smigles, *Queer Silence: On Disability and Rhetorical Absence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Cruz et al., “*Philippine Disability Sector*,” 68.

<sup>12</sup> Cruz et al., “*Philippine Disability Sector*,” 68.

transportation, and buildings. The Department of Public Works and Highways issued the Enforcement of the Accessibility Law in 2009 to ensure that PWDs would have access to all public spaces and buildings. It provides for the inclusion of braille symbols in signs located in public places and safety routes creation of sidewalks that follow “straightforward routes with right angle turns,” installation of audible signals used for crossings that are easily recognizable from other sounds in the environment to avoid confusion and to guide persons who are blind, and use international symbols for access are used in designated routes and facilities.<sup>13</sup> Apart from these policies running short and only serving the minimum for the requirements of accessible infrastructures and facilities, despite the legal structure that has been stated for its implementation, PWDs continue to live in a disabling environment because of the consistently present narrow sidewalks that bar those using wheelchairs, the lack of tactile provision for PWDs with visual disabilities, and public roads that utilize tall and narrow overpass bridges.<sup>14</sup>

The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons should be aligned with the transportation system to fulfill the aim of the Department of Transportation’s 2014 Task Force on Accessibility which aims to provide an efficient, secure, and accessible transportation system for PWDs; however, years have already passed, and these policies are still not fully implemented. This forces PWDs to surrender to being the subaltern subject as they continue to face challenges in accessing public transport. The inability of blind and those with hearing disabilities are forced to be dependent on navigating through transport facilities which further aggravates their disability.<sup>15</sup> Forced dependency becomes the most viable option for human rights to be accessible, especially when the line becomes blurred between a right and a privilege. This is a forced dependency that PWDs unwillingly embody not to live but to survive. The barrier that causes misunderstandings and division between abled and disabled persons is the impossibility of abled people to empathized with the experiences of disablement because they have never experienced being a minority or being at the receiving end of inequalities in infrastructures,

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<sup>13</sup> Cruz et al., “*Philippine Disability Sector*,” 22.

<sup>14</sup> As stated in the Philippine Disability Sector Research of October 2021, The Department of Public Works and Highways issued Department Order No. 37, series of 2009 or the Enforcement of the Accessibility Law along National Roads that stated numerous requirements for inclusive infrastructures and facilities such as ensuring international symbols for access in designated routes and facilities, braille symbols in signs in public roads and safety routes, and tactile blocks in sidewalks and crossing vicinities for people with visual disabilities. However, members of the ODP stated that they continue to experience obstacles such as (1) narrow sidewalks which do not accompany persons using wheelchairs, (2) non-availability of tactile provision for persons with visual disabilities, (3) inaudible and often dysfunctional, stoplight signals, (4) public roads which prioritize inaccessible overpass bridges, and (5) car-centric public roads which prioritize private vehicles rather than accessible public transportation.

<sup>15</sup> Tactile paving is a combination of ridge patterns, elevated lines, bumps, and other textures that inform persons with visual disabilities if there is a change in the area. These are vital to the daily routines of PWDs as it enables them to safely maneuver through their environment especially if it is an unfamiliar one that contains potential hazards. However, commuters of persons with visual disabilities in the Philippines continue to experience obstructed sidewalks, slippery overpasses, and dangerous pedestrian crossings to be able to arrive at their place of work. According to ABS-CBN News’ series on persons with disabilities commuting in the Philippines, husband and wife, Lorna and Jerry Padilla, regularly experience difficulties in commuting from Barangay Holy Spirit to their work in Tandang Sora, Quezon City. They experience daily challenges as the former is visually disabled while the latter has low vision. Lorna Padilla relies on her husband and co-worker to be able to pass the pedestrian crossing because tactile pavings are not available on their routes to work. They encounter multiple hurdles, such as narrow sidewalks that make it difficult for them to properly walk through because of the obstruction of utility poles, parked vehicles, and litter. Their route lacked audible signals that provided no length of time to cross the streets, resulting in the Padillas being stuck in the middle of the road as they were unsure when to cross safely. They had to rely on other commuters who would give way to them upon the realization of their disability. On their way home, they encounter various overpasses that lack elevators, steep steps, and darker paths, which leads them to rely on one another more especially on days where they encounter rain to avoid slipping and stumbling.

policies, education, wealth, and civil rights. They will never fully understand the impact of a disabling environment that is used to reinforce dominance in political power, economic resources, and unregulated civil rights.

Section 19 of the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons states that the Department of Health (DOH) must establish rehabilitation centers for persons with disabilities. It extends to section 20, wherein it states that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) must establish auxiliary services, including rehabilitation in community-based settings and residential care centers for persons with disabilities. The DSWD Central Office has three (3) major types of programs that cater to the rehabilitation and habilitation needs of persons with disabilities, (a) community-based, (b) residential care facilities, and (3) non-residential care facilities. The community-based programs include Early Detection, Prevention, and Intervention for Disability, Auxiliary Social Services for Persons with Disabilities, and Comprehensive Rehabilitation Program for Children/Persons with Disabilities. DSWD established two residential care facilities, the Elsie Gaches Village and the Accelerating Minor Opportunity for Recovery (AMOR) Village.<sup>16</sup> The AMOR village provides a 24-hour service for rehabilitation, recovery, and development for disabled and non-disabled children who were abused, abandoned, and neglected. These were established to create an environment for PWDs to become productive and independent members of society; however, the department representatives of AMOR village shared that their facilities are under-funded. There is a limit to the number of PWDs that can receive the benefits of the services. More than this, a marginal number of provinces have non-residential care facilities, which leads to an imbalance in access to services. DSWD offices have numerous and overlapping mandates that administering rehabilitation and habilitation services are not always prioritized, thus limiting the capacities and opportunities of PWDs. As such, this can be seen in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao-Ministry of Social Services and Development is currently at the initial stage of developing their Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, which is set to provide for the establishment of rehabilitation centers in all cities or municipalities still in the process.

The only fully functioning rehabilitation center for PWDs is the Cotabato Regional Center yet remains predominantly inaccessible because of the limitations in public transportation and excessive travel time. Despite BARMM-MSSD and DSWD consisting of rehabilitation programs that provide assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, canes, and hearing aids, they both recognize that there must be an increase in assistive devices and be customized to fully support PWDs to live freely and in comfort. Other rehabilitation and habilitation programs are partnered with DOH and provide support for children with disabilities such as assessment, evaluation, and physical and speech therapy. However, these are limited within Metro Manila only because hospitals in rural or less developed areas do not have the funds to implement such projects. This removes the access of PWDs in rural areas from adequate rehabilitation and habilitation services that disable them further from independence. More than this, a large population of PWDs are hesitant, if not refuse, to go to hospitals due to the additional expenses that add on top of their maintenance medication or assistive devices. The accumulated rehabilitation and habilitation projects that were left unfinished or underdeveloped, the slow progress toward institutionalizing mandates, and the apathy toward disablement slights prove the perception that abled people are not bothered or disturbed enough to use their power to be responsive towards the needs of PWDs that would have improved their quality of life. This renders the denial of the personhood of PWDs because abled people seem adamant in implementing more efficient health

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<sup>16</sup> Cruz et al., *"Philippine Disability Sector Research,"* 22.

systems. Despite the laws that have been enacted, its condition being locked at the starting point exhibits the hypocrisy of advocating for the rights of PWDs but falling short of the minimum execution because of the inconvenience and the manpower that it requires.

### **Ableist Convenience as the Barrier of Disability Rights**

Public spheres perpetuate disabling variations through the private and public voices that construct an oppressive environment. The lack of recognition of the diverse forms and inequality in the framework of disability immobilizes disabled bodies from maneuvering through the systems of oppression that shape them. Disabled bodies in the Philippines, especially those in the rural areas, have been the subject position of the subaltern because of the unfulfilled policies and the disabling infrastructures that perpetuate limitations to their agency. They are forced to surrender to the position of the subaltern as abled bodies outside of their own spaces speak on their behalf and do not emphasize the importance of reconstructing public and private spaces that are inclusive of the various contours and narratives of the body. It is problematic to sustain the continuum of violence or inadequacy in action that disabled bodies experience throughout history as the dominant power plays are controlled by people who do not recognize bodies outside of their own. Through this, they thrive off of their privilege that they do not recognize, have the power to maintain and define it as natural, beneficial, and standard to society. The Philippine government offices that are responsible for the protection of the welfare rights of Filipinos advocate for the fast implementation of these rights under the condition that it benefits the greater population and does not deviate from the standard. The justice that they define magnifies the discrimination against disabled bodies because of the lack of urgency that should take place in institutionalizing their policies. The existence of these policies is an act of resistance against ableism, but this resistance cannot be fully known unless it is acted upon with determination and the discrimination that disabled people experience is recognized.

With this, there is a rationalist conviction that all things can be understood, quantified, emancipated, liberated, or narrated. Behind every movement and objective for inclusivity is the conviction that all stones that are left unturned can be discovered and understood, and all pillars of injustices can be corrected to liberation. However, this is brushed under the rug because the undertone of this rationalist conviction is this irrational will in the language of the logic of accumulation, wherein there is no end in sight for the fight for emancipation or liberation. The rational conviction for an expansion of understanding and proliferation in the arsenal of knowledge on disability is grounded in the fight for liberation. However, this becomes overshadowed by the irrational will of the logic of accumulation wherein there is a finish line for the fight for liberation because the correction of heavily embedded discriminations in the system takes time and effort that may lead to an endless series of movements. As a result, time and effort for the disabled is additional work of inconvenience for the abled. This is the foundation of the inconvenience in actualizing disability rights in society.

The presence of these policies is an act of resistance, but it has not been fully institutionalized because of the fear that fully defining it may not succeed or it is too challenging to actualize. The creation of these mandates is for certain minorities to be “visible,” but it is utilized to complement obscure tactics and to make lack of action invisible—*creating spaces for public relations rather than the removal of subalternity*. The establishment of disability rights in the legal system of the Philippines eradicates any insinuations of ableism because the laws for disability inclusion, anti-discrimination, and accessibility are in the Constitution. However, the making of these strategies on paper is simple, and it is just as simple to refuse its actualization. The presence of these laws bares the notion that the theory of resistance is present; public spheres can advocate for the liberation movements of disability and the

assertion of their rights; however, it would be simpler if there were none because the divide between theory and its application to reality is an inconvenience. Through this comes the intersection of the logic of accumulation as the collective goal of equality stops at its lack of a definitive end. Resistance is isolated and cannot be known unless someone acts on this determination or puts himself on the margins of injustices against disability. The pressure of the logic of accumulation wherein there lacks an end in sight in the fight for disability rights is frighteningly fading into fiction or simply words on paper insofar as the disability laws remain in the limitations of a mandate on paper. The picture of resistance can be split into different images, may it be that people are afraid to fully define it because of the fear that it might not lead to success or that people refuse to define it because defining it includes action beyond comfort. It may be that these mandates that wear the face of resistance against ableist injustices cannot be fully explained, characterized, or actualized because it is fueled by another motive or logic that intends to eradicate claims of prejudice against disability. Perhaps such laws were set in stone to evade the claims of an ableist country, though the refusal to see through its materialization justifies the claims that were supposedly avoided.

## Conclusion

Disability is vibrant as it takes shape in various forms. The liberation of one aspect, such as reconstructing tall overpasses or narrow sidewalks to cater to wheelchair users, will develop more instruments of access such that the demand to involve the production of costly auxiliary devices and services that will dim the chances of an end for the fight for equality. The lack of complication is the source of motivation to say one thing and project oneself to it, but it is just as simple to retract such claims to remain within the contentment of the lack of movement. The lack of care and under theorization of disability studies produces the perception of inconvenience in additional work because the recognition of every need in the dynamism of disability is a reflection of an infinite chain of movements for disability liberation. The perceived privation of a conclusion in the fight for disability inclusion is situated on the negative connotations of additional work and inconvenience. Disability needs are perceived as additional work to the Philippine society because it fails to acknowledge bodies beyond the abled. The absence of an end in sight overturns the human right to recognize disability as a part of one of the many narratives of the body.

People with disabilities are societally known as people who are dependent on the “goodwill” of professionals, medical experts, and lawmakers to manage, if not fix, their impairments. Despite this knowledge that has bled into a societal norm, the access of disabled people to proper health, habilitation, and rehabilitation remains inadequate<sup>17</sup>. Their physical environments continue to consist of barriers from infrastructures and transportation facilities that disregard the needs of people with disabilities. These barriers interfere with the participation and enjoyment of disabled people to live independently as these incapacitate them to the subject position of the subaltern. The laws that have been discussed must be translated into action to extricate the idea of privilege hiding in sheep’s clothing of a human right. Equitable access to public spaces and health services must be provided to realize the rights of people with disabilities. However, the partial compliance of government agencies to national laws can be recognized as non-compliance altogether for the blatant disregard for the imbalance of quality of life between the abled and disabled people.<sup>18</sup> The unfinished policies and programs translate to indifference toward the injustices that are deeply rooted in the lived experiences of disabled people as these tangible hurdles are weaponized against them. Non-disabled people’s

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<sup>17</sup> Cruz et al., “*Philippine Disability Sector Research*,” 10.

<sup>18</sup> Cruz et al., “*Philippine Disability Sector Research*,” 10.

inability to understand that humanity is netted with various biological and cultural forms allows them to maintain their position of dehumanization as they fortify their power in an ableist society that serves them. It is ironic that abled people established laws to advocate for disability rights with the underlying notion to remove ableist claims and to fortify these laws only insofar as they achieve the minimum enforcement that remains within the limitation of convenience. The establishment of these laws is a national claim of resistance against ableism; however, its fragmentary actualization is also a claim that its completion is bothersome and a nuisance. Those who dictate its operation are composed of abled people who have never been on the opposite pole of prejudicial hate crimes against disability, thereby lacking the urgency to see these laws to their fruition. Such withstanding beliefs deemed fixed and immutable must be removed to recognize every subaltern disabled person in the Philippines who has little to no access to the benefits of these laws. Liberation for people with disabilities will come with friction and conflict; however, the struggle must not shrink from inconvenience. In this, it must be asserted that emancipation must not come from the liberation from the violence of ableism because this is reactive and negative. Instead, emancipation must be grounded on liberation for disability because this is a clear goal built on positivity. The existence of these laws wears the face of resistance, but true resistance must be working towards something rather than acting in response to something. Disability inclusion does not consist of freedom *from* ableist destruction but freedom *for* emancipation.

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# Unveiling the Virtue and Passion of *Hiya* as a Means of Social Control Against the Filipino Queer Identity

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**Abstract:** There are existing accounts that attribute the concept of *hiya* as a passion that is synonymous with embarrassment or shame, and *hiya* as a virtue which is defined as self-control or a form of sacrifice. However, in this paper, my argumentation shall center on the overarching problem of how patriarchy systematically weaponizes *hiya* in both forms against the queer community. Hence, such weaponization questions the virtuous status of *hiya*. To ground my claim, I analyze the existing literature on queer oppression to elicit how *hiya* perpetuates heteronormative enforcement and exploitation in national, local, institutional, and virtual communities. It also contributes to the subjugation of the queer community to patriarchy as individuals had to suppress their gender identity and expression to avoid the passion of *hiya*. Moreover, the virtue of *hiya* creates a contradiction regarding following social conventions and practicing self-control while attempting to reject and defy patriarchy. Claiming blind conformity and peer pressure seems to oversimplify power dynamics and gender inequality at play. This paper also questions the attribution of propriety of the virtue of *hiya* that failed to recognize reflexivity with the boundaries of conformity grounded in a patriarchal culture. To acknowledge and validate nuanced claims of the queer community in the complex world, there is a need to reduce the virtue into a Filipino value or concept for now. This paper ends with a hope for a cultural reclamation of *hiya* to detach the passion or embarrassment with the community.

**Keywords:** *gender struggle, hiya, Filipino virtues, Filipino Philosophy*

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## The Problem: Homophobia and Discrimination

In the Philippines, homophobia manifests in various ways. For example, the queer community is the constant object of violence due to the aid of poverty and discrimination on the grounds of SOGIE.<sup>1</sup> Religious oppression and violence entail reinforcing heteronormative gender roles and expectations according to Christian values that can be traced back to the Spanish Colonization. In the workplace and academic space, homophobia manifests through discriminatory policies prohibiting the queer community from expressing gender expression. In social media, the queer community is more prone to bullying than heterosexual individuals.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, within social media, repression and “decency” of expressing oneself on social media platforms, according to society, are also expected as an enforcement wing of homophobia. It entails repressing oneself to express aggressive opinions

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Amoronto, “Structural-Systemic-Cultural Violence against LGBTQs in the Philippines” *Journal of Human Rights and Peace Studies* 2 (2016): 92, <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/HRPS/article/view/163851>.

<sup>2</sup> Shiela Mae Quero, “Coping with FB Cyberbullies: A Survey among College Students in the Philippines,” *Research Gate* (2022): 2, doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.19163.85283.

toward LGBT+ rights.<sup>3</sup> Decency entails an expectation of the queer community to prohibit themselves from freely expressing their gender. They are also expected to act according to heterosexual norms with the feminine and masculine binary. Conversely, if a queer individual violates such norms within and outside social media, the negative connotation against the queer community that discriminates strengthens. Such manifestations of homophobia reinforce the narrative that homosexuality or being part of the LGBT+ community is wrong. In other words, the constant negation and discrimination against the queer community contribute to the demonization of homosexuality and deviance from heteronormative norms. Aside from the formation of internalized homophobia, the queer community internalizes the actualized shame contingent on their gender identities and expression.

### Another Problem: Definition of *Hiya*

In a superficial sense, *hiya* translates as shame. However, Pe-Pua and Marcelino, in their work, “Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology): A legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez,” veered against the mistranslation of the value of *hiya* by asserting that such does not equate to “shame” but a “sense of propriety.”<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes retains the element of propriety as a virtue and defines another variant of *hiya* as shame.<sup>5</sup> While the latter is defined synonymously to embarrassment, shame, or shyness, retaining its relational characteristic, the former underscores the importance of recognizing the other person’s welfare (*kapwa*). Moreover, the virtue of *hiya* employs a certain restraint, sensitivity, and intuition in thinking about his *kapwa* before making an action. If one fails to exhibit the virtue of *hiya*, he shall suffer under the passion of *hiya* or be characterized as *walang hiya* (no shame). The lack of the virtue of *hiya* or *walang hiya* entails that one is insensitive, selfish, uncaring, or conspicuous. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, I shall adopt the designation of *hiya(v)* and *hiya(p)*. The established virtue of *hiya(v)* necessitates the adept utilization of sensitivity and intuition in upholding propriety, emphasizing the cultivation of harmonious relationships with one’s *kapwa*. Furthermore, the conventions essential for propriety derive from established societal norms and etiquettes, thus furnishing an ethical framework directed at averting indecency and embarrassment that may cause displeasure within one’s *kapwa*. The passion of *hiya* or *hiya(p)* is the emotional consequence stemming from the deviation of an individual from established social conventions and norms. This affective response, characterized by feelings of discomfort, shame, and embarrassment, not only affects the moral agent but also elicits contempt from their “*kapwa*,” encapsulating the interconnected nature of individual emotional experiences and societal expectations within the framework of Filipino cultural values.

*Pakikisama* is *hiya(v)* manifested in groups. It entails that one should be willing to sacrifice or subordinate the interest of the self for the welfare of others or the majority.<sup>6</sup> To avoid tainting *pakikisama* as a group recession that perpetuates and justifies problematic beliefs and the reduction of *hiya(v)* to peer pressure, Lasquety-Reyes calls for a mature and responsible *pakikisama*. It entails that one should be critical and discern if such belief or action benefits or harms the group. One should

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<sup>3</sup> Xijia Tang and Ak Narayan Poudel, “Exploring Challenges and Problems Faced by LGBT Students in Philippines: A Qualitative Study,” *Journal of Public Health Policy and Planning* 2 (2018), 14, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:158139333>.

<sup>4</sup> Rogelia Pe-Pua and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, “Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology): A legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez,” *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3 (2000), 55, doi:10.1111/1467-839X.00054.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes, “In Defense of *Hiya* as a Filipino Virtue,” *An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East* 26 (2016): 66-70, doi:10.1080/09552367.2015.1136203.

<sup>6</sup> Lasquety-Reyes, “In Defense of *Hiya*,” 74.

also know how to refuse if it leads to disadvantage and harm. However, Lasquety-Reyes acknowledges the limitations of *pakikisama* in huge communities at the societal or national levels. In this paper, I shall mainly challenge the characterization of *hiya* as a virtue due to an irony regarding queer gender struggles that shall contradict *hiya(v)* and *pakikisama* grounded in propriety.

In this paper, I shall argue against the characterization of *hiya* as a virtue by asserting the patriarchal systemic weaponization of such a concept against the queer community. In other words, *hiya(p)(v)* are cultural streams of homophobia and oppression. It is a concept that oppresses and perpetuates patriarchal elements and pressures of heteronormativity. To effectively address the overarching issue, I shall also discuss the following: (1) Implications of *hiya(p)* and the consequences of epistemic ignorance to the queer community through a macroscopic lens; (2) *Hiya(v)* as a means of discriminating social control that may challenge the virtue aspect of the concept; (3) Ways forward on how we ought to perceive the concept; and (4) The possible implications of criticizing the Filipino concept under the queer theory lens.

Propriety as a characteristic of the virtue of *hiya* entails that one should always be directed to think about the welfare of their *kapwa*. Hence, one should always observe sensitivity in following societal norms and conventions. I argue that while *hiya(v)* can develop to and navigate towards *pakikiramdam*, defined as emotional sensitivity or empathy and understanding towards *kapwa*, *hiya(v)* is a self-contradictory non-universalizable motivation that must be broken in certain cases such as in cases of oppression, e.g., in the presence of tyranny and patriarchy. In other words, its challenges as non-universalizable and self-contradictory reduce *hiya(v)* into a Filipino concept. In a similar vein, patriarchy then heightens propriety as a means of subjugation and exploitation. Conversely, it does not provide any conceptual support or mechanisms that recognize gender and queer struggles. In other words, the discourse lacks substantive conceptual underpinnings or operational frameworks that explicitly acknowledge and address the nuanced struggles inherent to gender and queer contexts. Hence, *hiya(v)* fails to satisfy the conditions of consistency, universality, and the motivational aspect of virtue.

It is imperative to scrutinize *hiya(v)* and *hiya(p)* within a queer theoretical framework to critically assess and contest the perpetuated binary paradigms. Specifically, the examination involves elucidating how a conservative societal milieu promulgates the narrative that the queer identity serves as a source of *hiya(p)* through the strengthening of entrenched norms, traditions, and institutional policies. Furthermore, it entails an exploration of how heteronormativity fortifies propriety, thereby fostering a distorted manifestation of *hiya(v)*. It is also crucial to explore the analysis using intersectionality to notice the degree of *hiya(p)* according to one's socioeconomic status.

## On Laws, Government, and Policies

From a macro-level analysis of societal dynamics encompassing legal, governmental, and institutional frameworks, I shall first delineate the attribution of the queer identity as a source of *hiya(p)*, exerting a direct influence on the normative conventions integral to propriety—a prerequisite for *hiya(v)*. Such shall ground the argument that *hiya(p)* contributes to the reinforcement and exploitation of heteronormative norms and pressures.

On the surface, the lack of the SOGIE Equality Bill and Legal Union are blatant manifestations that the Philippines is still highly conservative and non-accepting of the queer community. There is an active production of ignorance, given that our legislation delays and argues

against the SOGIE Equality Bill. There is an active rejection of the validity of the accounts, existence, and experiences of oppression of the queer community as legislators actively perpetuate non-acceptance, which permeates various institutions and most importantly, the Filipino psyche. On a deeper analysis, conservatism and traditional views of heteronormativity validate the queers as a source of *hiya(p)*, perpetuating heteronormativity that may ground in religion while using fear and social exclusion as a tool for enforcement. Such further expands the perceived conservatism that forms a prejudice against the queer community. Moreover, the active ignorance and rejection of laws that protects and recognizes the queers discourage open discussions and discourse about the queer experience. Hence, as it gears toward the progression within the community and citizens, the opening of the topic on queer ideals may result in shaming from conservative sectors and institutions of society.

I acknowledge few local government efforts to protect the queer community were made through the implementation of anti-discrimination ordinances.<sup>7</sup> However, compared to the whole population and demographics of the Philippines, protection through ordinances became a privilege to some citizens depending on their local government. There are still millions of Filipinos without protection from SOGIE-based discrimination. Therefore, there is a crucial need for nationwide protection.

For the sake of preserving *hiya(v)*, propriety in a heteronormative society entails that queer individuals ought to follow these gender-discriminating policies to avoid *hiya(p)* and to be sensitive enough to cater to conservatism. For example, a transgender is forced to follow an educational institution's dress code that prohibits the individual from wearing women's clothing—an attempt to preserve formality with a formed contempt against cross-dressing. Another example is haircut policies that prohibit individuals from freely practicing their desired gender expression. One ought to follow these policies either for the sake of following policies and avoiding sanctions or for fear of being reprimanded as a form of fear-based social rejection and ostracization. Hence, the latter actualizes gender expression out of the binary as a form of *hiya(p)*. *Hiya(v)* endorses upholding propriety and suppressing one's gender identity to avoid *hiya(p)*. A study made by Joseph highlights the experiences of transwomen being discriminated against in employment.<sup>8</sup> When the participants appeared feminine to express themselves, others were discriminated against, while some lost their jobs. Some even had to cut their hair to ensure employment because of some company policies that prohibit transwomen from growing their hair. Such is a manifestation of many queer individuals who had to hide their gender and sexual identity just to find and keep a job, and many gender-discriminating gender policies in which the SOGIE Equality bill addresses.

Criticizing the established limitation of *hiya(v)* to avoid *hiya(p)* in a huge social group that has no attempts to reconcile the injustice of the group delimits and devalues the freedom, rights, and entailments of the queer community. The limit of *hiya(v)* is the start of gender discrimination and oppression. It is the space where patriarchy perpetuates. Imposing propriety while having no detailed and systematic account of how the virtue should manifest in universality and consistency, especially without consideration of the lived experiences of the queer community, creates an avenue for unwanted misinterpretation of the concept. In other words, the lack of clarity, flexibility, and

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<sup>7</sup> F.D. Arizibal, A.V. Aspa, and J.J. Manalo, "Raining on Rainbows: A Comparative Study of LGBT Anti-Discrimination Ordinances Between the Local Governments of Marikina, Manila, and Mandaluyong in the Philippines," *Journal of Government and Civil Society* 7 (2023): 4, doi:10.31000/jgcs.v7i1.6642.

<sup>8</sup> Nadine A. Joseph, "Globalization and Discriminatory Practices Against Trans-women in the Philippines," *International Forum Journal* 5, no. 2 (2012): 94, <https://journals.aiias.edu/info/article/view/149>.

acknowledgment of diversity can be a tool for the distortion of reality particularly by patriarchal culture. It can become a tool for enforcing heteronormative norms to the extent of oppression and discrimination toward the queer community. No system serves as the “checks and balances” for propriety.

Calling for a mature and responsible *pakikisama* grounded in criticalness to preserve *hiya(v)* is not enough to challenge the problematic culture embedded in various social institutions. It is insufficient in causing a cultural change that transforms institutions and societies, such as in the case of the Philippines, to accept the queer community. Moreover, the advocacy to refuse in conformation with the case of patriarchy leads to undiscussed consequences that oppress, marginalize, and discriminate. The proposed system only seems like a superficial either-or situation: either it criticizes or refuses the enforced culture. Another consequence of an apparent lack of such system explicates the extent of criticism, rejection, and refusal allowed or tolerated depending on the degree of force and power of an institution's degree of oppressiveness of a culture.

In summary, the present legal frameworks, societal regulations, and institutional structures in the Philippines collectively endorse a paradigm of epistemic ignorance that systematically dismisses the challenges faced by the queer community. These mechanisms further reinforce conservative ideologies by contending with notions of impropriety or unnaturalness concerning queer identity. Consequently, the generation of knowledge on the spectrum of gender identities and variations beyond the binary is consistently obscured by the prevailing culture of heteronormativity. In other words, the patriarchal culture actively impedes discussions surrounding queer identity and gender by rejecting the SOGIE Bill and maintaining a lack of diversification in heteronormative policies.

## On Family and the Self

This paper underscores that enforcing *hiya(v)* contributes to the subjugation of queer community to heteronormative standards and patriarchy. It is a form of social control to trivially and systematically classify heteronormative violating concepts, beliefs, and activities as a means to enforce subjugation and conformity. Within families, queer individuals had to suppress their gender identity and gender expression to avoid *hiya(p)* through social and familial rejections. In a study conducted by Joselito Ereño to explicate the reasons why homosexual adolescents remain “closeted” at home but “out” at school, a participant shared their fear of rejection and disownment from parents because she knows that parents would find it difficult to accept them.<sup>9</sup> In another study conducted by Ceperiano et al. in 2016 that seeks to understand the implications of the societal judgment on queer community in urban poor contexts, a participant stated:

*...parang kabihyan sa part ng papa ko tsaka ng mama ko. Kasi nga parang nakakababa ng pagkatao nila na may anak silang ganun so tinatago ko na lang yun. (...it's a source of shame for my father and my mother. It's like lowering their dignity to have a son who is like that [gay] so I just hide it.)<sup>10</sup>*

The participant suppresses their gender identity and gender expression because they believe their identity is a source of *hiya(p)*. While *hiya(p)* is a personal perception that extends to a relational

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<sup>9</sup> Joselito Ereño, “Playing it Straight: A Phenomenological Study of Filipino Homosexual Adolescents who are ‘Closeted’ at Home but are ‘Out’ at School,” *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies* 2 (2014), 111, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333671311>.

<sup>10</sup> Ceperiano et al., “Intersectionality of Sexuality, Gender, and Class in Urban Poor Contexts” *Philippine Journal of Psychology* 49, no.2 (2016): 10, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:167216176>.

phenomenon, patriarchy transformed the directionality with the *hiya(p)* into a relational prejudice that immediately influences the personal. In other words, societal heteronormative pressure determines the queer identity within the queer psyche as a source of *hiya(p)*. Individuals with internalized homophobia employ their power and the belief that being queer is a manifestation of *hiya(p)* to force queer individuals to subjugate themselves within heteronormativity. Hence, queer individuals who experienced shaming at an early age may lead to the suppression of their gender identity and expression. Moreover, they will deeply internalize the idea that being gay is wrong, accepting the oppressive framework. The active ignorance that invalidates their existence may lead to constant torment, existential crisis, gender dysphoria, low self-esteem, and internalized homophobia.

Moreover, the internalized ascription of the queer identity as a source of *hiya(p)* across various individuals within a community may create a systematic distortion of *hiya(p)(v)* that discriminates against the queer community. Such active production of ignorance regarding queer validity may further influence all individuals thus worsening the present conditions of queer individuals. This current framework does not offer any self-correcting system nor criteria to assess whether propriety and classification of *hiya(p)* are justified or morally acceptable. More so, conservatism further perpetuates the distribution of distortion in gender identity across various social institutions. It hinders individuals from exploring their sexuality and gender due to fear of shame and social rejection.

One could argue that subjugation to heteronormative standards is a manifestation of blind conformity and peer pressure that taints the “virtue-ness” of *hiya*. Scholars may then dismiss the case on subjugation to heteronormative to preserve the virtue of *hiya*. However, such dismissal leads to another major problem: what should queer individuals do to follow the virtue of *hiya* while rejecting and defying patriarchy? Such problem becomes paradoxical given that the dominating conventions, norms, rules, and laws are patriarchal in nature. On the one hand, claiming blind conformity and peer pressure seems to oversimplify power dynamics and gender inequality at play. If queer individuals choose to defy and reject heteronormative standards, they shall be labeled as *walang hiya* and suffer *hiya(p)*. While their rejection and defiance of these standards validate their existence and identity, they may suffer constant discrimination, ostracization, and violence as enforced by patriarchy through homophobia. On the other hand, conforming to heteronormativity shall result in constant suppression and invalidation of the self. All the anxiety, oppression, dysmorphia, and exploitation are at the expense of choosing to conform and please their *kapwa*, especially their families. It is a trap. It is a series of double binds. It entails that societal culture and pressures force queer individuals into confusing and contradictory demands and expectations, ultimately leading to negative consequences. For example, the community is forced to choose between living an authentic life that constantly risks their safety and facing social sanction, ostracization, and discrimination against following gender-discriminating policies that prohibit authentic expression for familial and social acceptance. Hence, no matter what queer individuals choose, they always seem to face challenges emanating from pressures of heteronormativity or elements of patriarchy. They only have to pick which difficult consequence they deal with. As long as society conservatively perceives the queer identity as a source of *hiya(p)*, the complex practice of *hiya(v)* for the community will be difficult, if not impossible.

Another form of oppression caused by *hiya(v)* nuanced to queer experience is reinforced through the practice of benevolence in homophobia. It entails that the presented gender acceptance is an illusion due to homophobic undertones. Such benevolent acts may be masked under a subtle intention to repress the gender expression of a queer individual. For example, within families, conditional acceptance or tolerance entails the “acceptance or tolerance” of a queer family member

while prohibiting the practice of gender expression. In other words, they only “accept” the gender identity of a family member if they do not flaunt or remain discreet with their relationships or expressions. In this case, homophobia lies in the intention behind the want to remain discreet. One could argue that even if the family merely tolerates or accept the queer individual to a bare minimum, they see and believe that being a queer is a source of *hiya(p)*. Remaining discreet is important either because they do not want their child to suffer any sanctions and discrimination related to gender or because the family is upholding a reputation to protect; thus, having a queer family member may tarnish such reputation or bring shame to the family. Hence by practicing *hiya(v)* through suppression of one’s gender expression identity, he and his family shall not experience *hiya(p)*. In another light, while the intention may seem benevolent; for example, parents protecting their queer child from the possibility of bullying, the act remains a reinforcement of traditional oppressive stereotypes. Discouraging a queer child from freely expressing themselves may convey the idea that there is something wrong, and shameful about being queer. Instead, while it is important to recognize the uncontrollability of bullying, parents must nurture a space where the queer child develops resilience and confidence within themselves, which reinforces one’s self-love and acceptance.

To underscore the intersectional dimensions of *hiya(p)*, its ramifications are notably evident in the context of conditional acceptance. Within economically disadvantaged communities, the acceptance of individuals is contingent upon their financial stability.<sup>11</sup> In essence, the ability to freely express one's desired gender identity without suffering the *hiya (p)* hinges upon one's capacity to both support their family and maintain personal sustenance. This underscores a fundamental dynamic wherein individuals must continuously strive to appease familial and societal expectations to attain propriety in adherence to *hiya(v)*.

In the gay community, there exists a stratification of *hiya(p)* associated with the queer identity, contingent upon one's socioeconomic standing.<sup>12</sup> The community tends to regard an affluent *bakla* with a certain level of sophistication, deeming them as 'chic,' whereas their working-class counterpart is often stigmatized as '*parloristang bakla*' as cheap. This differentiation in perception highlights a nuanced hierarchy within the community, wherein socioeconomic status influences the attribution of *hiya(p)* and contributes to the construction of distinct social categories based on class distinctions.

### The Progressive Solution on Perception and Categorization

The problem with the *hiya(v)* grounds itself in a vague unsystematic sense of propriety. There is also a sense of arbitrariness, relativity, and subjectivity when it comes to the determination of conformity, which patriarchy may be able to weaponize against the queer community. While relativity entertains inclusivity, it may also entertain the justification of problematic beliefs. The current accounts of *hiya(v)* fail to recognize the existing double bind the queer community constantly faces. It also fails to recognize the societal reduction of the queer identity as a source of *hiya(p)*. Moreover, the fact that this paper points to the lack of capacity for universalizability and consistency within queer experience solidifies the necessity to reduce *hiya(v)* into a Filipino concept or a socialization tool. Claiming such a virtue now justifies the heteronormative standards and conventions requiring adherence.

<sup>11</sup> Ceperiano et al., “Sexuality in Urban Poor Contexts, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Tan, “Survival Through Pluralism: Emerging Gay Communities in the Philippines,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 40 no. 3-4 (2001), 127, doi:10.1300/j082v40n03\_07.

It is also important to assess the nature and categorization of *hiya(p)* and how it operates the narrative of queer identity as a source of shame. First, it is important to establish the relational aspect of *hiya(p)*. It entails acknowledging that one cannot control and dictate the reaction, belief system, and characterization of the shame of the other. From this fact, one can only control one's reaction, emotions, and characterization of shame. Ideally, an individual who developed a high capacity for self-love and self-acceptance would have a disposition against attaching *hiya(p)* toward queer identity. Therefore, self-acceptance presents a potential solution for breaking free from self-imposed oppressive introspection and the impact of external discrimination. It is a way to reclaim one's gender identity and transform fear of social rejection and ostracization into source of passionately loving and accepting oneself even more.

If one fails to cultivate the capacity for self-love and self-acceptance, they might find it harder to detach *hiya(p)* against queer identity. They might constantly conform to heteronormative norms due to a fear of social rejection and ostracization.<sup>13</sup> It hinders the capacity to reduce the power to abate internalized homophobia. They constantly subjugate themselves to patriarchy with a distorted sense of propriety.

If one cultivates their capacity for self-love and self-acceptance, they will freely practice their desired gender expression and identity while leaving discrimination at the foot of acknowledgment. They do not consider their queer identity as a source of *hiya(p)*. They reject and deviate from patriarchal norms and pressures of heteronormativity by embracing their queer identity. They recognize that the established norms for propriety invalidate and discriminate queer community. In this case, propriety, a characteristic of *hiya(v)*, must be broken. In a study that elicited the lived experience and challenges of gay college students, a participant emphasized the importance of self-acceptance as a coping mechanism.

*Sa pamamagitan ng pagtanggap ko sa aking sarili at naniniwala ako na hindi ko kailangan magtago dahil ginusto ko kung ano ako ngayon. Mga pagsubok lang yan 40 ang mga bagay na nararanasan namin bilang bakla. Kailangan mo lang maging malakas at matapang dahil pinili namin itong situasyon na to kung kaya't tatanggapin namin mga pangungutya. Pero kung sosobra na ang mga tao. May karapatan na rin kaming lumaban. (By accepting myself and believing that I don't need to hide because I chose to be who I am now, I face challenges that are just part of being gay. I just need to be strong and brave because we chose this situation, so we will accept the insults. But if people go too far, we also have the right to fight back.)<sup>14</sup>*

The participant utilizes a self-affirming approach to emancipate themselves from societal heteronormative pressures. They eschew the notion of being a cause for *hiya(p)* and actively defy heteronormative propriety by consistently opting for authenticity over conforming to conventional expectations, thereby refusing to conceal their true identity. They also acknowledge the challenges that they must face as a queer person and acknowledge the right to retaliate.

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<sup>13</sup> In a study conducted by Tan, Reyes, and Davis, the researchers found out that parental attitudes, discomfort and fear of social rejection due to the social milieu, and negative experiences about their sexual minority status contribute to the fruition of internalized homophobia. See A.C. Tan, M.E. Reyes, and R. Davis, "Parental Attitude, Internalized Homophobia, and Suicidal Ideation Among Selected Self-Identified Filipino Gay Men in the Philippines," *Suicidology Online* 10, no. 8 (2019): <http://www.suicidology-online.com/pdf/SOL-2019-10-8.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Ferrer et al., "The Exploration on the Lived Experiences and Challenges Faced of the Gay College Students Amidst COVID 19" *International Journal Of Advance Research And Innovative Ideas In Education* 7 (2021): 795-815, doi:10.6084/m9.figshare.13724512.v.

Adjacently, the actualization of *hiya(p)* through freely practicing one's gender expression could catalyze conversations and discourse while challenging conservative ideals and beliefs regarding the lived queer experience. One must combat the epistemic ignorance perpetuated by patriarchy by validating queer existence and struggles. The ultimate goal is systematically detaching queer identity against *hiya(p)*. It must start from within by questioning one's perception and standards of *hiya(p)* rooted in patriarchy and pressures of heteronormativity.

## Conclusion and Implications

There is no need to characterize every Filipino concept or value as a virtue, especially if such classification lacks universality and consistency to be adapted and cultivated by everyone, diversity to recognize nuances such as gender, and rational systems that address ironies, specific concerns, and anomalies.

Moreover, I explicated that *hiya(v)* contributes to the perpetuation of conservatism among Filipinos that justify traditional beliefs regardless of their ethical implications. For patriarchy, it has become a tool and a weapon for enforcing and policing heteronormative gender norms disguised as a virtue. It hinders radicalization, inclusivity, reflexivity, and diversity toward gender sensitivity and the discourse towards other societal issues such as divorce, abortion, and the abolition of patriarchy. It also influences an individual as it introspectively shapes his perception of what constitutes *hiya(p)*. Given the patriarchal nature of society, continuous devaluation, marginalization, and discrimination towards the queer community instill fear, internal conflict, confusion, and internalized homophobia.

Despite the bleak reality, this paper attempts to offer hope against the ascription of the queer identity with shame or *hiya(p)*. The immediate linguistic solution is classifying *hiya(v)* as a Filipino concept or socialization tool. Deeming such a virtue entails detrimental consequences, as its vagueness may lead to queer oppression. Another way is to cultivate self-love and self-acceptance, for it leads to personal clarification that being queer is not a source of shame. In other words, introspective reflection guided by self-love and self-acceptance may validate his own queer experience and identity.

In conclusion, I have assessed the *hiya(v)(p)* and identified their patriarchal bindings in hopes that this may be a catalyst for the academe to reevaluate Filipino virtue and value under a queer-theory to identify and locate traces of heteronormativity. Once identified, they may apply the queer theory lens in underscoring intersectionality to criticize patriarchal characteristics of Filipino virtues and values. Therefore, radicalization and recreation of these virtues and values towards diversity and inclusivity becomes possible.

Finally, for the queer community, I ask that you resist to embrace oneself as an anomaly of society as a result of *hiya(p)(v)*. Reclaim every gender identity and gender expression to detach the characterization of *hiya(p)* within oneself. The queer community has endured vigorous trials and will continue to face endless challenges in pursuing civil liberties and societal recognition. Never falter in the attempt to forge a place of acceptance and equity within the fabric of social reality or, if necessary, tear a hole in it.

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## Ang Sarili at Pagkakararalan Tungo sa Kaganapan at Dekolonisasyon ng Pilosopiyang Pilipino

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**Abstract:** Pangunahing layunin ng papel na ito ang patunayan na mayroong konsepto ng sarili sa kamalayang Pilipino at gamitin ang pag-unawa rito sa pagtugon sa mga suliraning nakapalibot sa pilosopiyang Pilipino. Abala ang unang bahagi sa pagpapatibay ng pagkameron ng sarili at paglalahad ng depinisyon at mukha nito sa pamamagitan ng pagsagot sa mga sumusunod na katanungan: “Mayroon bang Sarili?” at “Ano ang Sarili?” Nakatungtong ang pagpapatibay at paglalahad na ito sa metalinggwistikal na pagsusuri ni Leonardo Mercado at pagmumuni sa meron ni Roque Ferriols. Mapapansin sa paglalarawan sa sarili ang pagkamangha ni Mercado sa konsepto ng kasararalan salungat sa kalayaan. Ang pagtuon ni Mercado sa kasararalan ang tulay patungo sa pagsagot sa mga paratang sa pilosopiyang Pilipino. Sinasabi ni Noel Pariñas na imposible ang pagkakaroon ng pilosopiyang Pilipino habang naniniwala naman si Rolando Gripaldo na Kanluranin ito. Naging inspirasyon ng papel na ito ang “balangkas ng dekolonisasyon” ng peministang si Kelly Agra sa pagtugon sa dalawang suliraning inihayag ni Pariñas at Gripaldo. Kung kaya’t ipinakikita ng papel na ito na mahahalagang sangkap ang ating pag-unawa sa sarili at kasararalan sa pagpapasimula ng dekolonisasyon at maging sa pagbibigay kaganapan mismo sa kasararalan. Higit sa lahat, pinalilitaw ng buong diskursong ito ang hindi napapansing kahalagahan at implikasyon ng pagsasaliksik tungkol sa sarili; kalakip nito ang hangad na mas marami pang mga palaisip at mag-aaral ang magtangka na sumisid sa mga hindi kilalang mga sangkap ng pilosopiyang Pilipino habang nakikilahok sa proseso ng dekolonisasyon ng Pilipinong kaisipan.

**Keywords:** *Filipino philosophy, sarili, kasararalan, dekolonisasyon*

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### Pambungad

Sa aking pagbabasa ng mga panitikan sa pilosopiyang Pilipino, dalawa ang napansin ko: una, napakaraming panitikan ang tungkol sa mga konsepto ng loob, sakop, at kapwa habang kakaunti ang pananaliksik tungkol sa sarili; at ikalawa, karamihan ng mga akdang isinulat ng mga Pilipinong palaisip ang gumagamit ng balangkas at pamamaraang kanluranin pero nakapaloob pa rin ang mga nasabing gawa sa kategoriya ng pilosopiyang Pilipino. Sa unang paningin, parang walang ugnayan ang dalawang ito. Kaya, layunin ng papel na: (a) patunayan na mayroong sarili; (b) ipakita kung ano ang sarili; (c) at gamitin ang ating pag-unawa ng sarili at kasararalan sa pagsagot sa mga suliraning nakapaloob sa pilosopiyang Pilipino. Kaya, sa abot ng aking makakaya, nais kong bigyan kasagutan, sa una at ikalawang bahagi, ang dalawang tanong na ito: “Mayroon bang sarili?” at kung mayroon man, “Ano ang sarili?” Abala ang unang tanong sa pagka-meron ng sarili sa kamalayang Pilipino at sinusubukan naman ng ikalawa na tukuyin ang depinisyon ng sarili at ilarawan ito. At mula sa kahulugan at paglalarawan kung ano ang sarili, hangad ko na maging patunay ito sa aking sagot sa unang tanong.

Dalawang balangkas at patakaran sa pamimilosopiya ang aking sisipiin sa pagsagot ng dalawang tanong. Una, ang metalinggwistikal na pagsusuri ni Leonardo Mercado, S.V.D. Ikalawa, ang metapisika ng pagmemeron ni Roque Ferriols, S.J. Sa aking pagbibigay ng kasagutan sa unang tanong, magkahiwalay kong gagamitin ang kanilang balangkas at patakaran. Ito naman ay aking sabay na gagamitin upang sagutin ang ikalawang tanong. Bubuksan ng huling bahagi ng aking papel ang dalawang problemang kinahaharap ng pilosopiyang Pilipino sa pananaw ni Noel Pariñas at Rolando Gripaldo. Susubukan kong sagutin ang kanilang mga paratang gamit ang iminumungkahing balangkas ng peministang si Kelly Agra sa pinakasimula kasabay ang pagpapahalaga ni Mercado sa konsepto ng sarili at kasarinlan.<sup>1</sup> Palalalimin at palalawakin ko ang bagong balangkas na ito gamit ang pilosopiya ni Roque Ferriols upang bigyang linaw ang kaganapan ng pilosopiyang Pilipino at papaano ito padadalisyain sa mukha ng suliraning kinahaharap ng Pilipinas bilang isang post-kolonyal na bansa. Ipakikita ko ang kahalagahan ng sarili at kasarinlan sa pagsasaganap ng pilosopiyang Pilipino.

Sa puntong ito, inaanyayahan ko ang mambabasa ng sanaysay na ito na bitawan muna ang iyong kasanayan sa pilosopiyang kanluranin. Susubukan natin, sa abot ng ating makakaya, na sumisid sa daigdig ng sarili at ng pilosopiyang Pilipino mula sa pananaw ng isang Silanganin.

## I. Mayroon bang Sarili?

### *Ang Metalinggwistikal na Pagsusuri ng Sarili ni Leonardo Mercado*

Si Leonardo Mercado ang unang Pilipinong palaisip na nagsulat ng disertasyon at naglambag ng libro ukol sa mga Elemento ng Pilosopiyang Pilipino sa lapit ng pilosopiya at antropolohiya gamit ang lingwistika at penomenolohiya.<sup>2</sup> Sa ganitong konteksto, napakahalaga ng tanong na binuksan ni Mercado sa simula ng isang bahagi ng kaniyang sanaysay: “Kung wala tayong madalamuhat na batis sa pilosopiyang Pilipino, paano tayo magsasaliksik tungkol dito?”<sup>3</sup> Agad niyang sinagot na sa kaniyang palagay, isang mainam na batis ang napupuno sa kakulangan na kaniyang nabanggit. Magiging pangunahing metodolohiya ni Mercado ang pagsusuri ng wikang Filipino at ang ugnayan nito sa kultura at kamalayang Filipino, lalo ng Tagalog, Ilokano, at Bisaya, sa kaniyang pamimilosopiya.<sup>4</sup>

Ngunit bakit wika? Dahil para kay Mercado, sinsalamin ng wika ang isang pananaw-sa-mundo o *worldview*.<sup>5</sup> At ano ang pananaw-sa-mundo na ito? Isang pananaw-sa-mundo na holistiko: ang loob ay lumalabas;<sup>6</sup> ang tao ay binubuo ng katawan, kaluluwa, at hininga;<sup>7</sup> at ang sarili ay hindi hiwalay sa kaniyang pagkatao.<sup>8</sup> Mula sa ating pag-intindi sa kahulugan at pamamaraan natin ng paggamit sa ating

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<sup>1</sup> Ang balangkas ni Kelly Agra ay nakatuon sa dekolonisasyon at paglalapat ng peminismo sa kritikal na teorya sa Pilipinas. Huhugutin ko lamang ang balangkas na iminumungkahi na nakasentro sa pagtakwil sa kanluraning balangkas. Kaya hindi gaano mahaba ang magiging talakayan dito lalo’t hindi angkop ang buong balangkas sa aking layuning gawin.

<sup>2</sup> Romualdo Abulad, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st Century,” *Suri* 5, no. 1 (2015): 6, [http://suri.pap73.org/issue6/Abulad\\_SURI\\_2016.pdf](http://suri.pap73.org/issue6/Abulad_SURI_2016.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2005), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Kung papansinin ang mga gawa ni Mercado mga sanaysay at akda, marami rito ang nagsisimula sa isang bahagi na pinamamagatang *metalinguistic analysis* dahil Ingles ang ginagamit ni Mercado na wika sa pagsusulat.

<sup>5</sup> Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Divine Word University Publications, 1974), 66, 70-71.

<sup>7</sup> Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series III, vol.8 (USA: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 30.

wika, mapapansin natin na mayroon itong galaw at katalagahang inihahayag na siyang nagpapatunay ng holistikong pananaw ni Mercado.

Kaya hindi nakagugulat pa na para kay Mercado, mayroong sarili sa kamalayang Pilipino dahil umiiral ang salitang ito sa ating wika. At dahil nahahanap ang sarili sa ating wika, natatanto natin na bahagi ito ng ating pananaw-sa-mundo lalo sa sari't sari nating paggamit nito upang tumukoy sa iba't ibang kondisyon ng pagiging sarili. Sa balangkas ni Mercado, at maging ng ibang palaisip, natatauhan tayo at lumalalim ang ating pag-unawa sa sarili sa ugnayan nito sa ibang konsepto sa kamalayang Filipino lalo't higit ng loob.

Mayroong tatlong mahahalagang konsepto sa pilosopiya ni Mercado na magkakaugnay lagi kapag pinaguusapan ang sarili: ang loob, sakop, at kapwa. Ang loob ay ang kaloobang lumalabas, at ang kabuuan ng sarili.<sup>9</sup> Ang katalagahan ng loob ay napapansin natin sa ating intelektwal, emosyunal, bolisyunal, at etikal na paggalaw.<sup>10</sup> Upang mas lalong maintindihan kung paano lumalabas ang loob sa intelektwal, emosyunal, bolisyunal, at etika na paggalaw, isinaayos ni Albert Alejo, S.J. ang mga paggalaw na tumutukoy sa loob ayon sa sa apat na dimensyong ito. Ilan sa mga ito ay ang sumusunod: intelektwal - isaloob at saloobin; emosyunal - masama ang loob at buhay ang loob; bolisyunal - kusang loob at mula sa loob; at etikal - utang na loob at mababang loob.<sup>11</sup> Ang sakop naman ay tumutukoy sa pagtuon ng pansin ng mga Filipino sa pagiging bahagi ng isang pangkat - tulad ng pamilya, barkada, at kapitbahayan - kung saan ito matutukoy ng mga sarili bilang 'tayo.'<sup>12</sup> Kung kaya ang sakop din ay pook ng pakikipagkapwa sa ibang sarili.<sup>13</sup> Unang umusbong ang pagsusuri ng kapwa sa sikolohiyang Filipino ni Virgilio Enriquez na pinagtibay din ni Mercado sa kaniyang pilosopiya. Ayon kay Enriquez, ang kapwa ay pagkilala sa pakikibahagi ng kalooban ng ating sarili sa kalooban ng ibang sarili.<sup>14</sup> Ang kapwa ang mga hindi-ako na nakikipag-ugnayan sa atin at tayo sa kanila. Palalalimin pa natin ang ugnayan ng mga konspetong ito sa bahagi ng ating paglalarawan kung ano ba ang sarili.

#### *Ang Metapisika ng Pagmemeron ng Sarili ni Roque Ferriols*

Naiiba naman ang balangkas ni Ferriols kay Mercado. Kung si Mercado ang unang naglambag ng akda tungkol sa pilosopiyang Filipino, naging tanyag naman si Roque Ferriols sa pagsisimula niya ng pamimilosopiya sa wikang Filipino.<sup>15</sup> Kinikilala ang kaniyang akdang 'Pambungad sa Metapisika' bilang isa sa kaniyang pinakamahalagang gawa, lalo't dito lumitaw ang kaniyang pilosopiya ng pagmemeron. Sinimulan ni Ferriols ang pagpapakilala sa 'meron' sa pagpapakita kung paano gumagalaw ang isip.<sup>16</sup> Ang ating mga isip ay may: (a) laman; (b) at hangganan.<sup>17</sup> Ang bagay na iniisip ang laman at ang bagay na ito ay may hangganan. Kapag inisip ko ang plato, hindi baso o kutsara ang

<sup>9</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, "Reflections on Buut-Loob-Nakem," *Philippine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1972): 598, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634841>.

<sup>10</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas Ng Pag-Unawa Sa Loob Ng Tao* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 30-32, E-book.

<sup>12</sup> Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 100.

<sup>13</sup> Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> quoted in Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 69.

<sup>15</sup> Paterno R. Esmaguil II, "Father Roque Ferriols, Pioneer of Philosophy in Filipino, Dies at 96," *Rappler*, last modified February 25, 2022, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/jesuit-priest-father-roque-ferriols-dies-august-15-2021/>.

<sup>16</sup> Jacklyn A. Cleofas, "Konsepto at Pag-Asa Ayon Kay Ferriols," *Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities Asia* 5, no. 1, (2015): 22, doi:10.13185/ap2015.05102.

<sup>17</sup> Roque Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press - BlueBooks, 2014), 1.

magmemeron sa aking isipan, kundi tanging plato. At habang nadadagdagan ang mga salitang tumutukoy sa bagay na nasa isip, lalong kumikitid ang hangganang ito.<sup>18</sup> Kapag inisip ko ang platong yari sa kahoy, kumikitid lalo ang kategoriya na nagmemeron sa aking isipan dahil hindi na hinahayaan ng aking isipan na maisip ang mga hindi-plato at maging ang mga hindi-platong-kahoy.

Natatauhan tayo ng ganitong pagpansin sa mga bagay na yaon at mga bagay na hindi yaon kung kaya alam natin at naiisip pa rin ang ako at ang salungat nito, ang hindi-ako.<sup>19</sup> At namamalayan din natin na ang nag-iisip na ito ay *ako*. At maaaring makapag-isip o makapag-imbento ang *akong* ito na nag-iisip ng maraming konsepto na maaaring malawak ang hangganan, pero magbabago ito kapag tinanong na natin: “Meron ba?”<sup>20</sup> Halimbawa, may kakayahan ang aking isip na makabuo ng isang imahe ng Pegaraw bilang isang nilalang. Maaaring iguhit ko pa ito o maglilok ng eskultura nito. Pero kapag tinanong ko na, “Meron bang Pegaraw?” napapaisip ako kung meron nga ba, kung umiiral ba ito sa mundo. Matatagpuan ng akong-nag-iisip ang kaniyang sarili na kaharap ang wala at meron.

Tumutukoy ang ‘meron’ sa mga bagay na may talagang pag-iral.<sup>21</sup> Kapag binibigkas ng isang nag-iisip ang meron, hindi na lamang ito konsepto na laman ng isipan, kung ‘di pagbigkas ng “isang talagang umiiral, talagang meron at nagmemeron.”<sup>22</sup> Purong kaisipan ang konsepto habang nakatapak sa katalagahan ang meron.<sup>23</sup> Mapapansin natin sa puntong ito na sa pagmemeron ni Ferriols, mayroong ako na nag-iisip at nakabubuo ng mga konsepto sa kaniyang isipan. At kapag binigkas niya na ang laman ng kaniyang isipan, tumutukoy na ito sa talagang nangyayari na namumulatan niyang nagmemeron ayon sa kaniyang pagdanas, pagmasid, at pagkilatis.

Ibinubuod ni de Leon ang Pamamaraang Pilosopikal ni Ferriols sa tatlong salita na bumubuo sa isang patakaran: danas-masid-kilatis.<sup>24</sup> Malinaw sa mga sulat ni Ferriols ang sinasabi ni de Leon na ang pagbabad sa karanasan ang pinakamahalaga. Hindi na kailangan ng kumplikadong pagpapatotoo dito dahil sa unang pahatid pa lamang ng kaniyang aklat, sinabi na ni Ferriols, “Lundagin mo beybe!”<sup>25</sup> Hamon ni Ferriols sa atin ang isapraktika ang nauunawaan, ang magmasid sa mundo, ang danasin ang meron, at ang pagkilatis sa lahat ng ito. Sa patakaran ni Ferriols, kailangan umangkop ang konsepto sa meron.<sup>26</sup> Kailangan ng ako na nag-iisip na makiisa sa meron sa pamamagitan ng paggawa at pagdanas ng kaniyang nauunawaan. Maging malinaw rin sana na hindi sinasabi na ang konsepto, laman ng isip, o pag-unawa ay nagsisimula sa purong konsepto. Napakahalaga para sa papel na ito na maging malinaw na sa balangkas ni Ferriols, ang mga laman ng isip na ating pilit na inuunawa ay hindi lamang basta inaangkop sa karanasan. Nalalaman rin natin na ang mga laman ng ating isip ay sumisibol at nagmumulat buhat ng pagdanas natin sa mundo na ating kailangang kilatisin upang malaman kung ito ay umaangkop sa meron.

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<sup>18</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Bagama’t sinasabi nating impormal ang meron, sa loob ng pilosopiya at balangkas ni Roque Ferriols, S.J., ang maigsing pormang ito ang kaniyang ginamit kaysa sa mahabang “mayroon.”: Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Emmanuel De Leon, “Ang Pilosopiya at Pamimilosopiya Ni Roque J. Ferriols, S.J.: Tungo Sa Isang Kritikal Na Pamimilosopiyang Filipino,” *Kritike* 9, no. 2 (December 2015): 41, doi:10.25138/9.2.a.3.

<sup>25</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, x.

<sup>26</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 112.

Oo, para kay Ferriols, mayroong sarili. Ang sarili ay nagmemeron. Nagsisimula ito nang matauhan ang nag-iisip na siya ay isang ako. Namumulat siya na hindi siya isang bagay na “maaaring ituro” dahil nagiging siya sa kamalayan na siya ay nasa loob ng tao.<sup>27</sup> Maaaring itanggi ng isang ako sa kaniyang isip na siya ay isang sarili pero di niya pa rin maiwasang mamasid at maranasan ang pagiging sarili. Sinasabi natin kanina na maaaring maglaho ang konsepto kapag hindi ito umangkop sa meron. Ngunit kahit gaano natin itaboy ang paniniwala na may sarili, hindi tayo makawala sa pagmemeron nito, sa nakagugulat na dahas ng pagmulat nito sa atin na siya ay meron. Madaling itakwil ang wala ngunit hindi natin matatakas ang meron na nagmemeron. Bilang ganito ang ating nararanasan, ang ating tanging magagawa ay yakapin ang katotohanan na ako nga ay aking sarili. Merong sarili.

Mula sa dalawang Pilipinong pantas na ito, nasagot na natin ang unang tanong: Oo, mayroong sarili. Bagama't alam na natin ngayon na mayroong sarili, malabo pa rin kung ano ito at papaano ito nagmemeron sa ating wika, karanasan, at kamalayan.

## II. Ano ang Sarili?

### *Ang parallelismo ng Kanin at Sarili sa ating gagamiting Pilosopikal na Paraan*

Sisimulan ko ang bahaging ito sa ilang paglilinaw bago tumungo sa paghahanap sa kung ano ang sarili. Una, hindi ako sumasang-ayon kay Mercado na katumbas ng sarili ang kanluraning *self*. Isang kabalintunaan ang ganitong pagtingin ni Mercado. Katulad ni Alejo, hindi ko maintindihan ang mga pagkakataon na itinatapat o itinutunggali ni Mercado ang mga konseptong Filipino sa kanluraning pag-iisip kung siya mismo ang nagsabi na holistiko ang pag-iisip ng silangan samantalang kompartmentalisado ang pag-iisip ng kanluran.<sup>28</sup> Sa ganitong diwa, hindi ko ihahambing kailanman sa mga susunod na talata ang sarili sa *self*.

Ikalawa, magmumula pa rin sa dalawang pantas na aking sinuri kanina ang balangkas na aking gagamitin sa bahaging ito upang tukuyin at ilarawan kung ano ang sarili. At sa aking palagay, nagkakasundo ang kanilang sari-sariling pamamaraan sa pamimilosopiya. Paborito kong halimbawa ang kanin sa pagpapatotoo ng pagkakasundo ng metalinggwistikal na pagsusuri ni Mercado at ang pagmemeron ni Ferriols. Sa Filipino, iba't iba ang tumutukoy sa kanin depende sa estado nito. Ang hindi pa nababayong bigas ay “palay”. Ang hindi pa lutong kanin ay “bigas”. Ang lutong bigas ay kanin. Ang kanin na sunog ay “tutong”. Ang hindi naubos na kanin na inihain sa susunod na araw ay “bahaw”. Ang kanin o bahaw na iginisa at iprinto ay “sinangag”. At ang panghimagas na gawa sa kanin naman ay “kakanin”. Di tulad sa kanluran, marami tayong salita na tumutukoy sa kanin. Sa patakaran ni Mercado, sumasalamin sa ating pananaw-sa-mundo na maaaring hinulma ng ating kasaysayan at kultura bilang isang agrikultural na lipunan ang pag-iral ng mga salitang ito. Sa patakaran naman ni Ferriols, tumutugma sa ating karanasan ang ating pagbigkas na ito. Nararanasan natin ang iba't ibang estado ng kanin sa ating pang-araw-araw na buhay. At sa ating pagdanas nito, namumulat tayo sa pangangailangan na mabigkas ito. Nagmemeron ang palay, bigas, kanin, bahaw, sinangag, at kakanin.

Sa aking pagmumuni, may pagkakapareho ang kalagayan ng ating wika at konsepto ng kanin sa kalagayan ng ating wika at konsepto ng sarili. Madami tayong salita na tumutukoy sa sarili na naayon sa konteksto ng paggamit nito o sa ating pagdanas dito. At kapag tinignan natin ang mga salitang ito

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<sup>27</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 155.

<sup>28</sup> Alejo, *Pag-Unawa Sa Loob Ng Tao*, 32-33.

bilang kabuuan ng sarili: nalalaman natin ang isang bahagi ng ating pananaw-sa-mundo, at natatanto na meron tayong sarili dahil harap-harapan itong nagmemeron sa atin.

### Ang mga Kategoriya ng Sarili

Sa kaniyang metalinggwistikal na pagsusuri ng sarili, ipinakita ni Mercado na sa ating wika mayroong iba't ibang paggamit ng salitang sarili: ang sarili bilang sarili, ang sarili bilang pagpapahayag ng kalayaan, at ang sarili bilang pagpapahayag ng pagmamay-ari.<sup>29</sup> Sa katunayan, apat ang mga inilista niyang paggamit pero tumututol ako sa panghuli dahil inamin rin naman ni Mercado na walang konsepto ng *privacy* sa kultura at kamalayang Pilipino. Wala tayong konsepto ng *privacy* dahil makikita natin mamaya na ang sarili ay nakikipag-ugnay lagi sa sarili at sa kapwa lalo kung titignan ang sarili bilang loob. Sa aking palagay, sakop na rin ng pagmamay-ari ang mga salitang inilagay niya sa ilalim ng larang na ito.

Sarili bilang Sarili	Sarili at Kalayaan	Sarili at Pagmamay-ari
Sa sarili	Sariling pag-iisip	Sariling bayan
Aking sarili	Sariling paraan	Nasa sariling papamumuhay
Sarili ko	Magsarili	Pansariling kapakanan
Iyong sarili	Kasarinlan	Sariling atin
Makasarili	Tiwala sa sarili	Magkasarili
Nanawala sa sarili	Sariling Sikap	Sarilinan
Paghahalaga sa sarili	Kaya ang sarili	Sariling gamit
Paggalang sa sarili		Walang sariling (gamit)
Pagmamahal sa sarili		

### *Ang Sarili bilang Sarili*

Sa sarili bilang sarili, makikita natin na iba ang ating pag-unawa sa sarili kapag tayo ay nag-iisa kumpara sa sarili kapag may sangkot na kapwa. Sa presensya ng kapwa, maaaring kilalanin ng isang sarili ang isa pang sarili kaya nasasambit natin ang mga pararilang, 'iyong sarili,' 'kanyang sarili,' at 'sarili niya.'<sup>30</sup> Sinasabi ni Mercado na hindi nakatuon ang sarili sa tao kung 'di sa kaniyang pagkatao. Kaya nga natatanyagan natin ang mga salitang 'makasarili' o 'nanawala sa sarili' kapag napapansin natin na ito ang kanilang sarili na ibinubunyag ng kanilang mga ginagawa at sinasabi.

Sa aspetong ito lumilitaw ang ugnayan ng sarili sa loob, sakop, at kapwa. Sa isang banda, bahagi ng sakop tulad ng bansa, komunidad, at pamilya ang sarili. At dito siya nakikipagkapwa sa iba pang

<sup>29</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 30.

<sup>30</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 30.

mga sarili na sakop din. Ngunit isang sakop ang sarili rin. Sakop ng sarili ang loob.<sup>31</sup> Mas malawak ang sarili kaysa sa loob pero ang loob ang kabuuan ng sarili. Inuulit natin na holistiko o buo ang pananaw-sa-mundo ng mga Pilipino. Sa loob ng sarili ay ang kaniyang loob. Hindi siya nahihwalay sa kaniyang loob, ni hindi nagiging “labas” ang sarili sa ugnayang ito. Gayunman, gumagalaw ang loob palabas kaya nailalarawan natin ang mga sarili ayon sa loob na nagbubunyag. Sinasabi natin na “may utang na loob” ang mga sariling ginawan ng mabuti ng kapwang sarili na may “mabuting kalooban.” Sabay na nagmemeron ang sarili at loob - ito ang kanilang buo at hindi nababaling ugnayan.

Mapapansin natin ngayon na may paggalaw sa sarili. Kaya nga kay Ferriols, ang sarili ay “isang kinagagalawan at gumagalaw na palaging nararanasan.”<sup>32</sup> Ang sarili ang kinagagalawan ng loob at gumagalaw ang sarili sa mundong kaniyang minemeronan. Sabi ni Ferriols, maihahambing ang sarili sa hangin - umiiral kahit saan, gumagalaw at nararanasan, ngunit hindi pinapansin.<sup>33</sup> Kailan man, hindi nawawala ang ating pagkasarili, iba’t ibang paraan natin ito nararanasan pero kalimitang hindi natin napapansin ang paggalaw ng sarili maging ang pagiging sarili. Sa ganitong diwa, ang sarili rin ay abot-tanaw.<sup>34</sup> Ang sarili ang sukatan ng abot na ating natatanaw na kalawakan, na meron. Ang sarili ang nagbibigkas ng meron. Ang mga natatanging meron lang ang kaniyang nabibigkas na hangganan ng natatanaw na meron. Hindi kayang tignan ang lumalagpas sa abot-tanaw, maaari lang makita ang natatanaw na meron ngunit hindi ibig sabihin nito ay ‘wala.’ Hindi man natin kayang makita ang sarili, nadadanasan pa rin natin ang pagiging meron-ako, ang pagiging sarili. Sa dulo, ihahambing ni Ferriols ang sarili sa sentro - ang punto ng ugnayan. Nagmumula sa sarili at patungo rin sa sarili at dumidiretso sa loob ng sarili ang lahat ng ating karanasan, nadarama, at galaw. Sa loob ng sarili nagmumula ang lahat ng aking pagpapasya at paggalaw sa daigdig. Ito rin ang tumatanggap ng lahat ng aking nararanasan at bunga ng aking pagpapasya at paggalaw bilang sarili.

Nabibigkas natin ang sarili. Maliban sa salita na bahagi ng ating wika na nagpapahayag ng ating pananaw-sa-mundo, nagmemeron ang sarili sa kaniyang paggalaw bilang loob at bilang sentro ng pagpapasya, pagtugon, at pagdanas. Sa pagmemerong ito, ating nalalaman ang pagkatao ng isang sarili.

### *Ang Sarili bilang Kalayaan*

Ang sarili ay pahayag ng kalayaan na inihahayag ng mga salitang ‘sariling pag-iisip,’ ‘sariling paraan,’ ‘magsarili,’ ‘tiwala sa sarili,’ at ‘sariling sikap.’<sup>35</sup> May paggalaw ang mga salita. Kinikilala rin nila ang kakayahan ng sarili na kumilos na hindi dinidiktahan o maging tinutulak ng ibang sarili. Mayroong kalayaang tinatangan ang sariling may kakayanang mag-pasya at mag-isip. Mahalaga ang pagkilalang ito para sa bawat sarili upang masiguro na ginagalang din ang kalayaan ng ibabilang mga sariling nakakapagpasya at nakakapag-isip.

Ang pagpasya na malayin at yakapin ang sarili ay pahayag ng kalayaan.<sup>36</sup> Magandang balikan na ang sarili ay: (a) parang hangin na gumagalaw ngunit hindi natutuonan ng pansin; (b) at hindi maiwasang natatanto ng akong nag-iisip. Maaring sabihin na malaya pa ba ang tao kung hindi siya makawala sa pagiging sarili? Sa aking palagay, hindi ito ang sukatan. Natatagpuan ang kalayaan ng sarili sa pagkamulat ng pagiging sarili. Hindi napapansin ng isang nag-iisip, maging ng isang pilosopo ang

<sup>31</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 155.

<sup>33</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 157.

<sup>34</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 157.

<sup>35</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 157.

kaniyang pagiging sarili - kaya nga wala masyadong panitikan tungkol sa sarili. Wala ring tao na direktang magsasabi sa iyo na “Ikaw ay sarili!” katulad ng walang nagdidikta sayo kung ano ang dapat gawin mo. Ngunit malaya mong natatagpuan ang katotohan ng pagiging sarili nang mag-isa kahit pa nakikipag-ugnayan ka sa iyong kapwa. Kayang kaya mong itanggi ang pagiging sarili pero ang kalayaan mo na na makapag-isip at kumilatis ng iyong pagdanas ang nagdadala saiyo para tanggapin na ikaw ay isang sarili.

Katulad ni Mercado, nais kong pagtuonan ng pansin ang isang salitang nagpapahayag ng rurok ng kalayaang ng sarili: ang kasarínlan. Sa maikling pagpapalagom ng kasarínlan ni Mercado, ipinakita niya ang pagkakaiba ng kasarínlan at kalayaan mula sa hinuha niyang paggamit ni Aguinaldo at Bonifacio. Ang paggamit ni Aguinaldo ng kalayaan ay nangangahulugang pagkalaya mula sa kahit anong panlabas na kapangyarihan. Ang paggamit naman ni Bonifacio ng kasarínlan ay nagpapahiwatig ng pagkalaya sa panlabas na kapangyarihan at ang kakayahang tumayo bilang sarili. Ang pagkakaroon ng kasarínlan ay kalagayan ng pagiging malaya. Subali’t hindi ibig sabihin na malaya ang isang tao ay nagkakaroon na rin siya ng kasarínlan. Nasa diwa ng pagiging sarili ang kaibuturan ng kasarínlan.

### *Ang Sarili at Pagmamay-ari*

Nagpapahayag din ng pagmamay-ari ang sarili. Kapag sinabi nating ‘sariling bayan,’ mayroong nagaganap na pag-angkin sa sakop na ito.<sup>37</sup> Para kay Mercado, kapag sinabi nating ‘sariling gamit,’ at ‘sariling pera’ sinasaad nito na sakop natin ang mga bagay na ito at parehong patungo at bahagi ng sarili. Hindi man kapansin-pansin, ang pagmamay-ari ay sakop ng sarili, at bahagi ng sarili ang pagmamay-ari. Kaya nga kapag pinuna natin ang pagmamay-ari ng isang tao, tulad ng kaniyang damit o maging ng kaniyang sakop na bayan, pinupuna din natin ang taong nagmamay-ari.<sup>38</sup>

Ang sariling nagpapahayag ng pagmamay-ari rin ay nagpapakita ng pagkatangi sa kapwa at pagkakaugnay sa kapwa. Ang mga salitang ‘nasa sariling pamumuhay,’ at ‘pansariling kapakanan’ ay lumalarawan sa kalagayan at kilos ng sarili habang ang pariralang ‘sariling atin’ ay sumasamo sa pag-angkin ng sarili bilang bahagi ng sankop. Napapansin ngayon kung paanong mayroong panarili at panlipunang dimensyon ang sarili na, muli, ay hindi hiwalay ngunit ay sabay na nagmemeron sa ating araw-araw na paggalaw, pagdanas, at pakikipagkapwa, kaya nga “walang taong nabuhuhay para sa sarili lamang.” Ang pagmamay-ari ay bahagi ng sarili, ang sarili ay bahagi ng sakop, sa sakop ay nakikipagkapwa ang sarili sa mga kapwa sarili. Sa ganitong diwa, sabihin man natin na nakapag-iisa ang sarili o mayroon siyang sariling buhay at pagmamay-ari, hindi kailanman mahihiwalay ang sarili sa kaniyang kapwa, sa kaniyang sakop. Lagi’t laging bahagi ang sarili ng isang sakop at ang lahat ng kaniyang paggalaw ay isang pakikipagkapwa sa iba, sa kapwa, at maging sa sarili.

Sa ating abot-kaya, sinubukan nating bigyan ng malinaw na anyo at mukha ang sarili sa diwa ng kasarínlan. Mula rito ay tatangkain nating ipagtanggol ang pilosopiyang atin gamit ang ating kakarampot na pag-unawa sa ating sarili lalo sa usapin ng pagkamit ng kasarínlan.

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<sup>37</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 30.

<sup>38</sup> Mercado, *The Filipino Mind*, 31.

## Ang Implikasyon ng Sarili at Kasarinlan sa Pilosopiyang Pilipino

*Sabi nung isa, walang pilosopiyang Pilipino habang yung isa, kanluranin daw ito*

Sa isang papel ni Noel Pariñas, ikinatwiran niya na walang pilosopiyang Pilipino at tahasang ipinahayag na imposibleng magkaroon ng pilosopiyang Pilipino gamit ang lapit ng lohika.<sup>39</sup> Una, hindi raw maitatangi na simula't sapul Griyego na ang Pilosopiya mula sa etimolohiya pa lamang nito at kasaysayan. Hindi lamang kanluranin, ngunit likas na Griyego ang Pilosopiya kung kaya't maging ang pilosopiyang Instik, pilosopiyang Indiyano, at kahit anong pilosopiyang Silanganin ay hindi matatanggap bilang tunay na pilosopiya. Ikalawa, kahit pa na Filipino ang wikang gamitin o Pilipino ang namimilosopiya, hindi ito magiging sapat na basehan para masabing mayroong pilosopiyang Pilipino dahil kadudaduda raw ang pagsamo sa pagsasalin o pagkamamamayanan bilang batayan. Sa katunayan, mayroon pa siyang pangatlong dahilan na inilatag na nakapako sa mga kategorya ng katutubong Pilipino ngunit malabo kung ano ang tinutukoy niyang mga kategorya o klase. Bagaman walang pilosopiyang Pilipino, hindi itinatangi ni Pariñas na mayroong pilosopong Pilipino. Sa aking pagbabasa ng papel ni Pariñas, isang pagtanto ang nanaig sa aking isip: litaw na litaw ang bakas ng pagkiling sa Kanluraning pag-iisip.

Habang sa artikulo naman ni Rolando Gripaldo, mayroon siyang dalawang argumento na pinunto: kanluranin ang tradisyon ng pilosopiyang Pilipino at nakatingin sa kanluran ang oryentasyon ng pamimilosopiyang Pilipino.<sup>40</sup> Nadalumat ang una mula sa kasaysayan. Paglalarawan ang sumunod sa nananaig na pilosopikal na paraan ng mga Pilipinong pantas. Sinubukan ni Gripaldo na tuntunin ang simulain ng pilosopiyang Pilipino na sinasabi niyang sumibol noong Panahon ng Pagkamulat sa katauhan ng ating mga ilustrado.<sup>41</sup> Malaki ang impluwensya ng kolonyalismo sa ating mga Pilipino sa halos lahat ng aspeto at napakarami nang mga pag-aaral ang nagpatunay nito. Hindi na nakagugulat, mula palang sa ating kasaysayan, kung paanong tigib ng Kanluraning konsepto at pamamaraan ang pilosopiyang Pilipino.

Dalawang problema sa kaganapan at kaanyuan ng pilosopiyang Pilipino ang binubuksan ni Pariñas at Gripaldo: ang ka-imposiblehan ng pilosopiyang Pilipino at ang pagkabanyaga nito.

*Ang Patakarán ng Critical Unweaving at Reparative Reweaving*

Bilang isang post-kolonyal na bansa, mayroong hamon sa atin ngayon, lalo sa larangang intelektwal.<sup>42</sup> Ito ang sumailalim, makiisa, at maging masigasig na bahagi ng proseso ng dekolonisasyon na nagsimula noong umusbong ang pagsasa-Filipino ng kasaysayan, pilosopiya, sikolohiya, at antropolohiya.<sup>43</sup> Mungkahi ni Kelly Agra na may dalawang hakbang sa dekolonisasyon ng kritikal na teorya: ang *critical unweaving at reparative reweaving*. Nakatuon ang unang hakbang sa paniniwala ni Agra na kabilang sa pagpapatuloy ng proseso ng dekolonisasyon ang paglalantad na hindi epektibo ang

<sup>39</sup> Noel Parinas, "Filipino Philosophy?," *Academia Letters* (2021): 2-3, doi:10.20935/al422.

<sup>40</sup> Rolando Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy: A Western Tradition in an Eastern Setting, The Making of a Filipino Philosopher and Other Essays* (Manila: National Book Store, 2008), 7.

<sup>41</sup> Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Bilang dating kolonya ng Espanya at Estado Unidos ang Pilipinas, kabilang tayo sa mga lupon na mga bansa na tinatawag na post-kolonyal matapos natin makamtan ang ating kalayaan mula sa mga mananakop na kanluranin.

<sup>43</sup> Kelly Agra, "Critical Theory and the Philippine Condition: A Decolonial and Feminist Contention," *Brown Transgressions*, June 8, 2023, <https://www.browntransgressions.com/post/critical-theory-and-the-philippine-condition-a-decolonial-and-feminist-contention>; Ayon kay Emerita Quito, ang dekolonisasyon ang "pagkalas sa kalinangan ng mga kongkistador" (quoted in Abenes & Mahaguay 2017, 19).

paraan ng pag-iisip ng Kanluran upang angkop na tugunan ang mga suliranin ng Timog Silangan.<sup>44</sup> Ang pananatili ng mga kapangyarihang kolonyal ay pagpapatuloy ng hegemonya at panunupil sa Silangan. Bahagi ang pagsisiwalat sa hakbang upang kumalasa sa hinabing kolonyal na kapangyarihan. Kasabay ng pagkakatag sa unang hakbang, abala ang ikalawang hakbang sa pagpapanibagong-tatag ng bago at pagpapatibay ng iba pang paraan ng pag-iisip at pagsusuri. Sa hakbang na ito, isinasalba at malikhaing pinagbabagong-ano ang ilang aspeto ng mga “konsepto, kategoriya, at balangkas” na maaaring maging mapagpalaya. Sa pamamagitan nito, magmumula, makatutugon, at makauugnay sa lokal na karanasan at katalagahan ang ating mga paraan ng pag-iisip at pagsusuri.<sup>45</sup> Kalaunan, dadalhin ni Agra ang dalawang hakbang na ito sa isang kritikal na dayalogo sa interseksiyonal na peministang pagsusuri upang mapalawak ang maabot nito at itutuon ang pansin sa mga konteksto.

Ang balangkas ng dalawang hakbang sa dekolonisasyon ng krikital na teorya ni Agra ang aking gagamitin upang pagtibayin ang kaganapan ng pilosopiyang Pilipino kaugnay ang nagtatagpong implikasyon ng kasarinlan at dekolonisasyon.

*Pagkamit ng Kasarinlan sa pamamagitan ng Dekolonisasyon tungo sa kaganapan ng Pilosopiyang Pilipino*

Dahil post-kolonyal ang Pilipinas, masasabing malaya na ito dahil walang panlabas na puwersang nananakop dito. Ngunit parang mahirap sabihin na nakamit na natin ang kasarinlan lalo’t pauli-ulit nating naririnig na malaking hamon sa ating pag-unlad ang pangigingibabaw ng kolonyal na mentalidad. Nakikita natin ang pamamalagi ng mga bakas at ibang porma ng kolonisasyon at imperyalismo tulad ng hegemonya ng ideolohiyang neoliberal na litaw sa paraan ng pagkilos sa ating ekonomiya, politika, at edukasyon.<sup>46</sup> Dahil sa epekto ng hegemonyang ito sa edukasyon, dominante sa mga disiplina sa akademya ang mga paksa at balangkas na Kanluranin.

Ito ang katunayan na hindi pa natin nakakamit ang kasarinlan. Ang kalagayan ng kasarinlan na aking isinusulong sa papel na ito ay ang kakayahang tumayo sa sariling paa nang hindi purong umaasa sa patakaran, balangkas, at konsepto na hindi-Pilipino. Nakakonteksto ang pilosopikal na kasarinlang ito sa kalagayan ng Pilosopiyang Pilipino na naunang inilarawan. Hindi maipagkakaila na mayroong kahirapan ang adhikaing ito dahil maging ang pagsambit sa mga salitang Pilipinas at Pilipino ay may kalakip na pag-animag sa kolonyalismo. Kaya, ang proseso ng dekolonisasyon at pagkamit ng ganap na kasarinlan ay hakbang upang magkaganapan ang pilosopiyang Pilipino.

Totoo ang sinasabi ni Pariñas na hindi puwedeng sabihin na mayroong pilosopiyang Pilipino dahil lamang Filipino ang ginagamit na wika. Maari din namang wikang Filipino ang ginagamit sa pamimilosopiya pero kanluranin ang balangkas. Subali’t maaangkin natin na atin ang wikang Filipino. Nagtatagpo ang sinasabi ni Mercado na salamin ng pananaw-sa-mundo ang wika sa sinasabi ni Rodriguez na nagbibigay ng bagong pananaw ang paggamit ng wikang Filipino sa mga problema at paksa ng pilosopiya.<sup>47</sup> Isang paraan ang paggamit ng wikang Filipino sa pagkamit ng kasarinlan at maging sa dekolonisasyon ng ating isip.

<sup>44</sup> Agra, “A Decolonial and Feminist Contention.”

<sup>45</sup> Agra, “A Decolonial and Feminist Contention.”

<sup>46</sup> Rohaiba B. Radiamoda. “Understanding Corruption In Education In A Neoliberal World: The Case Of The Philippines.” *Interaktif: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 10, no. 2 (December 25, 2018): 230–46. <https://interaktif.ub.ac.id/index.php/interaktif/article/download/183/172>.

<sup>47</sup> Mercado, *Essays on Filipino Philosophy*, 30; Emmanuel De Leon, “Ang Diskurso Ng Katarungan Ayon Kay Agustin Martin Rodriguez,” *Kritike* 8, no. 2 (December 2014): 236, doi:10.25138/8.2.b.1.

Tunay din naman na hindi dahil Pilipino ang nag-iisip mayroon nang pilosopiyang Pilipino agad. Ngunit, katulad ng isinasambit ng balangkas ni Agra, hindi maitatangi na naiiba ang konteksto, karanasan, at pinanggagalingan ng isang Pilipino laban sa mga banyagang palaisip. Nakapagaambag ang isang Pilipino sa diskurso na katangi-tangi kung ikukumpara sa ibang mga inilalatag na haka o muni ng mga banyaga. Ang kakayahan ng Pilipino na makilahok sa mga diskurso na hindi hinahadlangan ng kahit anong impluwensya o patakaran ay mahalagang pahiwatig ng kasarinlan. Pagtapak din ito ng Pilipinong palaisip paharap upang makaalis sa anino ng mga mananakop upang patuloy na bumuo ng kamalayan na may kasarinlan.

Kung atin namang pag-uusapan ang argumento na hindi katangga-tanggap ang mga kategoriya o klaseng katutubo bilang patunay na mayroong pilosopiyang Pilipino, nililimot nito ang mga katutubong pagpapahalaga at konsepto na nasa kamalayang Pilipino. Kabilang dito ang ating kamalayan sa loob, kapwa, sakop, at sarili. Mayroon tayong mga sariling mayayamang batis ng mga paksa at konsepto na magagamit bilang tuntungan sa pagpapasimula ng pilosopiyang Pilipino. Atin ang mga ito at mula sa mga ito ay kaya natin bumuo ng ating sariling patakaran at pamamaraan kung paano sila payayamanin at palalawakin.

Tama si Gripaldo noong sinabi niyang kanluranin ang simulain at patuloy na kanluranin ang pilosopiyang Pilipino. Ang lahat ng aking palaisip na binanggit sa papel na ito ay sumipi rin sa maraming banyagang pilosopo. Mahalaga rin ang pakikipagdayalogo sa Iba. Ngunit hindi puwedeng itanggi ng kahit sinuman na walang katang-tangi sa kamalayan at pamimilosopiya ng mga Pilipino. Kaya tama pa rin ang paninindigan ni Gripaldo na kahit pa kanluranin ang oryentasyon ng mga palaisip, maaari pa rin silang maging bahagi ng pilosopiyang Pilipino dahil nakatapak sila sa kanilang kalagayan bilang kolonisado. Subali't, hindi na kolonya ang Pilipinas kaya nararapat lamang na sikapin nating magkaroon ng kakayahang tumindig na may lakas ng loob na bigkasin ang meron na nagmumula sa ating sariling kamalayan at karanasan. Sa kabila ng ating pagbabad sa kanluraning patakaran at balangkas, sinusubukan pa rin nating ipagpabagong-tatag ang mga ito mula at nagkatutugon sa ating sariling karanasan at pagmamalay.

Paano natin tutugunan ngayon ang pananaw ni Pariñas na walang pilosopiyang Pilipino dahil likas na kanluranin at Griyego ito? Maaari tayong tumugon na may paggigiit na kanluranin ang ganitong pag-iisip at hindi umaangkop sa pamamaraan at pananaw ng mga Silanganin. Bakit kanluran ang magdidikta kung ano ang maituturing na pilosopiya? Ang masigasig na dekolonisasyon ngayon ay pagkakataon natin na bawiin mula sa mga banyaga ang ating kamalayan upang ang ating paningin ay magmula sa ating sariling pagmamalay. Pagbawi ito ng ating kasarinlan, paanyaya ito na maging sarili.

Inuulit ko na kanluranin ang pagtingin na hindi kailanman maaaring tanggapin ang pilosopiyang Pilipino bilang ganap at totoo. Si Ferriols na ang nagpahayag na “ang pilosopiya ay ginagawa” sa patakaran at pamamaraan ng pilosopiyang Pilipino.<sup>48</sup> Pinaninindigan nito ang holistikong pananaw na sinasabi ni Mercado dahil sa ganitong pagtingin sa pilosopiya, magkasamang gumagalaw ang teorya at pagsasapraktika - sabay at hindi hiwalay. Pinagtitibay ng mga pananaw na ito kung paano ipagpapatuloy ang pagsasagawa ng dekolonisasyon sa pilosopiya at kamalayang Pilipino. Patunay ito ng ating kaibahan at ang ating kaibahan ay daan patungo sa pagkakasarinlan. Mula dito uusbong ang pilosopiyang Pilipino.

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<sup>48</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, ix.

Ang pagkahinog ng mga sariling pamamaraan at kasangkapan ang sukatan ni Gripaldo ng pagkameron ng pilosopiyang Pilipino.<sup>49</sup> Hindi ito imposibleng gawain, sabi ni Ferriols, ang kailangan lang daw gawin ay mamilosopiya nang mamilosopiya dahil walang pilosopiyang umusbong nang sapilitan kung 'di aksidente lamang.<sup>50</sup> Mas mahalaga ang pagpapanday at pagpapadalisay ng tanong at proseso sa ngayon, hayaan nating lumitaw nalang ang masasabing pilosopiyang Pilipino. At lakip din nito ang hamong inilalarawan sa atin ni Agra na kapansin-pansin ang pagkaangkop nito sa ating pagtugon kay Pariñas at Gripaldo: ang sitahin at kalagin ang pananaig ng iba't ibang mukha ng kolonisasyon at pagpanibagong-tatagin ang mga bahagi nito na mula at makatutugon sa ating kalagayan at karanasan. Hindi natin alam kung kailan. Ang tiyak lamang natin, hindi ito imposible basta namamalayan natin na tayo ay may sarili, mga Pilipinong akong-nagiisip, gumagawa at gumagalaw, dumadanas at bumababad sa karanasan, at nakikipagkapwa sa daigdig na nakasapok sa atin mula sa kalagayang at kinatatayuan.

### **Konklusyon: Ang Pangarap na Kasarinlan sa Pilosopiyang Pilipino**

Naging masalimuot ang ating pilosopikal na paglalakbay sa papel na ito. Nagsimula tayo sa pagpapatunay na mayroong sarili. Matapos nito, sinubukan nating malaman kung ano ba itong sarili upang paigtingin ang pagkameron nito. Itinulay natin ang ating pangarap na pagkamit ng kasarinlang bilang sangkap din sa kaganapan ng pilosopiyang atin. Maaaring sa puntong ito nababakas na ng ating isip kung ano ang kasarinlang itinutulak ng papel na nakatayo sa pundasyong inilatag ni Mercado at Agra.

Nagsisimula ang pagkamit ng kasarinlang ito sa pagmamalay ng hindi pagiging sarili sa sariling konteksto at katayuan buhat ng patuloy na pagigiit sa atin ng mga kolonyal na kapangyarihan ng mga hegemonyang ideolohiya. Ang pagmamalay na ito ang simulain sa pagpansin ng hindi pagka-angkop ng kanluraning pag-iisip sa ating sariling paraan ng pag-iisip, pagmamalay, at pagdanas. Tinutulak tayo nito patungo sa pagkakalag mula sa mga panlabas na kapangyarihan na pilit inihahabi ang kanilang patakaran sa ating sariling patakaran. Kasabay ng pagkakalag ang pagpapanibagong-tatag ng mga konsepto at balangkas na maaari pa ring mabakas ang potensya nitong umangkop sa ating adhikain na sumarili. Kaya ang kasarinlang ito sa pilosopiyang Pilipino ay binubuo ng tatlong paggalaw at patunguhan: (1) ang kalayaan mula sa panggigiit ng banyagang kaisipan; (2) ang pagapapanibagong-tatag ng mga konsepto at balangkas upang magmula na ito sa pagdanas ng Pilipino; (3) at ang pagpapalinaw ng ating pagkilala sa pagmemeron ng pilosopiyang Pilipino na umuugnay sa ating pagiging sarili.

Ang ikatlong patunguhan ang hudyat ng pag-usbong ng kaganapan ng kasarinlan at ng pagmemeron ng pilosopiyang Pilipino. Hindi hiwalay na penomena ang kaganapan ng dalawang ito dahil tanging sa kalagayan ng kasarinlan lamang makikilala natin ang pagkasarili, ang katangi-tanging pagkakilanlan ng isang pilosopiyang Pilipino. Maaaring makita ang epekto ng pagkiling sa kanluraning pag-iisip sa pilosopiyang Pilipino sa mga akda ng ilang palaisip na itinatangi ang kameronan nito. Tanging sa pagkalas lamang sa kanluraning pag-iisip magkakaroon ng puwang sa isip ng palaisip ang posibilidad at kameronan ng isang pilosopiyang Pilipino. Ngunit hindi natin sinasabi na kailangang humiwalay ng buong-buo mula sa kanluraning pag-iisip. Mahalaga pa rin ang pakikipagdayalogo at pagbabad sa mga pilosopiyang Kunlarinin ngunit sa ating pagsasagawa nito, pagkakataon dapat na

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<sup>49</sup> Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> Roque Ferriols, "A Memoir of Six Years," *Philippine Studies* 22, no. 3/4 (1974): 339, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634877>.

maunawaan natin ang mga banyagang balangkas mula sa ating sariling katayuan, pinanggagalingan, at karanasan. Ang puntong ito sa buhay ng isang Pilipino palaisip marahil ang indibidwal na pag-usbong ng pagkakasarinlan at pagmemeron ng pilosopiyang Pilipino.

Batid ko na kulang pa rin ang mga talatang aking isinulat tungkol sa kung ano ang sarili, kasarinlan, at dekolonisasyon kahit nagmula pa ang maraming mga ideya sa mayayamang batis ng dalawang Pilipinong pantas. Hindi ko masasabi na nadalumat ko na ang kabuuan ng kanilang konsepto. At maaaring marami pang katanungan ang tumatakbo sa iyong isipan lalo't higit hindi natin nasagot kung meron nga bang pilosopiyang Pilipino.

Ang ganitong pagwawakas ay isang paanyaya. Sa wika ni Ferriols, “Kapag nasabi na ang lahat ng masasabi, ang pinakamahalaga ay hindi masasabi. Magagawa lamang. Mauunawaan lamang ng kaloobang mapagkawanggawa. At kapag nagawa na, makikitang bagay lamang itapon o igatong ang lahat ng sinabi.”<sup>51</sup> Halina, lundagin at danasin ang mundo at makilahok sa dekolonisasyon ng Pilipinong kaisipan upang tagpuin ng sarili ang kasarinlan ng pilosopiyang nagmemeron.

### Rekomendasyon

Nasabi ko na ang lahat ng aking maaaring sabihin ngunit alam ko marami pa ring masasabi. Hangad ko na marami pang palaisip na Pilipino ang bumabad sa sarili. Marami pang paraan upang mapatunayan na holistiko at laging patungo sa kapwa ang sarili. Hindi rin masyadong nasisid ng papel na ito ang kailaliman ng loob ng sarili at kung paano ito nagmemeron sa sarili. Mamulat nawa ang maraming Pilipinong pilosopo, lalo ang mga nasa antas ng kolehiyo, na hindi lamang ang pagsalin ng mga banyagang pilosopiya o ang pakikipagdayalogo sa kanluran at ibang pilosopiyang silanganin ang tanging mabubungang gawaing pilosopikal. Kailangan nating bawiin ang ating mga sariling pagpapahalaga at galugarin ang ating mga batis dahil wala tayong ibang aasahan na gagawa nito kung ‘di tayong mga Pilipinong palaisip.

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<sup>51</sup> Ferriols, *Pambungad Sa Metapisika*, 23.

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## The Possible and Impossible in the Political Constructivism of John Rawls

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**Abstract:** Laying bare that an idealized form of social regulation is at the core of John Rawls' theorizing is as crucial as knowing the limited role that the idea of truth plays in his brand of political constructivism. However, to clinch political matters without upholding a conception of the person and society is incongruous with Rawls' project. It is highlighted in this essay that the pre-theoretical commitments in Rawls' constructivism must not evaporate into thin air, that is, the fabric of this political process is threaded by interspersed recognition of fundamental yet reductive premises. I will argue that principles and theorizing flouted without the process of recalibration and a more inclusive deliberation is no less a gawking at our own errors any more than misconstruing the overlapping consensus as rinsed of all blunders and biases. This puzzlement is not diametrical to the issues of inconclusiveness in weighing the human values that are presented in the table of political settlement. Such arbitrariness only feeds the tendency to create a political stand-off, for it deliberately fails to resolve, and even recognize, the root causes of the problem and background assumptions. While Rawls undoubtedly places great faith in conjectural accounts of the background social condition under which the ideal of public reason can be determined as ineffectual or fruitful, there is an enormous possibility of a backfire on justification if Rawls fails to question how truth affects the prioritization of some human values over the others. Without this clarification, Rawls has placed most of his philosophical lines into the clutches of a delusory understanding of social and economic equality.

**Keywords:** *Political Constructivism, public reason, inclusive deliberation, conjectural accounts, human values*

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### Introduction

When one thinks of the great divide between the possible and the impossible, one cannot but also think of rules that dictate what things one is permitted to do, and the ways recognized as out of bounds. Whenever one's freedom is being framed – in whatever way, shape, or form – one must demand public justification. Our political ground is not merely a platform dedicated exclusively to a few people who can unleash social machinations to manipulate the public in accordance with their whimsical tendencies and sporadic wishes. Such a problematization of power-sharing behooves every person to struggle to comprehend the participatory nature of political control in defeating the abusive operationalization of coercive mechanisms.

Contra Thomas Hobbes' theoretical architecture, John Rawls believes that reducing the choice of the political situation into two extreme cases leads to a grave misunderstanding of what political theory is all about. When the justification of social cohesion becomes entangled between the

vindication of absolutism and the reasons to eschew anarchy<sup>1</sup> – a situation that aggrandizes the role that apparent goods play in political affairs – eradicates the bearing of moral evaluation in political arrangements. According to Rawls, inserting psychological assumptions as the fundamental interests of individuals in joining a political contract can be so maddening to the point that the support for political institutions becomes limited to things close to their existential peculiarities.<sup>2</sup> While individuals have object-dependent desires that point to the personal states of affairs – as the reality of a self-focused account of human nature found in Hobbes’ theory – Rawls asserts that what makes reciprocal ties in political order possible are the principle-dependent desires. That is, despite the variation in how people assess the things that they recognize as good, the key to escaping arbitrariness in the various notions of what counts as good is an adjudicator whose decisions are not devoid of (and are aligned with) moral commitments to democratic values of fairness and reciprocity.<sup>3</sup> It is not enough that Hobbes recognized a stabilizing instrument to handily prevent seemingly endless warfare of every man, as Rawls asserted, because there is a need for the moral substance of political commitments to completely overcome mutual distrust<sup>4</sup> – still having a common moral compass to shape reasoning and decision-making, for it is not a result alone of misfortune in informational constraints that people make political mistakes.<sup>5</sup> This makes the idea of compliance possible beyond sheer changes in the configuration of political power, power bargaining, and the narrow concern to preserve one’s life as the ultimatum to tolerate the injustices made by a sovereign power.

If we have recognized that there is an avalanche of doubts that comes our way when the political domain tries to build a characterization of objectivity in the demands of the private sphere, how can we hope that enforcement of constraints in the limitation of freedom can be acceptable to everyone? To be sure, far from expecting plenitude to fulfill everyone’s wishes, the assurance of compliance from the citizenry is brought about by the observation of the coercive powers of the government. However, political management might still be under the guise of mutually beneficial norms to propel one’s self-interested ambition. This sends us to the depths and roundabout direction of our dilemma in escaping the topsy-turvy “state of anticipation” that pushes everyone to “*attack others first whenever circumstances seem propitious.*”<sup>6</sup> This speaks of the general truth about genuine social cohesion: “[p]olitical principles of justice are not then reduced to only nonmoral interests and principles of rational choice but instead incorporate some prior idea of what is right and reasonable.”<sup>7</sup> This points to a political

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<sup>1</sup> John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap University Press of the Harvard University Press, 2007), 84.

<sup>2</sup> According to Rawls, Thomas Hobbes laid down three fundamental interests in his philosophy that became the cornerstone of the unity of civil society: “*our interest first in preserving our life, then our interest in securing the good of those who are close to us (what Hobbes called ‘conjugal affection’), and finally, our interest in acquiring the means of a commodious life[.]*” See Rawls, *History of Political Philosophy*, 46

<sup>3</sup> Rawls, *History of Political Philosophy*, 87.

<sup>4</sup> Rawls, *History of Political Philosophy*, 49.

<sup>5</sup> Rawls, *History of Political Philosophy*, 62.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Freeman, “Social Contract Approaches,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, ed. David Estlund (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 138.

<sup>7</sup> See Rawls, *History of Political Philosophy*, 136. According to Rawls, in order to make political society within the art of the possible, a social theory must set forth a “thin sense” of the conception of human rationality in practical affairs. It is in this general sense that one can determine the rationality of the parties in the original position argument devoid of their particularities and contingent descriptions that are unnecessary in choosing a political conception of justice. There are three counting principles that constitute the practical accounts of rationality – principles that escape controversial claims in the other domains of philosophizing and chosen under what Rawls would call “deliberative rationality.” First, Rawls claims that every person wants to take effective means for the realization of their consistent scheme of ends. Second, alternatives in a certain course of action are to be viewed in their likelihood. Lastly, as part of the counting principles,

conceptualization to avoid normativizing deeply embedded social predicaments and discovering the vital force that capacitates citizens to fairly advance their claims – which boils down to a forum that naggingly asks whether participants themselves are conducting their protestations rightfully so. Rawls would enigmatically accentuate a sense of political hope to realize “*that the limits of the possible are not given by the actual, for we can to a greater or lesser extent change political and social institutions and much else. Hence[,] we have to rely on conjecture and speculation, arguing as best [as] we can that the social world we envision is feasible and might actually exist, if not now then at some future time under happier circumstances.*”<sup>8</sup> We are not merely under the mercy of circumstantial accidents in our lives, for not everything is beyond our control.

No matter how commendable this culture of free-wheeling inquiry, we must not exhaustively indulge ourselves in wishful thinking since we are constrained by the limitations of the material conditions that ascertain whether we can practically safeguard our freedom to fight for social justice and the very fact that our being conscious of political maladies is shaped by our realistic positionality, such as our educational status, biological development vis-à-vis our basic human needs, income-generating work, level of convenience to experience the fullness of recreation, social interaction, among others. Rawls explicitly admits that, for the most part, he is spelling out idealized solutions – whether concerning the priority problems about human freedom or basic distributive justice – based on the assumption that the citizens of a well-ordered democratic society have attained a favorable condition<sup>9</sup> to strictly comply with the rules.<sup>10</sup> It is no less true, however, that this idealized conception can be far removed from the unruly political reality that we are living in. If such is the case in Rawls’ theorizing, then, an objection can be cogently raised about its practical difficulty of assimilation.

In defense of Rawls, Matthew Adams believes that “[t]he fact that such an assumption is not realistic is unproblematic: justice[,] after all[,] need not reflect how actual people will[,] in fact[,] behave – rather it is a normative standard that identifies how they should behave and that allows us to judge appropriately actual people’s noncompliance with the demands of justice.”<sup>11</sup> Such requirements can become evaluative criteria to assess the social injustices that people hardly realize. This evaluative tool can be a smack in the face of those who guard the status quo as a subterfuge so that citizens remain on the surface of the problem. To analogize, the

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Rawls believes that people, in general, are rationalizing their limited means to reach as many as possible of what they find to be significant purposes – a consideration of feasibility under the inclusiveness of choices. Thus, this establishes the crucial bedrock of the original position argument since it reveals that while people have relative commitments and beliefs in their lives, a rational plan of life bespeaks the fact that people will constantly be equally interested in what they find as valuable in each period of their lives; that is, in sketching rational plans, prudence is always there to guide people to be concerned with future good that cannot be discounted by the intensity of desires at present. Thus, even in the multitudinous motivations, ambitions, careers, and values in the society, Rawls is of the opinion that the fundamental elements of the rational plan of life will always remain to be of paramount importance in the pursuit of an appropriate political conception of justice in the original position argument. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 5<sup>th</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 407-424.

<sup>8</sup> John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>9</sup> In defending the unity of material sufficiency in economizing necessary resources of the society, and the values pertaining to human freedom, Rawls once pointed out: “*I have supposed that if the persons in the original position know that their basic liberties can be effectively exercised, they will not exchange a lesser liberty for greater economic advantages. It is only when social conditions do not allow the full establishment of these rights that one can acknowledge their restriction. The equal liberties can be denied only when it is necessary to change the quality of civilization so that[,] in due course[,] everyone can enjoy these freedoms. The effective realization of all these liberties in a well-ordered society is the long-run tendency of the two principles and rules of priority when they are consistently followed under reasonably favorable conditions.*” See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1999), 475.

<sup>10</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, 474-475.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Adams, “The Value of Ideal Theory,” in *John Rawls: Debating the Major Questions*, eds. Jon Mandle and Sarah Roberts-Cady (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 79.

dancer is not simply concerned as to whether people will give a standing ovation and glaring accolade from the huge crowd, the dancer is primarily attentive to one's every step being exactly right as shaped during rehearsals and training by following the model/s. Perhaps, the audience was not simply in the condition to give a generous amount of clapping (e.g., being hungry, drowsy, or suffering from eyestrain). Rawls himself highlighted that political theory must set itself apart from the empirical conditioning of ordinary politics that mainly follows the current configuration of power-sharing and the formation of intense desires without any moral qualification.<sup>12</sup>

Despite Rawls' project being clear about its point of departure found in ideal circumstances of political justice – that makes it a critical instrument to combat the manipulative arsenal of political leaders in advancing their self-interested ambitions and to escape the contingencies in addressing social injustices – Rawls also believes that Political Philosophy must be left alone from other controversial branches of Philosophy itself. Not only that Rawls claims that it is epistemologically difficult to rely on comprehensive outlooks to give birth to a political criterion of justice, but he also claims that the democratic spirit of social participation must be clear about its commitment to uphold the duty of civility – that which makes the comprehensiveness of any outlook unbridled in sallying forth ideas which are detrimental to private lifeways.<sup>13</sup> What Rawls has in mind in placing the idea of political correctness is the right amount of latitude for the more private sphere to decide independently, even if the political domain recognizes that there are incommensurable claims about human values and other moral issues. To riddle this point, one may refer to this passage regarding how Rawls described a practical necessity in the value of political toleration:

Some may think that to secure stable social unity in a constitutional regime by looking for an overlapping consensus detaches political philosophy from philosophy and makes it into politics. Yes and no: ***the politician, we say, looks to the next election, the statesman to the next generation, and philosophy to the indefinite future. Philosophy sees the political world as an ongoing system of cooperation over time, in perpetuity practically speaking. Political philosophy is related to politics because it must be concerned, as moral philosophy need not be, with practical political possibilities.*** This has led us to outline, for example, how it is possible for the deep divisions present in a pluralistic society to be reconciled through a political conception of justice that gradually[,] over generations[,] becomes the focus of an overlapping consensus. ***Moreover, this concern with practical possibility compels political philosophy to consider fundamental institutional questions and the assumptions of a reasonable moral psychology.***<sup>14</sup>

Driven by this context, it is not to be considered counterfactual to ask the question: “If there is a limitation on how we identify who are we up against, how do we decide who will be excluded politically?” But all our examinations are unavailing if we do not let it sink into our minds that there is a need for a political understanding at which the authority must also be referencing one's decision-making process. Even the declaration of comprehensiveness in one's ideas and beliefs forwarded in a public political forum can be a relentless garbage-in-garbage-out scenario have we not acknowledged the fact that a reason for a common good is not to devolve into a sobriquet of “public reason” whereby it is easily distorted by the prevalent perception of the public. Rawls is of the opinion that a bothersome weighing of all the observable facts in a social dilemma will not make us off the hook; according to Rawls, “[w]hat is wanted is a framework of reasoning within which to identify the facts that are relevant

<sup>12</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 22-33.

<sup>13</sup> John Rawls, “Commonweal Interview with John Rawls,” in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4th Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 617-618.

<sup>14</sup> John Rawls, “The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus,” in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4th Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 447. Emphasis added.

*from the appropriate point of view and to determine their weight as reasons.*"<sup>15</sup> Such a determination of relevance, however, heightens the possibility of simplifying the all-too-disarrayed evaluation of social problems which only perpetuates value-infested deliberation to determine which is which.

Rawls argued that the litmus test in knowing whether the public reason has reached its practical political purpose is to look at the indicators that "*have cleared our view and made our considered convictions more coherent; if [those have] narrowed the gap between the conscientious convictions of those who accept the basic ideas of a constitutional regime[.]*"<sup>16</sup> A political justification entails a political conception in which political authority is also subsumed and whose analysis of social problems must be coherently shaped by the relevant facts as identified by the political conception of justice. Generating an independent basis for public reason is to be recognized as at odds with other comprehensive views within a liberal pluralistic society. This has been the first working assumption in Micah Schwartzman's defense of Rawls' ideal of public reason under conjectural accounts.<sup>17</sup> However, the hopes of finding conjectural support for a political conception of justice can be seen as entirely contingent on political arrangements; and it bears the burden of circularity in precluding the right influence of the state to shape doctrines and being complacent towards social injustices under the artifice of respect. Admittedly, Schwartzman believes that the issues of indeterminacy and inconclusiveness inevitably lead to arbitrariness – it endangers the value of having a benchmark to gauge the attainment of social justice in all comprehensive outlooks in a society. Magnifying the vacillation of Micah Schwartzman amidst his support of Rawls' theorizing can catapult us to more thought-provoking questions:

One might object that if we do not engage [in] racist doctrines, or doctrines otherwise bent on domination, there is no purpose in reasoning from conjecture. After all, the need for conjecture arises because some citizens believe that they are justified in coercing others to act according to values that cannot be publicly justified. What else can this be but an attempt to dominate others through the illegitimate imposition of a particular comprehensive doctrine? We may decide not to engage such doctrines, but then what is there to conjecture about? ***To answer this question, it may help to draw a distinction between doctrines that are completely or fundamentally unreasonable and doctrines that contain unreasonable elements.***<sup>18</sup>

Unsurprisingly, one might be incommoded to simply analogize (as was mentioned elsewhere in this article) the dilemma at hand to the issues concerning a dancer following a model proper to its artful compliance to rules. Such a reduction in cases is by no means totally realistic nor completely useful in explaining the existence of social injustices. What is instructive, however, is that political understanding does not come solely by sitting on a throne overlooking the hardships of the subjects. Social transformation is, indeed, beset by the problems of the truthfulness of a political conception and its efficacy in resolving the practical concerns of bringing unification despite the diversity of the citizens. Schwartzman reminds us that it is "*better to acknowledge that some doctrines cannot justify the values of public reason than to cast aspersion on the larger project of justifying a commitment to liberal principles.*"<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is our hope to answer if Rawls inserted contradictory elements in his project, or whether he managed to strike a balance between the idealization of a political conception of justice to unify a pluralistic society and a subsidiary step in making sure that all comprehensive viewpoints are deeply connected in a political conception of justice in their own ways. If we find out that the answer is the former,

<sup>15</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Printing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 122.

<sup>16</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 156.

<sup>17</sup> Micah Schwartzman, "The Ethics of Reasoning from Conjecture," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 9 (2012): 522, doi:10.1163/174552412x628931.

<sup>18</sup> Schwartzman, "Reasoning from Conjecture," 543.

<sup>19</sup> Schwartzman, "Reasoning from Conjecture," 542.

then, Rawls' theory borders on the ideological landscape in favoring the present structure that sways political struggles – which profoundly militates against his ideal of political fairness. But if Rawls has been successful in making possible what seems to be impossible through his own political constructivism, he is still answerable to the details of his own account, that is, argumentatively ruling out the expostulations that his own agenda is made out of philosophical quirks. If Rawls categorically claims that his theory is not concretized out of vacuous thinking, how did he justify the moral substance of *Justice as Fairness* that can be juiced out to energize the political praxis of engaging decision-making worked out for social justice? What are the contradictions that slipped off from Rawls' political ambition with which he contrasted and constructed his chosen demands for the possibility of political justice?

### The Nature of Political Justification According to Rawls

It is not simply a put-down assertion to question the deep assumptions that a certain theory holds. Onora O'Neill sharply reminds us that the construction of ethical principles is not to be considered absolutely detached from the complexity of contexts. As O'Neill puts it: "*Ways of reasoning that assume that 'the facts' of human situations can be uncontroversially stated are likely to be dominated by established and often by establishment views. Without a critical account of the selection of minor premises, ethical reasoning may avoid formalism only to become hostage to local ideology.*"<sup>20</sup> Formulating principles is not simply placing all categories of thought in the phenomena themselves, which are to embellish too repugnant an ingredient to make psychological strains too repulsive to social transformation – as a capacity to highlight human rationality that entails deliberative exercises.<sup>21</sup> A cut-and-dried political equation must give way to the assessment of principles that go beyond the simplistic enumeration of facts – it creates judgments that appeal not merely to algorithmic pretenses of comprehensive decision-making, but to understand the selection of one's context over another description of events. In this vein of thought, Schwartzman also warned that even if conjectures can be used to bring about the close ties between comprehensive doctrines and a political conception of justice, the otherwise political arrangement that might be chosen under another set of values is not dispelled in a principled form of objection.<sup>22</sup>

The impasse about the correctness or acceptability of authoritative judgment in the selection of relevant facts for the whole shebang of political constructivism can be mollified by pointing out that we are on the offensive side of a certain set of values. Thus, the compunction is to be located in knowing whether Rawls takes truth to be the basis of public reason or simply calls for a clarification of consensus-generating instruments – in this case, the conjectures. While Schwartzman asserts the need to buttress the leverages of conjectures to ensure the relatability of thriving comprehensive doctrines to a chosen political conception of justice,<sup>23</sup> he also commented that what will make or break an overlapping consensus, traced from Rawls' demands, is in recognizing that the citizens "*reasoning from conjectures is sincere and non-manipulative if, and only if, conjectures (i) disclose that they do not believe the premises from which they argue, and (ii) disclose whether they believe their arguments are justifiable from within the comprehensive views of their intended audience.*"<sup>24</sup> Schwartzman argued that setting out the adhesion of comprehensive views to a political conception of justice is fundamental to promoting the ideal of public reason as

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<sup>20</sup> Onora O'Neill, "Abstraction, Idealization, and Ideology in Ethics," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Series 22* (September 1987): 65. doi:10.1017/s1358246100003660.

<sup>21</sup> O'Neill, "Ideology in Ethics", 62.

<sup>22</sup> Schwartzman, "Reasoning from Conjecture," 539.

<sup>23</sup> Schwartzman, "Reasoning from Conjecture," 540.

<sup>24</sup> Schwartzman, "Reasoning from Conjecture," 531.

Rawls did. The ideal of public reason, according to Rawls, is based on a moral duty of articulating one's "*fundamental political positions in terms of the political conception of justice they regard as the most reasonable.*"<sup>25</sup> However, it only announces a wide array of political reasonableness from which one can choose. It seems that this suggestion from Rawls is, to a massive degree, circling back to conceding generously that even public reason itself cannot resolve its own political stand-off in foreclosing the public deliberation to a given ring of public values. Textual support for this particular interpretation of Rawls can be drawn:

Whether public reason can settle all, or almost all, political questions by a reasonable ordering of political values cannot be decided in the abstract independent of actual cases. We need such cases carefully spelled out to clarify how we should view them. For how to think about a kind of case depends not on general considerations alone but on our formulating relevant political values we may not have imagined before we reflect about particular instances. Public reason may also seem too restrictive because it might seem to settle questions in advance. However, it does not, as such, determine or settle particular questions of law or policy. Rather, it specifies the public reasons in terms of which such questions are to be politically decided.<sup>26</sup>

Such a crux of public reason carried by the citizens while engaging in the deliberative praxis of democracy can bring ennui to every deliberator who might regard one another as sanctimoniously defending the abstract values of freedom and equality. What is worth reminding ourselves of is the importance that principles contribute to uncovering the shared fund of understanding in making the action-guiding elements across the board fathomable. This is a potential to counter absolute relativism that encloses society in tight bubbles of beliefs, if not in engaging in a warlike form of triumphalistic imposition of value-laden political positions.<sup>27</sup> The assumptive roots in Rawls' justification of the elements which he surrounds himself with in advancing the ideal-based conception of political justice are nothing new. Consider, for example, how social primary goods<sup>28</sup> have been established as all-purpose means of safeguarding political autonomy and other things that people may want in a more private sense. Two conjectures have been raised by Rawls to defend the possibility and effectiveness of social primary goods in maintaining freedom and equality: first, it is sociologically beneficial since these kinds of goods occupy a higher level of significance in effectively and meekly resolving institutional forms of injustice; second, these goods are assumed to be psychologically operative in shaping the content and intensity of human motivations that spring from insecurity and anxiety that make people tendentious to the unconscionable acquisition of wealth and power.<sup>29</sup>

In admitting that moral elements and other political resources appear to be ever-changing in their acceptability, one may ask if this is not a slippery slope to the helter-skelter of absolute cultural relativism. This approach is in contradistinction to how the causal connectives interpreted by human

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<sup>25</sup> John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4<sup>th</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 547. Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, liii.

<sup>27</sup> O'Neill, "Abstraction, Idealization, and Ideology in Ethics," 67.

<sup>28</sup> Rawls believes that social primary goods are formed under a so-called ideal condition to help navigate political arrangement in a non-arbitrary way. This set of goods include basic rights and liberties, opportunities, freedom of movement and choice of occupation, positions of office, equality of opportunities to politically participate, a sufficient amount of wealth to practice and realize a particular end, and social bases of self-respect. The reasonable (the more public) and rational (the more private) interests of the people, according to Rawls, fundamentally necessitate sufficient government support of the primary goods. See John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 2001), 57-58.

<sup>29</sup> John Rawls, "Fairness to Goodness," in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4<sup>th</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 276-277.

perception can be directly used as epistemic buttressing in the expansion of knowledge frontiers in the observable ground of physical sciences.<sup>30</sup> This avoids conflating the meaning of facts found in concrete judgments in the physical sciences, and what are normatively or philosophically selected as relevant facts in ethical disquisitions. Idealization in political justification does not fully spring from the empirical ordering of generalization and systemic treatment of observable data as human beings are, by nature, complex and are not simply objects that can be manipulated to arrive at the truth of the matter or to be experimented by.<sup>31</sup> Of capital importance, nevertheless, is to take a closer look at how Rawls defined political justification:

[J]ustification is [an] argument addressed to those who disagree with us, or to ourselves when we are of two minds. It presumes a clash of views between persons or within one person, and seeks to convince others, or ourselves, of the reasonableness of the principles upon which our claims and judgments are founded. Being designed to reconcile by reason, justification proceeds from what all parties to the discussion hold in common. Ideally, to justify a conception of justice to someone is to give him a proof of its principles from premises that we both accept, these principles having in turn consequences that match our considered judgments. Thus[,] mere proof is not justification. A proof simply displays logical relations between propositions. But proofs become justification once the starting points are mutually recognized, or the conclusions so comprehensive and compelling as to persuade us of the soundness of the conception expressed by their premises. It is perfectly proper, then, that the argument for the principles of justice should proceed from some consensus. This is the nature of justification.<sup>32</sup>

Notwithstanding, if one assumes an unbridgeable rift between the perceptive faculties of citizens and the elements selected as relevant facts for politico-ethical deliberations, one ignores the progress of concretizing the values of equality and liberty. For instance, it is not only because the construction of schools made a furor that one takes a stand to establish educational centers to support the love for learning and inquiry of children in a democratic country. We know for a fact that our abstract cause to champion educational development must be coupled with an environment conducive to learning. In the same way, the debilitating health of the poor can be an obstacle to how they can be empowered to work – just as we realized that from whatever class we belong, hunger, poor eyesight, depression, and physical fatigue could hardly give us the confidence that we worked in the most optimal sense that we could have been. It is to be expected that budgetary allocation can be a tremendous and sophisticated job that the government cannot elide as it endeavors to be the most economical and resourceful power despite the many factors it has to consider. But to be on the goldilocks of extravagance and penny-pinching can only take its form when we notice the problems and we do what we must as a good and responsible citizenry. One should not be desensitized, so to speak, to the forces that block social progress.

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Little, “Reflective Equilibrium and Justification,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 22 (1984): 378-379, doi:10.1111/j.2041-6962.1984.tb00354.x.

<sup>31</sup> This is similar to how Frederic G. Reamer argued that the discovery of knowledge in the human sciences has to be given ample space for ethical intervention. There are good reasons, however speculative these may appear, not to carry out experimental practices in order to give normative value to the context of research itself and not to dehumanize an inquiry and various scholarly approaches with the aim to understand – albeit not completely – the complexity of humanity. In this sense, the puzzlement amidst the scholarly rigor must be accompanied by the understanding that human values cannot be simply reduced to the objectification of smaller units in a completely tangible reality. As Reamer gave a convincing example: “No one would ever propose that we randomly assign children to abusive and nonabusive settings to investigate the causal effect of abuse.” See Frederic G. Reamer, *The Philosophical Foundations of Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 128.

<sup>32</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, 508-509.

By letting the controversial energies in political affairs subside and simply assuming an easy-way-out tunnel to all the disagreements, Rawls gestures on the relevance of homogeneity in the political identity of the citizens.<sup>33</sup> Fuelled by much frustration, Brendan Sweetman astutely assessed Rawls' project as being torn by its contradictory routes to progressive social inclusion. While Rawls firmly believes that there is a need for a space to respect basic human liberties and that it is politically impossible to obtain a one-size-fits-all category of social evaluation to test various conceptions of the good life in which we only have to rely on "*fundamental political ideas viewed as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society*["<sup>34</sup> Rawls is not bothered at all that the network of values that was constrained to what was believed to be politically reasonable has made citizens think that they are simply spiders trapped in the very cobweb of their social judgment without having the capacity to use their political autonomy and directly engage in the deep sources of questions that, at first glance, can be seen to be disentangled in the tightrope of political arrangement. "[T]here is no agreement on what these ideas are," as Sweetman critically noted in order not to sidestep the paradoxical nub of the dilemma, "*so any proposed set of them will always remain controversial and will have to be dogmatically imposed on those who do not accept them. Even if there [was an] agreement, there would still be no agreement about the particular understanding, range, and application of a value.*"<sup>35</sup>

It may be considered that Rawls imbibed a developmental fulcrum to counter the threats of societal lethargy to widen the horizons of understanding. To hold this in mind, as Alexander Kaufman pointed out, is to see that "*while deliberations begin with a set of fundamental ideas, the members are not limited to arguments grounded in this set, nor are they limited to appeals to any canonical account of the core ideas of the political culture.*"<sup>36</sup> A strong case that can explain how Kaufman has ineptly shielded Rawls from critics is the contradiction when Rawls asserted the priority of the first principle of justice pertaining to basic liberties in the constitutional essentials by saying "*that whether the aims of the principles covering social and economic inequalities are realized is far more difficult to ascertain. These matters are nearly always open to wide differences of reasonable opinion; they rest on complicated inferences and intuitive judgments that require us to assess complex social and economic information about topics poorly understood*["<sup>37</sup> despite the fact that Rawls himself strongly suggested that understanding the needs of the citizens cannot in any time be taken for granted to institute a social order of inherent stability and not only led by vicious coercion.<sup>38</sup> Are we, in this case, not falling victim to the stringent compartmentalization of issues and allowing ourselves to be pawns jockeyed by a social power beyond our deciphering? To take this crucial dilemma out of sight is no less an abetting of the sheer formality of basic human liberties and fooling ourselves that society is not deficient in vital materials "[b]y including the guarantee of fair value for the political liberties in the first principle of justice [since] one makes sure that the fair political process is open to everyone on the basis of rough equality."<sup>39</sup>

Can we simply accept this "rough idea of political equality" without necessarily holding the view that discussions on economic safety nets, from whatever range of intensity in dissension, is a steppingstone that cannot be sidetracked to optimize the equality of opportunity in political

<sup>33</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 152.

<sup>34</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 223.

<sup>35</sup> Brendan Sweetman, *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square* (United States of America: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 172

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Kaufman, "Rawls's Practical Conception of Justice: Opinion, Tradition, and Objectivity in Political Liberalism," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 3 (2006): 34, doi:10.1177/1740468106063281.

<sup>37</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 229.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 179.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Percy B. Lehning, "The Ideas of Public Reason: Can It Fulfill Its Task? A Reply to Catherine Audard," *Ratio Juris* 8 (March 1995): 36.

discussions? When Rawls stresses the idea that we are completely responsible in our decision-making, he assumes that political assistance is limited to circumstances in which the citizens improve themselves because of their normal functioning bodies that alleviate the effects of inequalities in social stratification, natural endowments, and other accidental events.<sup>40</sup> Rawls does not primarily recognize (or at least he does not want to be involved with it) that life is loaded with elements beyond our own making as we are also shaped by various external factors. As Norman Daniels hypothetically claimed, “*we might reduce the burden for bad health on those whose ethnic backgrounds led to tastes for fatty food, or might find biopsychological markers for [‘risk takers’] who thus form a type that should not be held as responsible for their high-risk behavior.*”<sup>41</sup> If the world is to be serious about issues of mental health, the right move is for the scientific community to study the complexity and not to wear another form of uniformitarianism by assuming that the political culture of liberal democracies is not interested in these endeavors. Rawls reduced this difficulty in a facile idea of the fair value of political liberties based on an application of rules in a debate not to restrict everyone but to regulate the flow of the discussion because freedom of speech becomes futile whenever we try to put the essential part of it as simply having the unlimited right to utter words; this highlights the fact of limitation in which not everyone can speak at the same time and place for conflicting ends.<sup>42</sup> While Rawls seems commendable in this respect, he would acknowledge the inevitability of equally strong forces of several human values that eventually result in refractory conflicts. At best, Rawls encourages the citizens to guarantee that “*the danger to liberty from the marginal loss in control over those holding political power just balances the security of liberty gained by the greater use of constitutional devices. [...] Ideally[,] these conflicts will not occur and it should be possible, **under favorable conditions anyway**, to find a constitutional procedure that allows a sufficient scope for the value of participation without jeopardizing the other liberties.*”<sup>43</sup> But does the determination of “favorable conditions” necessarily point to a political situation of economic sufficiency where political freedoms can effectively bear the fruits of equal footing in political participation?

### Socio-Economic Predicaments Facing the Possible and Impossible

In Rawls’ project, burdensome political unfairness legitimizes exclusion from governmental support. For example, one may ask, “*Are the least advantaged, then, those who live on welfare and surf all day off Malibu?*” – to which Rawls would reply: “*Those who do no work have eight extra hours of leisure and we count those eight extra hours as equivalent to the index of the least advantaged who do work a standard day.*”<sup>44</sup> While citizens may vary on what benchmark can be used to ensure their basic needs, Rawls reminded us that citizens “*must look to the society in question. But that does not mean that the constitutional essential itself is not perfectly clear: it is what is required to give due weight to the idea of society as a fair system of cooperation between free and equal citizens.*”<sup>45</sup> These issues, therefore, fascinate a critical reader about the contradictory elements that oscillate in Rawls’ project. Even if citizens find some issues too controversial, this cannot be a fundamental ground to exclude them from political deliberation. Why is the social minimum included in constitutional essentials while the difference principle is not – yet these are both bound to create extensive political disagreements?<sup>46</sup> This can be juxtaposed to Rawls’ later project in which the abstract

<sup>40</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, 83.

<sup>41</sup> Norman Daniels, “Rawls’s Complex Egalitarianism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 354.

<sup>42</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, 178.

<sup>43</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, 202. Emphasis applied.

<sup>44</sup> Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 179. Also see Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 182.

<sup>45</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 166.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 229-230. If the first principle of justice is in place, Rawls believes that the difference principle shall be the next political move of the government. The difference principle is divided into two

idea of equality in social relations can be favored at the highest level depending on the interpretation of the public political culture itself, which, in turn, extracts “[t]he concept of the appropriate minimum [as] not given by the basic needs of human nature taken psychologically (or biologically) apart from any particular social world.”<sup>47</sup> This contradicts Rawls’ early declarations that in harmonizing social interests by the determination of a social minimum, one cannot intuitionistically put forward its adjustment as it catches the volatility of social circumstances.<sup>48</sup> Rawls fears that this leads to the intractable social calculation of utilitarian arguments that puts in a precarious situation the least-advantaged members of the society who cannot join the intellectual discourse. However, a stark contradiction arises when one critically juxtaposes the assumption of Rawls that socioeconomic inequalities may not disrupt the preservation of self-respect with what he said that a conception of justice “*should publicly express men’s respect for one another.*”<sup>49</sup> This guarantees a sense of their own worth, as the establishment of equal liberty and the application of the difference principle are destined to achieve. Indeed, Rawls himself admitted that there is a connection between self-respect and the problems brought about by the variance in socioeconomic standing. But how come Rawls acknowledged the circumstances of justice that give rise to political questions but seems to present political and economic discourse as something outside the disagreeable edges?

In establishing deep commitments in a liberal society, Rawls categorically permits in the wide view of the public reason the appeal to non-public reasons, with a proviso that, in due course, public reasons will be offered for the political judgment raised as regards the matters of basic distributive justice and constitutional essentials.<sup>50</sup> This wide view of public reason, however, can be abused by a majority to appear with the intention to defend political positions anchored on public reason, yet they are like pirates hijacking the ship to take it all the way to their very particularistic intentions. One may well argue that to allay these worries, it is cogent to create a counterfactual motivational requirement in presenting a political stance solely by invoking political values as the content of public reason itself. In this fashion, the assumed wide view of public reason will not dissipate to the hypocrisy of citizens whose articulation has a hidden pernicious agenda – as easily inserted due to the complexity of abstract and fluid weighing of human values. The pivotal point, as David Reidy asserted, is not whether this can build the duplicitous political character of citizens, but “*were liberal public reason not autonomous and complete with respect to most, if not all, fundamental political issues, neither the ideal of public reason nor its sincerity [...] would figure so prominently in the liberal democratic ideal of citizenship, and there would be little need to worry about hypocrisy in the voting booth or about citizens or officials otherwise acting in bad faith in the political domain.*”<sup>51</sup> In the first place, what is the real score of being inclusive of non-political values and non-public reasons when, in the end, public reason will prevail in assessing contending political claims? But, as Rawls admitted, political values might only answer “*nearly all*”<sup>52</sup> political cases that call for public

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sections. The first part should be prioritized to the second part – as the former refers to the equality of opportunity that should be strictly maintained in all offices; while the latter pertains to the most optimal share and use of resources that the least-advantaged members of the society (lowest-paid and/or most unskilled workers) should have compared to any political arrangement. Also see Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 42-48.

<sup>47</sup> Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 132.

<sup>48</sup> See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 316-320. Rawls strongly believes that “[t]he fact that we have a compelling desire in such cases [of fundamental political questions] does not argue for the propriety of its satisfaction **any more than the strength of a conviction argues for its truth.**” Also see Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 190. Emphasis applied.

<sup>49</sup> See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 179. Also see Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 318; 326.

<sup>50</sup> Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” 591-594.

<sup>51</sup> David Reidy, “Rawls’s Wide View of Public Reason: Not Wide Enough,” *Res Publica* 6 (2000): 63, doi:10.1023/a:1009628330727.

<sup>52</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 225.

deliberation. It is a matter of avoiding inconclusiveness as well in which public reason alone lacks a rational instrument to formulate an ordering of values. It is not far-fetched to think that if there is no common currency in the modes of reasoning, justification of political position comes from non-public criteria.<sup>53</sup> But this only creates a circuitous trajectory in avoiding intuitionistic judgments that give a prominent place to “*capacities unguided by constructive and recognizably ethical criteria*” because, as Rawls himself admitted, “[i]f we cannot explain how these weights are to be determined by reasonable ethical criteria, the means of rational discussion have come to an end.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Michael Baur traced this problem as the actualization of Rawls’ idea of public reason has been torn apart by the subjective and objective sense of defining reasonableness. The only way that Baur sees Rawls withstand these objections is to emphasize that public reason pertains not to a particular stock of opinion but to an imperative that provides a generic ingredient to make mutual suspicion thriving in which “*there is something self-confirming or self-validating about any accusation, within the context of actual disagreement about public reason itself that some other citizen has violated the requirements*” which, as Baur writes, “*can be grounded in the simple fact of disagreement between citizens about the nature and requirements of public reason itself.*”<sup>55</sup> This is a great misunderstanding since Rawls is deeply banking on the public political culture of democratic societies and their widely held political values. It only underlines the question of who gets to decide when a stand-off arises, for even if no one bothers to be suspicious or apprehensive about the protestations in favor of bringing back slavery,<sup>56</sup> for instance, it is not to be regarded as unsound to object to it as a coincidental moment of commonality in accepting immoral political recommendations – highlighting that Rawls’ project is a victim of self-referentiality which is afraid to face and embrace truth from controversial political issues.

Thomas Nagel once posited that it is needed to set out a political arrangement that can be justified inherently as citizens can psychologically abide by the terms of human affairs without sacrificing moral quality and practical sustainability. “*We should regard,*” Nagel explains, “*both of the elements that create the dilemma as morally valid and take this as a call for the exercise of political, social, and*

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<sup>53</sup> However, one must also note that despite the fact that both the constitutional essentials and matters of basic distributive justice is under the ambit of political values, Rawls allowed the legislative bodies “[t]o resolve these more particular and detailed issues [on economic predicaments because] *it is often more reasonable to go beyond the political conception and the values its principles express, and to invoke nonpolitical values that such a view does not include.*” See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 230. Emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 40-41.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Baur, “On Actualization of Public Reason,” *Fordham Law Review* 72 (2004): 2173, <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol72/iss5/33/>. At some point, Rawls would seem to push for the more subjective criterion in realizing the institutionalization of public reason when he said that “*public reason does not ask us to accept the very same principles of justice, but rather to conduct our fundamental discussions in terms of what we regard as a political conception. We should sincerely think that our view of the matter is based on political values everyone can reasonably be expected to endorse [...]. A vote can be held on a fundamental question as on any other; and if the question is debated by appeal to political values and citizens vote their sincere opinion, the ideal is sustained.*” See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 241. Emphasis applied.

On the other hand, Rawls would seem to expand political understanding by relying on a more objective and external referencing to the whole citizenry: “*The criterion of reciprocity requires that when those terms are proposed as the most reasonable terms of fair cooperation, those proposing them must also think it at least reasonable for others to accept them, as free and equal citizens, and not as dominated and manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position.*” See Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” 578.

<sup>56</sup> Rawls stated that “[t]here are facts about justice that may be discovered, as there are possibilities before anyone goes through a construction, say the possibilities that certain principles would be agreed to in the original position. Similarly, there are no possibilities in other cases; for example, there is no possibility that a principle allowing slavery would be agreed to. That is a fact related to the injustice of slavery.” Cf. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 125.

*psychological imagination.*”<sup>57</sup> But, once more, we have crossed paths with the worry that this would be impossible without having been perturbed to know the truth of the matter. If expectations and proposals for declaring communal ambition must not be accepted far from the suspecting minds of the citizens – to ensure the right amount of human motivation and not to eradicate the moral value of the rule itself – how can we simply surrender all our hesitations to an economic framework that Rawls believes should be laid down to realistically resolve problems on justice without expecting such a public firestorm to be located in the very place of controversial ideas?

In building a psychological yet political touchstone, Rawls believes that valuing self-respect can dissolve extreme apathy and divisive cynicism.<sup>58</sup> This sense of fulfillment in the political sphere gives harmony to the larger union of smaller social unions (to use Rawlsian parlance). Rawls would claim that because the priority of liberty is secured, citizens need not be perturbed by the inequalities in social arrangements since due to so-called political fairness, “*social and economic differences between the various sectors of society, the non-comparing groups as we may think of them, are not likely to generate animosity, the hardships arising from political and civic inequality, and from cultural and ethnic discrimination, cannot be easily accepted.*”<sup>59</sup> In fairness to Rawls, it is rather politically welcome to say that there is no need to coerce everyone to uphold a one-size-fits-all standard for wealth since some people want to live in austerity and some to more profitable activities. Secured in this social condition is the freedom to choose an occupation and to let society grow in their more private dealings that, in turn, builds confidence in sociality and helps to boost social production without upsetting social harmony. Despite this, the so-called “self-respect” gives a map of the problematic route, especially in connection to social stability. It is truly difficult to delineate the issues of socio-economic inequalities with the issues of self-respect and even with the material means to safeguard the liberty of conscience. This has been problematic in neglecting the cause of poverty for the sake of the priority of basic liberties, which only reveals that “*the appropriate expectation in applying the difference principle is that of the [long-term] prospects of the least favored extending over future generations.*”<sup>60</sup> It is as if the least advantaged is to be mercifully grateful for simply being inserted into a well-ordered society to thrive. This interpretation also imposes a speculative account of what the prospects of the least advantaged should be without paying attention to circumstantial details. While some may sympathize with Rawls and argue that this kind of political constructivism is brought about not simply by relying on customary measures of social expectations,<sup>61</sup> it must be analytically punctuated by doubt if this critical projection is possible in Rawls’ enterprise since he aims for a criterion that “*appeals to what everyone can accept*” because it must be noted that “*a departure from generally recognized ways of reasoning would involve a privileged place for the views of some over others.*”<sup>62</sup> It is, indeed, doubtful if economic arrangements can be accepted without going through controversial platforms to effectively clarify vital issues the answers to which are not readily available to everyone divided by social status and other social contingencies. To analogize, it is one thing to say that it is challenging to teach some children with learning difficulties to correctly understand mathematical operations that need further psychological and educational intervention, but it is radically different to say that no one can possibly perform correct mathematical operations since it is beyond human intellectual capacities. For instance, in the case of the Philippines, one may become more careful not

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Nagel, “What Makes a Political Theory Utopian?,” *Social Research* 56 (Winter 1989): 915, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970571>.

<sup>58</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 440.

<sup>59</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 545.

<sup>60</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 285.

<sup>61</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 251.

<sup>62</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 187.

to deride some destitute people if they find affordable yet unhealthy packaged foods as their “staple and safer” supply in contrast with the pervasive recycling of leftover foods (known as “*pagpag*”).<sup>63</sup> But this “prospect for mere survival” does not hinder us from claiming that sustainable agricultural practices must be supported with sufficient nutrition and health awareness.

Rawls simplified the serious issues of social injustices in the mechanism of political constructivism by contrasting his notion of pure procedural justice to the idea of perfect procedural justice: in which the former is concerned with the modeling of a hypothetical device to exclude social contingencies so that there will be a fair outcome of a political conception of justice, whereas the latter pertains to procedures like assigning the one who will cut the whole cake to also get the last piece from the same divided whole.<sup>64</sup> The trouble with this vision is that by assuming that there is no identifiable and feasible criterion whereby the epistemic validity of political deliberation should be comported, Rawls instantly romanticized the procedural terms of democracy<sup>65</sup> that contradictorily becomes intermeshed with his idea of inherent stability in *Justice as Fairness*. Marianna Papastephanou examines that anthropological assumptions had been prioritized over others, and Rawls employed these collectively as a springboard to condescendingly state that his commonsensical justification can be insulated from socio-historical metanarratives fashioned under the guise of neutrality. By divesting theoretical assumptions, Papastephanou exposed the ethnocentric blindness behind such a brand of political liberalism that is not unadulterated with comprehensive ideas concerning human nature. For instance, Rawls warns “*that persons are mutually self-interested in certain situations and for certain purposes is what gives rise to the question of justice in practices covering those circumstances[,]*” which is the complete opposite of “*an association of saints, if such a community could really exist, [where] the disputes about justice could hardly occur; for they would all work selflessly together for one end, the glory of God as defined by their common religion, and reference to this end would settle every question of right.*”<sup>66</sup> However, if the rational aspect of the political conception of the person in Rawls’ project has a logical priority in pushing for various demands in social life, then, the egoistic tendencies being held as constants in every actual situation of contesting political justice cannot be taken to mean as devoid of applying a general theory on human motivation. On the contrary, Papastephanou believes that teaching that egoism is ever-present in justice-related situations reinforces conditioning in children toward tacitly liberalist, individualistic views.<sup>67</sup> While this critical observation can arguably be received as disputable as it might have placed a false notion of geographical and cultural categorizations in philosophizing, the truth of the matter is that Rawls relied on a certain theory of human motivation to advance his claims on distributive justice and public reason.

It becomes ironic that while Rawls frames the problem in an individualistic tone of firm resolve, he does not bother to be meticulous about the issues of social diversity in the economic sphere. Is it not the case that distributive justice should be aware of the reasonable distinction of the persons<sup>68</sup> and not impose a great weight on economic acceptability that hinders human freedom and

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Heriberto Ruiz Tafoya, “Packaged Food, Packaged Life: Corporate Food in Metro Manila Slums” (Kyoto, Japan: Kyoto University Press, 2023), 98-100.

<sup>64</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 72.

<sup>65</sup> As Rawls once quipped: “*To check whether we are following public reason we might ask: how would our argument strike us presented in the form of a supreme court opinion? Reasonable? Outrageous?*” See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 254. Cf. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 394.

<sup>66</sup> John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness,” in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4<sup>th</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 56-57.

<sup>67</sup> Marianna Papastephanou, “The Implicit Assumptions of Dividing a Cake,” *Human Studies* 27 (2004): 317, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20010377>.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 22-24.

reasonable self-fulfillment? “[T]he second principle lumps the worse-off together as recipients of public benefits and determines what they need to obtain the greatest benefits that Rawlsian justice calls for[.]” which tellingly ignores, as Roberto Alejandro emphasized, how individuals fulfill plans and maximize benefits based on their own assessment of well-being, including both physical and psychological states.<sup>69</sup> Rawls would accept that the issue of economic reform in which a casted shadow of philosophic doubts would preclude people from seeing changes eye to eye, but to say that it is all that there is in considering the issue of morality can be a betrayal to ourselves from what our political autonomy can do to initiate transformative political practices. This takes for granted that it is a moral responsibility of the citizenry to know what we can do and what we should prevent during discourses on socio-economic dilemmas. Given this impasse, how do we break its hold? Perhaps we should not be afraid to assess the suggestions of Rawls: “[J]ust institutions would have no point unless citizens had conceptions of the good they strove to realize and these conceptions defined ways of life fully worthy of human endeavor.”<sup>70</sup> But to completely define the lifeways “fully worthy of human endeavor” will only be jangling alarm bells in our head as this is not uncontroversial either as the political commitment must not be subsumed under the construction of a particular conception of the good – Rawls seems to be inescapable when running away from a monster in a labyrinth that he himself designed to lure it as Rawls should be held accountable in saying that “the total of public expenditures and the necessary sources of revenue is well defined, and **the distribution of income and wealth that results is just whatever it is.**”<sup>71</sup> This is only uncontestable unless Rawls already presupposes an inextricable link between the government and the visions of the good life without the need for various research endeavors and other political discourses. The embedded assumptions of *Justice as Fairness* bedevil the idea of political theory in the very workings of democratic practices to peacefully thrive with healthy political confrontations and tensions to address the often neglected predicaments creating a pretentious idea of social unity. As Rawls himself submitted, “*When we enter an agreement[.] we must be able to honor it even should the worst possibilities prove to be the case [...] Thus[.] the parties must weigh with care whether they will be able to stick by their commitment in all circumstances.*”<sup>72</sup> One may well argue that material insufficiency is just a natural fact of social reality and that no amount of political intervention can redress what is at the core of human nature. One might say that negligence, mismanagement, and government corruption are not the culprits of escalating impacts of economic poverty, but the inadaptability to emerging social circumstances, lack of perseverance, having no well-planned scheme to manage limited resources, and so on. But if we are truly determined to address the problem, are we not moved to find its underlying causes instead of simply describing its symptoms?<sup>73</sup> To be sure, complexity and indeterminacy may give hiccups to our philosophical undertaking of resolving social pathologies, but one must not be resigned to simply accepting that everything falls into place because of chance – that sooner or later, we will just wake up with the answers in our head. We must carry the moral responsibility to be effortful and meticulous when dealing with socio-economic inequalities.

Palpably, Rawls is in denial of the close link between socio-economic status and reciprocally self-supporting affirmation of everyone’s advancement of non-political commitments<sup>74</sup> in which the first principle of justice cannot diminish social instability even if he argued that if “[t]he less fortunate

<sup>69</sup> Roberto Alejandro, *The Limits of Rawlsian Justice* (London: The John Hopkins University Press: 1998), 56-57.

<sup>70</sup> John Rawls, “Social Unity and Primary Goods,” in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4<sup>th</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 386.

<sup>71</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, 249. Emphasis added.

<sup>72</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 153. Emphasis applied.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 117-118.

<sup>74</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 178-179.

are [...] forcibly reminded of their situation,” this may eventually slide “to an even lower estimation of themselves and their mode of living.”<sup>75</sup> Such a suspicion is acknowledged by Rawls in grounding the priority of liberty with self-respect which confirms that “men’s sense of their own worth may hinge on their institutional position and their income share.”<sup>76</sup> This endangers political participation since it becomes clear that disparities in socioeconomic positionalities become the basis of self-respect – which runs afoul of the priority of basic liberties. Fragmented social engineering is in the mind of Rawls when defending self-respect and associational ties; because beyond its face, Rawls uses an invisibility argument to bury the very neglect of the loss of self-respect due in large measure to the diverse social associations that reduce the “painful visibility” of variations in people’s prospects.<sup>77</sup> Aside from these fissures in the associational boundaries, Rawls himself even provided a specific order to suppress the negative repercussion by directing the well-off not to “make an ostentatious display of their higher estate [...] [as] the less favored are likely to experience their situation as impoverished and humiliating.”<sup>78</sup> Jeanne Zaino accentuates a similar concern that found the need for Rawls not to be apologetic towards “a bourgeois, inegalitarian class order.”<sup>79</sup> This carries a considerable weight to be suspicious of a doctrine that Rawls injected into his theorizing, that is, the principle that prioritizes liberty – or individualism, if you may – did not recognize that it can greatly diminish freedom itself without urgently addressing poverty. Even in democratic countries, where poverty is too rampant to be neglected, vote buying can easily truncate effective political participation since some of the poor voters tend to sell their votes in exchange for very particularistic goods from manipulative candidates.<sup>80</sup> While some people experiencing poverty must be understood and not taunted for having been tempted to selling their votes during elections due to very attractive offers that immediately address their basic needs, especially food supplies, it must be clear that policy positions of electoral candidates are usually disregarded as a major factor in selecting political leaders in these situations of vote buying. This also reduces an effective assessment of the long-term impacts on sustainable development of previous government officials since vote buying can be hidden under

<sup>75</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 92.

<sup>76</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 546.

<sup>77</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 536.

<sup>78</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 537.

<sup>79</sup> Jeanne Zaino, “Self-Respect and Rawlsian Justice,” *The Journal of Politics* 4 (Aug. 1998): 750, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1345537>.

<sup>80</sup> Susan Stokes, “Is Vote Buying Undemocratic?,” in *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying*, ed. Frederic Charles Schaffer (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007), 81-91. This critical observation was not incorporated into this article to simply assert that economically marginalized voters cannot vote wisely, nor is this to be considered the end-all and be-all of philosophizing. Rather, the issue is whether or not the complexity that the situation poses can outweigh the impractical side in Rawls’ argument that human liberty can override the concerns of economic conditions, especially with the use of public reason. Such a situation also magnifies how social stratification, in its considerable subtlety, can be a riveting force to shock the foundation of a democratic society. The antagonism that this situation brings forth can be considered a shackle to freely imagine a society that is equally prosperous for all to meet the demands of basic human needs and goods. Poverty, with all its economic burdens and societal exclusion, can all the more drive the people to collectively vote to assert their peculiar call for social change. Such a mob energy of voters to show how big and influential their circle is manifest in the contending economic interests in a democratic society that remains to be weighed down by economic adversities and other social inequalities. One of the causal explanations pointed out in the study is that political affairs beyond the sway of the ordinary masses, when taken under the formalities of conventional institutional measures, can be dismissed as negligent and austere enough not to be blended with the flavors of realistic contestation, perspectives, and inclusive transmission of possible solutions to economic predicaments. This complexity demands the call to involve various studies in social sciences in order to also understand, instead of ostracizing, the yearnings and distinct expressions of marginalized citizens. What this political sensitivity and sensibility requires of us is the avoidance of exaggerating and explaining so-called “blameworthiness” without delving into socioeconomic entangles. What is more, this also prevents us from engaging with voters’ education that does not realistically picture the choice situations of all voters from different economic and social backgrounds.

the mask of generosity as its value. Because of being materially insufficient, poverty can be blamed for making the impoverished not exercise their freedom in its fullness – indeed, this definitely takes a toll on how they introduce and express their view, hence a violation of the liberty of conscience. Situations like these are difficult to escape from, especially if competent and sincere people do not have the financial capacity to make their campaign more media-friendly and strategically captivating. The whole business, therefore, of hiding the symptoms of social instability is not immediately evaporated, and it only goes contrary to the moral force that Rawls often argues about the inherent stability of *Justice as Fairness*: a penultimate manipulation of legitimate expectations that becomes a shenanigan to the publicity condition of a political conception of justice.<sup>81</sup>

Simon Caney believes that it boils down to the attempt to predicate social stability on anti-perfectionist grounds in Rawls' well-ordered society.<sup>82</sup> My personal take is that Rawls assumed that the state must primarily be dedicated to protecting political fairness against unreasonable doctrines<sup>83</sup> without seeing that there are conceptions of the good that have no doctrine, say, those enthusiasts “*who want to surf all day off Malibu.*”<sup>84</sup> Having this limited understanding, Rawls bracketed the objects of critique that also inappropriately limited the scope of the influential powers of the state. Recall that Rawls recognizes that shared forms of political reasoning must be based on “*procedures and conclusions of science and social thought, when these are well-established and not controversial,*”<sup>85</sup> yet when considering the expanded clarification of the index of primary goods, Rawls suddenly considered that a standard working day must be assumed to sustain economic development and cooperative work.<sup>86</sup> Rawls even deemed it possible to include considerations about physical pain and realized native endowments, but Rawls opted to rule out so-called incomprehensible qualifications beyond objective measures. However, this unrealistically excluded solo parents managing single-handedly the upbringing of their dependent children, persons with disabilities, and students undertaking an income-generating job for their educational attainment, among others. Guided by a “non-comparing” purview, as Rawls puts it, an individualistic mindset created a Rawlsian world that presupposes that a certain population does not care about material insufficiency at the societal level, physical and psychological limitations of persons, and the manipulative view of politics placed under the guise of compartmentalizing rules on political discourses themselves. How is this explication of economic management not controversial that Rawls himself wishes to prevent as much as possible when tackling fundamental political questions? It seems that Rawls is the only game in town. It is truly a challenge how thorough public reason is in the balkanization of human values – from political and otherwise – to assert why a commitment (not only doctrinal ones) does not deserve public assistance. By sticking to so-called

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. John Rawls, “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory,” in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman, 4<sup>th</sup> Printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 326.

<sup>82</sup> Simon Caney, “Anti-perfectionism and Rawlsian Liberalism,” *Political Studies* 43 (1995): 248-264. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1995.tb01710.x. Cf. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 141-144; 179-180; 192-192.

<sup>83</sup> See the three features of reasonable doctrines as defined by Rawls himself. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 59. Rawls believes that, by and large, comprehensive doctrines exhibit an exercise of theoretical reason that is applied in many aspects of human existence with a relative degree of consistency and coherence to create an intelligible worldview. A comprehensive doctrine is also a manifestation of practical reason, according to Rawls, because it singles out values, among other things, that have specific weight and importance compared to the rest. Lastly, a comprehensive doctrine is flexible even in sticking to a certain doctrine and rooted in a particular tradition.

<sup>84</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 182.

<sup>85</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 67.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 179.

uncontroversial claims – or being held captive to those so-called “political” constraints – Rawls gave a poor definition of political reasonableness.

## Conclusion

Rawls believes that we are still latched on the unstable ground on how when defining matters that can be compelling for others to maintain our stable grounds where our collective democratic spirit dwells– and this is where the liberal idea of public reason is supposed to rescue us. Rawls’ idea of public reason shortchanges the dynamism of politics to rectify its own mistakes by trying not to leave any stone left unturned that can potentially be a host to subtle forms of social injustice. Using the original position argument, Rawls was able to simplify political problems by threading arguments based on a rationality that is replete with political assumptions about human nature, moral psychology, and social stability. This study also shows that while Rawls realized that there are sections of his convoluted brackets of arguments for his idea of public reason that became devastated by non-ideal circumstances and the convoluted brackets of his arguments, he was still recalcitrant that his ideal need not face the two buffeting winds that seriously blow upon his own call for political participation: first, the path has been too narrow for some to influence the political process due to material issues, as well as matters concerning the filtration of value-laden arguments, and, secondly, that the overlapping consensus has drastically relaxed its protecting measures that militate against the initial stance of Rawls to give way to a meticulous route to maintain a considerable amount of conclusiveness between political claims, and to fight against the sheer formality of equality that can be a slippery slope to embedded social injustices using aggregative apparatuses. Rawls has to face, on the one hand, the problem of indeterminacy in marshaling political values that can serve as a political argument despite the various interpretations of the democratic political culture, but, on the other, Rawls also has to answer if his intention to make political praxis free of controversy is not at any rate enervating the vitality of democratic participation to condignly fight inconspicuous types of social injustices.

What can saturate the energy to boost the discursive praxis in a Rawlsian society is the fact that, after everything that has been said and done in so-called “non-political contexts,” the processed ideas and duly examined solutions cannot take effect in influencing political understanding. Even in the inclusive view of public reason, citizens may invoke everything that they have got, but they cannot bring it out to fully shape political discussion, for the end route of political deliberation would be to listen to political values alone – nothing more, nothing less. But without understanding the reality that we live in, which can be controversial in one way or another, we cannot realize the political vision of Rawls that inherent social stability is guided by the right reasons.

In speaking of social primary goods as the benchmark of social cohesion, Rawls relegated the non-ideal circumstances to the thin theory of the good. With the assumption that the bundles of distributive justice can be described in the most general sense, Rawls believes that social primary goods can address the problems of freedom and material support based on his notion of political fairness. Rawls’ unflinching insistence on prioritizing basic human liberties – even if he is fully cognizant of the dark repercussions – has been a guiding force in his theory. To institutionalize a decisive factor in governance, instead of including socio-economic difficulties as part of the discursive scope of his idea of public reason, Rawls transferred this type of political management to an unfair route. However, this seriously impairs political influencing and basic human liberties, for our expressive capacities need a material medium, and if socio-economic inequalities are neglected – as Rawls himself admitted, even with the provision of the social primary goods – it is not surprising that such can badly affect the engagement in political decision-making. One can postulate, then, that Rawls himself has become a

utilitarian in a way that “does not take seriously the differences of individuals.” In other words, it has been assumed that the basis of political neutrality has successfully lumped up all the primary social needs of every citizen from whatever background. It has been argued in this study that Rawls did not bother to heighten this urgent political concern. For one thing, the vindictive mode that pushes for a *modus vivendi* can only be effectively undermined by a public reason that is not reluctant to countenance the contestable sources of various demands and claims for well-being. This boils down once more to the underpinning of a political conception of the person. The question is, is the political conception of the person simply filled with conjectural accounts, or does it also attract rich discourses about the nature of reality and the human person to facilitate an ever-renewing standard for policymaking?

This only highlights the fact that a political conception of justice and the political theory itself need other areas of philosophizing. It is not to remain superficial when facing indeterminate issues fundamental to political stability. Indeed, this is the authentic way to listen and appreciate the dialogical path of praxis itself. We learn to listen not simply because we want sounds to pass our ears and take the pretentiousness of the so-called democratic spirit on the pedestal – we listen because we want to know and understand each other. To uphold equality and liberty is not simply a staging of the conjectural devices; it is, most importantly, giving breath to a life of compassion for others, giving direction to navigate appropriate and long-term solutions (if not for eternity) to fight against corruption and oppression of whatever form, and providing an assurance that everyone in society is equally protected and cared for. This is why we must bridge the gap between the ideal theory and the non-ideal circumstances.

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## *Kapahingaloan: A Bicolano Indigenous Way of Philosophizing Towards Death*

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**Abstract:** Through indigenous language, Bicolanos philosophize about death and the longing for *kapahingaloan*, a state wherein the *kalag*, soul, finds peace after death. The root word *pahingalo* means rest, affixed by *ka* and *an*, forms an adjective connotation of rest in Bikolano interpretation, a more profound state of rest. *Kapahingaloan* is an indigenous concept of death. This paper utilizes linguistic and contextual approaches as it investigates the practical application and discourse methodology of Bicolanos to showcase the roots of the Bicolano indigenous philosophy of death. In establishing my claim, I used Fr. Wilmer Tria's Bicolano methodology of philosophizing that aims at unearthing hidden philosophies from the very language that builds their identity as Bicolanos. This paper will also subscribe to the methodologies of offshoot Bicolano philosophizing presented by Victor John Loquias. Linguistic analysis and contextual analysis of *Kapahingaloan* supports the establishment of a Bicolano Indigenous Philosophy through an understanding of the language and its application. It has to be noted that the Bicolano philosophy of death is just a portion of the totality of the Bicolano philosophical paradigm. *Kapahingaloan* showcases the identity of the Bicolano's way of philosophizing manifested in language, culture, prayers, and its pragmatic and dialectical applications in the phenomenon of death, dying, and the afterlife.

**Keywords:** *kapahingaloan, Bikol Philosophy, indigenous philosophy, death*

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### Introduction

Philosophy embedded in the culture, language, practices, and beliefs is worthy of unearthing and exploring. Bicolanos are known for their rich cultural heritage, dialects, traditions, and beliefs that manifest their identity. Bicolanos have a unique view of death as enunciated in the Bicol term *kapahingaloan*.<sup>1</sup>The root word *pahingalo* means "rest" or "to rest." When affixed with *ka*, the word assumes the significance of "a wishful rest." And when further suffixed with *an*, the word *kapahingaloan* is formed to mean "a profound state of rest." In English, it can be translated to 'restfulness'<sup>2</sup> that is characterized by calmness and tranquility. Moreover, in Bicolano linguistic analysis, the term further

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<sup>1</sup> Kapahingaloan – the term used by Bicolanos that invoke a deeper sense of rest towards the reunion of 'kalag' (soul) to 'Kagboot' (God) that has its Bicol identity in doing indigenous philosophy.

- The state where the soul and body achieve perfect rest.

Kapah(e)ngaloan – state of perfect rest; same meaning either spelled with vowel 'e' or 'i' See Dominador N. Marcaida, Jr., *Grammatikang Bikol*, (London: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2021), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Restfulness is a feeling of being calm and relaxed. "*Tranquilidad*" in Spanish translation. See "Restfulness," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed September 04, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english-spanish/restfulness>.

implies a connotative meaning of wishing and, praying for someone, a deep peace in rest that is viewed primarily in the phenomenon of death.

Fr. Wilmer Joseph S. Tria, a pioneer of introducing and establishing Bicolano philosophy,<sup>3</sup> presents methods to unearth terms that possess *pangabsan na halaga* or universal meaning as he elaborates the following:

*Sa madaling sabi, an metodolohiya iyo an mga minasunod: a) paggamit kan sadiring lingwage; b) an paghorop-horop kan mga manlaen-laen na gamit kan mga katutubong tataramon, lalolng-lalo na idtong mga tataramon na konotatiba; asin c) an pagladawan kan mga manlaenlaen na gamit kaini sa kultura; an pagtimbang kaini kun bage igwa man ini nin pangabsan na halaga o mayo; asin an pagtao nin mga mapa o direksyon na dapat sunudon tanganing makamtan an pangabsan na halagang ini sa ikakayaman kan sadiri, kan kultura asin kan bilog na katawohan.*<sup>4</sup>

By following Tria's methodology, I will explore the use of the term *kapahingaloan*<sup>5</sup> in culture, practices, and beliefs of the Bicolano towards death. For instance, the requiem prayer "*An Kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran itao mo saiya Kagurangnan, asin magbangraw saiya an linanag na daing katapusan*"<sup>6</sup> ("Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him) sang at the catholic funeral mass and prayed as responsorial for the dead, shows a deep sense of rest present in this Bicolano connotative term. Furthermore, it highlights the spiritual connection towards the reunion of the soul to God, *an kalag*<sup>7</sup> sa *kagbool*<sup>8</sup>, where perfect peace can be achieved. Alongside Tria's perspective, I will consider Victor John Loquias, who specializes in indigenous studies, Filipino and Bicolano philosophies. In his work "The Roots and Offshoots of Bikol Philosophizing" Loquias cites other contemporaries in this field of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Loquias also supports the framework of Tria in doing Bicolano philosophy, hence it applies to my paper. From this, this paper will discuss the Bicolano linguistic and societal landscape - history, topography, and different dialects and elucidate the philosophy embedded in language through the methodology presented by Tria on using native language, its cultural significance and universality in meaning. Through the analysis of different Bicolano cultures, practices, rituals, and beliefs, and by examining the prayers for the dead, the aim of this paper to establish a Bicolano identity of philosophizing towards death will be realized in the term *kapahingaloan*.

Based on the methodologies and its connotative significance, the rich use of the term *kapahingaloan*, I advocate, is a plausible establishment of an indigenous philosophy towards death by Bicolanos that embody a universal principle of rest and reconnection of the soul to God and the afterlife.

<sup>3</sup> Bikol Philosophy – Bicol identity on its way of philosophizing rooted in its language.

<sup>4</sup> Wilmer Joseph Tria, *Ako asin an Kapwa ko Pilosopiya nin Tawo*, (Naga City: Ateneo de Naga University Press, 2009), 23. Author's translation: In simple terms, the methodologies are the following: (a) the use of native language; (b) reflect on its cultural use and significance especially of those connotative terms; (c) and to illustrate the different applications of the term in the culture; to elucidate if it possesses universal meaning; and to give direction on how it will be used for the betterment of, self, the culture, and addition to new body of knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> The word *kapahingaloan* can also be written as *kapahengaloan* wherein the letters "i" and "e", even used interchangeably has the same meaning, a state of profound rest.

<sup>6</sup> Prayer for the dead used in Bicol Roman Missal and novena prayers for the dead.

<sup>7</sup> The same with Cebuano-Visayan term for the soul. See "Kalag," Pinoy Dictionary, accessed November 16, 2022, <https://cebuano.pinoydictionary.com/word/kalag/>.

<sup>8</sup> God - 'Dios' '*Kagbool*' in Bikol from Tria's notion of '*bool*' as God as the cause or having a fundamental relationship with God.

<sup>9</sup> See Victor John Loquias, "The Roots and Offshoots of Bikol Philosophizing," *PHILIPPINIANA SACRA* 57, no. 172 (January – April 2022): 23-48, <https://doi.org/10.55997/1002psslvi172a2>.

## Bicol Linguistic and Societal Landscape

### *History, Landscape, Community*

The Bicol region comprises six provinces: Albay, Sorsogon, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Masbate, and Catanduanes. In its geographical location, it is connected to the Quezon province and separated by sea from the Samar area. Bicol region has seven cities: Legazpi City, Ligao City, Tabaco City, Iriga City, Naga City, Sorsogon City, and Masbate City.<sup>10</sup> This partition also contributes to this region's rich cultural and dialectic background.

The Bicol language is said to be derived from the term “*bico*,” which pertains to the Bikol river. Others also theorized that it was derived from the word “*bikod*,” meaning twisted. Bicol language comes from Malayo-Austronesian with its adaptation from Arabic, Indian, Chinese, and Spanish.<sup>11</sup> Part of the history of where the name Bicol came from is the magnificent heritage of the region.

Bicol region is also known for its diverse and rich cultural heritage and was once top of the production of Abaca. Mayon Volcano is part of its tourist destinations situated in Albay; its white beaches of Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Masbate, and Camarines Sur. Furthermore, the love and devotion of Bicolanos to *Ina de Peñafrancia*, Our Lady of Peñafrancia in Naga, Camarines Sur, is evident as the yearly devotion of having fluvial procession is participated by thousands of devotees and pilgrims across the world. Alongside this cultural heritage is the diversity of languages in the region. Bikol-Naga is regarded as one of its *lingua franca*<sup>12</sup> since most people are linked to this language in the Holy Mass, novenas, sermons, missals, and even in politics. The analysis in this paper is limited in the use and coverage of the Bikol-Naga language.

### *Bikol-Naga Language*

From its geographic location, the Bicol region is considered as one of the regions with different languages and dialects. Each municipality has slight variations in tone, spelling, diphthongs, and glottal stops in their respective dialects.<sup>13</sup> As stated by Tria and Lobel, there is a standard Bikol, the ‘Bikol-Naga,’ considered as a *lingua franca*. According to them, 2.6 million Bicolanos can understand and talk with this language compared to the 1.4 million speakers of other Bikolano dialects.<sup>14</sup> Kristian Cordero clarifies that the Bikol-Naga, spoken and understood by many in Naga and Legazpi, and incorporated in the Catholic Church and religious writings, is part of the four languages of Bikol, namely, North Catanduanes Bikol, Coastal (Northern) Bikol, Inland (Southern) Bikol, and Bisakol. He emphasized

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<sup>10</sup> See Maria Lilia F. Realubit and Monica P. Consing, “Bikol Literary History”, accessed, September 12, 2022, <https://www.yodisphere.com/2022/07/Bikolano-Bicol-history-culture-traditions.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Rhoderick Nuncio, et al. “Pagsipat sa Leksikal na Baryasyon ng mga Terminong Filipino, Bikol, at Cebuano sa Kontekstong Panginabuhian/Pangkabuhayan.” *MALAY* 32, no. 2 (2020), 23-40, <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/pdf/research/journals/malay/tomo-32/2/3-nuncio.pdf>. Furthermore, to clarify, their point of reference is the difference between the use of the letters ‘c’ and ‘k’ in Bi(c)ol. The letter ‘c’ refers to the English word name of the region (Bicol) and its people (Bicolanos). On the other hand, the letter ‘k’ refers to the Bikol name, which refers mainly to its language (Bikol language). See Marcaida, Jr., *Grammatikang Bikol*, 2

<sup>12</sup> The language used as a means of communication between populations speaking vernaculars that are not mutually intelligible. See “Lingua franca,” Britannica, accessed November 02, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/lingua-franca>.

<sup>13</sup> Alvin Yapan, “Episode 6: Usapang Wika: Bikolano” interview by Sen. Loren Legarda, *ANC 24/7* YouTube, September 10, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYpG1LMOfzY>, (6:03-10:11).

<sup>14</sup> Nuncio, et. al., “Leksikal na Baryasyon,” 27.

that Bikol-Naga is not the *lingua franca* alone but together with four official languages of Bikol.<sup>15</sup> This explains why almost all written documents in Bikol use Bikol- Naga and its main driver for political, religious, and social communication.

Central or Standard Bikol is primarily used, spoken, and understood by those on the northern coast of Bicol, like Naga City, Camarines Sur, Tabaco and Legazpi City in Albay, and Sorsogon City, Sorsogon<sup>16</sup>. It is also largely used in Daet, Camarines Norte, and many other areas in Camarines Sur, the first and second districts of Albay, San Pascual, Masbate on Burias Island, the southwestern coasts of Catanduanes, and the northeastern coasts of Sorsogon. Sub-variants of this language can be seen in the areas of Daet in Camarines Norte, Naga City at Camarines Sur, Tabaco-Legazpi, first and second district cities of Albay, Sorsogon, and Southwestern and the northern town of San Andres and Caramoran, Catanduanes. The richness of this central Bikol language is also a reflection of the great devotion of Bicolanos towards the Roman Catholic faith, for it is the primary language used in giving the sermon, novenas, and the like.

In the topological aspect of the region and its history, Bikol-Naga, being one of the four languages and considered as the *lingua franca* by Tria and Lobel, warrants the linguistic and conceptual analysis of the term *kapahingaloan*. It is widely used in the Bikol transcription of the mass, prayers, and Church teachings and discourses in the political arena.

The etymology of words passed from one generation to the other highlights the *suano*, old thoughts, buried in Bicolano's language of interpreting the phenomenon around them. The Bicolano way of *pagborop-borop* or reflection, alongside their culture, practices, beliefs, and rituals, paves a way to reflect on the daily conversation implying the philosophy of *kapahingaloan* to suit the longing for the philosophy of rest that will be discussed in the succeeding part. Doing this implies the importance of studying the language and discovering its underlying philosophy.

### *Bikol Philosophizing*

A linguistic turn in the philosophical reflection on life, the process of dying, the phenomenon of death, and the afterlife is performed through pragmatic and discourse analysis.<sup>17</sup> Tria's methodology in doing Bicolano philosophy through connotative terms is applied in enunciating the practical and discourse connections of the term *kapahingaloan* in the individual, societal, and even religious perspective towards death, dying, and afterlife.

Loquias emphasized the plausibility of this effort in doing philosophy for many connotative terms show universal significance rooted in indigenous words. He writes:

Generally, "Bikol philosophizing" refers to the linguistic turn in doing philosophy identified here as the root which rendered the initial modification of philosophy as Bikol in its original articulation by Tria.... These are identified as the offshoots of Bikol philosophizing because while not all authors did not directly state allegiance to the project of "Bikol Philosophy," their employment of the linguistic

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<sup>15</sup> Yapan, "Episode 6: Usapang Wika", (2:38-3:49).

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Villanueva Ciudadano, *Bikol languages; Manga tataramon kan Bikol susog ki Lobel*, Facebook, October 08, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/417721452379437/posts/1294161554735418/>

<sup>17</sup> Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis involve the study of language in its contexts of use. Pragmatics focuses on the effects of context on meaning, and Discourse Analysis studies written and spoken language in relation to its social context. See "Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis" Department of Linguistics, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences Website, accessed October 27, 2022, <https://linguistics.uga.edu/research/content/pragmatics-and-discourse-analysis>.

and cultural resources of Bikol and the thematic or philosophical undertones of their works were considered as legitimate criteria for being pulled into its gravity and contributed to the flourishing of a rich fund of Bikol philosophical writings.<sup>18</sup>

The roots and offshoots of Bikol philosophizing aim to establish the identity of Bicol. Through linguistic turn, a justification is provided that by reinvestigating the language, a Bikol, philosophical reflection is possible.

As Federico Jose Lagdameo, the editor of *Bikol Studies*, puts it, these works, in one way or another, establish “a premise or promise of an identity” of thinking that is “Bikol.”<sup>19</sup> Through the available written materials in Bikol text and philosophical wit, this philosophizing emphasizes the identity of Bikol thoughts like those being written and explored in the Tagalog, Ilocano, and Bisaya philosophies.<sup>20</sup>

Indigenous philosophy in Bicolano language is a matter of excavating the roots and pragmatical sense parallel to its culture, traditions, ethnicity, religious norms, and societal construction of the people. Hence, by looking in its rich connotative terms, the roots and offshoots of *pamimilosopiyang bikolnon*, presented by Loquias, adheres to the methodologies proposed by Tria in his book, *Ako asin an Kapwa Ko: Pilosopiya nin Tawo*, articulated in the Bikol-Naga language.<sup>21</sup>

Focusing on the Bikol-Naga term *kapahingalooan* marks the sound identity of this word as used in the faith and spirituality of Bicolanos. The *lingua franca* serves as a legitimate driver of connotative terms that could offer philosophical groundings. A linguistic turn is performed in the style of what Florentino Timbreza calls “endogenous indigenization” or the use of native concepts to elucidate mainstream and foreign ideas and similarly executed by Bicolano scholars.<sup>22</sup> However, endogenous indigenization begins with the employment of language towards the prospect of philosophical validation resembling a sort of phenomenological eidetic reduction. From the old words expressed in the mother tongue, we can see the historical significance as preserved in different narratives through writing and verbal communication. For instance, the term *kapahingalooan* is used notably inside the community of believers of the Catholic faith rooted in the mother tongue and used as the language of Bikol mass and prayers.

Through the term *kapahingalooan*, an understanding of the Bicolano perception towards life, death, the process of dying, and the afterlife can be articulated. This requires a reflexivity of the word used primarily in relating with the phenomenon of death and its underlying philosophy.

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<sup>18</sup> Loquias, “Bikol Philosophizing,” 23-28.

<sup>19</sup> Federico Jose Lagdameo, “Constructing and Contesting What is ‘Bikol’” *Bikol Studies: Perspective & Advocacies* 1, no.1 (2014): 1.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Alfredo Co, *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*, Vol. VI (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 58.

<sup>21</sup> See Loquias, “Bikol Philosophizing,” 27. For Loquias’ translation of Tria’s methodology: Doing indigenous philosophy for Tria means to: (1) employ the native language in writing and doing philosophy; (2) reflect on key connotative terms on the mother-tongue where immense wealth of meanings and values are waiting to be unearthed for discussion; (3) reflect carefully and critically of traditions, beliefs and practices, and historically accepted narratives beyond mere descriptive analysis and logical justifications of culture and values; (4) transcend linguistic constraints by way of thought production or word production; and (5) transcend the culturally determined meanings by comparing them with their counterparts from other linguistic communities in the hope of accessing the universal human experience.

<sup>22</sup>Victor John Loquias, *Sariling Wika at Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Quezon City: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2008), 6.

## I. Idea of Death Embedded in Language

In order to understand the pragmatic and discursive use of the term *kapahingaloan*, this section delves into its purpose by looking into the context of Bicolano culture, practices, rituals, and beliefs towards death. Furthermore, contextual analysis of novenas, prayer responses, missal for the dead, and other literary texts can provide information on why it is plausible to be the indigenous philosophical viewpoint of Bicolanos towards death.

### *Bicolano Culture, Practices, Rituals, Beliefs*

Bicolanos trace back their practices, culture, rituals, and belief systems on death to many folklores passed from one generation to another and in the years of Spanish colonization. Such practices reflect the history of animism of our ancestors.<sup>23</sup> Death is viewed primarily as the separation of the soul from the body. The soul then transcends to a better place, a state of peace wherein it returns to the spirit world. The soul is called *kalag* in Bikol or *kaluluwa* in Tagalog. From this belief system still present today with the influence of Catholic dogmas about eternity, the soul, and the view of the afterlife, it is essential to revisit the motivation why people view it as a return of the soul to a peaceful state in his restfulness, that is, *kapahingaloan*.

Part of Bicolano rituals and practices in a wake (*lamay*)<sup>24</sup> is observing some *pamahiin* or superstitions. One example is not wearing red clothes when visiting a wake, for it is considered a bad omen. The soul, *kalag*, of the deceased might follow and bring another death in the community or to another family. Another widely popular superstition is the observance of *pagpag*. This refers to the practice of not directly going home from a wake instead, the visitors must look first for a place to hang out to *pagpag* or to shake off bad omens to prevent the deceased's soul from following them.

These superstitions may be perceived as a cultural response to ease the guilt and fear of another death or bad omen. We can see that some Filipinos still accept them as true and justified belief. A usual statement behind its practice states that “*wala naman mawawala kung sumunod kaysa magsisi sa hul?*” (there is nothing to lose, it is better to follow than to regret something bad will happen). On the other hand, some of these practices are rooted in filial piety that uncovers their desire to wish a departed loved one farewell and his bereaved family consolation amidst their grief. For instance, the ritual of sharing one meal by the bereaved family on a single plate after the interment of the deceased shows hope and strength to carry on new tasks as the head of the family feeds his people, which signifies setting a new foundation and a stronger familial connection. This paves the way for them to communicate their thoughts and hardships, thus promoting more open family discussions. They show concern and support to each other and ensure their acceptance that the deceased can now rest in peace. This is evident in the Bicolano statement: “*sige na, magpahingalo ka na. Kami na ang bahala*” (to the soul of the deceased ... “you can now go; we will take care of each other. You can now rest.”)

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<sup>23</sup> “Belief in innumerable spiritual beings concerned with human affairs and capable of helping or harming human interests.” I subscribe to the given definition of Sir Edward Burnett Tylor in his work *Primitive Culture* (1871), Park, G. Kerlin. “animism.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. See further: Street, B. Vincent (2022, February). Sir Edward Burnett Tylor. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Burnett-Tylor>.

<sup>24</sup> Lamay is a Filipino Term for wake. To further locate other significant Filipino practices, beliefs, on waking the dead in the Philippines. See Hope Yu, “The Practice of Waking the Dead in the Philippines,” in *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 37, no. 04 (2022): 231-238, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358087410>.

From this notion of having a peaceful rest, the term *pabingalo* is further given emphasis and connotative significance. When a person is tired, we often utter or give a command to take a rest “*magpabingalo ka nguna*,” to take a rest first. *Mag* or “to,” a verbal affix, is added. When someone is experiencing anxiety or frustration, we can command or make a plea to ease the problem, to clear his mind, “*kaipuhan mo nin kapabingaloan nin isip*.” *Ka*, a nominal and verbal affix in the infinitive form “a wish to,” is added plus the suffixed *an* - infinitive form meaning ‘ness.’ This *kapabingaloan*, in its construction of the sentence, merely signifies a plea; thus, in pragmatic and discourse analysis, it can be interpreted as a deep sense of rest that is viewed primarily in the use of the term *kapabingaloan* in the phenomenon of death. Nevertheless, this shows another side of the term in the view of life itself (used figuratively) but deeply rooted in the notion of dying, death, and the afterlife (used in both sense of the literal and figurative state of rest). The intensification of its use can be traced in the Roman missal for the dead, novenas, prayer, and responsorial for the dead, which will be discussed further in the next section.

### *Novenas*

Part of commemorating the life, death, and celebration of the afterlife, Bicolanos has this beautiful tradition of reciting novena prayers offered to the souls of the deceased. Mainly, these prayers are written in Bikol-Naga and are rooted in the teachings of the Catholic faith. Catholicism has a significant contribution to how Bicolanos perceive life, death, and the afterlife. About 93.6 percent, or 5,425,409 persons of the total population of Bicol in 2015, reported Roman Catholicism as their religious affiliation.<sup>25</sup> However, we can extract it to bracket the motivation for the utterance of *kapabingaloan* in its connotative significance from the linguistic and contextual use of the term.

Novenas consists of nine consecutive days of offering intention, prayer, and thanksgiving. It is usually done during fiesta celebrations in honor of the patron saint of the barangay, parish, or any celebrating community under the guidance of their patron saint. For instance, in Bicol, we have four known Marian celebrations that are pontifically crowned: Our Lady of Peñafrancia in Naga, Camarines Sur, Our Lady of Candelaria of Paracale in Paracale, Camarines Norte, Our Lady of the Pilar of Libmanan, in San Isidro, Libmanan, Camarines Sur, and Our Lady of Salvation in Joroan, Tiwi, Albay.<sup>26</sup> Considering this rich faith, people also offer supplications for their beloved loved ones in the afterlife. Novena for the dead, or in the local term, *decenario*, is said. *Decenario* is a prayer to God to help those souls in purgatory and for our departed loved ones. Appeals on the suffering of Jesus as the best aid to those in the purgatory to enter the state of perfect happiness in heaven. In one of its prayers, *dolot* or offering, this intention is recited:

*Daraba na sinda sa pagpabingalo duman sa saimong Mahal na [k]camurawayan asin buli lamang sa manga merito nin saimong Mahal na Pasion, pagcagadan sa Cruz agawa cami sa manga sakit sa infierno tangananing magcanigo cami macalaog sa pagcamit na caiditong Cabadean na dinaraban mo sa paladan na parahabon na ipinacong caiba mo asin*

<sup>25</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, “2015 Census of Population, Highlights Demographic Characteristics | Philippine Statistics Authority,” *PSA.gov.ph*, accessed November 19, 2022, <http://rso05.psa.gov.ph/content/2015-census-population-highlights-demographic-characteristics>.

<sup>26</sup> Pintakasi - Chronicles of Philippine Popular Piety and Local Ecclesiastical History, Accessed January 20, 2021, <https://pintakasiph.wordpress.com/2021/01/20/virgen-coronada-de-filipinas-the-canonically-crowned-marian-images-in-the-philippines/>.

*ta nabubuhay ca asin nagbabade caiba nin Dios Ama asin Dios Espiritu Santo sa gabos na panahon na daing casagcoran. Amen.*<sup>27</sup>

*Pagpabingalo* is the living person's intention to ask God to bring his departed loved one into his care. This signifies entrustment after one's demise. *Pagpabingalo* is rooted in the very sense of *kapabingalooan*, which is the totality of the state of profound rest in the afterlife.

The devotion to the souls in purgatory is also celebrated annually on the second day of November. All Souls' Day commemorates our loved ones in the second life, practiced by Catholic believers. The tradition of praying a novena for their souls is done nine days before the day of celebration. In the *Requiescat En Pace – Letania*, Litany for the blessed souls in purgatory, the following prayer is stated:

*Lider: Oh [K]Cagurangnan tawe nin daing tapos na capabingalooan an manga calag can manga nagcagaradan na binonniagan.*

*Simbag: Asin magbanaag logod sainda an tunay na livanag. Lider: Magpabingalo sinda sa catimawasan.*

*Simbag: Awot pa.*<sup>28</sup>

In this prayer, the faithful asks God to comfort the souls of our departed brethren. God, being the ultimate end, source of pure happiness, and perfect and just God, has the supreme judgment of one's destination. The Catholic teachings express this in three states: damnation or hell, purgatory, the state of cleansing and purification to attain the virtue of experiencing God face to face, and heaven, the state of perfect reunion to God as part of his creation that is now free from the guilt and stains of sins.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, on this day, a practice is usually done to commemorate our faithful departed through *sagugurang*.

Often, some family members offer mass for the dead while others still practice the *sagugurang*. *Sagugurang* sets traditional meals valued by their departed loved ones, such as *latik* or rice cakes and noodles, with their picture and a lighted candle on the table. Responsorial for the dead is recited, and the leader prepares a *kamangyan* or incense rounded in the table three times while praying for their eternal repose. This practice also signifies their love and unending bond to the family in the gesture of sharing the meal with them on the table. The practice of *sagugurang* can be traced to our animistic traditions of offering food for the dead to bring with them in their journey in the afterlife. As the family internalizes the reality of death, by this act, they remind themselves that their loved ones who have gone before them are now on a peaceful journey to rest in God's care. *Sagugurang* can be traced from the root *gurang*,<sup>30</sup> an old name for God in the Bikol context that is now expressed in *Kagurangnan*.

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<sup>27</sup> Letters 'c' and 'k' can be used interchangeably when like in Filipino writing, note however that proper names written originally with 'c' remains like, Camaligan, a town in Camarines Sur. Author's translation to English: "Give them rest in your glory, O God, and through the merits of your passion and death on the cross, deliver us from the torments of hell so that we can enter in thy Kingdom promised to the repentant thief, for as you live and reign together with the Father and Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen."

<sup>28</sup> Author's translation to English: "Leader: Oh God, grant eternal rest to the souls of thy faithful (baptized) departed. Answer (prayer members): And may the true light shine upon them. Leader: May they rest in peace. Answer (prayer members): Amen."

<sup>29</sup> Catholic Church. *Catechism on the Catholic Church: Article 12: "I Believe in Life Everlasting"* Libreria Editrice Vaticana. <https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>

<sup>30</sup> "Gurang means old, aged, and mature. The term is loaded with ethical expectations from a person who is supposed to act rightly "according to his age." As the *gurang*, *Kadunong* is both the man of learning and wisdom; the one who has gained familiarity of the world, society, and human experience. And finally, as someone literally at the threshold

Furthermore, in the Roman missal for the dead, we find the responsorial at the funeral mass for our departed loved ones. At the beginning of the mass, the choir together with the faithful sing this prayer of entrustment: *An kapabingalohan na daing kasagkoran Itao mo saiya (sainda), Kagurangnan; Asin magbangraw saiya (sainda) an liwanag na daing katapusan.*<sup>31</sup> This opening antiphon reminds the faithful of the main motivation of the celebration, which is to offer the departed's soul to God's heavenly embrace as he ends the journey here on earth. The mass' primary concern is for the departed's soul; although the body (corpse) is still present at mass, it is now in total demise, for his consciousness is gone.

Note, however, that in this attitude of entrustment, the term *kapabingalohan* always comes with *na daing kasagkoran*. In English it means "eternal rest," but in Bikol, it connotes a state of profound rest without end. After communion, the priest entrusts the soul of the departed by uttering these words:

*Padi: Mamibi kita... O Dios na makakamban, an atang na ini (refers to the reception of the Holy Eucharist) makalinig lugod kan kalag kan saimong sorogoon na si (name of the departed), na ngonyan tuminalikod na sa bubay na ini sa pagsunod sa saimong pag-apod. Patawada an saiyang mga kasalan asin daraba siya sa kapabingalohan na daing daing kasagkoran sa liwanag nin saimong kamurawayan. Huli ki Cristo na samong Kagurangnan.*

*Gabos: Amen.*<sup>32</sup>

As the priest has the duty to intercede and offer the sacrifice of the mass, his plea, together with the faithful, asks God to forgive the sins of the departed for him to attain the restfulness of his soul. This prayer of entrustment intends to offer the soul to God and comfort the bereaved family, ensuring them of God's mercy and just judgment.

When the prayer after the communion is done, the priest now sings or prays the song of farewell:

*Awit nin Papabumale*

*V. Mga santos kan Dios, madya kamo sa pagtabang saiya. Mga angeles kan Kagurangnan, magsabat kamo saiya.*

*R. An saiyang kalag daraba asin idolot nindo sa Kagurangnan.*

*V. Ibahan ka lugod ni Kristo na nag-apod saimo: Ibahan ka kan mga angeles sa kated ni Abraham.*

*R. An saiyang kalag daraba asin idolot nindo sa Kagurangnan.*

*V. Kagurangnan mapa-saiya an kapabingalohan na daing kasagkoran; Sa bangraw kan Saimong liwanag.*

*R. An saiyang kalag daraba asin idolot nindo sa Kagurangnan.*<sup>33</sup>

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of the ultimate possibility, the *gurang* might even be, in actuality, the one who is most authentically open to transcendence. In other words, the ethical and the spiritual may be said, or supposed, to converge in the person of the *gurang*." Loquias, "The Roots and Offshoots of Bikol Philosophizing," 33-34.

<sup>31</sup> Translation To English: "Eternal rest grant unto him (them), O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him (them).

<sup>32</sup> Author's translation: "Priest: Let us pray: O Almighty God, by this gifts we have received, may it wash the soul of your servant (Name) from sins as he respond to your call from this life. Forgive his sins and grant him eternal rest that he may see the light of your face. Through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen"

<sup>33</sup> Song of Farewell:

"Priest: Saints of God, come to his (her) aid! Hasten to meet him (her), angels of the Lord!

R. Receive his (her) soul and present him (her) to God the Most High. Priest: May Christ, who called you, take you to himself;

This beautiful farewell song narrates the soul's arrival to God's excellency. It reflects the plea for the soul to be assisted by angels and saints in complete union with God's presence in perfect happiness and adoration. By offering the soul to God, the ideal rest for the soul from the torments of sins, suffering, and illness is now entrusted to God's just judgment for his destination.

The priest then bestows his final blessings as he prays with the faithful.

*Huring Pamibi*

*Padi: Kagurangnan pinabulos mo an saimong dugo huli ki (name of the departed). Mapa-saiya an kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran.*

*(An simbag: Sa liwanag kan saimong kamurawayan.) Gabos: Sa liwanag kan saimong kamurawayan.*

*Padi: Bago sya namundag midbid mo na sya, Kagurangnan, asin sya linalang mo na kabaing saimo; mapa-saiya an kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran.*

*G: Sa liwanag kan saimong kamurawayan.*

*P: Pinag-solsolan nya an mga kasalan na saiyang naginibo laban saimo: mapa-saiya an kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran.*

*G: Sa liwanag kan saimong kamurawayan.*

*P: Sya itinalaan mo na mabububay-liquid asin makakailing saimo, saiyang Dios asin Kagtubos: mapa-saiya an kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran. G: Sa liwanag kan saimong kamurawayan.*

*P: Maugayon na Ama, sa saimong kamot idinodulot mi an kalag nin sasamuyang tugang. Bilog an samuyang pagsarig na sya mabububay liquid sa huring aldaw, kaiba an gabos na mga gadan sa gracia asin pagkamoot ni Cristo. Nagpapasalamat kami saimo huli kan gabos na mga karahayan na itinao mo sa saimong sorogoon mantang nabububay pa sya digdi sa ibabaw kan daga. Kagurangnan nyamo an pagtubod asin paglaom sa saimong pagkaberak, sagkod na kami makalaog sa kahadean mo kaiba kan samuyang tugang sa panabon na daing kasagkoran, Huli ki Cristo samong Kagurangnan.*

*G: Amen.*

*P: Kagurangnan, mapa-saiya an kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran. G: Sa liwanag kan saimong kamurawayan.*

*P: Mapa-saindo an Kagurangnan. G: Asin sa saimong espiritu.*

*P: Bendisyonan kamo kan Dios na makakamban: sa ngaran kan Ama asin Aki asin Espiritu Santo.*

*G: Amen.<sup>34</sup>*

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may angels lead you to the bosom of Abraham.

R. Receive his (her) soul and present him (her) to God the Most High. Eternal rest grant unto him (her), O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him (her).

R. Receive his (her) soul and present him (her) to God the Most High.” (From Ibreviary: <https://www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Preghiera>)

<sup>34</sup> “Concluding Prayer:

Priest: O God, you shed your blood for (Name of the deceased). May he rest in peace. Response: Through the light of your face.

P: You knew him, Lord, before he was born. You shaped him into your image and likeness; May he rest in peace.

R: Through the light of your face.

P: He repented his sins committed against you: May he rest in peace. R: Through the light of your face.

P: You promise to raise him up from the dead and he will see thy face, his God and Saviour: May he rest in peace.

R: Through the light of your face.

P: Into your hands, Father of mercies, we commend our brother (sister) N. In the sure and certain hope that, together with all who have died in Christ, he (she) will rise with him on the last day. We give you thanks for the blessings which you bestowed upon N. in this life: Merciful Lord, turn toward us and listen to our prayers: open the gates of paradise to your servant and help us who remain to comfort one another with assurances of faith, until we all meet in Christ and are with you and with our brother (sister) for ever.

Through Christ our Lord. R: Amen.

This concluding prayer summarizes the redemptive passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus that, in effect, redeems the souls from the adversities of sins committed by the departed. Through the salvation offered in Christ's crucifixion, the gates of heaven are opened to the souls who attained the grace of purity (cleansed in purgatory), and they will one day join God in the bounty of heaven.<sup>35</sup> As the faithful remember their departed loved ones, they are also invited to reflect on their mortality. While death is a reality there is an assurance that the afterlife exists and that the faithful hopes for the reunion with the loving and just God, the creator of all things.

The term *kapahingaloan* in the novena prayers and mass for the dead highlights the Bicolano *pagtubod*. The truth about this belief under the Catholic faith (as Catholic believers practice the mass), as explored by Loquias, pertains to obedience which implies two things: "first is authority, and the other is the acquiescence to authority."<sup>36</sup> For Loquias, "*Pagtubod sa Diyos*" or faith in God, is described as an act where truth itself (the authority which) commands obedience. From this obedience rose *pagkasabot*, that faith cannot be blind but is in fact rooted in understanding. As the believers proceed to strengthen this faith, and in this matter, faith about the promise of salvation and the afterlife, *pagkasabot* of the main connotative significance of *kapahingaloan* in this discourse is manifested. *Pagkasabot* can be broken down to *pagkayaon-sa-boot kan katotoohan* or "the presence of truth in oneself" that serves as a compass for one's action and enables him "to stand by them" or *paninindugan* from the root word *tindog* "stand."<sup>37</sup>

In other form of literary genre, Banzuela in his book *Dios Makina*, is seen to use the term *nagpapahingalong aroan*:

*Daing Pangaturogan sa Paraiso*

... Naghabarakebotan an salog dangan mga dabon Sa tagoy kan paros maogmang awit an haman Pondo sa panginaon an mga palago minadangog Minaluwas sa guma an nagpapahingalong aroan.<sup>38</sup>

The term *nagpapahingalo* in the text depicts the condition of resting Arowana fish or *aroan*. The present tense describes the action of the subject, Arowana fish. *Kapahingaloan* is used in its infinitive form, that is, as a state of restfulness. This will be further discussed in the next part.

## II. Bicolano Philosophy of Death: *Kapahingaloan*

Many consider death, its utterance, concepts, and practices as taboo. The taboo culture about death could be discerned in how Filipinos usually treat the talk about death as *paligsok*, or *daing data*, or a bad omen. Heidegger, in his *Being and Time*, explains that anxiety from death is a way to authentic 'Being-towards-death'.<sup>39</sup> The motivation of some superstitious beliefs about death explains the fear of it, and it makes the *Dasein* an 'Inauthentic Being-towards-death,' for they subscribe to the 'they-self.'

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P: Lord, grant him eternal rest

R: Through the light of your face. P: May the Lord be with you.

R: And with your spirit.

P: May Almighty God bless you all: In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. R: Amen.

<sup>35</sup> Catholic Church, *Catechism on the Catholic Church*, The Final Purification, or *Purgatory* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana),

### III.

<sup>36</sup> Loquias, "The Roots and Offshoots of Bicol Philosophizing," 34.

<sup>37</sup> Loquias, "The Roots and Offshoots of Bicol Philosophizing," 34.

<sup>38</sup> Raffi Banzuela, *Dios Makina* (Legazpi City: J & E Printing Press, 2017), 46

<sup>39</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1962), 304-311.

Subscribing to fear establishes the motivation to this superstition rather than actively preparing for one's own death. Death is seen as a negation of life, opportunities, and even companionship. When death comes, being-in-the-world ceases to exist.<sup>40</sup> However, Bicolanos manifest their distinct coping with the reality of this phenomenon. I advocate that the term *kapahingaloan* is the indigenous philosophy of death by Bicolanos.

Following Tria's three-fold step in discovering the philosophical significance of a term in Bicolano philosophizing the Bicolano philosophy of death will now be articulated in the term *kapahingaloan*.<sup>41</sup>

*Kapahingaloan* is a Bikol-Naga term that is used and incorporated to the *lingua franca* of the Bicol Region. As the *lingua franca*, this term is widely used in novenas, prayer for the dead, and the Roman missal for funeral services in the Roman Catholic faith, which is a primary driver of its use and denotative significance to a meaningful rest. This term is understood by most speakers of the region and has a connotative value primarily viewed in the phenomenon of death. Despite the linguistic variants in Partido, Rinconada, Iriga, Masbate, and in other provinces and municipalities, this term is widely used as a language of the church and in literary works such as poetry, *tigsik*, *rawit-dawit*, and in everyday conversations.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the connotative meaning of the term, the principal significance of *kapahingaloan* is the wish for a state of profound rest towards the inevitable reality of death. From the point of view of life, *kapahingaloan* is valued as peace, a rest from something that consumes energy. For instance, when our body is weak and tired, we often say, "*Kaipuhan ko nin pahingalo*," "I need rest." When we are in the state of anxiousness we say, "I need to calm down and rest my mind," or "*Kaipohan ko magkalma asin ipahingalo an saknyang isip*." The terms *pahingalo*, *magpahingalo*, and *kapahingaloan*, denote either the literal meaning of rest or the figurative significant profound rest in death.

A Bicolano way of philosophizing towards death is rooted in the primary motivation of achieving a painless, peaceful, serene view of the afterlife. The process of dying is painful especially for those who stay conscious of the pain entailing physical suffering. Pain can also be communicated through body aches, weariness, old age, sudden death, and emotional, mental, physical, and even spiritual agony when one is attending to a dying person. In response to pain comes the desire for a better situation. *Kapahingaloan* echoes hope for the dying and those who cater at deathbeds. Pain in the process of dying is universal and often viewed by many as evil. However, the *kapahingaloan* that is hoped for is perceived to bring ease to the suffering as the soul begins its journey in the afterlife. The statement "*Sige na, magpahingalo ka na. Mapasaimo man lugod an kapahingaloan na boot mo* (You may now go. May you attain the rest you deserve) literally and figuratively wishes the dying to let go. This utterance, pragmatically, is anchored to the hope that by passing in this awful moment of death, the person will soon attain peaceful rest away from his illnesses. The speaker's motivation is to transcend pain, guilt, and longing for peace and rest, even if this process will be of burden. Because of the hope,

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<sup>40</sup> Tria, *Ako asin an Kapwo Ko Pilosopiya nin Tawo*, 77

<sup>41</sup> The methodology presented by Tria is summed up in the three subparts. Following his methodology establishes my claim in establishing *Kapahingaloan* as a Bicolano philosophy of death.

<sup>42</sup> Based on the study and presented interview of Yapan. "We cannot ignore it when we come to church, in the reading of the bible and other religious works, one can find there hold the old Bikol is used. It is there preserved." (spoken in Filipino). Yapan, *Episode 6: Usapang Wika: Bicolano*, (9:30- 9:43).

faith, and notion of a better afterlife, this depicts how Bicolanos accept death in the idea of *kapahingaloan*.

Traditions, culture, rituals, and other practices on vigil for the dead up to its interment, differ in different parts of the Philippines. Yet its central common goal is to aid the suffering of the family, to accompany with prayers and hope that the body and soul, after one's death will attain rest, *pahinga* in Tagalog, *pahuway*<sup>43</sup> or a much deep term, *dayun*, *diskansu* or *diskansar*<sup>44</sup> in Bisaya, or *kapahingaloan* in Bikol. However, *pahinga* is seen as a literal command to rest, similar to *pahingalo*, and used directly in usual conversation to demand relaxation. *Diskansu* and *pahuway* as a verb also signify rest in its literal sense. *Dayun* refers to eternity: *Ang dáyung pahúlay*, "eternal rest" while *pahulay* refers to repose. *Kapahingaloan* is a state of profound rest that is yearned for by a person faced with the phenomenon of dying and hope for the afterlife. It is not simply relaxation or calmness, but the totality and perfect essence of rest. It is for this reason that the joke, "*Mapasaimo an Kapahingaloan. Kapahingalaon na daing kasagkoran!*" (May you have rest. Eternal rest!) will sound rude and disrespectful leading many to say, '*kapaligsok mo man!*'<sup>45</sup> From the preceding three-fold view of how Bicolanos view death, it could now be presented from this exploration of *kapahingaloan*.

#### *Pahingalo and Magpahingalo: On Living and Dying*

Bicolanos, with their faith and cultural practices, share a common ground to find consolation in the face of death. This consolation contains the hope for a better world beyond this human experience where pain no longer exists, that is, heaven. Some people are not open to the discussion about death and say "*Paligsok an pag-isip nin kagadanan,*"<sup>46</sup> ("It is a bad omen to think death.") But this reality will soon come and through hope, *pahingalo* (rest) becomes a task to be one with the dying; *magpahingalo* (to let go, to take rest) becomes a bid of farewell.

However, with many superstitious beliefs passed on from one generation to another, the talk of death becomes a taboo. This is reinforced by the popular statement "*Sabi iyan kan mga gurang kaya magsunod,*" ("Those are instructions from the elders, so it must be followed.") Elders or "*gurang,*" who, in the words of Loquias, "possesses wisdom from experience," often connect similar patterns to justify the risks of having another death by not observing those beliefs. They confuse Church teachings primarily through symbols. In a wedding, for example, when the flame of a candle is extinguished out of nowhere, they assume that death or tragedy will follow. Hence, the concept of *malas* and *swerte*, bad and good luck are used interchangeably in the Christian teachings of grace and God's blessing. The Catholic faith does not subscribe to good or bad luck for it delimits God as an omniscient and omnipotent supreme being.<sup>47</sup> With this, some elders and other practitioners of superstitions can be

<sup>43</sup> Pahuway – n. repose, rest.

<sup>44</sup> Dayun - 3. eternity. Ang dáyung pahúlay, Eternal rest; Diskansar - 2a., b., c. diskansádu, diskansáwu a. 1. rested, having rest. Diskansádu kaáyu ku human sa katúlug, I am very well rested after my sleep; 2. relieved, free of pain, worry, suffering. Diskansádu na ang masakitun kay nakatumar na ug tambal, the patient is relieved because he has taken his medicine; v. 1. get rested; 2. get respite. (Cebuano Dictionary)

<sup>45</sup> Paligsok, (n.) mockery with death based on the Gubatnon-English Dictionary, <http://gubatnondictionary.blogspot.com/2010/01/introduction.html>

<sup>46</sup> Wilmer Tria, "Ako asin an Kapwa Ko Pilosopiya nin Tawo," 72.

<sup>47</sup> In line with this pluralistic view of Filipinos, an interview with a Catholic exorcist by the Inquirer Philippines to Fr. Jose Francisco Syquia, director of the Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism, said these occult practices contaminated people's faith in God. "How many Catholic businesses have besides the statue of the Sto. Niño a statue of Buddha, a dragon, or some other pagan god? And the statue of the child Jesus is not there for devotion but for good luck,"

said to fall under what Heidegger called, ‘they-self.’ In this view, they are in the inauthentic view of the self for they subscribe to those practices being imposed out of their will to believe in because of fear and authority. Note, however, that the application of Heidegger’s notion in this paper of being inauthentic is on the animistic view of the people passed from one generation to the other that delimits logical foundations and autonomous reflection on death by superstitious models.

Heidegger’s notion of Being-towards-death is in anticipation rather than fear. The Bicolano way of viewing life and the process of dying is anchored in the dimensions of Heidegger on care in line with projection towards the possibility of death. “Dying” stand for the way the Being in which *Dasein* is towards its death.<sup>48</sup> As for Heidegger: “Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*. Thus, death reveals itself as that possibility, which is one’s ownmost, non- relational, and not to be outstripped.”<sup>49</sup> Heidegger pointed out the inevitability of death. This actuality of *Dasein* is certain. We can see the process of dying, of passing, and it enables us to reflect on this certainty. And superstitious model, countering its reality, shows a fear-based response of the people to death and not totally embracing its reality rather avoiding it by practicing those beliefs.

The Bikolano terms *pabingalo* and *magpabingalo* show the significant reality of thrownness in the world. The motivation behind the enunciation of these terms assists the dying and other concerned individuals in reflection and “in anticipation of death” to borrow Heidegger’s words. One indicator of this anticipation is securing a life and a memorial plan to prepare for the certainty that we will die one day. By ensuring good quality service for burial and interment, people are at peace and their bereaved members are secured financial aid when this time comes. They are conscious of the benefit of having life plans in order to prepare and visualize their death-care.

*Kapabingaloan: Death as the Cessation of Consciousness and the Advent of Journey through Eternity*

*Kapabingaloan* is used to transcend their motivation of assistance and farewell, for the soul now enters the state of profound rest. From the moment of death, the soul returns to the world of spirit.<sup>50</sup> This is the doctrine of the faith that after this earthly life, there is another realm where pain no longer exists thus it is the perfection of goodness. Christians views it as heaven. The passing of an individual signifies the entrustment of the family and even those acquainted with him to remember that pain no longer affects his body, especially those who died of a terminal illness. We can see this hope when in a wake, the bereaved family is often comforted by these words, “*Pabayae na, duman sa padudumanan nya, mayo na nin pasakit. May kapabingaloan asin katoninongan na an saiyang boot*” (“Let it go. In his journey, wherever he may be, there is no pain. He is now in peace and attains rest of his very being.”) The utterance of these words bring solace to the family and enable them to accept the reality of death.

The non-relational notion of Heidegger is realized for one is to die alone. *Dasein* is now in the process-of-being, that is, the actuality of death.<sup>51</sup> It is the full characteristic of humanity. Death is the

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he said.” – Cathy Yamsuan, “Occult, pagan practices ruin faith in God, says exorcist,” *Inquirer.Net*, November 02, 2012. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/300106/occult-pagan-practices-ruin-faith-in-god-says-exorcist>.

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 280.

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 294.

<sup>50</sup> Soul: The spiritual principle of human beings. The soul is the subject of human consciousness and freedom; soul and body together form one unique human nature. Each human soul is individual and immortal, immediately created by God. The soul does not die with the body, from which it is separated by death, and with which it will be reunited in the final resurrection Catechism of the Catholic Church. See Catholic Church. *Catechism on the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>

<sup>51</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 294.

window to inexistence, and through reflection of one's death. The entrustment of this hope is a reflection that when one departs from this life, he alone can experience it, and we can only attest to it, thus making us reflect on our passing. This reflection on the Bicolano term *kapahingaloan*, showcases the certainty and indefiniteness of 'when.' The way to cope with this certainty and indefiniteness of 'when' to die is to anticipate it by ensuring life and burial plans as stated above.

### *Kapahingaloan as Eternal Rest*

The liturgical expression about the state of the soul after death is the state of eternity. *Kapahingaloan* is always anchored with '*na daing kasagkoran*.' It is highlighted in the dialectic discourse of the mass for the dead "*An kapahingalaon na daing kasagkoran*" (eternal rest). This now applies the linguistic significance of the term based on its cultural relation to faith. It renders the pragmatic prospect of lessening the burden, sadness, and guilt over acts of omission after one's death. The motivation to transcend these emotions is achieved in the view of the afterlife as a pure state of bliss.

### **Conclusion**

Language embedded in the culture reflects the richness of meanings ready to be unearthed. The Bicolano language and the interrelation of traditions and faith of the people enrich and support Tria's notion of a Bikol Philosophy. It provides an identity of *pagborop-borop*, (reflections) and of philosophizing that is Bikol. *Kapahingaloan*, as understood by speakers of the Bicol Region connotes the state where the body and soul find perfect rest. *Kapahingaloan*, in other words, is the way Bicolanos philosophize about death.

The Bicolanos' outlook on life provides the motivation to hope for a better state that exists in ideal goodness. The invocation of profound rest that is anchored to the motivation of easing the burden of one's passing denotes a practical philosophizing toward death. This manifested in the use of the term in novenas, the Roman missal for the dead, and in dealing with the phenomenon of death. The traditions, beliefs, rituals, and practices to commemorate the departed enable them to lament the realness of death. The motivation for these practices is practical and justifies their belief as valid. It brings to light the awareness of misfortunes and death. Thus, it builds their communal grief and collective response to death.

*Pahingalo* and *magpahingalo* are terms used to view life concerning unprecedented and those who cater at death (acts of comfort and entrustment to God) of a loved one. *Kapahingaloan* appears more fully in connection to the phenomenon of death when its actuality is realized. *Kapahingaloan na daing kasagkoran* is the view and hope of having a peaceful rest attained by the soul in the afterlife.

Heidegger's notion of Being-towards-death is also embodied and exhibited in *kapahingaloan*. Together with the motivation of entrustment and hope after one's loss, this enables individuals to reflect on their death that is ownmost, non-relational, and not to be outstripped. *Kapahingaloan* also entails anticipation rather than fear of death in so far as *kagadanan* or death is the most certain possibility of mortality.

In this paper, the Bicolano perspective of *kapahingaloan* rendered an alternative view of death far from the evil that it is often viewed but as a state of profound rest. This adds to the literature of Bikol philosophizing, a modest contribution to the formation of Bicolano philosophical paradigm.

Finally, Bicolanos, in their indigenous language, will enjoy the fruits of this analysis. They can further study the depth of many connotative terms bearing significant views about life. By *bikolnon na paghorop-horop*, they can also follow in the steps of Fr. Tria in doing Bikol Philosophy. Succeeding researchers may consider looking for other Bikolano dialects to uncover other words that similarly reflect the view of *kapabingloan*. Through more collaborative philosophical pursuits, the identity of Bicolano philosophy will serve as a torch of light to inspire, rediscover, clarify, and stand for the truth that there is indeed such an indigenous philosophy.

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## Madness in/as/from Mental Illness: A Critical Commentary on Foucault's Concept of Madness

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In “Truth and Power”, an interview with Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, Foucault is primarily concerned about the direct and inseparable relationship between knowledge and power, and the lack of interest of contemporary intellectuals to discuss this relationship, *concretely* and *in detail*. Foucault forthwith arrests the weaknesses of the Marxist tradition at the time by asserting how it becomes an infertile ground for discourse surrounding science and its tenability. Most importantly, he begins the discussion by invoking the issue of psychiatry and medicine; the latter as a less dubious science than the former yet influenced by social structures. That is, psychiatry represents a shift in the discursive regime”; a transformation to the response to the question, “*what constitutes a scientific proposition?*”, hence, “*what is verifiable or falsifiable?*”

However, the elucidation of Foucault's ideas in “Truth and Power” are not as comprehensive compared to his other works because it relies entirely on a short interview with Foucault, where every question requires concise and precise answers in a brief amount of time. Therefore, I supplement “Truth and Power” with *Madness and Civilization* where Foucault articulates his position and problematizes the role of the State in character formation more explicitly. In this essay, I agree with Foucault's conclusion that the issue of madness is in the “political, economic, and institutional regime of the production of truth.” Furthermore, I argue that political and economic analyses are mutually inclusive with the greater reckoning of power relations at large, particularly with regard to psychiatry and internment. To do this, I first critique an argument Foucault makes in “Truth and Power” that understates political-economic analyses which is central to his conception of madness. Consequently, I will demonstrate how this is evident in his other work, *Madness and Civilization*. Then, I argue that a concrete and comprehensive political and economic analysis of madness is necessary to a complete understanding of power.

Forthwith, I want to address two phrases, in particular, that Foucault uses: “no doubt fairly limited importance” and “small importance” in *Madness and Civilization*. It appears that Foucault states a presupposition that his own prejudgment rooted in the state of the discourse of his time, which is not true of *all* economic analyses of psychiatry and internment. Indeed, by employing the terms “fairly” and “tendency” to qualify his judgment, he recognizes the intricacies and complexities of the subject in his statements. However, his answers further into the interview gives the impression that for Foucault, analyses on the level of economy are contradictory, if not, paradoxical, to a more *concrete* and *detailed* analysis of the level of power itself.

According to Foucault, the mechanics and exercise of power have never been ascertained by intellectuals on both ends of the political spectrum. As he explains in the latter part, this is on account of the role that the intellectual has moved from being the bearer of the universal in its conscious, elaborate form to working on more specific sectors with a more immediate and concrete awareness

of struggles.<sup>1</sup> This is the *status quo* in which Foucault situates his genealogical approach, a form of history that can “account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework.”<sup>2</sup> The ideological approach of Marxism is dispensed of, as posing the problems in terms of state apparatuses does not suffice. Surely, in a discussion of power, there is a need to go “beyond the limits of the state.”<sup>3</sup> Power has established control at the level of both the individual and the population.

Furthermore, Foucault dedicates chapter seven and eight of *Madness and Civilization* to considering the role of the State in the discourse of madness. In the preceding chapter, he briefly explains the rising demand for a political and economic analysis of the relationship between wealth, progress, institutions, and madness in the 18th century. He specifically used Montesquieu’s contrast between Roman and English suicide as a jumping-off point and Spurzheim’s synthesis as an exemplar. Following Spurzheim, he states, “The liberty of the mercantile state is ‘milieu’ and to this very degree it is the determining element of madness.”<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, in “The New Division,” Foucault elaborates on the historical movement from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in which the insane have become too “innocent” to remain confined in prison.<sup>5</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was unjust for the sane, however criminal, to be restricted in the same space as madmen in prison. During this time, crime was intertwined with madness and vice-versa, as if they were each other’s essence.<sup>6</sup> However, the notion of injustice was reversed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a shift that is contemporaneous with the revolution: it became unjust for the insane to be treated the same as criminals.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the attitude towards the confinement of the mad shifted during the emergence of the industrial period, in which the economy is contingent on poverty (scarcity of commodities and money) and population (labor with the potential to create wealth).<sup>8</sup> However, a poor population is antithetical to the growth of the economy in this era—labor cannot be scarce. Therefore, confinement of the mad was limited to certain categories, and madmen were awarded an amount of freedom.

However, I find this politico-economic analysis of madness lacking because madness is only incidental to the rising necessity of labor in a burgeoning capitalist economy. Although this case is indeed salient and concrete, it does not suffice to provide a detailed *comprehensive* account of madness and the State. The consequences of which may lead to the presumption of limited and small importance of the State within the broader framework of meta power. Spurzheim, who better articulated the emergence of madness in liberal England, also failed to illustrate the concrete and particular details of this rising phenomenon. Therefore, what I am attempting to do is highlight Foucault’s shortcomings in his political and economic analyses of madness, and that those analyses he referenced to does not diminish the potential role of the State in the overall mechanisms of power on the account of madness.

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol.3*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Rober Hurley (New York: The New Press, 2001), 126.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 118.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 123.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (Manhattan: Penguin Random House, 1965), 217.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 223.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 228.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 224.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 231.

Similarly, an article parallel to this interview is “Psychiatric Power” published in 1991 based on his lecture at Collège de France from 1973 to 1974. The article further exposes Foucault’s tendency to obfuscate the power of the State in psychiatry and internment. While the focus of my paper is madness, in a more general sense, I still argue that making the State and political economy a footnote is counter-intuitive to his objective of describing a meta-power concretely and comprehensively. It is intriguing to note how Foucault, having worked as a psychologist in Hospital Saint-Anne (a public hospital in Paris, France now called Sainte-Anne Hospital Center) in the early 1950s,<sup>9</sup> would overlook the economic implications of a Psychiatric internment. Admittedly, in *Mental Illness and Psychology*, he does explain earlier how the mad were ostracized from society starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and even emphasizes the omnipresence of the Hôpital Général all over France, where “madmen” were indefinitely interned.<sup>10</sup> He further observes that the cardinal sin was no longer, as it was in the Middle Ages, pride or greed, but *sloth* in the bourgeois world.<sup>11</sup> Although, he would later claim that Psychiatric internment has fairly limited economic importance—an evident Marxist orientation.

Moreover, Foucault seems to understate the effects of the State and political economy. One cannot help but wonder if Foucault, having died early in the—and due to the—AIDS epidemic, instead lived through it and witnessed the substantial and despicable role that the State played in the AIDS epidemic in America would have had then profundity to illuminate the role of the State in his own words, along with meta-power. Although he is an *early*<sup>12</sup> victim of the AIDS epidemic, signs of government neglect may already be subsistent, like that in the case of Rep. Philip Burton and Rep. Ted Weiss’ introduction of the first legislation in 1982 to allocate funding for AIDS research—who later died in committee.<sup>13</sup> To clarify my phrasing, *died due to the AIDS epidemic*; it remains ambiguous if Foucault contracted the disease accidentally or intentionally due to suicide.<sup>14</sup>

To further note, this critical commentary is not an attack on his character, especially as I empathize with Foucault, who also survived a suicide attempt early in his life, was politically active, and earnestly fought for marginalized people. However, I have to consider at least that Psychiatric power is posed negatively as an unintended, yet politically and economically instantiated, consequence of the State’s machinations. As Foucault elucidates the trend of madness-mental illness from the 18th and 19th centuries, transitioning from “psychiatry” to “anti-psychiatry”, has been to de-Pasteurize<sup>15</sup> and move towards a negative conception of madness-mental illness from a positive one<sup>16</sup>. While mental health is now typically seen as a spectrum, not as an absence of mental illness; the patient-doctor relationship remains to be an imbalanced relationship between authority, and powerlessness, in the part of the patient deciding on their diagnosis-intervention.

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<sup>9</sup> Hubert Deyfus, “Foreword” in *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (Oakland: University of California Press, 1962), vii–xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (Oakland: University of California Press, 1962), 67.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 68.

<sup>12</sup> Gary Gutting, “Michel Foucault,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified August 5, 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/foucault/>.

<sup>13</sup> “Timeline of the HIV and AIDS Epidemic,” HIV.gov, accessed August 9, 2023, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline/>.

<sup>14</sup> John Carvalho, “Fact and Fiction: Writing the Difference between Suicide and Death,” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 4 (2006), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0004.006>.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, “Psychiatric Power,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 Volume 1*, ed. Paul Rainbow, trans. Robert Hurley et.al., (New York: The New Press, 2001), 38–60.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 73.

In my first-hand experience<sup>17</sup> of the discontinuity of scientific development in psychiatry in the Philippines surrounding the adjustment of my medication by different Psychiatrists over the years which was still following a traditional application of scientific experimentation. Now, psychiatry has instead become evidently a “question of victory and submission”.<sup>18</sup> Madness-mental illness is no longer inscribed on the “truth-error-consciousness” but on the axis “passion-will-freedom”<sup>19</sup>, i.e., madness is evaluated more in comparison to normal behavior than delusion, manifesting not as impaired judgement but as a disruption in actions, volition, emotions, decision-making, and autonomy. For example, “I am mentally ill not strictly because I cannot discern reality or that my cognitive abilities have declined due to my mental illness but because I cannot keep up with my hygiene.” Similarly, mental illness becomes an issue of “not praying enough”, “not doing enough”, or “not friendly enough”. To provide further illustration, due to the lack of resources (especially in public hospitals and mental health centers), the patient is no longer discharged when they have become “reasonable” but when they have the willingness to conform to the production of truth machinated only by what the Psychiatrist expects.<sup>20</sup> While a Psychiatrist follows a medical procedure in examining and determining the *sanity* of the patient, it more or less becomes a question of whether or not the Psychiatrist assigned to you believes you—or whether or not they are even available to talk to you. Unlike the 18<sup>th</sup> century way of illustrating the discontinuity through the use of isolation rooms, the ironic difference is that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we may no longer be kept in isolation rooms but in Psychiatric *social* ward, separated from society—we are alienated from society: dominated, pacified, and assimilated. Foucault’s assertion that what is called “mental illness” in modern psychiatry is merely “alienated madness, alienated in the psychology that has itself made possible,” is validated.<sup>21</sup> Foucault also makes a substantial point in reversing the supposed causal relationship of alienation and madness, i.e., one is mad not because they are alienated, but rather, one is alienated because one is mad. As I was mad and I am mad in more ways than one, a hotline calls to ask for help is confronted with an automated message, *sorry you do not have enough load to make this call*. The alienation because of madness is further reinforced.

As I proceed with my last discussion, I contend that while the analyses of the “political economy” of truth may be amiss in its current form, reckoning with power beyond the limits of the State (at the minimum) is not mutually exclusive with addressing meta-power in the form of political and economic apparatuses. Indeed, the conception of power as never anything negative (such as ideological and repressive) is inadequate in “capturing the productive aspect of power.”<sup>22</sup> The State as a meta power “can only take hold and secure its flooring where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power.”<sup>23</sup> However, while we attest that this general power behind regimes of truth is the “condition of the formation and development of capitalism” itself, the specific political-economic situation within capitalism should not be undermined in turn. Incidentally, if Foucault truly does not “want to say the State isn’t important”<sup>24</sup>, is it not reasonable to expect more conviction from him in stating why it *is*

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<sup>17</sup> I received in-patient psychiatric care at a mental health institution, as well as out-patient care with multiple Psychiatrists over the years.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, “Psychiatric Power,” 43.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, “Psychiatric Power,” 42.

<sup>20</sup> The Psychiatrist is also known as “the master of madness” See Foucault, “Psychiatric Power,” 43.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 76.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 120.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 123.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 122.

important? Economic analyses may be inadequate, but if nothing else, it is concerned with the oft-concrete production and distribution of power, which can be explained in specific detail.

Furthermore, taking into account the political-economy of power is not necessarily the subordination of the question of power to the economy. Although we have to acknowledge that it was indeed “kept” subordinate in accordance with “a system of interests”, we can nonetheless underscore the great importance of issues such as psychiatry and internment under a political-economic analysis. The issue of psychiatry and internment, at the very least, remains of huge importance even when (supposedly) subsumed under economic concerns. Likewise, political-economy is still constituent in the specific machinations of power, “in its techniques and tactics.”<sup>25</sup> In general, psychiatry and internment reattribute (at the level of institutions) the “failures” of capitalism, through pathologization and criminalization of individuals. In particular, to wit, legitimate concerns over covert political machinations under capitalism, however factual, are often discredited as psychosis or pathologized as symptoms of schizophrenia. To deny the political-economy of psychiatry and internment would be antithetical to the project of ascertaining power itself, *concretely* and *in-detail*.

To conclude, Foucault’s primary concern lies in the intricate relationship between knowledge and power, as well as the lack of attention intellectuals gave to this relation. He critiques the weaknesses of the Marxist intellectual tradition, particularly in its failure to foster discourse on the tenability of science. His theory of discontinuity challenges the linear view of scientific development and highlights the political nature of scientific statements. He argues that intellectuals on both ends of the political spectrum have failed to fully comprehend the mechanics of power; as the Marxists and Freudians focus has been on the ideological and repressive, negative conceptions of power are privileged. As a consequence, he underscores the need to go beyond the limits of the state when reckoning with power. Inasmuch as I generally agree with Foucault’s arguments, his dismissal of the (political-) economic analysis, particularly in relation to psychiatry and internment, perplexes me as someone who similarly struggles with depression and suicide. The importance of considering the political economy should not be understated, as it encompasses the oft-material production and distribution of power. Likewise, accounting for the political-economic aspects does not necessarily subordinate the question of power to the economy, but rather it may provide a nuanced understanding of its manifestations. The issues of psychiatry and internment remain significant under a political-economic lens, as they contribute to the re-attribution of capitalist failures and the pathologizing of dissent. Therefore, considering the political-economy of power is crucial for a detailed and comprehensive ascertainment of the relations of power and their concrete manifestations.

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<sup>25</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 117.

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TALISIK is a Filipino word. It is a contraction of "Talas" [Keeness] and "Saliksik" [Search]. TALISIK then means "Katalasan ng isip na umunawa ng anuman" [Keeness of the mind to understand anything] and "Malaliman at matalinong pagdalumat sa kahulugan ng anuman" [In-depth and intelligent search for the meaning of anything]. Based on the definition of TALISIK, the Editorial Board intends to demonstrate the acumen of undergraduate students of philosophy through their research undertakings. The journal primarily caters to the works of the UST undergraduate students of philosophy and welcomes contributions from other fields and institutions. Today, the organization also envisions expanding its academic channels not only through publication but also with discursive spaces that will allow curiosity and polemical research to develop.

TALISIK publishes issues annually.



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