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ABOUT THE JOURNAL. *The Pinnacle: Journal of Arts and Sciences* is the official bi-annual publication of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), Bohol Island State University (BISU) - Main Campus. As a peer-reviewed journal, it adopts a rigorous double-blind review process, ensuring that both authors and reviewers remain anonymous to maintain research objectivity and integrity. This multidisciplinary journal serves as a platform for the dissemination of knowledge e.g. research articles, creative works, lectures, reviews, policy briefs to contribute transformative insights towards human well-being and sustainable development.

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FOREWORD

It is with great pride that we present the maiden issue of *The Pinnacle: Journal of Arts and Sciences*, the official research journal of the College of Arts and Sciences, Bohol Island State University. This first volume affirms our collective commitment to provide a vibrant platform where scholarly inquiry, critical reflection, and creative ideas can flourish. True to its name, *The Pinnacle* aspires to be a summit of knowledge—bringing together voices from different fields not only in a multidisciplinary way but also with the aspiration for true interdisciplinarity, where insights converge to address concerns of both local and global significance.

The vision of this journal is firmly linked to the mission and vision of BISU. As the university strives to be *a premier science and technology university for the formation of world-class and virtuous human resource for the sustainable development of Bohol and the country*, *The Pinnacle* seeks to contribute by nurturing a culture of research that is both excellent and ethical. In line with BISU's mission to *provide quality higher education, undertake research and development, and extend services for the sustainable development of Bohol and the nation*, the journal welcomes contributions from both emerging and established scholars. New voices will be encouraged while seasoned researchers continue to enrich the discourse. In this way, *The Pinnacle* aims to be a venue not only for rigorous academic exchange but also for the nurturing of the Filipino and Cebuano languages as languages of science, culture, and development.

We are aware, however, of the challenges that lie ahead: sustaining a steady flow of quality submissions, gaining recognition from national and international indexing bodies, securing the cooperation of contributors and reviewers, and ensuring the journal's relevance in the years to come. Our foremost task is to resist becoming a mere "paper mill" and to remain committed to publishing research that informs, inspires, and transforms.

This inaugural issue is made possible by the dedication of our contributors, editors, reviewers, and supporters. To them we extend our heartfelt thanks. May this volume inspire those who value the pursuit of knowledge, and may it encourage further research, collaboration, and dialogue across and beyond disciplinary boundaries.

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Editor's Note

With profound feelings, I present to you the maiden issue of *The Pinnacle: Journal of Arts and Sciences* – the official publication of the College of Arts and Sciences of Bohol Island State University. The journey to fruition of this output was one sustained by determination and hard work all towards providing a platform for scholarly discourse that democratizes the playfield for all interests in the arts and sciences. This intent to foster multidisciplinarity is consistent with the foundational conviction that understanding the human being and the world could only be fully achieved from diverse and interrelated perspectives.

This maiden issue of *The Pinnacle* features six philosophy articles which central themes generally gravitate towards the individual and the dynamics of his/her interaction with others and the society analyzed through the lens of politics, ethics, and culture. The other four articles, as sequentially presented hereafter, look into how a local blacksmithing trade could imply economic gains while preserving its artisanal technique; survey the anti-terrorism initiatives of the Philippine National Police in the region; identify Contingent Valuation Method as the more practical and participatory in upland resources valuation; and document how a devised e-scheduling and room utilization system innovated the process of instruction in the university. The remaining additions are creative works, the sense of each is left to the reader to discover or invent. Indeed, these articles, though a preliminary salvo to the project; to the promise, actualized the multidisciplined approach in understanding the human being and the world.

Heartfelt gratitude extends to the contributors, reviewers, editors and consultants of this issue. It is from their interest, dedication and overall proclivity to the quest for truth through rigorous, objective, and scientific process that *The Pinnacle* sees the light of day. Explicit or not, their contributions expressed communion to the vision of achieving excellence in *Truth* and *Honor* ["(*Excellentia*) *Veritatis et Honoris*"] as the *pinnacle* (highest, ultimate) goals of arts and sciences, respectively. They inspire commitment to the sustainability of the journal.

May this shared journey extend to further heights of success to authors and enlightenment to readers.

Bernabe M. Mijares Jr., PhD
Editor-in-Chief

A Filipino Sense of the Political Thoughts of Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu and Han Fei Tzu

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Abstract. This article provides theoretical-conceptual basis to make sense of identified Filipino political practices, both local and national. Three Chinese political thinkers are considered namely, Mo Tzu who pointed out that successful governance is achieved when the "worthy" are "honored" and the "capable" are "employed;" Hsun Tzu who emphasized that an enlightened King governs according to the regulation that "equality is based upon inequality," which is modelled after Heaven and Earth; and Han Fei Tzu who advised that a ruler should "carefully and tightly grip" the handles of government which are reward and punishment. Given the preceding, the Filipino practice of nepotism is a violation of the law (national statute) but may not necessarily run counter Mo Tzu's criterion of worthiness since one's kin in position may likewise possess the needed qualification. Additionally, political dynasties, which are a common feature in Philippine local politics, may shun democratized participation but per se, does not shatter the hierarchy of the governing and the governed (heaven and earth). They may likewise indicate consensus among the governed which is a higher test for an ordered state. Finally, a President's unorthodox way of reward and punishment could suit well within Han Fei Tzu's advice to "carefully and tightly grip" the handles of the government. This analysis is far from exhaustive but could well be of use for small groups or classroom discussions. Detailed aspects of Filipino political practices may be explored for in-depth juxtaposition with the thoughts of the Chinese philosophers.

Keywords: Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu, Han Fei Tzu, Filipino Nepotism, Filipino Political Dynasty

Introduction

This paper presents the basic political thoughts of three Chinese thinkers: Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu. They belong to different groups or schools of thought in Chinese thinking. Mo Tzu was a Mohist, Hsun Tzu was a Confucian scholar, and Han Fei Tzu was a Legalist. Generally, they differ in their views, but there are also points of connection among them as far as their political themes or thoughts are concerned. The review comes in short

summaries of the sections of their works (or works attributed to them) that are particularly devoted to politics and governance. This is far from exhaustive of the whole political thought or treatise of any particular thinker. Towards the end, the authors will analyze certain aspects of Philippine politics, transpiring at the local and national levels, to offer instances of the relevance of Chinese political thought to the present.

Mo Tzu: Summary of His Basic Political Thought

Honoring the Worthy (*Part I, Section 8*) (Watson, n.d.). Mo Tzu laments that while rulers and officials of nations of the current time aspire for their states to be rich, their populations numerous, and their administration well-ordered, they instead acquire the opposite. According to him, this is due to the failure to implement the principle on which successful governance is founded, which is to "honor the worthy and employ the capable" in their administration. He describes a government rich with worthy men as "characterized in weight and substance," but that which is poor of their presence is an "administration of paltry affairs."

Who, then are these worthy men? Mo Tzu qualifies that they are those who "practiced virtue, skilled in discourse and broad in learning." They are those who come indeed because of their worth and not because of their material, familial, and social circumstances. Therefore, the worthy men may be rich or poor, descendants of rulers and officials or commoners, intimate to the ruler, or unknown from remote areas.

In the past, worthy men as subordinates offered knowledge of the arts of government. The sage kings, in turn, bestowed upon them material benefits. They were enriched, honored, respected, and praised. Since they were the righteous, they have to be obtained in plenty, and the benefits can usher their coming forward.

In particular, how did the sage kings honor the worthy men in their empire? Mo Tzu relates that they were "honored with titles, treated to generous stipends, entrusted with important matters, and empowered to see that their orders were carried out." Accordingly, generous stipends are important since without them, people will not have confidence in the worthy, and if their orders are not carried out, then other subordinates will not "stand in awe of them." The benefits were not given as a particular gift from the ruler but so that success in the affairs of the government was ensured.

Affording further length to the comparison, Mo Tzu narrates that at the time of the sage kings, "ranks were assigned according to virtue, duties allotted according to the office held, and rewards given according to the efforts expended; achievements were weighed and stipends distributed

accordingly." Pounding more on honoring the worthy and, in essence, discouraging the practice of *torens title* in the affairs and administration of the government, Mo Tzu points out that "no official is assured of an exalted position for life, and no member of the common people is necessarily condemned to remain forever humble."

Mo Tzu ends Section 8 of Part I with advice to obtain the services of the worthy men (which he termed in the concluding part of the section as the "noblemen"). Their services, he insured, will not thwart the plans and wear by care the body of the ruler. They will establish his (ruler or king) fame and bring his undertakings to a successful conclusion. Finally, they will make manifest his excellence and make sure that no evil will mar it. Thus, says Mo Tzu: "Honoring the worthy is the foundation of good government."

Honoring the Worthy (Part II, Section 9) (Watson, n.d.). Mo Tzu opens up Section 9 with a seemingly self-evident statement. He said that there is order when the eminent and the wise rule over the stupid and humble. Otherwise, there is chaos. Moreover, since man's universal natural proclivity is ordered, then the government should honor the worthy, as they are essentially those who can bring order. Moreover, Mo Tzu emphasizes that "the foundation of good government is to honor the worthy." This pronouncement becomes more meaningful and frees itself from its tautological character as Mo Tzu later emphasizes the model of Heaven and Earth.

Advancing the worthy and employing the capable are the catchphrases of Mo Tzu's good governance. When those deserving of promotion and rejection are accorded their due, people are encouraged and deterred by the sanctions. When the worthy are honored not based on material and social circumstances but purely on their knowledge, skills, and values, and the unworthy are rejected as they lack those that are characteristic of the worthy, "people are encouraged by the hope of reward" and deterred by the "fear of punishment." Consequently, worthy men will increase, and unworthy men will decrease. This is "advancing the worthy." When the worthy are thereupon entrusted with the administration of the state, this is, as Mo Tzu labels, "employing the capable."

What comes after the above is Mo Tzu's specific identification of the occupations in the government where worthy men should be assigned with the specific objectives they were to achieve for successful governance. These would include the administration of the state, the government bureaus, and the outlying districts. The primary task of ordering the state is the just administration of laws and punishment. The government bureau, on

the other hand, is well-managed when the treasury is full and the people are well-off, while outlaying districts should be tended where seeds are sown, trees are planted, and vegetables and grains are gathered. In all of these, Mo Tzu prescribes that the worthy men assigned to function in the identified occupations shall leave their houses early for work and come home late to retire.

For the rulers, Mo Tzu has given them precautions that must be carefully watched out to ensure success in the government. These are: (1) if the titles and positions of the worthy men are not exalted enough, then the people will not respect such men; (2) if their stipends are not generous, then the people will not have confidence in them; and (3) if their orders are not enforced, then the people will not stand in awe of them.

It is interesting to note that, as Mo Tzu observed, it is in the grant of stipends that the present rulers are deficient in dealing with worthy men. With the meager stipends, the worthy men then felt that the rulers only used them as a means for their own ends, despite the honor titles. The stipends, therefore, that were given do not follow in proportion with the title.

When worthy men do not come to the ruler, their opposite, the unworthy, will the there. Mo Tzu describes them as "not loving or filial to their parents at home; not respectful and friendly to the people of their neighborhood. Their actions show no sense of propriety, their comings and goings no sense of restraint, and their relations with the opposite sex no sense of decorum." The unworthy men cannot deliver success to the government because "even if he works day and night [he] will never be able to attend to his duties of post."

Honoring the worthy as the foundation of the government is a principle not only asserted by Mo Tzu alone. This is the way of the sage kings.

When the ancient sage kings honor the worthy and employ the capable in the government, they pattern their actions on the ways of Heaven for "Heaven too shows no discrimination between rich and poor, eminent and humble, near and far, the closely and the distantly related. It promotes and honors the worthy and demotes and rejects the unworthy."

Mo Tzu then speaks of the consequence of being a sage king and a wicked king. Sage kings were the eminent ones who strive to love all men universally, worked to benefit them and taught their subjects to honor Heaven and serve the spirits. "They were rewarded by Heaven and the spirits by setting them up as Sons of Heaven and causing them to act as fathers and mothers to the people. The people then praise them as sage kings even until today." Wicked kings were those who possessed wealth and eminence and

still practiced evil. They were condemned by the people calling them wicked kings until today.

Mo Tzu concludes *section 9* by pointing out that virtue and righteousness are needed if one were to lead the feudal lords; if one were to become a king. For him, ruling and leading could not be accomplished through display of might and power since it will overthrow others and drive people towards death which is what they hate most.

Against Fatalism (Part I, Section 35) (Watson, n.d.). Mo Tzu points out that rulers and high officials of the present fail to get what they seek and achieve what they abhor not only because they have failed to implement the fundamental principle of governance. They also failed because the large number of the people is fatalists.

The advocates of fatalism say "If fate decrees that the state will be wealthy; it will be wealthy; if it decrees that it will be poor, it will be poor" (Sjöholm, 1967). In other words, things are because fate dictates it. Reason permits that it would not be excessive and uncalled for if one subject such a belief into a simple investigation. And since it comes in the form of a theory, Mo Tzu suggests that it should pass the three tests of its origin, validity and applicability.

A theory is judged in its origin by comparing it with the deeds of the sage kings of antiquity; it is judged in its validity by comparing it with the evidence of the eyes and ears of the people; and it is judged in its applicability by observing whether, when it is put into practice in the administration, it brings benefit to the state and the people.

Mo Tzu argues that when one looks back into the past, it could be observed that while there was chaos, there was also order in the government. He seems to demonstrate herein that there was no identifiable pattern of governance quality that may be fated to transpire. Later on, he will argue that the very chaos and order in those past governments were not caused by fate but by the change in the way rulers govern their subjects. Moreover, Mo Tzu laments that among the "statues," "the codes of punishment" and the "declarations," no matter how one would search, there is never any evidence to support the theories of the fatalists.

As regard its validity, fatalism does not harmonize with what people aspire. It replaces righteousness with fate and creates worry for the people which eventually would destroy the men of the world. Moreover, righteous men who were appointed to authority were rewarded because of their worthy deeds and not because they are fated to be rewarded. This is evidenced by the life of the sages. In the same way that wicked men were punished

because of their wicked deeds. The basis of reward and punishment was not fate but the statues and laws issued and published by the ancient sage kings in order to encourage good and prevent evil. Fatalism is the way of evil men. They have succumbed to their weakness and have not been diligent to pursue their task and made fate as an excuse.

Finally, fatalism is flawed in terms of applicability. Accepting it would mean that those above would not attend to the affairs of state and those below would not pursue their tasks (Beck, n.d.). Therefore, it does not bring benefit to "Heaven above, no benefit to the spirits in the middle realm, and no benefit to mankind below."

Mo Tzu then concludes that those who insist upon holding fatalism are the source of pernicious doctrines and this is the way of evil men. Boldly, he states that the doctrine of the fatalists "brings great harm to the world."

Hsun Tzu: Summary of his Basic Political Thought

The Regulations of a King (Section 9) (Watson, n.d.). Not exclusively different from other Chinese thinkers, Hsun Tzu, in presenting his political thoughts, provided principles and even specific proscriptions on the characteristics of a state, where and to what should it be founded and how should it be managed.

In Section 9 on *The Regulations of a King*, Hsun Tzu prescribes how a ruler should govern the different types or classes of individuals. For those who are worthy, they deserved to be promoted without even waiting for their turn; but those who are inferior and incompetent should be dismissed outright, without hesitation. Those who are incorrigibly evil should be punished without trying to reform them and those who have average capacity should be taught what is right without forcing them into goodness. There are also men with perverse words and theories who, accordingly, should be taught what is right. If they settle down to their work, they become subjects; if not, they should be cast out. Moreover, Hsun Tzu also prescribes that the dumb, deaf, crippled, missing an arm or leg and dwarfed should be provided and taken care of. And finally, those who work against the good of the time should be condemned to death without mercy.

Since much is expected from those who shall occupy the high positions in the government, they should possess the necessary characteristics that would enable them to function as they are expected. To ensure this, standards have to be met which, as Hsun Tzu enumerates, are "acquisition of learning, upright in conduct and adherence to ritual principles." These are not prejudiced by the social circumstances of any

person which implies that one can be in a high position regardless of whether he is a descendant of kings or dukes or a commoner.

In listening to proposals in the government, Hsun Tzu guides that fair-mindedness is the balance to be used to weigh them and upright harmoniousness is the line by which to measure them. Fair-mindedness is achieved by not practicing favoritism or having partisan feeling and without constant principles. Upright harmoniousness is achieved when one uses the law, or in its absence, invokes precedence and analogy.

In hearing proposals in the government then, the good is distinguish from the bad by the law as the measure. With it, one could neither be too stern and severe nor too sympathetic and understanding. And such could only be achieved by men in office who have an over-all understanding of their duties. Only a gentleman, as Hsun Tzu calls him, is capable of such a government.

Hsun Tzu then presents his concept of equality which he encapsulates in the statement "equality is based upon inequality." It is apparent that this is not comparable to the contemporary understanding of equality. Hsun Tzu says that: "with equal ranks, there would be no enough goods to go around; where there is equal distribution of power, there will be lack of unity; and where there is equality among the masses, it will be impossible to employ them" (The History of Ancient Chinese Economic Thought, n.d). Thus, for him, equality in ranks and power leads to disorder.

Equality as inequality is modeled after Heaven and Earth. Hsun Tzu says that "the very existence of Heaven and Earth exemplifies the principle of higher and lower" and therefore negating equality as a leveling. Finally, Hsun Tzu believes that only an enlightened king governs according to such a regulation.

While Hsun Tzu obviously favors the existence of rank as the necessary feature of equality, he does not, as such, favor those who are in the higher ranks. His treatise on good governance in fact emphasizes the satisfaction of the common people. He says that "if the common people are frightened of the government, then the gentleman cannot occupy his post in safety." Further, Hsun Tzu opines that "the ruler is the boat and the common people are the water. It is the water that bears the boat up, and the water that capsizes it." Thereupon, the ruler has the obligations to (1) govern fairly and love the people, (2) honor ritual and treat men of breeding with respect, and (3) promote the worthy and employ men of ability. As these are realized, the gentleman, accordingly, achieves safety, glory, fame and merit.

Comparing the king – a true leader of the people – to other government leaders, Hsun Tzu says that "a king enriches his people, a

dictator enriches his soldiers, a state that is barely managing to survive enriches its high officers and a doomed state enriches only its coffers and stuffs its storehouses." Lastly, Hsun Tzu believes that too much attention to tax collection is not the path of the enlightened ruler.

Hsun Tzu likewise speaks of the use of force. He believes that he who uses force to conquer other states not only inflict injury to the people of the conquered but also to his own. In both sides, he does not win their sympathy and affection. "One who truly understands how to use force does not rely upon force," Hsu Tzu preaches. The explanation he provides for this refers to a ruler who builds up his own might so that it cannot be weakened by others and who creates a fund of good will so that it cannot be reduced to insignificance by feudal lords. He therefore builds force not to wage an offensive with others but to strengthen his foundation and defenses. Such a ruler will, "if he happens to live in a time where there is no true king or dictator in the world," always be victorious.

From the preceding, Hsun Tzu moves on to expound the dynamics of the relations between Heaven and Earth. He explains that Heaven and Earth are the beginning of life and their unity is the basis of all other relations, thus, higher (Heaven) – lower (Earth) is the model for ruler-subject, father-son, elder-younger, etc. One could observe that this unity is essentially characterized by rank or hierarchy and ritual principles are based on its recognition (rank or hierarchy) which when applied or observed in all other relations will establish order. The gentleman is the one who recognizes this unity and establishes ritual principles. Therefore, it is he who brings order to Heaven and Earth. Hsun Tzu says that he (the gentleman) "acts on, practices, guards and loves, more than anything else, the principle." Further, he says that the gentleman "forms a triad with Heaven and Earth" and that "he is the controller of all things, the father and mother of the people."

Are humans capable of following the ritual principles? Is it of their nature that they are able to emulate the hierarchy of Heaven and Earth and thereby establish order among themselves? While order could be established through the guardianship and implementation of the gentleman, it is also inherent upon men to follow the natural order of things. Hsun Tzu says that "man is the noblest being on earth because he possesses energy, life, intelligence, and, in addition, a sense of duty." Man establishes a society and in it, he sets up hierarchy. Such setting up is not an exercise in vain. Hierarchy is there precisely because man has the ability to perform his duty, that is, to carry out functions and obligations inherent upon any level of the hierarchy. With his sense of duty, hierarchical divisions would lead to harmony, unity, strength and power "that will conquer the world." Hsun Tzu

says that a society without hierarchical division will result into "quarreling, to chaos, to fragmentation which makes men weak to conquer other beings." Acting on one's sense of duty is in fact to follow the ritual principles which, according to Hsun Tzu, should not be neglected even for a moment. Thus, "he who serves his parents is called filial; he who serves his elderly brother is called brotherly; he who serves his superior is called obedient; and he who employs his inferiors is called a ruler."

It is the gentleman who is the origin of ritual principles. And in the actual management, administration, and governance, it is the king who concretely immerses his hands in actual and real conditions. It is therefore the king who could be significantly instrumental in ensuring that the ritual principles are observed. By then, the gentleman is in the king, the sage king. He is one who is "good at organizing men in society."

An organized society is an ordered society. Things therein are in their proper places and government commands are issued at the proper time; people are united and good men offer their services.

The measure of a sage king then is this: "He looks up to examine heaven, looks down to direct the work of the earth, completes all that is necessary between heaven and earth, and applies his actions to all things." A sage king thus is he whose every move is founded on unity.

Hsun Tzu then moves on to specify the different officials that would comprise the government. They are the Master of Tiles, Minister of the Interior, Minister of War, Chief Director of Music, Minister of Works, Administrator of the Fields, Director of Resources, Director of Communities, Director of Artisans, Hunchback Shamanesses and Crippled Shamans, Director of Markets, Minister of Justice, Prime Minister, High officials and finally, the Heavenly King. The heavenly king, being the one who leads all should have "weight in authority, strong in military might, and fair in reputation" as his attributes.

With the officials identified, Hsun Tzu also accorded the Prime Minister and the Heavenly King the weight of blame for major failures. He says that "disorder in the affairs of the government is to be blamed to the prime minister." And of the customs of the country are faulty, it is "due to the error of the high officials." Finally, "if the world is not unified and the feudal lords are rebellious, then the heavenly king is not the right man for the job."

In assisting other states that are in danger of being wiped out, the state concerned should remain free and flourishing and act from the sincerity of one's innermost heart, Hsun Tzu cautions. This, he emphasizes, is the way to win merit and fame.

Han Fei Tzu: Summary of his Basic Political Thought

The Way of the Ruler (Section 5) (Watson, n.d.). Han Fei Tzu starts this section by describing the Way (note: It is here that one is given the evidence that adherents to the Legalist school adopt the basic and fundamental concepts of Taoism.). He says that "the Way is the beginning of all beings and the measure of right and wrong." An enlightened ruler knows this truth and holds on to this as he governs the people and his kingdom. Through the Way, he understands and efficiently handles his subjects.

In governing, Han Fei Tzu advances that it is important that the ruler should emulate the Way. As the Way is neither this nor that, but all, a ruler should likewise be neither this nor that desire or will. He should not reveal any side of him. He should be empty "so that he can comprehend the true aspect of fullness" and be still so that "he can correct the mover." In knowing who his subjects are and who should he appoint to positions, again, he should be empty and still, "discard likes and dislikes," and wait, for being in such disposition, men will come forward by themselves in their true nature. Behaving this way, the ruler lets the "names define themselves and affairs reach their own settlement" (The Greater China Journal, 2021). Han Fei Tzu further said that "those whose duty is to speak will come forward to name themselves; those whose duty it is to act will produce results. When names and results match, the ruler need do nothing more and the true aspects of all things will be revealed" (Wilson, 2022).

To ensure that things are done and results are accomplished in the government, again, the ruler should be empty, still, idle, reserved and unfathomable. In other words, he "reposes in non-action (*wu wei* of Taoism). He only allows men to come forward in their true nature, speak their names, that is, their offices and the obligations accorded thereto and measure what they say based on their accomplishment. If there is a match between names or words and accomplishment, then they are rewarded, if there is no match then they are punished. Punishment and reward (favor) are the handles of the government and Han Fei Tzu advises that the ruler should "carefully and tightly grip them" which means that ruler is never over-liberal in his rewards nor over-lenient in his punishments which results to laxity and easy doing of wrong, respectively. Those whose names or words and accomplishments do not match should be punished for it is the way of the enlightened ruler "never to allow his ministers to speak words that cannot be matched by results." Merit and punishment are for those who truly deserve them, regardless of social status and familial ties. With this, "the humble will not stint in their efforts and the elite will not grow proud."

It appears therefore that the ruler is not doing (non-active) anything but he is in fact in control of everything. While he appears to have no wisdom, yet his "ministers watch their steps" and "tremble in fear." While he seems to be oblivious of what transpires in his kingdom yet, he fixes a gaze on every affair therein. Thus, says Han Fei Tzu: "Be empty, still, and idle and from your place of darkness observe the defects of others. See but do not appear to see; listen but do not seem to listen; know but do not let it be known that you know."

Behind the shield of emptiness that the ruler puts up, he should only be consistent in the pursuit of the objective of making certain that "names and results tally." Han Fei Tzu laments further that the ruler should also punish those who willfully act against the state. They are those whom he calls traitors. And ministers (of the state) should be assigned a watchful eye especially when they are into any of the moves that block the ruler. These are (1) when they (ministers) shut out the ruler which results into the loss of effectiveness of the ruler's position; (2) when they control the wealth and the resources of the state which removes the means of dispensing bounty to others; (3) when they issue order as they please which loses the means of command; (4) when they are able to do righteous deeds in their own name which loses the ruler's claim to enlightenment and (5) when they are able to build up their own cliques which results into the ruler's loss of supporters.

For Han Fei Tzu, to be an enlightened ruler is therefore, to follow the Way. In external disposition, he has to be still and reserve. Despite being so, and speaking no words and exacting no promises, "good answers will be given him" and "good works will increase."

Wielding Power (Section 8) (Watson, n.d.). In order to take hold and make use of power, an enlightened ruler should be guided by the Way. While he is enriched by it he should not let his power be seen. He should be "blank and actionless." But while he is being so – actionless – that is, he does not change or alter anything, he should be consistent and unyielding to the grip of the handles of government which are reward and punishment. He should "act and never cease" in their use. This, as Han Fei Tzu says, is called the "walking path of principle."

Moreover, the Way is characterized by singularity, unity and stillness. It is not of multiplicity, opposition and disturbance or chaos. Such characteristics should also be reflected in the state which is accomplished by way of the names. Han Fei Tzu says that "when names are correct, things stay in place; when names are twisted, things shift about. Hence the sage

holds to unity in stillness; he lets names define themselves and affairs reach their own settlement." Further, names are the basis by which

> He makes his appointments, and where the name is not clear, he looks to the actual achievement it applies to. According to how achievement and name tally, he dispenses the reward or punishment deserved. When rewards and punishments are certain to be handed out, then the subordinates will bare their true nature.

Order is therefore reflective of the Way and this is only achieved in society when things and talents are in their proper places. They, in turn are in their proper places only when names head the way (here, one may notice that Han Fei Tzu also makes use of the Confucian concept of Rectification of Names).

Moreover, the ruler should not try to be like others for it is in such inclination that all his worries come about. The Way is all too powerful, unlimited and vast in its expanse. It is the source of everything yet it is not confined to anything. Han Fei Tzu says that the myriad beings, the yin and yang, heaviness and lightness, etc., are products of the Way; but the Way itself is never plural – it is called a unity (Lim Xiao Wei, 2006). Therefore, like the Way, the ruler must also be one of a kind and "for this reason, [he should] prize(s) solitariness, which is the characteristic of the Way."

Han Fei Tzu further counsels that the enlightened ruler should keep watch of his ministers. He takes their statements but do not trust them; rather he should compare them with the power that they have been invested. He must examine names carefully in order to establish ranks and clarify duties in order to distinguish worth. He should never enrich a man to the point where he can afford to rebel against him. He should likewise never ennoble a man to a point where he becomes a threat. Hence, he should never put all his trust in a single man and thereby lose his state.

In governing the state, the enlightened ruler should be on his guard and see to it that he (1) destroys conclaves, (2) makes certain that bestowals pass into the right hands, (3) does not allow cities to grow too large, (4) does not enrich the powerful families, (5) does not ennoble the ministers, and (6) guards against danger, fears peril and makes haste to designate his heir. In ferreting out evil within his palace, he should (1) hold fast to standards and measurements, (2) whittle away from those who have too much and enhance those who have too little always according to measure, (3) destroy cliques that destroy superiors, (4) simplify the laws and be cautious in the use of

penalties, (5) make certain that punishment is carried out when it is called for, and (6) never loosen his bow to get rid of rivals.

In a state that is ordered according to the Way, the ruler does not share the power to anyone and ensures that he alone should hold it. He guards it by "pruning his trees from time to time." He goes out to "search [out] the hearts of others" and "seize their power from them." Han Fei Tzu says that in the ordered state, "the ruler himself should possess the power, wielding it like lightning or like thunder."

Mo Tzu and the Filipino practice of Nepotism

Nepotism is a term that rings a bell especially among those who are employed in the Philippine government (Pena, 2022). While it is commonly understood as *kamag-anak* (relative) in the office, Republic Act No. 2260, a Philippine Civil Service Law, specifically provides a section for its unequivocal understanding. The section says that "all appointments in the national, provincial, city and municipal governments or any branch or instrumentality thereof, including government-owned or non-competitive service, made in favor of a relative of the appointing, recommending authority, or of the chief of the bureau or office, or the persons exercising immediate supervision over him, are hereby prohibited."

While the provision of the law appears clear, and there have been cases of sanctions, including removal from office of those who have been found guilty, cases of nepotism continue to be committed, and convictions are affirmed until the present (Boadi, 2000). People seem undeterred by the penalties imposed, and it is quite unacceptable to invoke ignorance of the provision as an excuse (Onsori, 2021). What could possibly be the impetus of this insistent defiance?

Many point a finger at a cultural propensity generally characteristic of Filipinos. Accordingly, they are strongly family or kin-oriented, and the type, manner, and degree of their relations with family members extend beyond the confines of their familial abodes (Villamejor-Mendoza, 2023). A politician, for instance, when able to win and employ his relatives in the government unit where he or she holds office is an occurrence normally accepted (Gjinovci, 2016). Many of these relatives are previously unemployed and find the term of their politician kin an opportunity that should be availed of and a fertile occasion to grab (Fafchamps & Labonne, 2017). This author's experience, though different, is not far from the mentioned instance. When he transferred to a state university, it was mainly out of courage to test his luck, for he did not know anyone, not even the appointing authority. After six months of employment, he found out that

most of the employees were in fact relatives of the heads of the university (It was then that he understood when someone cautioned against giving comments since, accordingly, the “walls have ears”).

Some authors explain that many of those who practice nepotism have not transcended their familial orientation that they take their office and staff as extension of their kin-circle. To a certain extent, this could provide for him or her a sense of security being surrounded by those who can assure him or her of their loyalty and support (Gomez, 2016).

The prohibition against nepotism is a measure to ensure that only those who are qualified based on his or her ability and not on social and familial affinity are employed in the government (Gutman, 2013). Government employment is oriented towards service so that only those qualified to render the service are given the responsibility to deliver it. Government employment and service therefore is based on merit (Hodder, 2014).

Meritocracy is likewise what Mo Tzu advocates for the government. As discussed in the beginning of this paper, he counsels that the foundation of good government is to “honor the worthy and employ the capable.” With them in the key positions in the administration of the state, things are delivered as they ought to be. Those who are not worthy and capable should be rejected and even punished, for they will only thwart the state's plans (Riano, 2021).

From the perspective by which Mo Tzu is presented, can one then say that the Filipino practice of nepotism runs counter against his thought? It has to be qualified that the worthy are those who carry in them the worth that is needed to succeed in the governance and administration of the state. He specifically said that they are those who “practiced virtue, skilled in discourse and broad in learning.” They are not confined by social orientation and familiar ties which means that they may or may not be descendants of kings and dukes or ordinary commoners.

Having stated the above, this author argues that the Filipino practice of nepotism does not necessarily go against Mo Tzu’s foundation of good government. Mo Tzu does not limit the worthy to social orientation and familial ties. His basic and fundamental qualification is the worthiness of the individual. And it is highly possible that those relatives of a politician appointed to office are men or women of worth relative to the position that they are appointed to and the action that they have delivered appertaining thereto. It is clear then that what is violated when one appoints a relative into an office is the provision of the law and not necessarily the criterion of worthiness (Slater, 2021).

Hsun Tzu and the Dynamics of Philippine Local Politics

Democracy means increased, if not maximum, participation of people in government. This also essentially implies equal access to opportunities for positions in the administration and in the delivery of services. One may observe that the elected positions of the local government units in the Philippines are occupied by only a few, if not a single family, for many years, sometimes even decades. Husbands, wives, children, and in-laws of the same family occupy key elected positions in the same locality (Fafchamps et al., 2017). This has been rampant and traditional and has led to branding, identification, and even attempts of prohibition of political dynasties in local government units (Crowley & Reece, 2013; Feinstein, 2010).

In political dynamics, how the different parts of a political system interrelate may be through consensus and conflict (Przeworski, 2010). In the case of the subgroup of families that dominate political leadership and the ordinary people, it is one of consensus. For the longer periods that these political dynasties are in power, it is obvious that they have been supported by the electorate. It doesn’t matter whether the support was a willful expression of loyalty or extracted through other means such as intimidation, coercion, or corruption (Levitsky & Way, 2010). The point was that the electorate, the subgroup of the common people had appeared to yield to the perpetuation into power of such dynasties. With the political dynasties, the line between the governing and the governed was made distinct and allowed to exist for a relatively longer period.

Hsun Tzu says that order is reflective of Heaven and Earth. Its defining characteristic is the existence of a rank or hierarchy. Now, an ordered society is characterized by the presence of hierarchy which is being maintained by those that belong to the upper and the lower parts. Maintaining the rank means that both those in the upper and the lower levels can perform the duty accorded to them.

Maintaining the dynamics between the political dynasties and the local electorate in order to sustain the existence of the divide, and therefore, the rank or the hierarchy may appear to result from order and therefore reflect the way of Heaven and Earth. With political dynasties still in place, is it, therefore, valid to assume that there is order in the local government units in the Philippines? One should consider that the existence and maintenance of rank or hierarchy, from which order is deduced, is only one criterion of the enlightened state. The one other true measure of an enlightened state and a true government is the satisfaction of the people (Helliwell & Huang, 2008).

Again, Hsun Tzu says, “The ruler is the boat, and the common people are the water. It is the water that bears the boat up and the water that capsizes it.”

The elements of the political system in the local units in the Philippines which have maintained the existence of political dynasties may be said to have agreed to prefer consensus over conflict where the local electorate, the common people, allowed the perpetuation of certain families in power (Tadem & Tadem, 2016). This maintains the rank or the hierarchy where both sectors perform their duties according to their rank and therefore, maintain order. However, it is not always the case that consensus is the resolve of the sectors. Conflict could likewise possibly arise, most likely due to the dissatisfaction of the people of the government (Kowalewski, 2019). In such a case, the political dynamics of the system are now disturbed and could eventually change leading to a new kind of interrelations among the elements of the political system.

Han Fei Tzu and Duterte on Rewards and Punishment: A Juxtaposition

He is perhaps currently the more controversial head of state in the Southeast Asian region (Chandran, 2017). Apparently, this is brought about by the flagship campaign of his administration, which is to eradicate illegal drugs in the Philippines. He consistently and persistently emphasizes that he does not mind killing those who are into the business, users or pushers, if they resist arrest (Xu, 2016). With the media mechanism, President Rodrigo Duterte seems to have the international community's attention.

At home, he wields a power entrusted to him by more than 16 million Filipinos. Drawing confidence from the magnitude of such support from the people, he pushes through with his program of governance, rebuffing those who attempt to stand in his way. Indeed, one sees in him not only the figure of a strong leader but of a fierce ruler whose indulgence in fiery confrontation is preceded more pronouncedly by the belligerence of his words (Dressel & Bonoan, 2019).

Contrary to Han Fei Tzu’s description, one cannot see in President Duterte the emptiness of a ruler. He is one whose emotions are displayed whenever they arise out of the promptings of the circumstances. He curses and throws insults, but he also cries in public (Lim, 2023). He displays more compassion and concern for children and the youth, yet he also makes fools out of the “frailties of a woman” (Parmanand, 2020).

President Duterte does not discard wisdom and wile. He displays his professional degree under the very nose of his critics and brings to attention his strategies of deception if only to lead astray those who plot against him (Timberman, 2019). In many ways, he is not the enlightened ruler of Han Fei

Tzu, who, in imitating the Way, is empty, isolated, and action-less. To borrow the line of Friedrich Nietzsche, Duterte is “human-all-too-human.” Maybe this is so because it is what is needed by the people who have been characterized to be hungry for change in the kind of leadership that the past administrations had displayed.

There is one feature, though, as these authors see it, that Duterte and Han Fei Tzu’s enlightened ruler have in common, and that is the way they both have a hard grip on the handles of the government which are reward and punishment. Maintaining peace and order and eradicating corruption in the government are the pivotal programs of Duterte’s administration to which all others hinge. These are the primary objectives where efforts of his full force are tended to. Achieving them is the right thing to do; failing to get them done is wrong. Perhaps this is the reason why he invests and puts more rewards on the police and the military, who have been instrumental in his campaign against drugs and terrorism (Kine, 2020). He promoted a military official who quelled the Marawi terrorist attack even before the latter’s turn. This has precedence though since his Police Director General was given the position surpassing many of his seniors in rank. Further, Duterte increased the salaries of the soldiers and gave additional perks and incentives to the police (Cabacungan, 2016).

On the other hand, Duterte doesn’t give a second thought to arrest and even kill, when called for, those who defy the drug campaign (Kine, 2020). Unofficial reports even have it that extra-judicial killings have been committed in implementing the “*Oplan Tokhang*” (Sarno, Baluran, Santillan & Gamban, 2021). He puts shame to attach a stigma to local government officials, generals, and magistrates who are on his list of drug protectors in the country. He quickly and swiftly removes from position those officials of his cabinet who are allegedly involved in graft and corruption even before they can devise a strategy to defend themselves (Lamchek & Lamchek, 2023)

Others look at it as bribe and persecution. Maybe, but the authors see it as a firm grip on what Han Fei Tzu termed as the “handles” of the government. It is making use of the mechanism to ensure that the ends identified for the development, perhaps glory and greatness, of the state are achieved.

Conclusion

An enlightened state; a good government for Mo Tzu, is founded on “honoring the worthy and employing the capable.” For Hsun Tzu, it is modeled after the order, rank or hierarchy of Heaven and Earth which is

achieved by following ritual propriety of *Li*. For Han Fei Tzu, it is characterized by the achievement of ends through the consistency and firm instrumentation of the "handles" of government which are reward and punishment. of the three Chinese thinkers herein presented, the thoughts of Han Fei Tzu appear to be more objective, "cold" and unattached. But it has likewise connections with those of Mo Tzu and Hsun Tzu. With Mo Tzu (and the Mohists in general), Han Fei Tzu also proposes for authority, society mobilization, utilitarian ends and uniform standards. With Hsun Tzu (and the Confucians in general) Han Fei Tzu also advocates the "rectification of names."

The political thoughts of the Chinese philosophers herein reviewed were elicited by their temporal circumstances. But their profundity transcends the boundaries of time. In truth, they can even be invoked to shed light to the present political events; perhaps even for a solution to current social and political problems.

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Priority of Response: Levinas and the Phenomenology of the Third Party

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Abstract. The third party, in a general sense, often carries a negative implication. It is associated with conflict, injustice, broken relationships, and other disturbances to the direct I-Other relationship. In contrast, within Levinas's ethical framework, the concept of the third party acquires a complex and positive ethical dimension that reconfigures the I-Other relationship. This paper examines the socio-ethical connection between the Other and the "other Others," which Levinas refers to as the "third party," and explores why the concept of the third party in Levinas's ethical philosophy carries a positive meaning. It investigates how the third party leads to justice itself and examines various interpretations of Levinas's notion of the third party. Consequently, this paper seeks to extend and elaborate on the interpretation of Levinas's asymmetrical I-Other relation by examining his notion and discussion of the third party in his ethical thought. This paper contends that Levinas's treatment of the ethical relationship between the primary Other and secondary Others—what he terms the "third party"—remains underdeveloped. Specifically, Levinas does not clarify whether the Other holds a higher ethical ground over the other Others, who also demand justice and compel us to respond.

Keywords: the Other, the other Others, the third party, asymmetrical relation, face-to-face encounter, responsibility, totality and infinity

Introduction

Western philosophy has traditionally been concerned with the fundamental inquiry into "being"—a central theme that has historically structured its discourse—until thinkers like Levinas reoriented this focus toward the ethical primacy of the Other. Levinas shifts the focus from "being" to the "Other," asserting that justice begins with the Other. Ethics, rather than metaphysics, is the "first philosophy." He critiques Martin Heidegger's ontology in *Being and Time* (1927) for reducing the Other to sameness and for prioritizing the relationship with being over the relationship with the Other. According to Levinas (1987, 46), this ontology remains bound to the anonymous and inevitably results in power, imperialist domination, and

tyranny. This is why Levinas is very critical of Heidegger's support of the Nazi regime.

In essence, Levinas's philosophy is a critique of the entire tradition of Greek philosophy, particularly Heidegger's ontology, which prioritizes the inquiry into "being-as-such", conceived as "more primordial." In his seminal works, *Totality and Infinity* (1969)[1] and *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (1979), Levinas argues that our ethical responsibility to the Other and to the "third party"—the other Others, the many Others who make up society—is "pre-original." This responsibility precedes anything "said," any concept of "being" or the "letting-be of things" or *Aletheia* (as in Heidegger's *Being and Time*), and even the notion of "freedom" (as in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*). Robert Bernasconi (2002, 8) describes Levinas's ethical philosophy as an attempt to articulate a relationship with the Other that cannot be reduced to comprehension. This is encapsulated in Levinas's famous notion of the "face-to-face encounter with the Other." Levinas presents an unconventional view of ethical responsibility, one that is unescapable and incomprehensible, transcending any conceptual framework.

Although there are now many scholarly works on Levinas's ethical philosophy of the Other, relatively few studies focus on his phenomenology of the third party. This paper does not aim to cover the entirety of Levinas's ethical philosophy, which is too vast to be condensed into a single theme. Instead, it focuses on analyzing the socio-ethical relationship between the Other and the numerous Others—the "third party"—and explores why the third party has a positive meaning in Levinas's ethical philosophy. This paper investigates how the third party leads to justice and examines various interpretations of Levinas's notion of the third party. Its primary aim is to extend and elaborate on the interpretation of Levinas's asymmetrical I-Other relationship by scrutinizing his notions and discussions of the third party in his ethical thought.

This paper contends that Levinas's treatment of the ethical relationship between the primary Other and secondary Others—what he terms the "third party"—remains underdeveloped. In Levinas's view, the Other enjoys primacy over the self (me). The Other is not like me; the Other

[1] Jacques Derrida (2000, 21) remarks that Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* is a "treatise on hospitality," highlighting a central ethical theme: the encounter with the Other. Levinas presents ethics as "first philosophy," arguing that human subjectivity is fundamentally shaped by the ethical demand of the Other, whose face disrupts totalizing structures and calls for infinite responsibility. Derrida's engagement with *Totality and Infinity* suggests that Levinas's ethics can be read as a call for unconditional hospitality—an openness that refuses to reduce the Other to the Same.

is irreducible to the Same.[2] The I-Other relationship is inherently asymmetrical. However, what remains unclear is the nature of the ethical relationship between the Other and the many Others who also demand justice and command our response. Is the ethical relationship between the Other and the other others (the third party) also asymmetrical? Which ethical obligation should be prioritized within this asymmetrical framework, and does the primary Other maintain a superior claim to responsibility compared to the collective of additional Others?

The Primacy of the Other: An Overview of Levinas's Notion of the Other[3]

One of the prominent philosophers who attempted to include the topic of "otherness" in their philosophical analysis is Jean-Paul Sartre. In his magnum opus, *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre (1958, 251–257) emphasizes that our awareness of the existence of the Other as a subject constitutes the original relation of the Other to us. This relation is primarily based on our "pre-ontological" (pre-reflective) comprehension of the world in which we exist. For Sartre (1958, 270-284), the Other is different from us by virtue of their very nature as Other. The state of "not-being-the-Other" is never given but is perpetually chosen in a constant process of renewal: consciousness can only "not be the Other" insofar as it is conscious of itself as not being the Other. However, ontologically, the Other is on equal footing with us because we share the apodicticity of existence, namely self-consciousness.

Another philosopher who highlighted the importance of the topic of the Other is Martin Buber. In his famous work *I and Thou* (1958), Buber examines the fundamental relationship between the I and the Other, presenting his ideas in an aphoristic style. For Buber, human existence is defined by two primary modes of engagement: the *"I-It"* and the *"I-Thou"* relationships. Buber (1958, 3) writes that the world appears to a person in two ways, shaped by their two distinct attitudes. These attitudes, in turn, stem from the fundamental types of words they use. The "I-It" attitude reflects a detached, objective stance, where the Other is seen as an object to be analyzed, utilized, or categorized. In contrast, the "I-Thou" attitude

[2] In *Totality and Infinity* (1969), Levinas speaks of "exteriority" as the location of a point of "otherness" that cannot be reduced to the Same. He characterizes the Other as a reality irreducible to any consciousness (see "Exteriority and the Face," 187-247).

[3] In Levinas's ethical philosophy, the concept of "primacy" refers to the first and most immediate ethical responsibility that one feels toward the Other. The question seeks to uncover who or what occupies this primary position in the ethical relationship. Levinas (1969, 45–80) argues that this primacy belongs to the Other, as the encounter with the Other is foundational to ethical responsibility. However, this question opens the possibility of exploring whether there is ever a contest for this primacy, especially when considering multiple Others or the role of the third party.

represents a profound, mutual relationship, where the "I" encounters the Other in its full authenticity. This is what Buber refers to as "reciprocity." Thus, for Buber, these two modes of interaction are not merely linguistic constructs but are deeply embedded in how individuals perceive and engage with the world. The choice of attitude determines the quality of relationships—whether one views the Other as a mere "It" to serve a purpose or as a "Thou," a partner in genuine dialogue and connection.

However, unlike Sartre and Buber, who affirmed a symmetrical relationship between me and the Other—where the Other is like me—Levinas argues that the ethical relationship between me and the Other is inherently asymmetrical and can never be reciprocal. For Levinas (1969, 49-80), the Other holds the higher ethical ground and is superior to me. The Other is infinite, absolutely Other, and beyond the confines of objective experience. It can never be reduced to the Same (totality). This is why the Other enjoys primacy over me. However, this does not mean that I am a slave to the Other. I am also an Other to the Other, just as the Other is Other to me. In this sense, everyone is both a master and a servant simultaneously. Levinas (1985, 89) explains that the face of the Other conveys a profound message: "You shall not kill." This is not merely a suggestion but a command, as though it comes directly from a higher authority. At the same time, the face reveals vulnerability and need, for it belongs to someone who is destitute—someone for whom we can do everything and to whom we owe everything. As "first-persons," regardless of who we are, we are called upon to find the means to respond to this call.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that, for Levinas, our relationship with the Other differs from the relationship of the Other to us. He does not adhere to a Buberian concept of reciprocity. Levinas (1985, 98-99) asserts that we are responsible for the Other without expecting anything in return, even to the point of sacrificing our lives for it. The self always bears one responsibility beyond all others. He further elaborates that this asymmetrical and infinite responsibility is so profound that the self can give away the bread from his/her mouth or even sacrifice his/her own skin (Levinas 1979, 77). Levinas emphasizes an ultimate form of generosity and selflessness, arguing that our ethical responsibility involves a profound willingness for the Other.

This I-Other relation, however, becomes problematic with the entrance of the third party. Levinas acknowledges that no issues arise if proximity directs us solely toward the Other. Our ethical responsibility toward the Other becomes complicated only when the third party enters this I-Other relation. As Levinas (1979, 157) explains that if proximity were solely directed toward the other, without involving anyone else, there would be no

problem in any general sense. No question would arise, nor would there be consciousness or self-consciousness. The responsibility for the other exists as an immediate experience, preceding any questions—it is proximity itself. This responsibility becomes troubling and turns into a problem when a third party is introduced into the I-Other relationship.

The Third Party[4] and the Asymmetrical I-Other Relation

In his first major work, *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas (1969, 213) provides a brief outline of the "third party" in the asymmetrical I-Other relationship. He argues that the third party looks at us through the eyes of the Other. Language represents justice. Levinas explains that it is not that the face appears first, and then the being it reveals concerns itself with justice. Rather, the appearance of the face, in its very essence, opens the path to humanity. The face, in its bare essence (nakedness), shows us the destitution of the poor and the stranger. However, this poverty and exile, which call upon our abilities, address us but do not surrender themselves to those abilities as simple givens—they remain the expression of the face. The poor and the stranger present themselves as equals. Their equality in this fundamental poverty lies in referring to the third party, who is already present in the encounter, and whom the Other, in their destitution, already serves. The presence of the third party, while entering the I-Other relationship, assumes a paradoxical role: it is both a summons and a challenge. It compels ethical engagement not by subordination alone, but by imposing an obligation that reconfigures our understanding of responsibility. The "thou" is placed before a "we." To be a "we" is not about simply gathering around a common task; it is the presence of the face, the infinity of the Other, a form of destitution, a presence of the third party (representing all of humanity looking at us), and a command that compels us to command.

In *Otherwise than Being,* Levinas (1979, 35) briefly notes that the introduction of a third party is not just an addition to the Other; from the outset, the third party is both distinct from the Other and positions us as one among others. This form of alterity is fundamentally ethical, not merely

[4] Sartre (1976, 100–109), in *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. I*, discusses the notion of "mediating third parties" to explain the nature of groups beyond I-Thou relations. According to Sartre (2004, 373), mediating third parties are group members who temporarily act as external threats but later rejoin the group. However, for Levinas, the third party plays a fundamentally different role. Rather than merely mediating between individuals in a group, the third party disrupts the direct I-Other relation and introduces ethical complexity. At the same time, this disruption expands the scope of responsibility—from an ethical obligation to a single Other toward a responsibility for multiple Others, extending beyond immediate interpersonal encounters to a broader, more universal ethical demand. This shift marks a departure from the existentialist framework, emphasizing ethics as first philosophy rather than conflict or mediation as the foundation of social relations.

numerical; it involves a dynamic of appeal and challenge. Recognizing that the one for whom and before whom we are responsible is also responsible to another does not diminish or negate their position in relation to us. Rather, it reveals the demand for justice and the presence of another responsibility among Others. In short, for Levinas (1979, 157), the "third party" is distinct from the neighbor, yet also another neighbor, a neighbor of the Other, and not merely their companion (fellow).

In *The Ego and the Totality*, Levinas (1987) argued that the face-to-face encounter with the Other cannot be restricted to the intimacy of love,[5] as this would limit our responsibility and attention to only those who are closest to us, leaving everyone else out. If ethics were confined only to intimate relations, it would create a very narrow circle of concern, excluding anyone outside of that circle from ethical responsibility. The third party stands alongside and behind this singular Other, who compels us in the present moment through their mere presence. Because ethical responsibility is not tied to any particular trait of this Other, but instead to their very introduction into our world, all Others place the same obligation on us as this one does. In Perperzak's (1993, 31) interpretation, when confronted with this Other, we perceive the potential presence of all people. However, since it is impossible to act as the servant of everyone, the situation requires categorizing all Others under a universal concept that allows us to speak of them in general terms. Furthermore, Burggraeve (2002, 123) noted that Levinas's third party encompasses not only the other Others who are distant but also future Others. These many Others are not always—and often are not—present to be seen or heard.

Hence, Bernasconi (1999) clarifies that in Levinas's ethical philosophy, the third-party relation is not merely an addition to the face-to-face encounter. Although Levinas occasionally framed the third party as entering at a later stage in a narrative that begins with the face-to-face relation, he also described the third party as already inherent in the face of the Other. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas at one point portrayed the third party as emerging only after the relationship with the Other—the second—had been established, suggesting that the third party's presence depends on the prior existence of this fundamental ethical relationship.

Thus, Borkowski (2016) interprets Levinas's third party as the horizontal dimension of ontology, directed and uplifted toward the Other. She argues that Levinas does not propose a sequential relationship in which

[5] Burggraeve (2002, 124) describes Levinas's phenomenology of love, which occurs at the level of experience, as a "closed community" between two people committed exclusively to one another. Consequently, this inherently and involuntarily excludes the third party.

the face of the Other precedes the appearance of the third party. Instead, the face serves as the meeting point of the vertical and horizontal dimensions, revealing the entirety of humanity. Through this revelation, it confronts the subject with the presence of the poor and the stranger.

Beyond the Face-to-Face: Critiques of Levinas's Third Party

Who holds the higher ethical ground? Who holds primacy? Is the third party also an (infinite) Other to the Other? These are some of the questions that this paper wanted to address. In his writings, Levinas did not provide a definitive account of this problem. In Levinas's ethical philosophy, ethics is understood primarily as the responsibility one has toward the Other. However, the question here is whether some Others are ethically more significant than Others. Let us now examine how Levinas scholars address this important issue.

One objection to Levinas's notion of the "third party" is raised by Peperzak. Although he does not directly address the third party, in his book *To the Other*, Peperzak (1993, 30) states that if the existence of even a single other person already imposes on us infinite responsibility and commitment, how can we manage the reality that, throughout our lives, we are confronted not only with a few Others but with countless Others? This objection is closely related to the unresolved question regarding the I-Other relation and the third party: How exactly are face-to-face relations connected to collective structures? A similar argument is raised by Peter Atterton in his article titled "In Defense of Violence: Levinas and the Problem of Justice." He questions whether we are not also responsible for the "third party" or "another neighbor." Who deserves more care and attention? Whose needs are most urgent? In fulfilling our duties toward one person, do we not risk not only neglecting but also harming the Other? What role do we play in justice?

Accordingly, another set of questions is raised by Simmons in his article *The Third* (1999). He argues that with the introduction of the third party, the I's focus becomes divided, no longer exclusively directed toward the other. Responsibility takes on a different form. Are both individuals truly considered the other? How can the I maintain infinite responsibility for more than one Other? Which Other should receive priority? What if one Other engages in conflict with another? Can the I protect one Other from an attack by another? If so, is the ego justified in using violence or even killing another to defend the other?

Peperzak, Atterton, and Simmons, as we have seen, presented their objections in a very dramatic way. Unfortunately, none of them attempted to

provide answers. The problem remains unresolved to this day. Although Simmons tried to explain that the third party is simply an infinite other, he too faces difficulties. For Levinas, particularly in his later works, the third party is different from the Other and is not merely his fellow. Burggraeve (1981, 36) attempts to answer some of these questions by stating that when we encounter another person's bare face (nakedness), we are confronted with all Others, each equally in need of our help as the person standing before us. We can no longer prioritize those closest to us; we must direct our attention to everyone. However, Simmons (1999) responded that a direct, face-to-face relationship with every individual in humanity is impossible. Instead, Simmons suggests that those who are far away can only be engaged with through indirect means.

This dilemma raises the issue of ethical primacy: which obligation should be prioritized when faced with competing claims from multiple Others? Which Other is my priority? Which Other should receive the most care? Who would I save first in an emergency? This becomes more problematic with the fact that there are so many Others in this world who need help. We cannot ignore this fact. There are numerous Others—the unheard, the voiceless, the non-faced, the poor, the stranger, the sick, the dying, the hungry, the thirsty—on the margins of society. Burggraeve (2002, 123) even pointed out that the notion of the third party includes future and unseen Others. They are all infinite Others in relation to me. But the problem is that we cannot infinitely respond to them all. It is impossible to do so.

Moreover, among Levinas scholars, it seems that the question of the ethical relation between the Other and the third party has not been given the proper attention it deserves. They have not come up with a clear response to this issue. They have also provided different interpretations, but none of them address the issue directly. As discussed earlier, the Other, from Levinas's point of view, holds primacy over me, so it follows that the third party, the other Others, is also superior to me. The third party also demands the same infinite responsibility from me. However, if the third party and the Other share equal footing, then the Other seems reducible to the same (totality). As a result, the ethical relation between the Other and the other Others becomes reciprocal, which, for Levinas, is impossible since the Other is infinite. And if the Other is infinite, there is no way to bridge the distance between the Other and the other Others (which is either concrete or infinite). Although, from Levinas's point of view, they are all infinite Others in relation to me.

This is exactly the point of this paper. Up until now, there have been no clear answers to the question regarding this relationship that Levinas has

failed to take into account. Responding infinitely to the Other is itself ethical. Responding to the many Others is, of course, ethical, which, for Levinas, leads to justice in the community. But we must take into account the problem of ethical primacy. It is here that Levinas's concept of infinite responsibility becomes problematic, because it is impossible to respond infinitely to all Others. In reality, people care most for their loved ones. People respond first to those they care for and love. It seems impossible that the "I" would choose the stranger over their family, friends, and loved ones.

To sum up, if the third party is also an infinite other, then there is no need for us to consider whether I am infinitely responsible for him/her. But again, for Levinas (1979, 35), the third party is other than the infinite Other and also a neighbor of the Other, not simply his or her fellow. Therefore, it is problematic to account for the ethical relation between the Other and the third party. The ethical relation between the Other and the third party in relation to me is very clear. I know my place: I am infinitely responsible for the Other and the third party. Levinas often cites Alyosha Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* as an example to further explain his concept of infinite asymmetrical responsibility. Alyosha says: *"We are all responsible for everything and everyone in the face of everybody, and I more than the others."* However, Levinas has failed to address the ethical relation between the Other and the other Others (the third party). Levinas did not account for whether the Other holds the higher ethical ground over the other Others, who also call for justice.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Levinas's ethical philosophy insufficiently articulates the relational dynamics between the primary Other and secondary Others (the third party), thereby leaving critical questions about ethical primacy unresolved. Among Levinas scholars, it seems that there has been little serious treatment of this issue. Levinas is even criticized for being inconsistent with his views on the third party, as pointed out by Bernasconi. This paper has shown that this issue is often neglected among Levinas scholars. Since the question of whether the Other and the third party share equal footing has not received proper attention, the problem remains unanswered. One potential interpretive resolution emerging from this study is that Levinas's explicit notion of the third party might be redundant within his broader account of the asymmetrical I-Other relation, thereby suggesting a reconceptualization of ethical responsibility that inherently presupposes the presence of the many. The existence of the third party—the other Others, the presence of all humanity—is already presupposed when we encounter

the Other. In this sense, there is no need for us to account for the reality of the other Others. The fact that we encounter the Other implies that there are so many Others in this world. The notion of the third party somewhat obscures his account of the asymmetrical I-Other relation. Another possible solution, as mentioned earlier, is to interpret the third party as simply another infinite Other (in contrast to Levinas's claim that they are not just his fellow Other). In this sense, they share equal footing. Therefore, there is no need for us to question whether the Other holds primacy over the other Others (the third party), since they are both infinite others. Thus, we can conclude that in responding to the Other, we also respond to the other Others, and vice versa. As Jesus Christ states, *"whatever you have done for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done for me"* (Matthew 25:35-40). This passage might further explain Levinas's phenomenology of the third party.

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Reinterpreting Humanism Beyond Heidegger and Derrida

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Abstract. Traditional humanism assumes that the human nature is captured by defining the human being as "rational animal." Heidegger, in his *Letter on Humanism*, dismisses by arguing that this reduces existence within metaphysics. Derrida demonstrates how even post-metaphysical attempts at humanism, such as Heidegger's, remain haunted by the logic of presence, exclusion, and *différance*. The paper argues that humanism lies not in metaphysical certainty but in its openness to critique, reinterpretation, and reinvention which implies that the question of the human is unfinished, fragile, and ethically urgent. With this reinterpreted humanism, philosophy can then appropriately respond to the ethical, political, and ecological challenges of contemporary life.

Keywords: Humanism, *Dasein*, *Différance*, Deconstruction, Post-Metaphysical

Introduction

The question of humanism remains a central concern in twentieth-century continental philosophy, particularly in the writings of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida. Traditional humanism, especially in its Enlightenment form, had defined human beings as rational, moral, and universal subjects. Heidegger (1947/1998), however, critiques this metaphysical grounding, arguing that reducing the human being to fixed categories obscures the concrete mode of human existence. Instead, he introduces the concept of *Dasein*, a being whose existence is defined not by essence but by its openness to Being. This existential reorientation reframes human existence as *ek-sistence*—a "standing out" into the truth of Being, historically situated and responsive to its disclosure.

Yet Heidegger's rethinking of humanism raises further questions. His concepts of Being, *ek-sistence*, and the "clearing" (*Lichtung*) risk creating new abstractions that parallel the metaphysical structures he critiques (Critchley, 1992; Kisiel, 2002). Jacques Derrida takes up this tension in his deconstructive project, most notably in *of Grammatology* (1967/1978),

showing that attempts to move beyond metaphysics remain entangled with metaphysical language. Derrida's notion of *différance* illustrates that meaning and existence are always deferred, never fully present, and thus resistant to definitive grounding.

This study examines the dialogue between Heidegger and Derrida to clarify the philosophical stakes of rethinking humanism. The central question guiding this inquiry is: How do Heidegger's critique of humanism and Derrida's deconstructive response jointly contribute to a rethinking of human existence? By situating Heidegger's critique and Derrida's response in conversation, the study illuminates how human existence cannot be reduced to metaphysical essence but must be continually interpreted. Beyond philosophical abstraction, this inquiry engages contemporary debates on subjectivity, meaning, and the ethical implications of understanding the human as open, finite, and interpretively constituted (Caputo, 1987; Malpas, 2016).

The study proceeds in three parts: first, by examining Heidegger's critique of humanism; second, by analyzing Derrida's deconstructive response and its implications; and third, by reinterpreting humanism beyond Heidegger and Derrida.

Heidegger's Critique of Humanism

Heidegger's critique of humanism represents a foundational shift in twentieth-century philosophy, challenging the metaphysical assumptions that had long defined what it means to be human. Traditional humanism, particularly in its Enlightenment form, positioned humans as rational and moral agents whose essence could be objectively defined (Aristotle, 1984). Heidegger, however, argues that such definitions reduce human existence to abstract categories, obscuring the lived, concrete, and temporal nature of being (Heidegger, 1947/1998). In response, he proposes a rethinking of human existence through *Dasein*—a being that is always already situated in history, culture, and the disclosure of Being itself—and *ek-sistence*, a mode of standing out into the truth of Being (Heidegger, 1962). This reorientation not only destabilizes essentialist humanism but also opens the space for existential and interpretive engagement with the human condition, laying the groundwork for subsequent philosophical interrogations, including Derrida's deconstructive critique (Derrida, 1978; Caputo, 1987).

Dasein and Ek-sistence: Rethinking Human Being. Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* represents a radical departure from traditional humanism, insisting that human existence cannot be captured through

abstract predicates such as reason, morality, or essence (Heidegger, 1947/1998; Kisiel, 2002). *Dasein* is "being-there", a mode of existence characterized by its openness to the disclosure of Being itself.

Ek-sistence—literally "standing out" into Being—captures the dynamic nature of human existence. Unlike static conceptions of essence, *ek-sistence* emphasizes projection, care (*Sorge*), and temporal finitude (Heidegger, 1962). Humans are always oriented toward possibilities yet thrown (*Geworfenheit*) into circumstances not of their choosing. This duality—between thrownness and projection—forms the cornerstone of Heideggerian humanism: existence is always already situated, finite, and contingent, yet it carries the responsibility of choosing how to respond to possibilities (Caputo, 1987; Malpas, 2016).

This reorientation challenges classical anthropocentric frameworks that posit humans as sovereign arbiters of universal reason (Aristotle, 1984; Marx, 1978). By reframing existence as *ek-sistence*, Heidegger relocates the locus of human value: it is not in possessing abstract traits but in the authentic engagement with one's temporal, finite, and historical situation (Heidegger, 1947/1998; Kisiel, 2002). *Dasein* becomes a site of interpretive openness rather than metaphysical closure.

The temporal dimension of *Dasein* is essential. Heidegger's notion of being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) underscores the inevitability of finitude, revealing existential authenticity as a response to mortality (Heidegger, 1962). The human being, confronted with death, experiences an irreducible tension: freedom exists only because existence is finite; yet, this very finitude exposes human life to anxiety (*Angst*) and uncertainty (Caputo, 1987). Heideggerian humanism, therefore, is non-foundationalist: it refuses absolute grounding in reason or morality and insists on the interpretive, precarious nature of existence (Malpas, 2016).

Dasein's situatedness also carries ethical and political implications. By emphasizing relationality, care, and interdependence, Heidegger undermines the Enlightenment ideal of autonomous rationality (Critchley, 1992). Humanism must recognize the embeddedness of the human within social, historical, and ecological matrices, shifting ethical discourse from abstract universals to the lived responsibilities of *Dasein* in concrete contexts.

However, Heidegger's project is not without tension. While *ek-sistence* seeks to transcend metaphysics, articulating *Dasein*'s openness relies on conceptual mediation, which risks reintroducing abstraction in subtle forms (Heidegger, 1947/1998; Caputo, 1987). Heidegger's vocabulary—Being, *Lichtung* (the clearing), *ek-sistence*—functions as a conceptual scaffold that

paradoxically echoes essentialist tendencies. *Dasein* is thus simultaneously liberating (challenging essentialist humanism) and precarious (entangled with metaphysical language) (Critchley, 1992; Malpas, 2016). This tension lays the groundwork for Derrida's deconstructive intervention, which further destabilizes the relationship between humanism and metaphysics (Derrida, 1978; Derrida, 1997).

In sum, *Dasein* and *ek-sistence* represent a profound reconfiguration of humanism: humans are no longer defined by static properties but by their temporal, relational, and finite engagement with Being. Heidegger's critique destabilizes traditional humanism and simultaneously opens the space for continued philosophical reflection on the limits, responsibilities, and openness inherent in human existence (Caputo, 1987; Critchley, 1992; Malpas, 2016).

Overcoming Metaphysics and Its Limits. Heidegger's critique of humanism is inseparable from his broader project of overcoming metaphysics. Traditional humanism, particularly in its Enlightenment and classical forms, had long situated the human being within a framework of universals: rationality, morality, and essential characteristics that defined "man" as a metaphysical entity (Aristotle, 1984; Plato, 1997). Heidegger challenges this assumption, arguing that the tendency to ground human existence in abstract categories obscures the concrete, temporal, and situated nature of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1947/1998; Kisiel, 2002). In other words, humanism, when entangled with metaphysics, reduces the human being to a predictable, objectifiable concept, overlooking the existential depth of lived experience.

The project of overcoming metaphysics is both radical and paradoxical. Heidegger's proposal requires a turning away from traditional ontological models that define being in terms of presence, essence, or fixed attributes, yet his own discourse relies on conceptual articulation—terms such as Being, *ek-sistence*, and *Lichtung* (the clearing) are themselves linguistic constructs that risk reintroducing the very abstraction he seeks to avoid (Caputo, 1987; Malpas, 2016). Here emerges what can be called the "structural tension" of Heideggerian thought: while seeking to free human existence from metaphysical domination, Heidegger cannot entirely escape the metaphysical heritage of language itself (Critchley, 1992; Heidegger, 1962).

This tension is particularly evident when considering *Dasein*'s relationship with temporality and finitude. Heidegger emphasizes that the human being is thrown (*Geworfenheit*) into a world not chosen, yet

simultaneously projects toward possibilities (*Entwurf*), revealing the paradoxical structure of existence: freedom exists only within finitude, and understanding arises only through engagement with historical and cultural contexts (Heidegger, 1962; Caputo, 1987). By situating humanism within this existential frame, Heidegger destabilizes metaphysical humanism without claiming to offer a final, stable definition of the human. The human becomes an interpretive agent, constantly negotiating between the constraints of thrownness and the possibilities of projection, rather than a fixed essence.

Moreover, Heidegger's critique problematizes the very notion of autonomy and universality that classical humanism presumes. Human beings are not isolated rational subjects but beings whose existence is co-constituted with world, others, and history (Kisiel, 2002; Calarco, n.d.). Ethical, political, and existential responsibilities emerge from this situatedness, rather than from adherence to universal principles. Heidegger thereby anticipates contemporary critiques of humanism that foreground plurality, contingency, and ecological embeddedness (Malpas, 2016). In this sense, overcoming metaphysics is not merely a technical philosophical move but a reorientation of the human condition, demanding attentiveness to interdependence, temporality, and vulnerability.

Yet, the limits of Heidegger's project are unavoidable. His very vocabulary—Being, *ek-sistence*, *Lichtung*—reflects a linguistic mediation of existential truth, demonstrating that metaphysics is never fully abandoned. As Caputo (1987) notes, the attempt to overcome metaphysics is always haunted by the traces of metaphysical thinking; there is no pure, non-metaphysical description of human existence. In this light, Heideggerian humanism occupies a liminal space: it both destabilizes the metaphysical human and remains conditioned by the metaphysical structures it critiques.

This liminality has significant implications. First, it emphasizes that humanism is not a fixed doctrine to be eradicated but a problematic horizon, requiring constant interrogation and reinterpretation (Heidegger, 1947/1998; Malpas, 2016). Second, it prefigures Derrida's deconstructive analysis, which further exposes the aporetic nature of metaphysical concepts and demonstrates that critique and deconstruction are mutually dependent philosophical strategies (Derrida, 1978; Derrida, 1997). Finally, it challenges contemporary philosophy to navigate between grounding meaning and acknowledging its perpetual instability, a tension that lies at the core of the rethinking of humanism (Caputo, 1987; Critchley, 1992).

In sum, overcoming metaphysics in Heidegger's project is a dynamic, ongoing effort. It destabilizes essentialist humanism, foregrounds the

interpretive and temporal dimensions of *Dasein*, and situates humans within a relational, finite, and historical context. Yet, it remains an ambivalent enterprise, constrained by the very language and concepts that enable reflection. This ambivalence underscores the enduring philosophical challenge of thinking humanism beyond metaphysical constraints, a challenge that Derrida will later elaborate in his deconstructive project.

The Relevance of Heideggerian Humanism Today. The stakes of Heidegger's critique extend beyond abstract philosophy into contemporary debates on subjectivity, ethics, and human-centered thinking (Caputo, 1987; Malpas, 2016). In a world increasingly attentive to plurality, contingency, and ecological interdependence, a Heideggerian humanism emphasizes that humans are finite, relational, and interpretively engaged beings, rather than sovereign rational subjects (Heidegger, 1947/1998; Critchley, 1992).

This perspective has practical implications: it encourages ethical responsibility grounded not in universal absolutes, but in situated understanding of one's historical, social, and ecological context (Calarco, n.d.; Marx, 1978). Moreover, it challenges any ideology or political system that assumes humans are fully autonomous or universally rational, foregrounding the complexity, vulnerability, and openness of existence (Caputo, 1987; Heidegger, 1962).

Finally, Heidegger's critique provides a crucial foundation for Derrida's deconstruction. By revealing the inescapable tension between humanism and metaphysics, Heidegger opens the way for Derrida's analysis of *différance* and textuality, which further destabilizes the assumptions underpinning traditional humanist thought (Derrida, 1978; Derrida, 1997). The dialogue between Heidegger and Derrida is therefore not a matter of simple opposition but a mutually illuminating interrogation of what it means to be human in a world where meaning is never fully secured.

Derrida's Deconstructive Response

Derrida engages Heidegger's critique of metaphysical humanism but radicalizes it in a way that exposes the persistent entanglement of thought with metaphysical structures. In *Of Grammatology* (1967/1978), Derrida recognizes Heidegger's displacement of traditional humanism, which reduces humans to rational or moral categories. Yet Derrida warns that Heidegger's attempt to retrieve an originary meaning of Being is itself a form of metaphysical thinking: it presupposes a stable, foundational ground that Heidegger seeks to transcend. This tension underscores the paradox of post-

metaphysical reflection—one cannot entirely escape metaphysical assumptions even while critiquing them (Caputo, 1987; Malpas, 2016).

Central to Derrida's intervention is the concept of *différance*, which demonstrates that meaning is never fully present but always deferred. Every sign points to another in an endless chain of references, rendering language a site of play, absence, and relationality. As Derrida famously writes, "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte" ("there is nothing outside the text") (Derrida, 1978, p. 158). This does not deny reality; rather, it emphasizes that access to reality is always mediated through textuality, signs, and *différance*. Caputo (1987) clarifies that Derrida is not simply rejecting Heidegger but highlighting that even Heidegger's "step back" into Being is caught within the very structures of signification it aims to surpass. Derrida calls this persistent tension the trace: every attempt at presence carries within it the mark of absence, revealing the impossibility of fully grounding meaning.

The Tension Between Overcoming and Remaining in Metaphysics. The dialogue between Heidegger and Derrida exposes a profound philosophical paradox. Heidegger seeks to move beyond metaphysical humanism by redefining man as *ek-sistence*, emphasizing the historical, finite, and situational nature of *Dasein*. Yet the very language he uses—terms like "shepherd of Being" and "house of Being"—risks instituting a new abstraction, a quasi-essentialist framework that echoes the metaphysical structures he critiques (Critchley, 1992; Kisiel, 2002). Derrida shows that any attempt at retrieval, naming, or grounding is already inscribed in the movement of *différance*, making the effort both necessary and impossible.

Malpas (2016) calls this the "ambivalence of post-metaphysical thought": one is caught between the necessity of thinking beyond metaphysics and the impossibility of fully doing so. Heidegger's contribution lies in freeing humans from the reductive logic of rational-animal definitions, while Derrida reminds us that even this liberation remains entangled in metaphysical residues. The oscillation between critique and implication reveals that post-metaphysical reflection is both a liberation and a constraint, always negotiating between freedom and structural limitation.

Implications for Humanism and Subjectivity. The consequences of this dialogue for humanism and subjectivity are profound: (1) Humanism as essence is no longer viable. Heidegger demonstrates that defining humans through fixed predicates—reason, spirit, freedom—obscures the more fundamental openness of existence and the temporal unfolding of *ek-sistence* (Heidegger, 1947/1998); (2) Post-metaphysical humanism is

unstable. Derrida reveals that attempts to retrieve a more originary understanding of Being are contaminated by the very metaphysical assumptions they aim to leave behind. Even "Being" itself is a sign, caught within chains of *différance* (Derrida, 1978); and (3) Subjectivity must be rethought as openness-without-ground. Humans are neither fixed essences nor purely transcendental subjects. Instead, subjectivity is constituted relationally, by traces, and through the play of *différance*, emphasizing responsibility, finitude, and interpretive engagement (Critchley, 1992; Caputo, 1987).

Thus, Heidegger and Derrida do not offer a definitive foundation for humanism. Instead, they open a path toward a critical humanism—one that embraces fragility, finitude, and undecidability as intrinsic features of human existence. This approach gives rise to what Critchley (1992) calls an ethics of finitude, where responsibility emerges not from universal certainties but from the recognition of inherent limitations and incompleteness

The Cruciality of Humanism. Despite destabilizing metaphysical humanism, Heidegger and Derrida do not render humanism obsolete. The question, "what is the human?" persists, signaling the continued relevance of humanist inquiry. Abandoning humanism risks nihilism, relativism, or depoliticized indifference. Instead, a renewed, critical humanism is necessary—one that acknowledges fragility while retaining ethical urgency.

Why Humanism Cannot Be Discarded. Humanism provides the conceptual horizon for questions of dignity, responsibility, and meaning. Without it, philosophy risks severing itself from ethical and political realities. Taylor (1989) notes that modern identity is inseparable from struggles for authenticity and recognition, which require a humanist vocabulary. Eagleton (2008) affirms that humanism remains the indispensable "language of value," underpinning justice, solidarity, and emancipation. Heidegger and Derrida's critiques, therefore, call for transforming humanism, not abandoning it—preventing regressions into essentialism while sustaining engagement with human concerns.

Alternative Visions of Humanism. The post-metaphysical landscape offers diverse attempts to reconceptualize humanism: (1) For Levinas (1969), the human is defined by infinite responsibility to the Other. Ethics precedes ontology, and relationality, rather than essence, grounds dignity; (2) Habermas (1987) argues that norms of justice, recognition, and democracy presuppose intersubjective communication. Human beings' unique capacity for dialogue generates shared lifeworlds, sustaining ethical and political humanism; (3) Rorty (1989) rejects metaphysical foundations but retains a moral orientation. Humanism persists through practices that reduce cruelty and promote solidarity rather than through philosophical essence; and (4) Thinkers like Spivak (1999) and Nussbaum (2011) situate humanism within struggles for justice, inclusion, and global recognition. These approaches expand humanism by addressing structural inequalities and historical exclusions.

These alternative humanisms demonstrate that humanism survives through ethical engagement and reinterpretation, rather than metaphysical certainty. Humanism becomes plural, contingent, and historically responsive, illustrating the richness of post-metaphysical thought

Dialectical Tension Between Critique and Affirmation. The interplay between Heidegger and Derrida reveals a persistent dialectical tension: Heidegger destabilizes traditional metaphysical humanism by exposing its reduction of the human to abstract categories such as reason or morality, while Derrida interrogates the very possibility of establishing a secure post-metaphysical foundation. Together, their engagement illuminates a fundamental oscillation in the project of humanism: it must be deconstructed to prevent dogmatism and essentialist closure, yet preserved to sustain ethical, existential, and political significance.

This dynamic tension constitutes the conceptual core of post-metaphysical humanism. It underscores a critical insight: critique alone risks dissolving the ethical and political horizon of humanism, reducing it to nihilism or relativism. Conversely, affirmation alone, without critical awareness, risks reproducing the metaphysical certainties that Heidegger sought to overcome. Derrida's notion of *différance* exemplifies this balance, revealing that the act of sustaining humanism must navigate between the trace of absence and the possibility of responsibility (Derrida, 1978; Caputo, 1987).

In practical terms, this oscillation shapes subjectivity, ethics, and interpretive responsibility. The human condition is neither a fixed essence nor a metaphysical abstraction; it is a locus of continuous negotiation between freedom and finitude, presence and absence, affirmation and critique. As Malpas (2016) notes, post-metaphysical thought must acknowledge this ambivalence, recognizing that every attempt to ground humanism encounters its limits, yet is ethically necessary to preserve engagement with lived experience and social reality.

Toward a Critical and Unfinished Humanism. From this dialectical engagement emerges a critical, unfinished humanism, a conception of the human that is dynamic, relational, and ethically oriented. It is defined by several interrelated features: (1) Humanism is not a fixed doctrine but a living orientation, capable of responding to the plurality of human experiences and historical contexts. It thrives precisely because it is open to reinterpretation and critical interrogation; (2) Human existence is finite, historically and culturally situated, and cannot be captured by universalizing abstractions. This recognition grounds humanism in the concrete reality of lived experience; (3) Responsibility, relationality, and attention to the Other constitute the ethical core of humanism. Post-metaphysical humanism does not seek transcendental grounding but insists on ethical accountability to others and to society; and (4) Continuous negotiation between critique and affirmation: Humanism is sustained through an ongoing dialogue between deconstruction and reaffirmation, between exposing conceptual limits and maintaining an ethical horizon.

This humanism is deliberately unfinished and contestable, reflecting the impossibility of establishing a permanent foundation while insisting on the ethical imperative to engage with the world. Its vitality lies in keeping the question of the human open, resisting both dogmatic closure and nihilistic dissolution. Far from presenting a final doctrine, it functions as an orientation or horizon—a continuous negotiation that preserves the relevance of humanism without succumbing to essentialist assumptions. Critchley (1992) and Malpas (2016) emphasize that such an approach sustains philosophy's accountability to ethical responsibility, historical change, and interpretive plurality, ensuring that humanism remains an active, reflective, and socially responsive project rather than a fixed metaphysical claim.

In sum, critical and unfinished humanism exemplifies a philosophy that is simultaneously skeptical and affirmative: skeptical of essentialist certainties, yet affirmative of ethical, relational, and interpretive engagement. It embodies a horizon of responsibility in which humanism is perpetually interrogated, reconstructed, and ethically enacted.

Conclusion: Humanism Beyond Heidegger and Derrida

The confrontation between Heidegger and Derrida over humanism reveals philosophy at its most unsettling yet most necessary juncture: the insistence on continually asking what it means to be human when every metaphysical certainty has collapsed. Heidegger's critique of metaphysical humanism exposes the dangers inherent in defining the human as a rational substance or autonomous essence. Such definitions, by reducing existence

to abstract categories, obscure the concrete reality of *Dasein*—a being that is historically situated, finite, and responsive to the disclosure of Being itself. His notion of *ek-sistence* reframes human existence not as the possession of fixed predicates but as a standing-out into the truth of Being, emphasizing the dynamic and situational character of human life. Yet even this reorientation carries the risk of reintroducing new forms of abstraction, highlighting the difficulty of fully escaping metaphysical thought (Critchley, 1992; Kisiel, 2002).

Derrida extends and radicalizes Heidegger's critique by demonstrating that even attempts to ground a "new" humanism are entangled within the play of *différance*. Meaning, he shows, is never fully present but always deferred, circulating through chains of signs and traces that resist absolute grounding. The very concepts Heidegger employs—"Being," "clearing," or "*ek-sistence*"—participate in linguistic and metaphysical structures that Derrida calls into question. In this sense, the dialogue between Heidegger and Derrida uncovers a fundamental tension: one cannot overcome metaphysics without simultaneously relying on its language. The trace, the play of absence within presence, and the perpetual deferral of meaning reveal that humanism, even when critically rethought, cannot escape the shadows of metaphysical inheritance (Caputo, 1987; Malpas, 2016).

Yet this confrontation does not render humanism obsolete. On the contrary, the very persistence of the question—"what is the human?"—testifies to the irreducible centrality of humanism. Abandoning it outright risks nihilism, relativism, or depoliticized indifference. Heidegger and Derrida, while dismantling essentialist definitions, open the possibility for a critical and unfinished humanism, one that acknowledges fragility, openness, and plurality as intrinsic to the human condition. This humanism is dynamic, relational, and ethically responsive: it recognizes finitude, situationality, and the ethical demands that emerge from our interrelations with others.

Alternative rearticulations of humanism further illustrate this enduring necessity. Levinas's ethical humanism emphasizes infinite responsibility to the Other, shifting focus from essence to relational ethics (Levinas, 1969). Habermas's communicative humanism underscores intersubjective dialogue as foundational to justice, recognition, and democracy (Habermas, 1987). Rorty's pragmatic humanism retains ethical orientation and solidarity without metaphysical grounding (Rorty, 1989). Postcolonial and feminist humanisms, articulated by thinkers such as Spivak (1999) and Nussbaum (2011), insist on addressing structural inequalities

and global recognition, situating humanism within concrete historical and cultural struggles. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that humanism persists not as a fixed doctrine but as an ethically, politically, and socially responsive horizon.

The conceptual core of post-metaphysical humanism resides in the dialectical tension between critique and affirmation. Heidegger destabilizes metaphysical humanism, showing the limitations of defining human existence through universal predicates. Derrida deconstructs any attempt to secure a new foundation, revealing the impossibility of fully escaping metaphysical entanglements. Yet, this oscillation is precisely what sustains humanism: it must be deconstructed to avoid dogmatism while simultaneously preserved to maintain ethical, political, and relational significance. It is within this interplay of critique and affirmation that humanism acquires its vitality, remaining accountable to the lived experiences of finitude, responsibility, and historical contingency.

In the contemporary world—characterized by technological transformation, ecological crisis, persistent social injustice, and the ethical dilemmas posed by artificial intelligence—the urgency of critical and unfinished humanism becomes even more pronounced. Philosophy cannot retreat into abstraction, nor can it reproduce outdated metaphysical frameworks. Instead, it must sustain the fragile yet indispensable question of the human, ensuring that thought remains attentive to ethical responsibility, historical change, interpretive plurality, and the openness that defines human existence. The challenge, therefore, is not to provide a final definition of humanism but to maintain it as an ongoing inquiry, a continuous negotiation between critique and affirmation, deconstruction and responsibility, grounded in both reflective thought and lived reality (Critchley, 1992; Malpas, 2016).

In this sense, the confrontation between Heidegger and Derrida, enriched by alternative humanisms, is not a conclusion but an opening—a methodological and ethical orientation that insists upon keeping the question of the human alive. Critical and unfinished humanism, then, does not offer closure but accountability: it affirms that human existence cannot be reduced to essence, yet neither can it be abandoned without sacrificing the ethical, political, and relational frameworks through which dignity, justice, and solidarity are realized. Philosophy's role is to nurture this openness, to hold humanism in tension, and to ensure that the question of the human remains ever-present, dynamically responsive, and ethically imperative.

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Natural Law, Metaphysics, and the Creator: Natural law as the laws of physics[1]

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Trying to summarize the view of the world given by the secularist appropriation of science now common in Western culture, Simon Blackburn describes things this way:

> "the cosmos is some fifteen billion years old, almost unimaginably huge, and governed by natural laws that will compel its extinction in some billions more years, although long before that the Earth and the solar system will have been destroyed by the heat death of the sun. Human beings occupy an infinitesimally small fraction of space and time, on the edge of one galaxy among a hundred thousand million or so galaxies. We evolved only because of a number of cosmic accidents . . . Nature shows us no particular favors: we get parasites and diseases and we die, and we are not all that nice to each other. True, we are moderately clever, but our efforts to use our intelligence . . . quite often backfire . . .That, more or less, is the scientific picture of the world." [2]

I will call a view such as this 'the secularist scientific picture' (SSP, for short), to distinguish it from a mere summary of contemporary scientific data. It remains a widely held picture of the world, even though, as I will show in what follows, research in various areas is making inroads against some parts of this view.

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[2] Simon Blackburn, "An Unbeautiful Mind," *New Republic*, 5 and 12 (Aug. 2002), p.29.

On SSP, as I will understand it for purposes of this paper, the natural laws Blackburn refers to are typically taken to be the laws of physics, and all other laws are supposed to be reducible to the natural laws of physics. All *things* in the world are thought to be reducible to the fundamental units of matter postulated by physics and governed by the natural laws of physics.

One important presupposition of SSP is a metaphysical rather than a scientific principle, namely, that constitution is identity. For anything made of parts, that thing is identical to the parts that are its constituents. There is nothing to a whole other than the sum of its parts. And, of course, the same holds for each of the parts. Each part is also nothing more than the sum of *its* parts, and so on down to the most fundamental level. Ultimately, everything is identical to the most fundamental parts that constitute it. On SSP, these are the elementary particles governed by the natural laws of physics.

The metaphysics incorporating the principle that constitution is identity is one version of reductionism. As Robin Findlay Hendry puts it, "the reductionist slogan is that *x* is reducible to *y* just in case *x* is 'nothing but' its reduction base, *y*."[3] Applied to theories rather than things, reductionism holds that all the sciences reduce to physics, and all laws are reducible to the laws of physics, together with bridge laws connecting theories in the higher-level sciences to theories in physics.

The appeal of reductionism was greatly enhanced by scientific developments in the 20th century, especially in molecular biology and genetics. Describing the growth in adherence to reductionism in consequence of these scientific developments, Cynthia and Graham MacDonald say,

> "The use of chemical theory in all these developments [in biology was] … crucial, suggesting that biology was reducible to chemistry and thereby to physics, given that the reducibility of chemistry to physics was thought to have been demonstrated by the physical explanation of chemical bonding. The major trend in all of this scientific work was to explain processes at the macro-level by discovering more of the detail of microprocesses. Reductionism looked to be an eminently suitable research strategy."[4]

[3] Robin Findlay Hendry, "Emergence vs. Reduction in Chemistry", in *Emergence in Mind,* ed. Cynthia MacDonald and Graham MacDonald, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.209.

[4] *Emergence in Mind,* ed. Cynthia MacDonald and Graham MacDonald, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.3.

Reductionism is often thought to rest on another metaphysical claim as well, namely, the claim that there is causal closure at the level of physics. On this metaphysical view, apart from quantum indeterminacy, there is a complete causal story to be told about everything that happens; and that complete causal story takes place at the level of the elementary particles described by physics. As Cynthia and Graham MacDonald explain this claim,

> "[on reductionism] the difficulty of downward causation was avoided, since reduction would place all such causation at the level of the physical. The problem of the causal powers of the higher-level properties was solved: the reductionist's picture would endorse their causal efficacy, but would do so at a cost, robbing them of any causal autonomy. For, according to the reductionist, any higher-level property that has causal powers has them because it is, really, a physical property. Physics is fundamental, where 'fundamental' means that the physical is causally, ontologically, and explanatorily all-encompassing."[5]

On the view of natural laws in SSP, then, any causality found at the macro-level is just a function of the causality at the micro-level of physics. Because there is causal closure at the lowest level, the causal interactions among the fundamental particles of a thing are not open to interference by anything which is not itself at the most fundamental level and governed by the natural laws operating on that level. And everything that happens at any higher level, from the chemical to the psychological, happens as it does just because of the causal interactions among the fundamental physical particles involved.

So, for example, any act of a human being is explained by events at the level of bodily organs and tissues; these are explained by events at the level of cells; these are explained by events at the level of molecules; these are explained by events at the level of atoms – and so on down to the lowest level, at which there are the causal interactions among the elementary particles postulated by physics and governed by the natural laws of physics. The causal interactions of things at this lowest level thus account for everything else that happens, including those things human beings do.

[5] MacDonald and MacDonald 2010, pp.2-3.

Or, to put the point of this example in a more provocative way, on SSP love and fidelity, creativity, the very achievements of science, and any other thing that makes human life admirable or desirable is itself just the result of the causal interactions of elementary particles in accordance with the natural laws of physics. *Every* human act is determined by the causal interaction of elementary particles governed by these natural laws; and even the belief that SSP is correct is so determined. SSP has so strong a hold on some contemporary philosophers that they see no alternative to holding that all mental states are causally determined by the physical states of the brain, which are in turn causally determined by causal interactions at the lowest level.

To philosophers in the grip of SSP, libertarian free will can seem impossible. Since neural states are part of a causal chain that is determined by causal interactions at the level of the microphysical and there is causal closure at that lowest level, not only states of the will but in fact all mental states, considered as mental, seem causally inert. Cynthia and Graham MacDonald summarize this position this way:

> "The physicalist is thought to be committed to the 'basic' or fundamental character of the physical, and an expression of this is contained in the assumption that the physical domain is causally closed: any event that has a cause has a complete (sufficient) physical cause. The thought that a mental event (or a mental property) could cause an effect without relying on, or working through, physical events (or properties) was rightly deemed inimical to physicalism. … [I]f the higher-level property's causal power is constituted by the contribution from the lower-level-realizing properties, then it is difficult to see how its causal power could fail to be exhausted by that contribution – it seems that it will contribute nothing of its own to the effects it is said to cause."[6]

It is not surprising, then, that, as regards freedom of the will, philosophers who accept something like SSP tend also to accept compatibilism, the theory that the will of a human person can be both free and also causally determined. Compatibilism appears to be a sort of corollary to the scientific picture that embraces reductionism and causal closure at the

[6] MacDonald and MacDonald 2010, p.8, p.12.

microphysical level. If all macrophenomena are reducible to microstructural phenomena and if there is a complete causal story to be told at the micro-level, then whatever control or freedom we have as macroscopic agents has to be not only compatible with but in fact just is a function of the complete causal story at the micro-level.

For many people, me included, the implications of SSP seem highly counter-intuitive. Can the laws of all the other sciences really be reduced to the laws of physics? Is everything really completely determined by causal interactions at the microphysical level? Could it really be the case that the mental states of a person are causally inert as far as his own actions are concerned? Could an act of will really be both free and yet also causally determined?

Natural law in the thought of Thomas Aquinas

It is instructive to reflect on SSP by contrasting it with the very different view of the world held by the medieval philosopher Aquinas. Aquinas talks of natural law, too; but, as is well-known, the notion of natural law in the thought of Aquinas is nothing like the notion of natural law in SSP.[7] With respect to the notion of the natural law in Aquinas's thought, human persons and human agency are not rendered marginal or even invisible, as they seem to be in SSP. They are at the center of the discussion.

Aquinas's notion of natural law has been the subject of extensive discussion,[8] and different characterizations of it have been given. Sometimes natural law is described as if, for Aquinas, it were a matter of innate and incorruptible knowledge of moral truths.[9] Sometimes it is characterized more as the set of moral principles itself, or the set of some especially fundamental sort of moral truths.[10] And sometimes it is categorized as a matter of metaphysics, as something that grounds morality.[11] Aquinas's

[7] For more discussion of Aquinas's notion of natural law and its place within Aquinas's metaethics and normative ethics, see the chapter on goodness in my *Aquinas*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

[8] For one recent and sophisticated treatment of the topic, see Mark Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality,* Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[9] Ralph McInerny explains it this way: "natural law is reason's natural grasp of certain common principles which should direct our acts." Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas on Human Action. A Theory of Practice,* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p.110.

[10] McInerny himself says, "natural law is a dictate of reason"; and a little later he remarks that there is a way in which "natural law is a claim that there are moral absolutes". Ralph McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica. The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas,* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, revised edition 1997), p.46 and 47.

[11] For example, in a discussion of the relation of rights and law, John Finnis says, "if I have a natural -- as we would say, human -- right I have it by virtue of natural law". John Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.135.

characterization of the natural law is complicated enough to provide some justification for all these different descriptions.

When Aquinas explains his notion of natural law, he says that the *natural* law is a participation on the part of a human person in the *eternal* law in the mind of God.[12] And, when he explains the *eternal* law, he says that it is the ordering of all created things as that ordering is determined in the mind and will of the Creator.[13] For a created person to participate in the eternal law of God, then, is for that person to have a mind and will which reflect their origin in the Creator: the natural law in created human persons is an analogue of the eternal law in the Creator.

The ordering of creation in the eternal law includes all the organization of the created world; but it is the moral ordering in the eternal law that is at the heart of the natural law. A human person's intellect has enough of the light of reason to be able to discern what is good and what is evil, and his will has some natural inclination to follow reason's light.[14] The natural law in a created person is therefore a participation in the Creator in two ways, first by way of knowledge about good and evil in the intellect and secondly by way of an inward principle in the will that moves to action in accordance with the deliverances of the intellect.[15]

So, for example, Aquinas says,

> "all acts of virtue pertain to the natural law… for everything to which a human being is inclined in accordance with his nature pertains to the natural law. Now everything is naturally inclined to an operation appropriate to it in accordance with its form… And so since the rational soul is the proper form of a human being, there is in every human being a natural inclination to act in accordance with reason. But this is to act in accordance with virtue."[16]

And he goes on to explain,

> "if we are talking about virtuous acts in themselves, that is, insofar as they are considered in their proper species, then in this way not all virtuous acts belong to the natural law. For many things are done virtuously to which nature at first does not incline; rather human beings come to find them by the investigation of reason, as useful for living well."[17]

In fact, Aquinas maintains that the eternal law as it is in the mind of the Creator can be made known to created persons not only by the light of reason[18] but also by revelation. Just as human beings are made in the image of God, so the free agency of created persons is an image of the free agency of the Creator. God can exercise his free agency by choosing to share his mind with his creatures; and so God can reveal to human beings parts of the eternal law that might not be available to them by the natural light of reason alone. Human persons therefore have access to the natural law both because of the light of reason and also because of the Creator's willingness to reveal some part of the eternal law to them.[19]

Aquinas describes law in general as an ordinance of reason for the common good which is made by the person who has the care of the community and which is promulgated. A question therefore arises for Aquinas whether natural law is also promulgated. In reply, he says that the natural law is promulgated just in virtue of the Creator's instilling it into a created person's intellect as a matter of natural knowledge.[20] In the will, however, what the Creator instills is not a habit of knowledge but rather an innate inclination for the good, as perceived by the intellect. Even so, the will is master of itself and free. Contrary to the compatibilist account of free will typically taken to be implied by SSP, for Aquinas the will is free in the strong sense that nothing, not even the intellect, acts on the will with efficient causation.[21]

Although the general precepts derived from the divinely implanted habit of knowledge in the intellect cannot be completely wiped out even in evil people, secondary precepts derived from these general precepts can be blotted out; and even the application of the most general precepts to

[12] *ST* IaIIae.91.2.
[13] *ST* IaIIae.91.1.
[14] *ST* IaIIae.91.2.
[15] See, for example, *ST* IaIIae.93.6. There Aquinas remarks that both ways are diminished in the wicked because their knowledge of the good and their inclination to it are imperfect.
[16] *ST* IaIIae.94.3.
[17] *ST* IaIIae.94.3.
[18] See, for example, *ST* IaIIae.19.4 ad 3. There Aquinas remarks that a created person can know and will in a general way what God wills because a created person can know that God wills what is good. And so, Aquinas says, "whoever wills something under some description *(ratio)* of the good has a will conformed to the divine will as far as the description of what is willed [is concerned]."
[19] *ST* IaIIae.19.4 ad 3
[20] See, for example, *ST* IaIIae.90.4 ad 1. But the natural knowledge in question consists in very general moral precepts, the precepts of the natural law, such as that the good is to be done and the bad is to be avoided (*ST* IaIIae.94.2).
[21] I have argued the case for this claim in the chapter on freedom in my *Aquinas*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

particular actions can be hindered by the effects of moral evil on a person's intellect.[22]

Aquinas makes an analogous point as regards the natural inclination to act in accordance with the good. He argues that even the natural inclination to the good can be undermined by moral evil. In the wicked, not only is the natural knowledge of the good corrupted by the passions and morally evil habits, but also

> "the natural inclination to virtue is corrupted by habits of vice."[23]

So one way to understand Aquinas's account of natural law is as a gift of the Creator to the human persons he has created. It consists in a pair of habits, one in the will and one in the intellect, which is given to human beings either by means of the innate light of reason or through the Creator's revelation of his own mind to his creatures. Although, apart from revelation, these gifts are implanted innately, they are so far in the control of the creature that a person's exercise of his free will in evil acts can corrupt them. Nothing about God's rendering the natural law innate in human persons takes away from them their free agency.

Just as many people find the implications of SSP counter-intuitive, so, for many people, the implications of Aquinas's account of natural law, grounded as it is in his metaphysics and theology, seem counter-intuitive too. Can everything in the world really be traced back to an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good Creator? Could it really be the case that a human person has the causal powers of intellect and will which reflect the eternal law in the mind of the Creator? Or, to put the question in a less theological way, could the action of something at the macro-level, such as a human being, exercise causality, from the top down, as it were, without being itself determined at the micro-level? Could it really be, for example, that human beings have libertarian free will?

Double vision

Any attempt to hold in one view the very different notions of natural law in SSP and in the outlook of Aquinas can induce vertigo. How is one to understand the differences in worldview between the two, and how could

[22] *ST* IaIIae.94.6.
[23] *ST* IaIIae.93.6.

one even begin to adjudicate their competing claims, or the competing accusations of being counter-intuitive?

It will be profitable to begin by considering their highly various foundational metaphysics.

As has often been remarked, one notable difference between the notion of natural law in SSP and the Thomistic notion of natural law is that, for Aquinas but not for SSP, natural law is the law of a law-giver, whose mind is the source of the law and whose relation to and care for other persons lead him to promulgate the law. On the view of natural law in SSP, the whole notion of law is only metaphorical or analogous. A natural law of physics understood as SSP sees it is a generalization describing the nature of the world at the microphysical level. It is not prescriptive; it is not promulgated; and it is not the result of an act of intellect and will on the part of a lawgiver.

This dissimilarity is correlated with a much greater difference as regards the ultimate foundation of reality. On SSP, the ultimate foundation of reality consists in those elementary particles described by the ultimately correct version of contemporary physics and their causal interactions governed by the natural laws of that physics. All the sciences are reducible to physics. And everything that there is is reducible to the elementary particles composing it. Persons are no exception to this claim. Persons too are reducible to the elementary particles that constitute them. At the ultimate foundation of all reality, therefore, is only the non-personal.

What is challenging for SSP therefore is the construction of the personal out of the impersonal. The mental states of persons, their free agency, their relations with each other all have to be understood somehow as built out of the physically determined interaction of the non-personal.

On Aquinas's view, things are in a sense exactly the other way around. That is because for Aquinas the ultimate foundation of reality is God the Creator, who exists in the three persons of the Trinity. of course, on the doctrine of the Trinity, the word 'person' is used in a technical sense. But, even on that technical sense, each person of the Trinity has mind and will. And so it is also true that each member of the Trinity counts as personal in our ordinary sense of being characterized by mind and will. Furthermore, on the doctrine of the Trinity, none of the persons of the Trinity is reducible to anything non-personal. That is, it is not the case that the persons of the Trinity are reducible to the Godhead or to being qua being or to anything else at all. On the Thomistic worldview, the ultimate foundation of reality is therefore precisely persons.

It would not be hard, I think, to trace the notable differences between SSP and Aquinas's worldview, as implied by their varying notions of

natural law, back to the great dissimilarity in their metaphysical views regarding the ultimate foundation of reality. But, given this radical difference between SSP and the Thomistic worldview as regards such foundational matters, is it so much as possible to reason about their competing claims?

of course, people who are very much in the grip of SSP might suppose that there is no point in trying to do so. For them, an evaluative comparison of the two differing pictures of the world is not worth the effort; the Thomistic view of the ultimate foundation of reality is no longer a live option. No doubt, those committed to a Thomistic worldview return the compliment as regards SSP, which is not a live option for them either.

Nonetheless, even in the face of this great divide, I want to see what can be done by way of an evaluative comparison; and I want to do so without addressing the question of the existence of God. Even if the recent history of philosophy did not make us pessimistic about the prospects for success when it comes to arguing over the existence of God, it is clear that it would not be profitable in a short paper to tackle a disagreement of this magnitude head-on. It is, however, possible to evaluate these two differing worldviews with regard to one somewhat smaller metaphysical issue. This is the issue of reductionism.

The brief sketch of Aquinas's views given above makes clear that Aquinas's metaphysics is incompatible with reductionism, unlike SSP, which is committed to it.[24] As I explained at the outset, reductionism has come under increasing attack in recent years, in science as well as in philosophy. In what follows, I will sketch a little of this attack and argue that the rejection of reductionism it supports is right. And then I will not argue but only suggest that such a rejection of reductionism is more at home in a worldview such as that of Aquinas, which sees the ultimate foundation of reality as personal.

Reductionism

Although reductionism comes in many forms, they share a common attitude. In virtue of supposing that all the sciences are reducible to physics, reductionism holds that ultimately all scientific explanation can be formulated solely in terms of the microstructural. That is one reason why reductionism is often taken to imply a commitment to causal closure at the microphysical level.[25] One way to understand reductionism, then, is that it

[24] For defense of the claim that Aquinas's metaphysics rejects reductionism, see Chapter 1 of my *Aquinas,* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

[25] For a helpful discussion of the general problem of reductionism relevant to the issues considered here, see Alan Garfinkel, "Reductionism", in *The Philosophy of Science*, ed. Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper, and J.D.Trout, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp.443-459. Garfinkel argues against reductionism by trying to show that reductive microexplanations are often not sufficient to explain the

ignores or discounts the importance of levels of organization or form, as Aquinas would put it, and the causal efficacy of things in virtue of their form.

This feature of reductionism also helps explain why it has come under special attack in philosophy of biology.[26] Biological function is frequently a feature of the way in which the microstructural components of a thing are organized, rather than of the intrinsic properties of the microcomponents themselves. Proteins, for example, tend to be biologically active only when folded in certain ways, so that their function depends on their three-dimensional structure. But this is a feature of the organization of the protein molecule as a whole and cannot be reduced to properties of the elementary particles that make up the atoms of the molecule. In fact, for large proteins, even an omniscient knowledge of the properties of the elementary particles of the atoms that comprise the protein may not be enough to predict the structure of the folded protein,[27] because the activity of enzymes is required to catalyze the folding of the components of the molecule in order for the protein to have its biologically active role.[28]

In his magisterial attack on reductionism from the perspective of philosophy of biology, John Dupré takes the examples in his arguments

macrophenomena they are intended to explain and reduce. He says, "A macrostate, a higher level state of the organization of a thing, or a state of the social relations between one thing and another can have a particular realization which, in some sense, "is" that state in this case. But the explanation of the higher order state will not proceed via the microexplanation of the microstate which it happens to "be". Instead, the explanation will seek its own level..." (p.449). Aquinas would agree, and Aquinas's account of the relation of matter and form in material objects helps explain Garfinkel's point. A biological system has a form as well as material components, so that the system is not identical to the components alone; and some of the properties of the system are a consequence of the form of the system as a whole. Garfinkel himself recognizes the aptness of the historical distinction between matter and form for his argument against reductionism. He says, "the independence of levels of explanation ... can be found in Aristotle's remark that in explanation it is the form and not the matter that counts." (p.149). See also Philip Kitcher, "1953 and All That: A Tale of Two Sciences", in *The Philosophy of Science*, op.cit., pp.553-570. Particularly helpful and interesting on this subject is a recent book by John Dupre, *The Disorder of Things. Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Dupre argues that causal determinism falls with the fall of reductionism.

[26] . See, for example, Alan Garfinkel, "Reductionism", and Philip Kitcher, "1953 and All That: A Tale of Two Sciences" in *The Philosophy of Science*, ed. Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper, and J.D.Trout, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp.443-459 and pp.553-570.

[27] For a connection between reductionism and predictability, see Tim Crane, "Cosmic Hermeneutics vs.Emergence", in MacDonald and MacDonald 2010, p.28. Crane says, "Sometimes it is said that emergent properties are those properties of a thing whose instantiation cannot be predicted from knowledge of the thing's parts.... [P]roperly understood, the idea ofpredictability contains the key to emergence."

[28] . See, for example, Frederic M. Richards, "The Protein Folding Problem", *Scientific American* 264 (Jan. 1991) 54-63. According to Richards, for relatively small proteins folding is a function of the properties and causal potentialities among the constituents of the protein, but "some large proteins have recently been shown to need folding help from other proteins known as chaperonins." (p.54)

against reductionism from ecology and population genetics, rather than molecular biology.[29] He summarizes his rejection of reductionism this way:

> "[On reductionist views,] events at the macrolevel, except insofar as they are understood as aggregates of events at the microlevel -- that is, as reducible to the microlevel at least in principle -- are causally inert.... [But] there are genuinely causal entities at many different levels of organization. And this is enough to show that causal completeness at one particular level [the microlevel] is wholly incredible."[30]

In philosophy of science, as Dupre's work illustrates, arguments against reductionism have frequently been directed against the possibility of reducing biology to physics; but analogous arguments can be used to undermine even the project of reducing chemistry to physics.

So, for example, consider the chirality or handedness of a molecule. The same constituents of a molecule can form different chiral analogues or enantiomers, depending on whether those very same constituents are in a left-handed or a right-handed form. Enantiomers of the same molecule can behave very differently. It turns out, for example, that different enantiomers of organophosphates, which are a mainstay of insecticides, have radically different toxicities for freshwater invertebrates. Testing for the ecological safety of one enantiomer alone can give very misleading results about the safety of an insecticide.[31] Each enantiomer has its own form or organization, and the causal power of the enantiomer is a function of the configuration of the whole.

In a detailed defense of the claim that chemistry cannot be reduced to physics, Hendry takes as one of his examples ethanol and methoxymethane. Hendry says,

[29] John Dupré, *The Disorder of Things. Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); see especially chapters 4-6.

[30] Dupré 1993, p.101.

[31] See, for example, "Enantioselectivity in environmental safety of current chiral insecticides", Weiping Liu, Jianying Gan,* Daniel Schlenk, and William A. Jury,

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> "These are distinct substances, though each contains carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen in the molar ratios 2:1:6. Clearly, the distinctness of ethanol and methoxymethane as chemical substances must lie in their different molecular structures, that is, the arrangement of atoms in space..." [32]

Discussing another of his examples, hydrogen chloride, Hendry says,

> "if the acidic behavior of hydrogen chloride is conferred by its asymmetry, and the asymmetry is not conferred by the molecule's physical basis according to physical laws, then ontological reduction fails because the acidity is a causal power which is not conferred by the physical interactions among its parts."[33]

And he goes on to remark,

> "the explanation of why molecules exhibit the lower symmetries they do would appear to be holistic, explaining the molecule's broken symmetry on the basis of its being a subsystem of a supersystem (molecule plus environment). This supersystem has the power to break the symmetry of the states of its subsystems without acquiring that power from its subsystems in any obvious way. That looks like downwards causation."[34]

In addition to work such as this in the philosophy of biology and chemistry, there have also been attacks on reductionism in recent work in philosophy of mind and metaphysics. This work has attempted to undermine the credibility of the claim that there is causal closure at the microphysical level. So, for example, Alexander Bird has argued that a substance is what it is in virtue of having the causal powers it does; it could not be the substance it is and have different causal powers. For philosophers such as Bird, causal

[32] Hendry 2010, p.214.

[33] Hendry 2010, p.215.

[34] Hendry 2010, pp.215-6.

powers are vested in substances, not in events;[35] all causation is substance causation, not event causation. The constellation of the properties of a substance is another way of picking out what Aquinas would see as the form of the substance. For Bird, as for Aquinas, the form of a substance, its constellation of properties, gives that substance certain specific capacities for acting. A substance can act to exercise the causal power it has in virtue of its form or configuration. For this reason, a causal chain can be initiated by any substance at any level of organization. Consequently, there can be top-down causation, as well as bottom-up causation.

One way to think about such recent anti-reductionist moves in philosophy is to see them as adopting a neo-Aristotelian metaphysics of a Thomistic sort. For Aquinas, a thing's configuration or organization, its form, is also among the constituents of things; and the function of a thing is consequent on its form. Dupre himself is aware of the Aristotelian character of his position. In making his case for the rejection of both reductionism and the causal closure view, he says that there is no reason for "attaching preeminent metaphysical… importance to what things are made of. … why should we emphasize matter so strongly to the exclusion of form?".[36]

On philosophical views such as these, a thing is not just the sum of its parts, reductionism fails, and there is not causal closure at the microphysical level. The component parts of a whole can sometimes explain *how* the whole does what it does. But *what* the whole does has to be explained as a function of the causal power had by the whole in virtue of the form or configuration of the whole.

An example drawn from neuroscience

Some contemporary philosophers of mind, such as E.J. Lowe, for example, suppose that similar lessons apply with regard to the mind and to mental states.[37] Like Bird and others, Lowe argues that genuine causal powers belong only to substances and that substances have the causal powers they do in virtue of the properties (or the form) of the whole. On his view, a mental act is an exercise of the causal power had by a human being in virtue of the complex organization had by human beings.

To see the sort of idea at issue here, consider a relatively well-studied capacity of the brain such as the capacity for face recognition. Suppose that

[35] There are differing ways of understanding this claim. For one interpretation which allows a role to events, taken in a certain way, see Timothy O'Connor and John Ross Churchill, "Is Non-reductive Physicalism Viable within a Causal Powers Metaphysic?", in MacDonald and MacDonald 2010, p.45.

[36] Dupre 1993, pp.92-93.

[37] Lowe's view differs from Dupre's, in that Lowe hopes to make his view consistent even with the acceptance of causal closure principles.

a man Max walks into a crowded room and immediately recognizes his daughter by face. The mental act of seeing and recognizing his daughter's face will feel instantaneous to Max. But in fact this one mental act is correlated with an enormous amount of neural activity. Light falling on the retina, transmitted by the optic nerve in two different streams of information, is processed by several areas in the visual cortex before being processed further in the temporal lobes, and so on, in a long story.

As we now know, if this processing were disrupted at any given point, either the mental act of seeing would fail entirely, or it would be produced in some way that would make it seriously defective as an act of face recognition. If the process were disrupted at the point found in blindsight patients, for example, then although Max would indeed have visual information about his daughter's face, Max would report that he could see nothing at all. Or if the process were disrupted at the point at which it is disturbed in visual agnosia, then Max would have consciously accessible to him a lot of visual information about the face of his daughter; but if we were to ask him whether he sees his daughter's face, he would say 'no', in virtue of his inability to recognize what he sees as her face. And if the limbic system were defective in a certain way, or if its connection to the visual system were somehow undermined, then Max would suffer from Capgras syndrome, in which vision is retained but without its usual emotional tone. If the normal visual processing were disrupted in Max because of the deficits of Capgras syndrome, then Max would report that he saw someone who looked exactly like his daughter in every respect; but he would deny strenuously that the person he saw actually *was* his daughter.

On the anti-reductionist views argued for by Bird, Lowe and others, we need to understand the causal power of face recognition through vision as an act of the causal power had by a human being. The causal power is not vested in any of the parts of the neural system alone. Rather, it emerges from the configuration of the person as a whole, and it can be exercised only by the person. In cases of blindsight, visual agnosia, or Capgras syndrome, there has been some disruption of parts of the great complex of neural processing such as that underlying the one sudden mental act of vision in which Max sees his daughter and recognizes her face. Without the smooth functioning of the system as a whole, there is not the one apparently instantaneous mental act of face recognition. For this reason, it seems right to say that, when at a particular moment of time Max suddenly sees and recognizes his daughter's face, he is exercising a causal power which is vested *in him*, at the level of organization of a human being as a whole.

It would not undermine this picture of Max if neuroscientific experiments demonstrated conclusively that there were neural events occurring in Max's visual cortex in advance of the moment of time at which Max reported seeing his daughter. On the contrary, on this view, this is the conclusion one would expect. Until the system is functioning as a whole, the causal power of the whole cannot be exercised. Nonetheless, it remains the case that the causal power of face recognition is vested in Max, and not in particular neural parts of Max.

The case of autism

In fact, recent discoveries in neuroscience and developmental psychology suggest that we should go even further in this direction. These discoveries suggest that in order to understand some cognitive capacities we need to consider a system that comes into existence only when two people are acting in concert. Research on some of the deficits of autism have helped to make this clear.

Autism in all its degrees is marked by a severe impairment in what some psychologists and philosophers call 'mindreading' or 'social cognition'. We are now beginning to understand that mind reading or social cognition is foundational to an infant's ability to learn a language or to develop cognitive abilities in other areas as well.

Since the discovery in the 1990s of a special kind of neurons (mirror neurons), there has been a growing consensus on the part of many neuroscientists and developmental psychologists that the cognitive capacities for mindreading are subserved by the brain's mirror neuron systems. So, for example, one group of researchers says that mirror neurons enable one person to know the mind of another

> "without any explicit reflective mediation. Conceptual reasoning is not necessary for this understanding. As human beings, of course, we are able to reason about others and to use this capacity to understand other people's minds at the conceptual, declarative level. … [but] the fundamental mechanism that allows us a direct experiential grasp of the mind of others is not conceptual reasoning but direct simulation of the observed events through the mirror mechanism."[38]

[38] Gallese et al. 2004, p.396.

Possession of a non-defective mirror neuron system is not enough to prevent autism, however. For an infant to develop normally, the mirror neuron system has be employed within the active functioning of a larger system composed of at least two persons, an infant and a primary caregiver. This system requires shared attention or joint attention between a child and its caregiver.

It is not easy to give an analysis of joint attention. One developmental psychologist, Peter Hobson, says, "Joint attention… occurs when an individual … is psychologically engaged with someone else's … psychological engagement with the world".[39] Elsewhere he says,

> "for an instance of infant social engagement to count as joint attention, it is not enough that the infant attends to some object or event that just happens to be at the focus of someone else's attention. Critically, the infant needs to be aware of the object or event as the focus of the other person's attention -- and in addition, for full 'jointness', he or she should share awareness of the sharing of the focus, something that often entails sharing an attitude towards the thing or event in question."[40]

This sort of joint attention is often called 'triadic joint attention' because the attention shared between child and caretaker is directed towards some third thing. This kind of shared attention is often manifested in young children by gaze alternation on the child's part between the caretaker and a third object.[41] Autistic children typically show serious deficits in triadic shared attention.

But researchers are now inclined to think that a there is a more foundational deficit in autism which has to do with what they call 'dyadic shared attention'. On the view of these researchers, it is hard to overemphasize the importance of dyadic attention-sharing for normal human development. As one scientist says, "this is the most direct sharing of attention and the most powerful experience of others' attention that one can have."[42]

[39] R.Peter Hobson, "What Puts the Jointness into Joint Attention?" in JA, p.188.
[40] Hobson 2005, p.185.
[41] Franco 2005, p.129.
[42] Reddy 2005, p.85.

Many lines of recent research are converging to suggest that autism is most fundamentally an impairment in the capacity for dyadic joint attention.[43] Trying to summarize his own understanding of the role that the lack of shared attention plays in the development of autism, Hobson says that autism arise "because of a disruption in the system of child-in-relation-to-others".[44] By way of explanation, he says,

> "my experience [as a researcher] of autism has convinced me that such a system [of child-in-relation-to-others] not only exists, but also takes charge of the intellectual growth of the infant. Central to mental development is a psychological system that is greater and more powerful than the sum of its parts. The parts are the caregiver and her infant; the system is what happens when they act and feel in concert. The combined operation of infant-in-relation-to-caregiver is a motive force in development, and it achieves wonderful things. When it does not exist, and the motive force is lacking, the whole of mental development is terribly compromised. At the extreme, autism results."[45]

On Hobson's views, then, autism cannot be explained apart from a complex system involving two human beings, an infant and its primary caregiver. Any attempt to explain this system in terms of reductionism and causal closure at the microphysical level would lose the understanding of the jointness in attention critical for normal infant development. On the contrary, as the phrase indicates, joint or shared attention cannot be understood even just by reference to one human being taken as a whole, to say nothing of the lowest-level components of a human being. Rather, it has to be understood in terms of a system comprising two human beings acting in concert. This system enables the shared attention which in turn enables the connection necessary for typical infant development.

[43] One group of researchers in this area says, "Early research findings focusing on the joint attention impairment [of autistic children] initially emphasized a specific impairment in triadic interactions rather than dyadic interactions. ... Recently, however, the tide has begun to turn. Several studies show group differences in dyadic interaction between children with autism and those with other developmental delays.... The research shows that certain measures of dyadic interaction predict diagnosis of autism several years later." Leekam 2005, p.207.

[44] Peter Hobson, *The Cradle of Thought. Exploring the Origins of Thinking,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.183.

[45] Hobson 2004, p.183.

The moral of the story

SSP supposes that all macrophenomena are reducible to micro-level phenomena and that there is a complete causal story to be told at the micro-level. The converging lines of research in the sciences and several areas of philosophy, however, make a good case that reductionism is to be rejected. And if reductionism is rejected, then it is not true that the laws of higher-level sciences reduce to physics. It is not the case that everything is determined by the causal interactions at the level of the microphysical. And it is therefore also not the case that things at the macro-level are causally inert. Rather, causal power is associated with things at any level of organization in consequence of the configuration or form of those things.

For SSP, whatever control or freedom human beings have as agents at the macro-level has to be not only compatible with but in fact dependent on the complete causal story at the micro-level. But if reductionism is rejected, as the new work in philosophy and the sciences suggests it should be, then there can be causal efficacy at various levels of organization, including at the level of human agents. A person's intellect and will can exercise real causal efficacy, from the top down, in the way Aquinas supposes they do.

Dupre puts the point this way:

> "there is no reason why changes at one level may not be explained in terms of causal processes at a higher, that is, more complex, level. In the case of human action, the physical changes involved in and resulting from a particular action may perfectly well be explained in terms of the capacity of the agent to perform an action of that kind." [46]

He can take this position, because having rejected reductionism he is free to hold that

> "humans have all kinds of causal capacities that nothing else in our world has.... There is no good reason for projecting these uniquely human capacities in a reductionist style onto inanimate bits of matter. Nor is there anything ultimately

[46] Dupre 1993, pp.216-217.

mysterious about particular causal capacities' being exhibited uniquely by certain very complex entities...." [47].

On this view, there is nothing mysterious about assigning such causal power to human beings. On the contrary, compatibilism looks like an unnecessary concession, an attempt to preserve what we commonly believe about our control over our actions in the face of a mistaken commitment to reductionism. With reductionism rejected in favor of a metaphysics that allows causal power vested in substances at any level, the causality exercised in libertarian free will is one more case of a kind of causation that even molecules can manifest.

In a metaphysical system of this anti-reductionist sort, the place of persons is not imperiled. In fact, even a human pair bonded in love, as a mother and child are, can be a sort of whole, with causal power vested in their bondedness.

Conclusion

If reductionism is rejected, as the work I have canvassed argues it should be, then with respect to this one issue the Thomistic worldview is more veridical and more worthy of acceptance than SSP is. By itself, of course, this conclusion certainly does not decide the issue as regards the central disagreement between SSP and the Thomistic view. It cannot adjudicate the issue regarding the ultimate foundation of reality. And so, as far as the evidence canvassed in this paper is concerned, the central disagreement between SSP and the Thomistic view remains an open issue. Clearly, it is possible to reject reductionism and accept atheism.

For that matter, it is possible to reject atheism and accept reductionism. As I have described it, SSP is a secular view that combines contemporary scientific theories with certain metaphysical claims. But it is possible to have an analogue to SSP in which a reductionist scientific view of the world is combined with a commitment to religious belief, even religious belief of an orthodox Christian sort. That is, SSP can have a theistic analogue, which includes most of the scientific and metaphysical worldview of SSP but marries it to belief in an immaterial Creator.

So, for example, consider Peter van Inwagen's explanation of God's providence. Trying to explain God's actions in the created world, Van Inwagen says that God acts by issuing decrees about elementary particles and their causal powers: "[God's] action consists in His ... issuing a decree of

[47] Dupre 1993, p.216.

the form 'Let *that* [particle] now exist and have such-and-such causal powers.'"[48]. For van Inwagen, apart from miracles,[49] God's actions in the world consist just in creating and sustaining elementary particles and their causal powers. This, Van Inwagen says, "is the entire extent of God's causal relations with the created world".[50]

For most people conversant with religious discourse in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, this religious analogue to SSP will seem a very odd mix. Could it really be possible, as Van Inwagen is apparently claiming, that decrees concerning the existence and causal powers of particles exhaust the rich panoply of divine interaction with human persons that Judaism and Christianity have traditionally ascribed to God? Most orthodox interpreters of Judaism and Christianity have assumed that God also creates and sustains persons and that he engages in personal relationships with them. On their view, God not only issues decrees (about particles or anything else). God also cajoles, threatens, instructs, illumines, demands, comforts, and asks questions. At the heart of all these activities is the direct interaction between persons of the mind-reading sort.

Even if, *per improbabile*, all this and more could be reduced to decrees about particles, the reduction would have lost the personal connection that in both Judaism and Christianity has been the most important element in the relations between God and human persons. For van Inwagen, God interacts directly with particles and thereby, indirectly, with things composed of particles, including human beings. Most religious believers have supposed that God interacted directly, at least sometimes, with human persons.

For these reasons, reductionism does not fit well with theism. I am not claiming that it is incompatible with theism. The point is only that there is something awkward or forced or otherwise implausible about reductionism in a theistic worldview. It isn't natural there, one might say. On a worldview that takes persons to be the ultimate foundation of reality, reductionism to the level of elementary particles is not really at home.

By the same token, it seems to me that the rejection of reductionism is harder to square with a worldview in which the ultimate foundation of reality is impersonal. Here too the issue is not the compatibility of the two positions. I am not claiming that the rejection of reductionism is incompatible with a worldview on which the impersonal is foundational. The

[48] Van Inwagen 1995, p.49.

[49] On Van Inwagen's view, miracles are a matter of God's supplying "a few particles with causal powers different from their normal powers." Peter van Inwagen, *God, Knowledge, and Mystery. Essays in Philosophical Theology,* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 45.

[50] Van Inwagen 1995, p.44.

point is rather this. The rejection of reductionism leaves room for the place ordinary intuition accords persons in the world. But, to me at any rate, the metaphysics that gives persons this place is more readily intelligible on a worldview that sees persons as the ultimate foundation of reality. Figuring out how to make it cohere with the picture Blackburn paints, even if we subtract reductionism from that picture, strikes me as harder to do.

Philosophy, Human Poverty, and Democracy

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Abstract. This paper seeks to link philosophy and the social sciences. To be able to do so, I will first explain the distinction between the methods of philosophy and that of the social sciences. To put flesh into my argument, I will examine the problem of poverty using the lens of Thomas Pogge, who provides a definition, description, and explanation of poverty. To understand poverty as a moral as well as a political issue, I will elucidate some concepts introduced by Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and Iris Marion Young, illustrating in the process how their thoughts actually intersect. Finally, I will discuss the meaning of democracy and how, in order to understand it, one must appeal, beyond theory, to everyday experiences. The social sciences, in this regard, can be linked to moral philosophy. The social sciences should not be construed as separate or purely distinct from the philosophical questions that have shaped human knowledge.

Keywords: Philosophical Method, Social Sciences, Problem of Poverty, Democracy

Philosophy and the Social Sciences

I will start by saying that there is a lot to learn from the social sciences when it comes to doing research. But I was trained in philosophy so you know my bias. Nevertheless, I will first take up the complaint of some researchers as to the limit, which instead I would call rigidity, of the methodologies of the social sciences. In philosophy, we have been trained to reflect on the critical questions, to analyze relationships and distinctions, ergo to use logical analysis, as we try to decipher the puzzles of the mysteries of life, religion, or the human mind. In short, we have been taught to think alone about the questions that matter to humans for centuries. There is a dichotomy, in this way, between metaphysics and the empirical sciences. Nevertheless, the science of man has to be studied in a normative way. According to Rezaei & Saghazadeh (2021, 11), “while technical norms are based on empirical evidence, social norms are held to be binding on the man of science.”

In view of the above, we realize that education is meant “to develop the power of creativity, not a culture of standardization” (Rezaei, 2021). This serves as a warning, for instance, to those who wish to reduce education to

metrics and numbers, even if the method for reaching such values is scientific. The problem with some policy makers is that they simply assume that all standards are always good because they represent an ideal system. Yet, it matters to ask who designs, makes decisions, and promulgates these standards. It is important to know that many discoveries happened not because scientists or philosophers followed the rules of convention. Rather, many of these things came into light because of the defiance to authority of human genius and the fact that brave human beings have challenged traditional authority. We can mention Descartes, who was the first to write in French, hence defying the standard Latin text for philosophy during his time. Galileo Galilei, for example, was ex-communicated for supporting the theory of Copernicus. Indeed, in the new normal, one can choose to do the practical ends of learning or resist and be a critical thinker (Maboloc, 2020).

Philosophy, of course, also deals with moral problems and issues, which it sees as its exclusive domain. Yet, that is not exactly right. For instance, risk analysis may be crucial before one comes up with a decision (Timmons 2002). But the task at hand is to make moral theory work in a society filled with doubts and uncertainties. Social scientists sometimes criticize philosophers for being naive of the facts and the actual historical realities that people have to confront on a daily basis. However, science and philosophy need not be antagonistic towards each other. There's no need to demean one discipline in order to favor another. For instance, philosophy accuses sociology of limiting things into the function of social organizations and the roles that accompany societal structures. Yet, one cannot take away the fact that social structures help determine and sometimes influence what becomes of human life. There's no freedom that is detached from the actions of people and the circumstances that are produced out of these actions.

Human society is not just a question of values, identity, or purpose. We need to identify the unfair practices, put an end to unjust systems, and fight oppressive policies and mechanisms that undermine the lives of people. We have to resist the control and domination of powerful interests and elitist systems that hide under the guise of social charity and concern for the poor Hence, when it comes to the problem of poverty, we need to analyze actual situations and events that cause the pathological nature or character of modern society. One can mention, for instance, the dynamics of power. As such, it can be argued that human poverty is difficult to eliminate because it is ultimately about powerlessness. To solve poverty, in this sense, will require addressing oppression in society.

Our philosophical methods are based on experience and how we see the world. Seeing the world requires some sort of a binocular, so that our

bespectacled view means that everything depends on our way of seeing or as Thomas Kuhn (1962) puts it, a paradigm. A paradigm is a framework or the way theory sees reality. If there is no anomaly in a theory, why change it? In this sense, paradigms are like ways of solving a puzzle (Kuhn, 1962). If the textbook analysis of a problem is no longer helpful, then we move on to look for other means to understand the world. Indeed, the complaint really comes from the distinction between qualitative or interpretive and quantitative research. Nevertheless, there's a way to transcend the limits where researchers in science and philosophy can work together. It is called transdisciplinarity. Rezaei & Saghazadeh (2021, 26) write:

> The transdisciplinary work is based on a shared framework, shared goals, and shared skills by which participants are allowed to release and expand their roles. By such a process, we can expect that the integration, amalgamation, and assimilation of disciplines, incorporation, unification, and harmony of disciplines, views, and approaches do probably occur.

An explanation may be necessary. I first encountered the interpretive while reading the thesis of the late Dr. Ryan Urbano, the first Filipino scholar to write on Thomas Pogge. He did so as a thesis at Linkoping University in Sweden under the eminent Goran Collste, who espoused a type of global justice that is rectificatory. The interpretive method is based on your experiential assessment of things or events. The problem with it is that the analysis can be tainted with the subjective perception of the investigator. It is in this regard that philosophy researchers begin to complain because they will be told by reviewers to clarify or at least identify an empirical or quantitative method. Indeed, that is understandable. Data is important. Philosophers are used to idiosyncrasies. The way we see things must be based on a whole or some structure, which should be integral. Yet, in order to understand poverty, for instance, you need to look at numbers and not just speculate on the reasons why people are poor. It is in this sense that philosophy can learn or work with the social sciences.

Theories must be applied (Timmons 2002). The application means that philosophical theories can finally be useful when it comes to real world issues and concerns. There is an inherent difficulty, however, because most philosophy researchers are not trained on data analysis. There is no field work, so to speak. Yet, the combination between philosophical reflection and social science, or in the case of Amartya Sen (1999), economics and moral

theory, is critical in order to arrive at new insights, for instance, in the definition of human development. And this is where philosophy can come into the picture. One can think, for instance, of the way Martha Nussbaum (2006) expanded Sen's work by redirecting the latter's attention to Aristotle's concept of human flourishing. Nussbaum, in this regard, gave Sen's work on human development a deeper philosophical meaning hy merging it with ethical questions.

Indeed, while the interpretive method lacks the rigor of empirical data such as indices and other forms of statistics, it reminds us that there are certain aspects of human reality that one cannot capture by means of computing. This is not to say that social science cannot explain the complexity of theory. Rather, it has something to do with the nature of reality. Philosophical reflection is introspective, which means that certain aspects of truth or reality can only be revealed by personal experiences or reflection. One is reminded, for instance, of Gabriel Marcel's *The Mystery of Being*. Our experiences do not only provide the observations needed to make factual judgments. They reveal who we are as human beings. Marcel (1950, 7) describes the philosophical method: "I have written somewhere that metaphysical unease is like the bodily state of a man in a fever who will not lie still but keeps shifting around in his bed looking for the right position." The uneasiness comes in various forms, but for now, this has something to do with what makes one's work meaningful.

For instance, in understanding the Holocaust or Nazi atrocity, one must seriously consider the narratives of the victims, their feelings and sentiments, or the way they see reality, for instance, Laurence Rees's historical narrative, *Auschwitz* or Elie Wiesel's personal narrative, *Night*. Both are powerful in terms of revealing the evils of the Holocaust. Such narratives cannot be reduced to numbers. Nevertheless, this does not mean one method is better than the other. Rather, what has emerged, in order to bridge science to society, is transdisciplinary research. While working on a research goal, it does not mean that two disciplines must work exclusively. Rather, one can learn from the other, so that transdisciplinarity is not about two or multiple disciplines crisscrossing, but rather, it is the pursuit of the same truth with two minds working together to solve a clearly defined problem.

I believe that if there is a problem that today's philosophers should pay attention to, it is understanding human poverty. We now know that it is not just about economic deprivation, or the lack of income (Sen, 1981). It has something to do with freedom, or the lack of ability to achieve those things that one has reason to value (Sen, 1999). By implication, Sen is saying that poverty is not purely an economic issue, but an issue about the lack of a

person's power to be. However, poverty appears to have a broad spectrum. It involves several issues and concerns. For instance, one can mention poverty traps, or the obstacles that impede economic growth (Sachs 2005), unfair international money or trade policies and the corruption that accompanies them (Stiglitz, 2003), or the effect of colonialism (Collste, 2015).

The Problem of Poverty

I will now examine the problem of poverty using the perspective of Thomas Pogge. The German philosopher, who was mentored by John Rawls, provides a philosophical as well as the ethical view on poverty. By definition, Pogge (2023, 2786) says that poverty "has something to do with the lack of access to goods and resources." Pogge (2023) also explains that poverty, by definition, deals with the scale or extent of the deprivation. Poverty is multidimensional, which means that it is related to various aspects of life - social, political, and economic (Pogge 2023). Its relative definition, Pogge (2023) says, can mean "the lack of endowments, including the lack of recognition or social acceptance." The problem of poverty, in this way, encompasses a wide range of problems.

Pogge (2023) reiterates that poverty, by description, has been labeled by economists as simply the "lack of income". While this description does not give a full picture of poverty, it cannot be disregarded, because people who are beneath the poverty trap obviously suffer from a lack of means to improve their standard of living. However, it cannot stop there. The description brings us to its multidimensional character, which relates to well-being achievement, access to health care, and education (See Sen, 1999). As such, poverty can be seen from a "quantitative" point of view and the "qualitative" point of view. The first is about notions of modern progress and how poor people do not enjoy the comforts economic progress brings while the latter is more substantive and deals with the quality of human life (Sen & Nussbaum, 1993).

But what is the explanation for poverty? Pogge (2023) says that the most obvious is that poor people are born to a world in which they experience scarcity. But there's a deeper reason that leads one to think of "global inequalities, wrong structural designs and policies, the lack of opportunities, including tax burdens on poor people (Pogge 2023, 2788) One must also mention the historical roots of poverty, including the case of Mindanao, which can be connected to the presence of unjust structures and bad governance (Maboloc, 2025). In fact, the poverty of people is something that can be seen from patterns of bad political decisions, including wrong

policies. Deprivation, in this way, can be a result of policy failures (Sen, 1981).

Finally, assessing poverty is often grounded on welfarism. Such consequentialist view, Pogge (2023) says, relates to the concept of effective altruism and social justice. The idea of effective altruism is about the issue pertaining to how much of donor money actually reaches the poor beneficiaries. Charities, for instance, need to pay the salaries of employees. They also entail huge operational costs that need to be charged to the funding they receive from donors. The truth is that the same charities cannot also channel funding to governments because of corruption. In contrast, the idea of social justice is related to the design of the basic structure and the concept of just or fair redistribution, including conditional cash transfers and stimulus packages meant to create employment and income.

Put more succinctly, Sen (1999) argues that the focus should be on human capability instead of income because the achievement of certain functionings relies on the person's capability. If we relate this to the efforts of the Philippine Government to remove General Education (GE) courses in the curriculum so that college students can focus on internship in order to become productive citizens, it shows that our leaders actually have a myopic view of the world. In assessing human well-being, it is human freedom and not one's technical skills that tell us how a human person is able to live well. Gasper (2004) has elaborated the various aspects of human development, including the economic as well as culture, the reality of violence and cruel choices that accompany the advent of modern progress. Yet, in essence, when talking about human development, the point is that people desire freedom and that freedom helps them define the purpose of their lives. What that purpose is the government has an important role to play. As such, bad governance results to bad outcomes in the lives of people. Without good institutions, ordinary citizens will have no means to attain decent and dignified lives.

This brings us to the most important question. How do we eradicate poverty? Let me cite one concrete example. In the 2025 General Appropriations Act of the Philippines, around 26 billion pesos was allocated for AKAP (Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program), a form of financial assistance to poor individuals (Tumbado, 3 January 2025). The release of the said budget was timed with the midterm elections in 2025, so that the intent of the allocation was obvious. The same was meant to influence the decision making of the electorate. The beneficiaries were targeted, but mostly local officials at the barangay level were the ones who made the listing that was submitted to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)

and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). While these agencies denied that the release of the dole-out money was tainted with political motives, what people tend to believe say otherwise because the politicians who used the system to influence voters have posted pictures of the distribution online. One politician even said that "mura ta ug Ginoo tungod sa ayuda" (we are acting like God by giving money to the people).

The above is an example of systemic corruption. This is where Rawls (1999) missed the point when he insisted that the redistribution of resources should not go beyond borders. The problem is that some governments are corrupt. As a result, people continue to suffer. Pogge (2006) extends the concept of justice to a global difference principle. The problem of poverty requires a causal analysis. Pogge suggested in his book *Realizing Rawls* the idea of a global redistributive principle. Knowing that the same needs to be applied beyond theory, he recently proposed a model called the Health Impact Fund, an alternative framework that pays researchers in the field of medicine who discovers a successful drug (Pogge, 2023). Instead of selling the drug via pharmaceutical corporations, the fund will pay for the innovative idea of researchers in exchange for patent rights, which when used by big firms, means expensive drugs and burdens to the public. Such an alternative framework is meant to promote innovation without the influence of profit-making companies.

Poverty and Democracy

In understanding the meaning of democracy, we need to know the everyday lives of the people. In this country, democracy, and for this reason, development, is a myth. There cannot be any real development if people do not enjoy their democratic rights, and democracy cannot be achieved if people are not free. What is the root of this lack of freedom? The short answer is poverty, whereas the long one is structural injustice. The future of this country is decided by a few people, many of whom finished in elite schools in Katipunan, Quezon City, well connected and the scions of the rich and powerful in government and the private sector, controlling and dictating what is to become of the country's future. We cannot win the war against poverty since the same structures that caused the historical injustices that people suffer from still persist.

I have argued on several instances that we continue to be controlled by an elitist system that is financed by oligarchs who control the daily lives of Filipinos. The Manila-centric type of governance has limited progress in Mindanao and concentrated the wealth of the country in the capital (Malaya, 2017). The social, political, and economic structures in the country continue

to be dominated by an age-old patronage system of politics and an elitist type of democracy that has excluded Mindanao. In this sense, the problem of poverty is intertwined with the political. Hence, understanding poverty cannot just be about whether one is above or below the poverty line because equality of income is not tantamount to equality of human well-being (Sen, 1999). Thus, one must examine poverty beyond the analysis of the economics of welfare. One needs to unveil the reality of unjust structures and systems that impede human development and deprive people of their happiness.

For example, Mindanao continues to be discriminated and its people labeled as violent – an orthodoxy that ignores its vast socio-economic potential. The Indigenous Peoples (IP) of Mindanao suffer from abuse and exploitation, marginalized by powerful political interests and extractive Indus owned by both big corporations and politicians (Gaspar, 2021). What is happening in Mindanao hence is rooted in the ill effects of colonial rule that displaced its local inhabitants (Maboloc, 2025). The elite type of politics in the country only benefited only the rich and powerful who continue to dominate the everyday life of Filipinos. While doing my research on peace and poverty in Muslim Mindanao, I have personally seen and observed how the common man struggles in life. In my book *The Politics of Peace and the Mindanao Problem*, I wrote:

> ...what we have is a weak state that cannot provide to its people the opportunities for a well-lived life. The state cannot protect nor promote the rights of marginalized Filipinos, nor guarantee the enjoyment of their basic social and economic entitlements, because of systemic and structural problems. For many decades, only those who are in positions of power have benefited from whatever economic progress the country must have achieved. The political elites and dynastic politics have stifled economic growth and development. Mindanao, in fact, has been excluded from the national agenda for a long time. The oligarchic nature of the Philippine economy means that resources are only in the hands of a few affluent families (Maboloc 2025, 98).

Fr. Vitaliano Gorospe, S.J., in 1974, also said the same thing. He asked: "How many Filipinos are really free to take into their own hands their own development and destiny and achieve by their own efforts the full human life to which they aspire?" (Gorospe 1974, 427). Such question above is crucial in the issue of social justice. The ideal of social justice, Gorospe

(1974, 438), argues, "includes the relationship of the person to the material world and to the socio-economic structures of society." Iris Marion Young would express the same idea 20 years later in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, although I doubt if Young ever read Fr. Gorospe's *The Filipino Search for Meaning*. The point here is that there is a universal or a common ground for every human thought and that is human experience. Herein, one finds the juxtaposition between philosophy and the social sciences, between human knowledge and everyday experience.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have enunciated the possible relationship between philosophical research and the social sciences. The juxtaposition must consider the issue of methodology. However, the differences between the two disciplines should not prevent the ability of any research to arrive at sound conclusions, although there are limits as well as advantages to both approaches. Yet, the two can be merged. It is about bridging the social sciences to philosophy, in the same way as we connect ethics, politics, and human society. This can be achieved by means of transdisciplinarity, in which there is a recognition of a common goal, two minds working something out in order to understand human reality. To demonstrate this, I used the problem of poverty and its relation to democracy. I cited Pogge and Nussbaum, among others, as two approaches in which philosophy and ethics are applied to solve moral problems, i.e. economic inequality and social injustice.

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Revisiting Enlightenment: *Lantugi* as Rational Discourse

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Abstract. This paper revisits the Enlightenment as conceptualized by Immanuel Kant, Michel Foucault, and key figures in the Frankfurt School. Kant construes the Enlightenment as an emergence from self-incurred immaturity, i.e., dependence on authority. Foucault reframes Kant's question as an interrogation of the present. I then trace Adorno and Horkheimer's diagnosis that the Enlightenment risks becoming an instrumentalized myth and present Habermas's corrective of communicative rationality as a procedural way to recover the emancipatory promise. Reflecting on my fieldwork with an apologetics community in Bohol, I argue that *lantugi* captures Habermas' vision for undistorted discourse and thus offers a local, practice-based, non-Eurocentric pathway for re-anchoring the public use of reason, conditional on light institutional supports (rotating moderation, archival practice, civility norms). *Lantugi* is one of the possibilities for rebuilding deliberative capacities from below.

Keywords: Kant, Foucault, Enlightenment, rational discourse, domination

Introduction

The Enlightenment, in everyday parlance or at least in how I previously uncritically used the term, refers to the 18th-century intellectual movement that urged people to rely on reason, evidence, and public debate instead of settled authority, and promised what is called public reason, i.e., arguments offered in common forums and assessed by anyone, not just by experts, priests, or rulers.[1] As formulated by Immanuel Kant, the Enlightenment is both individualist and public. McCarthy (2002) astutely juxtaposed Kant's (1784 [1991]) apparently individualist exhortation "Have courage to use your own understanding!" at the start of his essay "What is Enlightenment?" with the remainder of his essay being about the use of

[1] Note however that Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 2) define Enlightenment broadly as "the advance of thought," and by doing so they place the term beyond the narrow confines of eighteenth-century politics to include any intellectual movement that promotes the development of reason or thinking.

reason in public. Hence, reason, as articulated by Kant, is intrinsically dialogical.

Foucault (1984), however, locates Kant's contribution elsewhere. Instead of focusing on the content of the "Enlightenment," Foucault returns to Kant's essay to argue that the real contribution of Kant is in the essay's attempt at the problematization of the present. Here, Kant "poses a new problem" (Foucault 1984, 33), the problem of finding what philosophy's role is today. That attention to the present is therefore what brings me to a paradox identified by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 2) that "the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity," indicating that they critique enlightenment as a form of domination and mass deception, rather than emancipation.[2]

Enlightenment seeks to free humanity from fear by replacing myth with reason, yet that same replacement produces a totalizing instrumentality, technicalization of knowledge, the world is reduced to what is calculable and useful. Demythologization returns in new, more powerful guises that reinforce domination rather than dissolve it (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 2–6).

Yet the perversion of reason in some cases need not be taken as the definitive downfall of the Enlightenment. Jürgen Habermas however argues that the Enlightenment is always an unfinished project. He departs from the pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer as he is "concerned with shoring up the Enlightenment program of reason aimed at achieving human liberation and the amelioration of oppressive social conditions" (Chriss 2018, 93). He is hopeful of a possibility of a rational communicative community guided by communicative reason. There is reason to believe that in the Philippines, the Enlightenment is "still burning bright" (Zialcita 2020). I locate a potential site of rational discourse in a practice in Central Philippines called *lantugi.*

Lantugi, a recurring practice of reasoned public discourse in Central Philippines, both instantiates and transforms the core Enlightenment demand for the public use of reason.[3] Inherent to the practice is the confrontation between two communities with opposing stances. Admittedly, there are cases when *lantugi* progresses more like a vigorous debate, which still boxes it in the confines of instrumental rationality. Yet not so in all cases.

[2] Weber similarly warns of rationalization's "iron cage," where bureaucratic calculation traps action in rule-bound procedures but articulating that further is for another paper.

[3] In this paper, I explore the Enlightenment as an alternative lens in interpreting *Lantugi.* I developed an agonist hermeneutic of *Lantugi* in my master's thesis. See Pandan, Mark Steven A. *Lantugi towards the Development of Agonist Teaching Models in Social Studies.* MA thesis, Cebu Normal University, 2025.

Experience, field observations, and interviews coalesce in the finding that *lantugi* can serve as a site for change of worldviews, a site for learning from a person with the opposite worldview. I (first author) was a former member of a *lantugi* community in Bohol, a province in Central Philippines. Interviews with members of the community show how not only did *lantugi* become an avenue where they could defend their beliefs (apologetics), but it was also a site where their opponents' ideas shattered the certainty by which they held their presuppositions. Having become a site of the overcoming of an echo chamber, I argue that it has become a site for rational discourse.[4]

Kant and the Enlightenment

Kant provides the normative point of departure.[5] Immanuel Kant's essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784) begins with his famous definition: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another" (Kant 1784 [1991]). The key term here is "immaturity" (*Unmündigkeit*). It is not a natural deficiency but a condition maintained by habit and fear. Kant immediately clarifies that this immaturity is "self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another" (Kant 1784 [1991]). The problem is not ignorance as such, but timidity: the refusal to exercise one's own reason. Hence the essay's motto: "Sapere aude! [Dare to be wise!] Have courage to use your own understanding!" (Kant 1784 [1991]). The structure is deliberate: Kant places courage (*Mut*) before knowledge, because intellectual independence requires a break from dependency. Enlightenment is an act of will, not only an accumulation of facts.

Kant then identifies why immaturity persists. It is, he says, "so convenient to be immature!" (Kant 1784 [1991, 12]). Relying on books, advisers, and experts spares one the exertion of judgment. Kant does not condemn the *use* of expertise but the *abdication* of one's own judgment. Laziness and cowardice form the psychological ground for immaturity; "guardians" e.g. priests, teachers, etc. exploit it to keep others docile. Yet

[4] This parallels the argument by Ocon (2025, 33) that the Internet's "potential as a public sphere stems from its capacity to go beyond echo chambers."

[5] Although the Enlightenment is such a common concept to hear about, the works problematizing it has remained absent in social studies classes that I have observed. My first encounter with it being problematized was in a Coursera class under Dr. Michael S. Roth, where we were introduced to Kant's essay, "What is the Enlightenment?" It was around the same time that my seminary professor, Fr. Jose Conrado Estafia, PhD, used the same text for the History of Philosophy class at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary.

Kant insists the danger of independence is exaggerated by these guardians: “they would certainly learn to walk eventually after a few falls” (Kant 1784 [1991]). He writes,

> If I have a book to have understanding in place of me, a spiritual adviser to have a conscience for me, a doctor to judge my diet for me, and so on, I need not make any efforts at all. I need not think, so long as I can pay; others will soon enough take the tiresome job over for me (Kant 1784 [1991]).

The deeper critique emerges when he writes that “Dogmas and formulas, those mechanical instruments for rational use (or rather misuse) of his natural endowments, are the ball and chain of his permanent immaturity” (Kant 1784 [1991]). Dogma here is not simply religious; it is any rigid scheme that replaces living judgment with rote application. The enslaving effect is intellectual paralysis. Only “a few, by cultivating their own minds, have succeeded in freeing themselves” (Kant 1784 [1991]). Kant then pivots from the individual to society. Paradoxically, he thinks it is easier for a public than for an individual to become enlightened, “There is more chance of an entire public enlightening itself. This is indeed almost inevitable, if only the public concerned is left in freedom” (Kant 1784 [1991]).

Here lies the essay’s crucial distinction: freedom of discussion can generate collective progress, even if individuals remain timid. Guardians, once they free themselves, can set examples. Yet Kant warns against revolution as a substitute for enlightenment, “A revolution may well put an end to autocratic despotism and to rapacious or power-seeking oppression, but it will never produce a true reform in ways of thinking” (Kant 1784 [1991]).

Political upheaval does not guarantee intellectual maturity. New prejudices often replace the old, keeping the “great unthinking mass” under control. Thus, enlightenment must be gradual, dependent on freedom of reasoned speech, not sudden coercive change.

Kant introduces his most famous distinction between “public” and “private” uses of reason. The contrast is counterintuitive: “The public use of man’s reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted” (Kant 1784 [1991]). By “public use” Kant means when a scholar writes for the reading world; by “private use,” he means when one fulfills an official role within an institution. Thus, a soldier must obey orders on parade, a citizen must pay taxes, and a priest must teach church doctrine,

yet in each case, the same individual retains freedom to critique these practices as a scholar (Kant 1784 [1991]). Civil order requires obedience in action, but intellectual progress requires liberty in writing and argument. Freedom of thought, when publicly exercised, can exist even under regimes of obedience, provided rulers do not fear open discussion. His examples, officers, taxpayers, and clergymen, illustrate how obedience and critical reflection can coexist without contradiction.

Kant addresses whether ecclesiastical authorities may bind themselves by oath to fixed doctrines. His answer is uncompromising: “A contract of this kind, concluded with a view to preventing all further enlightenment of mankind forever, is absolutely null and void, even if it is ratified by the supreme power” (Kant 1784 [1991]). The reason is that no generation can prevent future generations from using reason freely. To do so would be to “violate and trample underfoot the sacred rights of mankind” (Kant 1784 [1991]). Here Kant universalizes enlightenment as a human vocation. It is not merely an individual option but the destiny of the species. Any attempt to arrest intellectual progress is therefore not only impractical but illegitimate.

Kant then situates his essay in its historical context, praising Frederick the Great of Prussia, “a prince who does not regard it as beneath him to say that he considers it his duty, in religious matters, not to prescribe anything to his people, but to allow them complete freedom… is himself enlightened” (Kant 1784 [1991]). This is no mere flattery. For Kant, rulers secure enlightenment not by imposing doctrines but by removing obstacles to free discussion. His paradoxical formula crystallizes this: “Argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey!” (Kant 1784 [1991]). Intellectual freedom can flourish even where civil obedience remains strict, and that this intellectual freedom eventually reshapes civil institutions. For Kant, the “age of enlightenment” is less about having arrived at maturity than about clearing the path for its gradual realization.

Kant closes by identifying religion as “the focal point of enlightenment,” since religious immaturity is the most degrading (Kant 1784 [1991]). Yet he generalizes the principle: rulers should not fear criticism, for “there is no danger even to his legislation if he allows his subjects to make public use of their own reason” (Kant 1784 [1991]). Intellectual progress, once set in motion, enlarges human dignity and compels governments to treat citizens not as machines but as persons.

Thus, Kant’s exposition of enlightenment is both modest and radical. Modest, because it emphasizes gradual cultural change through freedom of discussion, not violent revolution. Radical, because it insists that every

person has the duty, and not merely the right, to think for themselves. To deny this freedom is to deny humanity itself. The essay's power lies in its enduring motto: *Sapere aude!* The courage to think is the first act of liberation, and the true beginning of enlightenment.

Enlightenment as Interrogation of the Present in Foucault

Foucault shifts to Kant's conceptual innovation about the present.[6] He insists that, "in itself and within the Christian tradition," Kant's little text "poses a new problem" (Foucault 1984, 33). This is the problem of the present. In his work *Kant on Enlightenment and revolution,* Foucault (1986, 88) wrote that

> ...the question which seems to me to appear for the first time in this text by Kant is the question of the present, of the contemporary moment. What is happening today? What is happening now? And what is this 'now' which we all inhabit, and which defines the moment in which I am writing?

The essay is "certainly not the first text in the history of philosophy" to address history (Foucault 1986, 88). He says this to avoid the overclaim that Kant invented historical thinking; instead, Kant reorients the way philosophy poses historical questions (Foucault 1986, 88).[7] Kant's question is thus not teleological in the old sense; instead of asking what history will culminate in, he asks, practically and locally, "What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?" (Foucault 1984, 33). The philosopher's task, then, becomes one of discrimination: to single out that feature of contemporaneity that bears philosophical meaning (Foucault 1986, 89). Put plainly, Kant asks: what in our now has philosophical significance? and how should that significance be read? (Foucault 1986, 89).

[6] The author acknowledges the feedback from Dr. Joseph Martin Jose and Dr. Joseph Paña.

[7] Philosophers had long reflected on "today," but Foucault compresses these older modes into three schematic types so that Kant's difference stands out. One older mode treats the present as a distinct historical era or as the aftermath of a dramatic event, the sort of moment Plato's *Statesman* characterizes as a revolution of the world (Foucault 1984, 33). A second reads the present as a set of heraldic signs that foretell what will come, an interpretive, almost prophetic hermeneutics exemplified by Augustine (Foucault 1984, 33). A third treats today as a threshold to a new realized condition, as in Vico's image of "a complete humanity... spread abroad through all nations," where the present is valued as the dawning of a grand accomplishment (Foucault 1984, 33). Descartes does refer to his "own personal itinerary" as a historical situation for decision-making, but he does not ask "What then is the precise character of this present to which I belong?" (Foucault 1986, 89). In other words, Descartes uses his historical situation as a motive for methodological choice, whereas Kant asks after the character of the situation itself (Foucault 1986, 89).

Kant, Foucault emphasizes, does not locate *Aufklärung* as simply an era, an augury, or an imminent fulfillment; rather, he defines it negatively as an *Ausgang*, an "exit," a "way out" (Foucault 1984, 33). Foucault teases out the key features of Kant's way out. Kant's "exit" releases human beings from a condition he calls "immaturity," where immaturity names a willful dependence, "a certain state of our will that makes us accept someone else's authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for" (Foucault 1984, 34).[8] Enlightenment, for Kant, therefore alters the relation among will, authority, and the use of reason: it is a reconfiguration of who is permitted to exercise judgment (Foucault 1984, 34).

Foucault notes "antinomies," or logical tensions, that appear when Kant treats the Enlightenment as both "process" and "phenomenon" (Norris 1994, 168).[9] By "antinomies," Norris points to clashes between claims that cannot be fully reconciled within Kant's framework, especially when Kant ties critique to universal *a priori* faculties while also anchoring critique in concrete historical conditions (Norris 1994, 168). Norris contrasts this cautious reading with Foucault's earlier, more skeptical account in *The Order of Things*, where Kant's project looked merely like a transient discursive illusion slated to vanish under the pressure of changing "discourse" (Norris 1994, 168). Here, however, Foucault treats the Kant text with more respect, calling it a work "located in a sense at the crossroads of critical reflection and reflection on history" (Norris 1994, 168). Foucault now acknowledges Kant's originality in linking philosophical critique to historical self-awareness.

Foucault notes that Kant distinguishes between the private and public uses of reason. The private use occurs when one is "a cog in a machine," confined to a role where reason must serve particular institutional ends; there, the free use of reason is inappropriate. But when one speaks as a member of "reasonable humanity," reasoning must be free and public (Foucault 1984, 36–37). This inversion, a reason that is free in public yet

[8] Kant makes this concrete with three everyday examples: when "a book takes the place of our understanding," when "a spiritual director takes the place of our conscience," when "a doctor decides for us what our diet is to be," each of which shows how authority can replace personal judgment (Foucault 1984, 34).

[9] Kant's account is ambiguous in the important sense that he treats the Enlightenment both as a collective phenomenon and as an individual duty, "a phenomenon, an ongoing process," and simultaneously "a task and an obligation," summed up in the motto *Aude sapere*, "dare to know" (Foucault 1984, 34–35). Because Kant locates responsibility for immaturity in human beings themselves, escape must be enacted by individuals; Enlightenment is both the historical process they participate in and the moral courage they must exercise personally (Foucault 1984, 35). This is why Kant's use of *Menschheit* (mankind) is vexed: it may mean the entire human race experiencing political and social transformation, or it may mean a change in what constitutes human nature itself; Kant leaves the scope somewhat ambiguous, and Foucault highlights this complexity (Foucault 1984, 35).

submissive in private, poses a political problem: how can the public use of reason be secured in a society that also depends on obedience? Kant's practical answer, offered to Frederick II, is a conditional bargain: permit the public, free exercise of autonomous reason, and that very openness will best guarantee obedience, *provided* the political principle enforced is itself aligned with universal reason, a proposal Foucault dubs a "contract of rational despotism with free reason" (Foucault 1984, 37).

By making "today" both a difference in history and the motive for a distinct philosophical task, Kant, in Foucault's reading, sketches the attitude that will define modernity: an intertwining of personal responsibility, public critique, and political arrangements that allow reason to be exercised in broad daylight (Foucault 1984, 38). Foucault then argues that "modernity" is better understood not merely as a historical period but as an *attitude*, a distinctive way of relating to the present that combines feeling, thought, and practice (Foucault 1984, 39).[10] He brings us to "envisage modernity rather as an attitude than as a period of history" (Foucault 1984, 39). By "attitude," he clarifies, he means "a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people" and, finally, "a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving" that both signals belonging and presents itself as a task (Foucault 1984, 39). Modernity is not only a time we happen to live in. It is an ethical and practical stance people adopt toward the now.

Foucault links this idea of attitude to the Greek notion of *ethos*, suggesting modernity functions like a character or disposition (Foucault 1984, 39). Because it is an attitude, modernity will always meet resistance; Foucault therefore urges us to look for how "the attitude of modernity, ever since its formation, has found itself struggling with attitudes of 'countermodernity'" (Foucault 1984, 39). That contrast, modernity as a chosen posture versus countermodern reactions, shifts the historian's task as tracing recurring orientations toward the present.

Foucault chooses Baudelaire as an emblematic example, since Baudelaire's consciousness of modernity was "one of the most acute in the nineteenth century" (Foucault 1984, 39–40). Baudelaire famously defines modernity as "the ephemeral, the fleeting, the contingent," and Foucault uses that definition to show what modernity feels like: an awareness of

[10] He notes that "modernity is often spoken of as an epoch, or at least as a set of features characteristic of an epoch" (Foucault 1984, 39). He means that people usually treat modernity as a slice on the historical calendar, something preceded by a premodern past and followed by a troubling "postmodernity" (Foucault 1984, 39). From that starting point he poses the question whether modernity should be read as the sequel to Enlightenment or as a rupture from eighteenth-century principles (Foucault 1984, 39).

time's discontinuity and a vertigo before the passing moment (Foucault 1984, 40). But Foucault emphasizes that for Baudelaire being modern is not merely recognizing transience; rather, it "lies in adopting a certain attitude with respect to this movement" (Foucault 1984, 40). That attitude aims to "recapture something eternal" that is not outside the present but "within it," meaning the modern person searches for an enduring significance *inside* the very instant that seems fleeting (Foucault 1984, 40). Thus, modernity differs from mere fashion; fashion merely follows the course of time, while modernity seeks to "heroize" the present by finding its deeper, sometimes tragic, meaning (Foucault 1984, 40).[11]

Foucault turns to painting to show how this attitude operates in art. He notes that Baudelaire mocks painters who, finding contemporary dress "excessively ugly," would paint only ancient togas, because that mistake misses modernity's task (Foucault 1984, 40). For Baudelaire, the modern painter is instead the one who can display the contemporary frock-coat as "the necessary costume of our time" and thereby reveal "the essential, permanent, obsessive relation that our age entertains with death" (Foucault 1984, 40). In other words, the modern artist does not reject current appearances; he renders them pregnant with enduring meaning, political, poetic, and social, so everyday clothing becomes a sign of deeper conditions (Foucault 1984, 40). Baudelaire even describes the public life of his era in funeral imagery, "an immense cortege of undertaker's mutes," to show how contemporary forms carry a communal significance that the modern artist must make visible (Foucault 1984, 40).

Foucault then teases out what that attitude looks like in practice by contrasting the *flaneur*, the idle spectator, with the modern man who actively seeks modernity. The *flâneur* is the "spectator's posture": he strolls, observes, and accumulates impressions for his private store of memories (Foucault 1984, 41). Baudelaire's modern figure, by contrast, is described as moving "hurrying, searching," a solitary person with an "active imagination" who seeks something "loftier" than the mere transient pleasures of circumstance (Foucault 1984, 41). The modern seeker engages fashion and daily life in order to "extract" whatever kernel of poetry or significance they contain (Foucault 1984, 41). Constantin Guys is given as Baudelaire's exemplary modern artist: in appearance a collector of curiosities, Guys is really the last to linger "wherever there can be a glow of light, an echo of

[11] This gained salience for me when I taught the general elective course "Philippine Popular Culture" last year, as I instinctively knew the course's relevance would be passing if I focused on the fashionable instead of using the fashionable as sites for cultural critique (Ogdon, 2001).

poetry" and, crucially, he transfigures the world precisely when others are sleeping (Foucault 1984, 41).[12]

That transfiguration is not an escape from reality but a strenuous interplay between truth and freedom. Foucault quotes Baudelaire's effect: "natural" things become "more than natural," "beautiful" things become "more than beautiful," and objects acquire an "impulsive life like the soul of [their] creator" (Foucault 1984, 41–42). The modern artist intensifies reality; he respects what is there but imagines it otherwise and thus enlarges its meaning. For Foucault, this means the attitude of modernity joins "extreme attention to what is real" with a practice of liberty that both honors reality and violates it in the service of transformation (Foucault 1984, 42). Modernity, then, is not passive admiration of the fleeting; it is an active, creative appropriation of the present.

Foucault adds that modernity is also a way of relating to oneself. For Baudelaire, the modern person must practice an ascetic discipline, Baudelaire's *dandysme*, by which the self becomes an object of deliberate artistic production (Foucault 1984, 42). Dandyism is not mere vanity; it is an austere program in which "the body, his behavior, his feelings and passions, his very existence" become a crafted work of art (Foucault 1984, 42). Modernity does not "liberate man in his own being"; rather, it forces a self-production: the modern subject must invent himself rather than discover an inner, preexisting essence (Foucault 1984, 42).

Foucault stresses the social limits of this program: Baudelaire does not imagine that this ironic heroization of the present or the ascetic elaboration of the self will take place in ordinary society or in the body politic; rather, these practices can be produced only in a special sphere, art (Foucault 1984, 42). Modernity as an attitude combines acute awareness of the present, a deliberate aesthetic and ethical discipline toward the self, and an artistic transformation of everyday reality that together define a modern stance.

Foucault argues that the real legacy of the Enlightenment is not a fixed doctrine but a way of living and thinking, a habit of constantly questioning our own time and ourselves. Foucault wants to show that a certain kind of philosophical questioning, one that questions how we relate to the present, how we exist in history, and how we make ourselves into independent persons, comes out of the Enlightenment (Foucault 1984, 43). Second, he says the important link we have with the Enlightenment is not loyalty to its

[12] In this spirit, Zizek introduces Lacan through kernels in popular culture (Zizek, 1992).

doctrines but "the permanent reactivation of an attitude," that is, a steady habit of criticizing our own era. (Foucault 1984, 43).

Kant commits to a form of critique that both arises under specific historical conditions and at the same time claims to transcend those conditions by appealing to faculties "deduced a priori as a matter of timeless, self-evident truth" (Norris 1994, 168–169). Foucault's worry is that Kant's claim to timeless, subject-centered truths cannot be squared with the insight that truth-claims are historically situated; this is a residual anthropomorphism, a human-centered move that fails to accept the full force of the contingency it otherwise exposes (Norris 1994, 169). That is, Kant both historicizes and universalizes, and Foucault sees that tension as unresolved (Norris 1994, 169).

On Foucault's reading, Kant's own will to contest established power/knowledge relations is simultaneously produced by an unexamined drive to secure his own enlightened status (Norris 1994, 169). Kant challenges existing power-knowledge setups but still assumes a subject who can stand outside history to judge them. This is a move Foucault finds inconsistent (Norris 1994, 169). Norris concedes Foucault's practical point: any critique must proceed by terms shaped in part by the Enlightenment legacy itself, so Foucault urges we "proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment" (Norris 1994, 169). That phrase captures Foucault's methodological modesty: we critique while recognizing that our critical categories come from the tradition we critique (Norris 1994, 169).

From that stance Foucault insists the Enlightenment is only one among several discursive paradigms, shifting orders of language and representation that form Western reason's genealogy, and therefore enquiry should not aim to recover an "essential kernel of rationality" to be preserved, but instead should ask what now counts as "necessary" for constituting us as subjects and what no longer does (Norris 1994, 169). Inquiry becomes oriented to the "contemporary limits of the necessary," namely to the historical constraints that shape present self-understanding, rather than to some timeless core of reason (Norris 1994, 169).[13]

[13] Foucault reads Kant as still trapped in a humanism that pretends universal validity while relying on historically bound assumptions (Norris 1994, 169). Foucault warns against confusing Enlightenment with humanism. He says this confusion is common but mistaken because the two are not the same. (Foucault 1984, 44). Enlightenment is a set of historical events and changes, institutions, ways of knowing, technologies, that happened at a certain time and changed how people reflect on the present. (Foucault 1984, 44). Humanism, by contrast, is a loose theme that appears in many different forms across history. It changes meaning depending on time and politics. (Foucault 1984, 44–45). Humanism has had many faces: anti-religious versions, Christian versions, versions friendly to science, versions hostile to science, and even versions used to justify bad politics. (Foucault 1984, 45 cf. Jaszczolt, 2024).

Adorno and Horkheimer on the Enlightenment as Myth

If Kant framed Enlightenment as emancipation from immaturity, and Foucault reframed it as an interrogation of the present, Adorno and Horkheimer radicalize the inquiry by arguing that the Enlightenment is inseparable from domination. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they begin with the paradoxical formulation that "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, xvii). This is not a paradox for its own sake but an indictment of reason's fate: the very project meant to liberate humanity from fear ends by reproducing the same structures of compulsion and myth, only in rationalized form.

For them, the logic of enlightenment is a logic of control. The Enlightenment promise of autonomy masks new modes of subjugation, both external and internal, where freedom coincides with self-discipline in the service of systemic imperatives.

Reason itself, they argue, is torn between utopia and instrumentality. On the one hand, "Reason as the transcendental, supraindividual self contains the idea of a free coexistence in which human beings organize themselves to form the universal subject and resolve the conflict between pure and empirical reason in the conscious solidarity of the whole" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 65) This represents the idea of true universality: Utopia. Yet reason is also "is the organ of calculation, of planning," thus Enlightenment thus bears within itself both the promise of liberation and the tendency toward total instrumentalization (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 69).

In this process, myth is not eradicated but transformed. For the Enlightenment, "Thinking, where it is not merely a highly specialized piece of professional equipment in this or that branch of the division of labor, is suspect as an old-fashioned luxury: 'armchair thinking'" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 167). The result is not freedom but a new mythology of numbers, calculation, and efficiency, such that "for the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion; modern positivism consigns it to poetry." Their uncompromising judgment follows: "Enlightenment is totalitarian" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 3-5).

In contrast to Kant's optimism about the Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 7) argue that the "Enlightenment stands in the same

For this reason, Foucault says humanism is too changeable to be the main lens for study, and it should not be treated as the same thing as the Enlightenment (Foucault 1984, 45). Foucault's claim is that Kant's philosophy is pervaded by the error of mistaking culture-specific claims for a priori truths (Norris 1994, 169).

relationship to things as the dictator to human beings." The Enlightenment thus does not stand outside domination but exemplifies it. Knowledge, on this model, legitimates manipulation; one "knows" what one can manipulate (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 7). Hence, the scientist is said to know things "to the extent that he can make them," and the object's "in-itself" is transformed into a "for him," that is, into what it means as an instrument for the subject (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 7). The authors call this process a reduction of things to a single "substrate of domination," meaning that the variety of things is abstracted into raw material whose primary significance is usefulness in domination (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 7). Rationality, stripped of reflection on its own limits, becomes indistinguishable from the compulsion it sought to overcome. What Kant hoped would be emancipation, Adorno and Horkheimer diagnose as a new myth: a rationalized world that enslaves in the very act of promising freedom.

Rescuing Enlightenment with Rational Discourse in Habermas

Habermas (1982, 13) locates Horkheimer and Adorno's debt to a set of "dark writers of the bourgeoisie." Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Mandeville, and notes that Horkheimer himself was influenced by Schopenhauer, which shows a line of affinity reaching back into pessimistic and realist strands of modern political thought. He then stresses that these earlier ties to Marx's social theory are ruptured when the authors turn to what he calls the "really nihilistic dark writers," above all the Marquis de Sade and Nietzsche, and that it is to these figures that Horkheimer and Adorno turn in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in order "to conceptualize the self-destructive process of Enlightenment" (Habermas 1982, 13). Habermas explains that, because Horkheimer and Adorno had lost hope in the Enlightenment as emancipatory, they nevertheless continued the "paradoxical labor of analysis," a stance Habermas no longer shares and which he warns may be conflated with certain post-structural appropriations of Nietzsche (for example, Derrida and Foucault) unless the two attitudes are carefully distinguished (Habermas 1982, 13).

Turning to the book's formation and reception, Habermas calls *Dialectic of Enlightenment* "a strange book" because much of it derives from notes taken by Gretel Adorno of discussions between Horkheimer and Adorno in Santa Monica and because its unusual composition, a fifty-page essay plus extensive excursuses and appendices, obscures its internal structure (Habermas 1982, 14). He therefore proposes to explicate two central theses and then to address a contemporary problem: the subtle strategies for "radically enlightening the Enlightenment about itself," a

project that will require comparing Horkheimer and Adorno to Nietzsche and will, in Habermas's view, call into question the repeated reflexivity of the Enlightenment (Habermas 1982, 14).

In his first thesis, Habermas states that enlightened thinking was classically conceived as both antithetical to myth and as a force dismantling it; the Enlightenment opposes tradition by substituting "the non-coercive coercion of the better argument," and it opposes mythical powers by turning collective spells into individually acquired insight (Habermas 1982, 14). Challenging this clear opposition, Horkheimer and Adorno advance a thesis of "secret complicity": "Myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology," a claim Habermas reports as the guiding paradox announced in the work's introduction (Habermas 1982, 14). He says that the authors develop this paradox through an extended reading of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus's adventures mirror a "primal history of a subjectivity" that must wrench itself free from myth in order to gain identity (Habermas 1982, 14).

Habermas explains the logic of the *Odyssey* reading: the mythical world is not a homeland but "the labyrinth" one must escape from to become a subject (Habermas 1982, 15). Mythic narratives "call the individual back to his/her origins" by way of genealogical mediation, and rituals that promise reconciliation with origins also enlarge the distance they are meant to heal; rituals both bridge guilt and widen the gap from origin (Habermas 1982, 15). Thus, the primal myth, as Habermas reads Horkheimer and Adorno, contains a double motion, the dread of being uprooted and the relief of getting away, and for that reason, the powers sanctified and outwitted in ritual already instantiate an early form of Enlightenment (Habermas 1982, 15).[14]

But Habermas then follows Horkheimer and Adorno into the price exacted by that escape: even as the ego gains identity through mastery over danger, it does so by renouncing and repressing its inner nature, a dynamic they read through episodes such as the Sirens' song, which recall a former "fluctuating relationship with nature" that the subject must suppress (Habermas 1982, 16). Habermas quotes Horkheimer and Adorno's striking formulation, that "Man's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken," to show how the cultivated selfhood presupposes the suppression of the "substance" that is life itself (Habermas 1982, 16). The point is that the process of identity formation via control of external nature simultaneously entails an internalization of sacrifice: the ego originally

[14] Durkheim, the sociologist of religion, is invoked here to indicate why ritual returns sustain collective consciousness; Habermas mentions Durkheim succinctly to register this sociological point.

outwits myth by offering a substitute, but when the ego internalizes that sacrificial posture it becomes again subject to the mythical fate it had eluded (Habermas 1982, 16).

Summarizing the historical consequence, Habermas explains Horkheimer and Adorno's diagnosis: humanity, by the Enlightenment, has distanced itself ever farther from origins while failing to free itself from them (Habermas 1982, 16). A thoroughly rationalized modernity only appears demystified; beneath that surface "rests in fact the curse of demonic objectification and fatal isolation," symptoms of emancipation gone awry, where the compulsion to "rationally subjugate the natural forces" fuels productivity ad infinitum for self-preservation while the powers of reconciliation wither (Habermas 1982, 16). The hallmark, in their account, is the double domination of an objectified external nature and a repressed inner nature, what Habermas summarizes as the Janus-face of Enlightenment (Habermas 1982, 16).

Habermas notes that this thesis reworks Max Weber's well-known image of demystified gods returning as impersonal powers, a metaphor for modern impersonality and bureaucratic domination, and that Horkheimer and Adorno thus vary Weber's diagnosis to explain the renewal of archaic conflict in modern form (Habermas 1982, 16).

In the second section, Habermas steps back to characterize impressions the careful reader may have: the book's thesis is as risky as Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism; the authors try seriously to substantiate their cultural critique; yet they rely on generalizations that threaten plausibility (Habermas 1982, 17). He extracts the core thesis of the first excursus: "Reason itself destroys the humanity which it had made possible in the first place," a claim Horkheimer and Adorno sustain by arguing that Enlightenment from the start depends on a self-preserving impulse that mutilates reason into instrumental purposiveness (Habermas 1982, 17). Habermas is careful to say that this still does not automatically prove that reason remains instrumental even in the higher reaches of modern culture — in science, universalistic morality, or autonomous art — and he points to the title essay, the excursus on morality, and the appendix on the culture industry as the evidence Horkheimer and Adorno marshal to support their sweeping claim (Habermas 1982, 17).

First, Habermas reports, Adorno and Horkheimer hold that logical positivism ushered modern science into a phase in which theoretical knowledge yielded to technological exploitability, so that the sciences themselves were absorbed by instrumental reason (Habermas 1982, 17). Second, they argue, by reading *Histoire de Juliette* and Nietzsche's *Genealogy*

of Morals, that reason has been exorcised from morality and justice, so that with the decline of metaphysical certainties, normative moral standards lose credibility before the authority of science (Habermas 1982, 18). Third, in their analysis of the culture industry they claim that art fused with entertainment loses its critical and utopian content and becomes ideological drivel (Habermas 1982, p. 18). In all three domains, Habermas summarizes, separation of cultural spheres and the decay of substantive reasons produce a regression into purposive rationality devoted to self-preservation (Habermas 1982, 18).

Habermas resists this flattening. He insists the Dialectic of Enlightenment neglects important elements of cultural modernity: the self-propelling theoretical dynamism of the sciences, the universalist foundations of law and morality instantiated (if imperfectly) in constitutional institutions and democratic procedures, and the emancipatory force of aesthetic experience liberated from instrumental utility (Habermas 1982, 18). These items, Habermas argues, would, if elaborated, show the book's presentation to be incomplete and one-sided, and would explain why the reader justifiably senses the work's global pessimism, neglecting the dignity of cultural modernity (Habermas 1982, 19).

Seeking reasons for Horkheimer and Adorno's sweeping critique, Habermas proposes two moves: first, he will locate the classical Marxian critique of ideology within the Enlightenment process; second, he will offer reasons why Horkheimer and Adorno abandoned that immanent critique in favor of a totalizing denunciation (Habermas 1982, 19).

In section III Habermas reframes the earlier discussion by emphasizing that myth and enlightened thinking are also bound up in the status of fundamental concepts: myth's totalizing force suspends differences by weaving correspondences between phenomena; language in myth remains close to its referent, so that speech and world view remain interwoven and mythical categories of truth, good, and evil link to empirical concepts like exchange or causality (Habermas 1982, 19). Hence, demythologization, the modern critical move, severs that weave and allows for a decentered world in which objective entities, the social world of norms, and the inner world of subjective experiences are distinguished (Habermas 1982, 20).

From this decentering, Habermas explains, the classical critique of ideology can properly emerge: only when semantic and empirical relations, internal and external relations, have been segregated can one suspect that a theory's claimed autonomy masks hidden interests; the critique of ideology thus seeks to show that theories' validity claims cloak an a-tergo fusion of

power and validity (Habermas 1982, p. 20). Properly understood, the critique of ideology is not an alternative competing theory but a reflexive move of Enlightenment upon its own products: it unearths category mistakes produced by fusing validity and power (Habermas 1982, 20).

Yet, and this is crucial for Habermas, the drama intensifies when the critique of ideology itself becomes suspect, only then does Enlightenment become reflexive a second time (Habermas 1982, 21). Habermas locates a passage in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that reads like an echo of earlier critical theory: philosophy's immunity to the status quo derives from its uncritical acceptance of bourgeois ideals, which contained both deceptive appearances and the seed of an immanent critique (Habermas 1982, 21). In the 1930s, critical theorists retained some trust that bourgeois ideals harbored emancipatory potentials that social analysis could release; but by the early 1940s, Horkheimer and Adorno judged that the Marxian critique of ideology had exhausted itself and so radicalized their critique into a totalizing attack that turned critique against reason itself (Habermas 1982, 21). The preface to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* confesses that the authors abandoned confidence that critique could be confined to disciplinary specialties and instead were forced to a more comprehensive radicalization (Habermas 1982, 21).

Habermas explains the logical payoff: if the suspicion of ideology becomes total, it no longer only questions bourgeois ideology but extends suspicion to rationality itself, hence the concept of "instrumental reason," which names not merely *Verstand* usurping *Vernunft* but the totalizing purposive rationality that collapses the distinction between claims of validity and the interests of self-preservation (Habermas 1982, 22). Once reason is instrumentalized and assimilated to power, Habermas reports, it loses its critical force, the critique of ideology turned upon itself becomes a performative contradiction because it must use the very categories it has declared contaminated (Habermas 1982, 22). Adorno, aware of this paradox, responds with a sustained negative dialectical strategy that refuses to resolve the contradiction but persistently develops it (Habermas 1982, 22).

Section IV turns to Nietzsche, whom Habermas treats as both model and counterexample. Horkheimer and Adorno acknowledge Nietzsche as one of the few after Hegel who "recognized the dialectic of enlightenment," that is, the identity of domination and reason, yet they also see Nietzsche as Hegel's antipode because Nietzsche's affirmation consumes the critical impulse and leaves negation without its bite (Habermas 1982, 23; (Hohendahl 1985, 15–16). Habermas summarizes Nietzsche's genealogical story: when instincts are robbed of direct discharge, subjects are reduced to

thinking and to objectifying nature, and the unspent instincts are internalized as a "bad conscience," a development Nietzsche describes as the internalization that produces the 'soul' (Habermas 1982, 24). Nietzsche thus provides a model in which domination of external and internal nature congeal into social domination, "the curse of society and of peace," because institutions enforce renunciation (Habermas 1982, 24).

Habermas stresses that Nietzsche's critique of knowledge and morality anticipates Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason: behind objectivity, positivism, ascetic ideals and universalist moral claims there may hide imperatives of self-preservation and domination (Habermas 1982, 24). Nietzsche supplements this with an aesthetic-genetic account: interpretation is valorization, and the "drive to metaphorize" makes texts the sum of their possible readings; the judgment of taste becomes the site where value-orders are posited and where "the beautiful" stimulates a "will to power" that replaces claims of truth with aesthetic valuation (Habermas 1982, 25). Habermas briefly identifies Nietzsche's aesthetic horizon (he is, Habermas notes, an intellectual contemporary of Mallarmé and heir to Wagnerian late-romanticism) to show why Nietzsche privileges taste and valuation over truth claims (Habermas 1982, 25).

But Habermas also points out Nietzsche's final *aporia*: if all validity claims are reduced to value preferences, critique loses its normative purchase, the "Yes/No" of value becomes merely expression of will, and so Nietzsche resorts to genealogy to re-inscribe rank by origin, thereby replacing rational standards with criteria of ancestry and precedence (Habermas 1982, 26). Nietzsche's genealogy thus relativizes truth and justice by tracing evaluative practices back to power relations and *ressentiment*, but in doing so it leaves the critic without a shared standard to adjudicate among rival powers (Habermas 1982, 26).

Habermas concludes by drawing the two variants together and diagnoses their shared predicament: both the Nietzschean and the Horkheimer–Adorno totalizing critiques risk losing direction because, when every claim to validity is suspect, the critic must nonetheless retain some standard by which to judge corruption (Habermas 1982, 28). Nietzsche opts to ground critique in a theory of power, a move that makes power the final horizon but which, Habermas warns, cannot serve where the categorical distinction between validity and power is presupposed (Habermas 1982, 29). Horkheimer and Adorno take the opposite road: they intensify and preserve the performative contradiction rather than resolve it, practicing a determinate negation that refuses theoretical closure and keeps the paradox alive as a critical vow (Habermas 1982, 29).

Habermas suggests that the purist ambition of a single decisive unmasking betrays the pragmatic interweaving of critique and justification; instead, only a form of rational discourse that admits its "everlasting impurity" and relies on the "non-coercive coercion of the better argument" offers a chance to disentangle myth and Enlightenment (Habermas 1982, 30). Habermas argues for a communicative rationality that recognizes and works within the unavoidable mixtures of power and validity rather than for a totalized unmasking that collapses critique into nihilism (Habermas 1982, 30).

Habermas reads *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a set of bold and perilous moves: Horkheimer and Adorno radicalize the critique of ideology into a general indictment of reason by tracing a myth-Enlightenment entwinement, and Nietzsche offers a genealogical and aesthetic variant of the same totalizing insight. Habermas's own corrective is modest but decisive: preserve the reflexivity of the Enlightenment while refusing the totalizing gesture; cultivate a communicative rationality that can separate, procedurally and dialogically, claims of validity from claims of power (Habermas 1982, 30).

***Lantugi* as Rational Discourse**

I argue that *lantugi*, the ritualized, vernacular practice of public apologetics, functions as a form of communicative rationality that can help repair the deficits of modern Enlightenment reason. I show how its procedural rhythms (*tigbakay, tema, paglatag, paggisa, panapos*),[15] embodied apprenticeship, and communal accountability instantiate the "the peculiarly constraint-free force of the better argument' (Habermas 1984, 28), while resisting the instrumentalization of reason that Horkheimer and Adorno diagnosed. I also note limits and propose modest institutional supports so *lantugi* can more reliably contribute to democratic and epistemic goods.

Lantugi's first moral and epistemic strength is ritualization. The practice is a sequenced enactment, an informal *tigbakay* prelude, a *tema* that functions as a boundary object, front-stage *debatedors*, regulated temporal-spatial setting (*adlaw* ug *lugar*), and closure rituals (*paglamano*, open forum, *paghinuklog*). That sequence does what rituals do in the sociological literature: it sacralizes a shared time and space for argument, makes commitments visible (the *pirmahay*), and aligns affective bonds with propositional contestation. Far from reducing argument to mere spectacle, the ritual frame suspends purely instrumental aims (winning at all costs) and

[15] More granular description of these steps is in the full thesis (Pandan, 2025).

foregrounds mutual recognition; the handshake and a public notebook where the *debatedors* sign adherence to agreed rules, are communicative technologies that make participants accountable to a communal standard, not solely to private advantage.

Because ritual secures the lifeworld context from which topics emerge, *lantugi* avoids two classical failures of Enlightenment critique. On the one hand, it refuses the purely formal, disembodied syllogism that easily collapses into instrumentality; on the other, it resists raw particularism by supplying shared interpretive resources, canonical texts, community norms, and agreed-upon evidentiary repertoires that stabilize intersubjective testing. Ritual makes the conditions of argument visible and contestable, restoring the social infrastructure that enables reasons to count as reasons.

Tigbakay (the unscripted back-and-forth) and *tema* (topic selection as boundary-object formation) are crucial because they institutionalize interpretive humility and epistemic pluralism. *Tigbakay* is a communal hermeneutic prelude where meanings are floated and interpreted in low-stakes interaction. By permitting ideas to remain fluid at the *tigbakay* stage, the practice mirrors *interpretive work*: participants test intelligibility before fixing positions. The *tema* phase then crystallizes a contested claim but does so only after communal filters of relevance, conviction, and resonance have been applied. That two-stage structure, exploratory, then formalized, is a small but powerful safeguard against both premature closure and indefinite relativism.

From a Habermasian standpoint, this sequence helps instantiate the ideal conditions for undistorted communication: discussants enter an exchange with a shared background (the lifeworld), explicit propositions are rendered public and contestable, and the debate's scope is constrained so that validity claims are examinable. As a practice in the province where the longest revolt happened in the Philippines, *lantugi* definitely is does not pretend as though disagreements do not exist (Aparece, 2013). Yet whereas instrumentally organized discourse reduces reason to technical means, *tigbakay→tema* preserves a dialogical ecology in which reasons can win by force of their normative or empirical pull, not by rhetorical manipulation alone (Habermas 1984).

Habermas (1999, 14-15) notes that postmetaphysical thinking asks that religious "essential contents from religious tradition" be "transformed 'into justifiable knowledge.'" That transformation of religion from a matter of the private sphere into something within the realm of knowledge is inherent to *lantugi*. Field observations evidence the pressure among the communicators not to rely on arguments from authority when the authority

is not within the propositions publicly (that is, mutually agreed upon by both sides) accepted as justified knowledge.

My (first author) interviews, which were part of my thesis at Cebu Normal University, where the second author is adviser, illuminate a pedagogy in which argument is learned in embodied, affective cycles: wonder → ritual inclusion → crisis → methodical preparation → spontaneous responsiveness → reflective integration. This apprenticeship is philosophically significant. It shows how rationality is not merely propositional competence but a dispositional achievement: the practiced ability to marshal reasons under stress, to modulate affect, and to attend to audience cues. Mirror practice, rehearsal, and communal mentoring produce a skill set that is cognitive, somatic, and social. Furthermore, subsequent reflective reformulation of arguments and ideas after iterations of debates where one's worldviews are contested, sharpened, and even revised, exemplify what Habermas (2017, 94) calls "fallibilistic self-interpretation" and inclination to "decentre" background assumptions.

Two consequences follow. First, by cultivating emotional resilience and rapid, evidence-based rejoinder, *lantugi* repairs a deficit often ignored in Enlightenment rhetoric: the need for citizens who can use reason in lived, pressured encounters. Second, because novices must pass through vulnerability (being cornered) and subsequent reflective reformulation, the practice encourages epistemic humility; mastery emerges not from ideological closure but from recursive correction. In other words, the pedagogy of *lantugi* produces arguers whose rationality is reflexive and fallibilist rather than absolutist.

Horkheimer and Adorno worry that Enlightenment, once instrumentalized, collapses claims of truth into power. *Lantugi* can function as a practical counterweight because many of its norms are procedural rather than metaphysical: protected presentation time, cross-examination, open forum, and public record (the notebook). These are weak institutional constraints, but they matter: they create predictable opportunities for counter-speech, create shared expectations about evidence (Bible + references, encyclopedias), and make rhetorical performance subject to communal memory (audience recall, later *paghinuklog*). Where institutional public reason has been hollowed by bureaucratic or market pressures, ritualized deliberation of this kind keeps validity claims tethered to community testing rather than to the calculus of power alone.

That said, *lantugi* is not automatically immune to coercion. The *hakot* (mobilizing support), the charisma dynamics, and the political permeation of topics show that ritual can be captured. The critical insight is

conditional: ritual stabilizes communicative norms only insofar as the community resists instrumental capture and preserves the preconditions for challenge. Thus, the rescue is pragmatic. It is possible when ritual practices are protected and reflexively cultivated.

My interviews show that *lantugi* already opens multi-class and cross-confessional spaces; participants include laborers, students, merchants, and clergy. This demographic breadth gives the practice democratic potential. If *lantugi* is intentionally expanded to include civic and moral-political themes, without abandoning its evidentiary rigor, it can function as a local modality of deliberative democracy: a space where citizens practice giving and testing reasons in public. The longer arc of rescue I propose is modest: not that *lantugi* will replace formal institutions, but that it can seed a culture of robust, embodied deliberation that stabilizes the public use of reason at the grassroots.

To do this responsibly requires two programmatic shifts. First, broaden accepted topic-domains (it has already begun: atheism, human rights; and I have developed a teaching model out of it, and my students have even studied the student experience of *lantugi*) while keeping the ritual filters that privilege conviction and evidence. Second, introduce light procedural supports, archival recording, minimal timekeeping conventions, and transparent rules for acceptable conduct, so that *lantugi*'s virtues (flexibility, spontaneity, apprenticeship) are not lost to performative spectacle or misinformation.

Any proposal that treats a vernacular ritual as philosophically redemptive must concede limits. *Lantugi* can ossify into xenophobic echo chambers if the *tema* selection process systematically excludes dissenting social positions; it can be gamed by mobilized audiences (*hakot*) or by charismatic elites who monopolize stage space; and digital media can distort deliberative pacing into bite-sized fragments that favor virality over sustained reasoning. These perils mirror the failures of Enlightenment reason, but they also suggest corrective measures that are practice-anchored rather than abstract: rotating moderation, explicit audience norms, recorded transcripts for institutional memory, and periodic reflective workshops to cultivate critical media literacy among participants.

The rescue I propose does not rest on discovering a pure reason beyond contingency. By cultivating ritual discipline, expanding topic horizons toward civic concerns, and adopting modest procedural safeguards, *lantugi* can function as a vernacular school of reasoning that repairs the link between the lifeworld and the public use of reason. In that limited but consequential sense, *lantugi* helps re-orient the Enlightenment away from the pitfalls of

instrumentalization and toward a practice of shared, embodied argument, the very corrective Habermas sought when he urged communicative repair of modernity's deficits (Habermas 1984).

Conclusions

I began this paper with a simple claim: Enlightenment need not end in the self-consuming regress Adorno and Horkheimer diagnose; neither must it be confined to the particular history of European institutions. *Lantugi* shows that practices of public reason can be reworked in plural, vernacular, and decidedly non-Eurocentric forms. This is not a claim that ritual alone saves reason, but that certain ritualized communicative practices, when reflexively cultivated, supply the institutional and pedagogical conditions under which the "public use of reason" can thrive again (Kant 1784 [1991]).

Lantugi answers Kant's injunction to dare to think by doing the hard labor of communal thinking in public spaces: it stages the conditions in which ordinary persons practice judgment, test claims, and learn to bear intellectual risk within a shared lifeworld (Kant 1784 [1991]). It enacts what Foucault called an attitude toward the present: participants do not wait for an abstract, universal moment of reason; they interrogate here and now, converting the plaza and the livestream into laboratories of the contemporary (Foucault 1984). In that sense *lantugi* is fidelity to Kant and Foucault at once; it cultivates courage to think and the habit of questioning the present.

At the same time *lantugi* resists the pathologies that Horkheimer and Adorno diagnose: ritualized formats, public records, cross-examination, and open forums attenuate the easy slide from reason to mere instrumental control (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). These are weak institutions, to be sure, but they matter: they create routinized opportunities for counter-speech and communal memory that tether validity claims to ongoing public testing rather than to private power (Habermas 1984). Where Enlightenment had become a technique of domination, *lantugi* reintroduces practice, embodied, noisy, fallible practice, as the ground of critique.

This rescue, however, is conditional and modest. *Lantugi* can be captured: *hakot* politics, charismatic monopolies of attention, and digital fragmentarization can turn ritual into spectacle or tribal performance. My fieldwork repeatedly showed these dangers. Therefore, the task is not to romanticize *lantugi* but to strengthen it prudently: rotate moderators, institute light archival practices, agree on minimal timekeeping and civility norms, and organize periodic media-literacy and reflective workshops for participants. These are not heavy institutional prescriptions; they are

practice-anchored safeguards meant to preserve spontaneity while increasing reliability.

Pedagogically, *lantugi*'s greatest gift is its apprenticeship model. Novices move from wonder through being-cornered to disciplined preparation and reflective reintegration. That cycle produces arguers who are resilient, fallibilist, and attentive to audiences, capacities too often absent in contemporary public culture. In essence, it provides an opportunity, if done well, to learn emancipatory postmetaphysical thinking (Estafia, 2020). If civic education aims to rehabilitate the public use of reason, we should take seriously forms of learning that are somatic, communal, and iterative rather than merely curricular.

Finally, a methodological remark. This paper has read philosophical problems through ethnographic particulars and, in the process, returned those particulars to philosophy. That movement is deliberate: theoretical categories (immaturity, attitude, instrumentality, communicative rationality) gain traction only when grounded in lived practices. *Lantugi* does not resolve the contested legacies of Kant, Foucault, Adorno, or Habermas. It does, however, show that their debates matter in ordinary places, in plazas, in notebooks, in the embodied discipline of rehearsing a rejoinder late at night.

If Kant taught us that courage is the first act of enlightenment (Kant 1784 [1991]), and if Foucault taught us to interrogate the present (Foucault 1984), then *lantugi* teaches us how courage and interrogation are practiced together in community. If Habermas' corrective is right, that communicative repair can salvage the emancipatory core of the Enlightenment (Habermas 1984), *lantugi* offers one, locally rooted way to begin that repair. It is a modest, plural, practice-based hope: not a metaphysical rescue of reason, but a civic pedagogy that keeps the Enlightenment project alive in a world that desperately needs modes of shared, accountable thinking. And even if Central Philippines is often left out of nationalist accounts of how Enlightenment ideas entered the country (Arcilla 1991), and while we are still working to build the Habermasian precondition for democratic discourse (Ocay, 2023, 6) which is a "firmly established democracy" *lantugi* perhaps quietly testifies that those ideas were, in practice, already part of local life.

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Notes on Artisanal Blacksmithing in Villalimpia, Loay, Bohol

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Abstract. This report presents initial findings from one recorded interview with a practicing blacksmith in Villalimpia, Loay, Bohol (16 April 2025). The paper documents staffing (three core workers + two interns), typical output (18–20 blades/day), input conversion (≈2 blades per kg scrap metal), local input prices (≈₱65–₱75/kg), and a retail example (≈₱500). Key patterns are noted. Electric grinders speed some tasks but hand-finishing remains central; metal and charcoal supplies are seasonally fragile; institutional or government support is absent; intergenerational skill inheritance is inconsistent. These exploratory data intend to guide small, practical initiatives i.e. pooled buying, provenance labelling, targeted apprenticeships.

Keywords: blacksmithing, craft continuity, artisanal, community-based production, hand-finishing

Introduction

Artisanal blacksmithing in Villalimpia, Loay touches on culturally-relevant issues. Studies have been written on Bohol's art, including the Bohol school of painting (Tse, 2005), the *asin tibuok* artisanal salt (Pandan & Poquita, 2025), and raffia weaving (Centillas et al., 2024). Blacksmithing in Dumaguate and in Cebu has been studied, yet this has remained underexplored in Bohol (Mascuñana, 1998; Gerra, 2013).

This paper opens with an account of one maker's practices gathered by a team of researchers who immersed themselves in Villalimpia, Bohol, in April 2025. Field interviews were conducted to record exactly what is made, how it is made, what it costs, who buys it, and what would help keep the craft alive. This is meant to inform future initiatives in its preservation (Khan, 2016).

This manuscript presents initial exploratory field data. The base is one recorded interview with a practicing blacksmith in Villalimpia. This manuscript aims to contribute to the growing field of Boholano studies

(Mojares, 1980; Urich & Edgecombe, 1999; Mijares, 2023; Gementiza, 2023; Moral & Pandan, 2024).

Background

Resil Mojares (1986) provides the primary theoretical frame for this paper. He traces how crafts move across modes of production. He shows shifts from self-directed, apprenticeship-based making to merchant-led and capitalist arrangements. His work names the social effects that follow market expansion. These effects help explain what small technological changes can mean for a craft's future. Mojares (1986, 186) states the core risk directly:

> There has been a degradation in the value of human skills. In earlier times, the premium on such skills was expressed in the formal apprenticeships and the rituals that attended the practice of craft. A market-driven technology has displaced or degraded such skills. The standardization of work has diminished areas for individual expression as art is reduced to craft and craft becomes common labor.

From this statement flow three linked theoretical claims that guide the analysis. First, the premium on manual skill sustains apprenticeship rituals and the social identity of makers. Second, market centralization and exporter concentration can withdraw value from household workshops. Third, merchant-led supply and credit relations can strip producers of control over inputs and distribution. These three claims become a diagnostic lens for reading the initial data from Villalimpia.

Mojares (1986) bolsters these claims with sustained empirical attention to Philippine cases. His account of Cebu's shellcraft industry shows how layered markets and concentrated exporters can centralize value and marginalize small workshops. As he documents, the industry has a multilayered structure: gatherers, small household workshops, networks of middlemen and contractors, larger factories, and a few exporting firms. He notes that

> There are around 250 shellcraft 'factories' in Cebu Province... The industry is multilayered, beginning with the shell gatherers and traders of specimens, to the small household workshop of 3 or 4 workers, to a network of middlemen, contractors, and agents, to the larger factories... to the large exporting firms ... in Cebu, there are less than 10 large shellcraft exporting firms that control more than 80 percent of the total shellcraft exports (Mojares, 1986, 183–184).

Mojares' historical discussion of Iloilo's textile and cottage industries highlights a related mechanism: loss of control over inputs and distribution when merchants or traveling agents dominate trade. He recounts how weavers in Iloilo shifted from producing for local patrons to becoming linked to merchants who supplied raw materials and directed export trade. As Mojares puts it, "The weavers, therefore, were no longer in full control over the production and distribution process" (Mojares, 1986, 178).

Taken together, these cases identify (a) market centralization and exporter concentration, and (b) input- and credit-based capture by merchants, as two principal mechanisms that can erode craft autonomy. Mojares' framework clarifies specific vulnerabilities and points toward targeted interventions that preserve maker control, apprenticeship rituals, and signature handwork.

Method

The empirical base of this paper is a single semi-structured interview with informant I1, conducted on April 16, 2025. There are two more blacksmiths who refused to be interviewed. The interview guide addressed history, daily practice, tools, materials, markets, pedagogy, institutional relations, and future prospects. The conversation was recorded and transcribed verbatim; translations were prepared immediately after transcription. Analysis proceeded through iterative close reading, open coding, and grouping of codes into seven themes that align with the interview schedule. The method prioritizes verifiable, operational detail—times of day, number of pieces produced, and prices reported. This is a report on the initial immersion of researchers studying at Bohol Island State University, Main Campus. Bersales' (1999) ethnographic notes on the Alona Beach in Panglao is the genre this study adopts.

Findings

The interviewee situated the arrival and establishment of blacksmithing in Villalimpia within a history of migration and succession. He recalled that "the first workers who worked here were from Camiguin... they are dead now, so we are the ones who continued" (Cebuano: "*Naa may kanang... ang unang mga trabahante nga nagtrabaho ani sauna kay taga Camiguin... pero patay naman, maong kami na ang nagsunod*," 0:00:04). He also pointed to an earlier site of production and noted that "the original shop used to be over there ... but it's not the same now; it has been rebuilt"

(0:00:19–0:00:24). These remarks anchor the shop's memory and place-identity in the village and indicate a localized settlement of the craft rather than an always-indigenous lineage.

Daily work practices are tightly routinized. The shop follows an approximate 06:00–14:00 schedule: "*magsugod mig alas sais mahuman mig mga alas dos*" (0:02:25–0:02:31). Typical daily output is stable and team-dependent: "usually we make at least 18 pieces; sometimes it reaches 20" ("*Kasagaran... gaminimum mi og mga dise otso kabook... onya naa poy masobra... moabot baynte,"* 0:02:39–0:02:44). Staffing also reflects a small, multi-member workshop: the owner reports three core workers and two interns ("*Tulo... Tulo mi [ka trabahante], naa koy intern duha*," 0:04:31–0:04:34), and he insists that one person cannot meet the work target ("*Dili mabuhat og kanang kuan... kinahanglan nga tulo jud mi*," 0:04:38–0:04:43). Taken together, these facts model the shop as a micro-production unit operating a team-based division of labour with explicit daily productivity expectations.

The toolset described in the transcript shows selective mechanization rather than wholesale technologization. The informant enumerated hammers, clamps, tongs and an electric grinder ("*kaning maso, kumpit, pakpakan... og kanang grinder... mao rana... kuryente*," 0:02:03–0:02:16) and contrasted this with earlier, fully manual practice ("*Pero sauna dili man kuryente gamit sauna gud... kuan ra man... mano-mano*," 0:02:17–0:02:21). The recording itself contains the background whine of grinders at several points, corroborating the claim that electric tools now punctuate the shop's soundscape.

Material inputs and conversion metrics are given with precise, operational detail. The artisan reported that "from one kilo you can make at least two blades" ("Sa isa ka kilo duha ka sundang jud ang minimum ana," 0:16:40–0:16:46) and supplied per-kilo price ranges from local junkshops—approximately ₱65–₱75 depending on supplier ("*Depende naay saysentay singko, naay sitenta, kinamahalan sitentay singko*," 0:16:37–0:16:46). He also linked fuel availability to local agro-ecology: charcoal scarcity in dry months arises when coconut yields fall ("*...ting-init, mominus man ang among ginagamit na uling... Pag mominus ang bungag lubi, mominus sad ang ngana*," 0:10:20–0:10:36). These statements permit direct arithmetic budgeting (e.g., eighteen blades ≈ 9 kg metal; at ₱70/kg ≈ ₱630 daily metal cost) and identify concrete seasonal supply vulnerabilities.

Market relations and pricing practices are similarly concrete. The shop's principal buyers are market vendors and agricultural workers ("Kasagaran mamalit ani kay kana jung mga...trabahante... mga farmers,"

0:06:28–0:06:45), and a displayed retail item is priced at roughly ₱500 ("kung binook... tag 500," 0:03:10–0:03:13). The artisan contrasts his hand-made goods with factory alternatives—criticizing factory pieces as less sharp or standardized—and links quality directly to repeat patronage ("kung maayo jud kag agi kay magbalik-balik nimo," 0:07:42). Together, these claims describe a segmented market: a price-sensitive mass segment competes with cheaper factory products, while a smaller, quality-seeking niche sustains the shop's reputation.

Labour arrangements are governed by batch incentives and reputational management. Helpers are paid per batch contingent on completing the daily minimum ("Ang sweldo ani nila kay pinakyaw depende ug mahuman nang dise otso," 0:08:58–0:09:07). The owner explicitly refuses to undercut price or accept rushed orders that would compromise workmanship, reflecting an intentional strategy to preserve long-term client loyalty over short-term volume.

Institutional ties are essentially absent. When asked about government or organizational support the artisan answered flatly, "Wa" ("None," 0:09:31), and elaborated that the work is sustained "on our own" ("Wa... ako-ako ra ni. Amo-amo ra gud...," 0:09:38–0:09:42). Finally, intergenerational skill inheritance appears partial and fragile: the informant entered the trade young and became a master by seventeen, yet he reports limited familial succession—his son did not persist—while he continues to train a son-in-law and interns ("Dose anyos pako...," 0:01:33–0:01:55; "Wala namay gasunod nako ani...," 0:12:15–0:12:23; 0:18:00–0:18:07).

Discussion

The empirical narrative above invites interpretation along two related vectors: (1) the ways selective mechanization reconfigures labour and value within the workshop, and (2) the structural vulnerabilities that derive from input dependence and market intermediaries. Read through the historical lens advanced by Mojares (1986), these vectors correspond to the twin mechanisms he identifies, market centralization and input/credit capture, which can, in aggregate, erode the premium on skill and the social institutions that sustain craft life.

First, the evidence indicates that mechanization in Villalimpia is adaptive rather than totalizing. The presence of electric grinders shortens certain time-consuming, strenuous tasks and alters the auditory and temporal rhythm of the workshop. Yet the artisan insists that final shaping remains hand-driven, and he refuses rush orders that would compromise this finishing work. This co-existence of machine-assisted steps with hand-

finishing matters because, as Mojares argues, the retention of signature manual techniques preserves both market differentiation and the moral economy of apprenticeship. If mechanization were to fully supplant the visible markers of individual skill, the shop's capacity to command quality premia and to reproduce apprenticeship rituals would be jeopardized.

Second, the Villalimpia shop is structurally exposed to the input- and market-related dynamics Mojares documents in his Philippine case studies. The Cebu shellcraft example shows how layered markets and a small number of exporting firms can centralize design knowledge and buyer access, thereby capturing margins that once accrued to household producers (Mojares, 1986, pp. 183–84). The Villalimpia shop already services bulk orders and market vendors; this positioning could permit intermediaries to expand their control over demand and thereby compress the workshop's price-setting power. Likewise, Mojares's discussion of Iloilo's textile and cottage sectors warns that when merchants dominate inputs and distribution, producers lose autonomy over production choices and market channels (Mojares, 1986, p. 178). Villalimpia's reliance on junkshop-sourced metal and on coconut-husk charcoal, both variable and externally mediated, creates concrete entry points for supplier leverage through price volatility, stockouts, or tied-credit arrangements.

These theoretical mappings yield a mixed prognosis. On the one hand, the persistence of hand-finishing and the owner's reputational stance moderate the immediate risk of proletarianization: there remains a visible, market-recognizable skill that sustains repeat buyers. On the other hand, the structural facts, dependence on centralized junkshop supply, seasonal fuel vulnerability, and the absence of institutional support, instantiate the precise mechanisms that Mojares identifies as eroding craft autonomy. The result is neither inevitable decline nor secure continuity, but a contingent equilibrium vulnerable to shifts in buyer concentration or supplier power.

From this combined reading of empirical data and historical theory three policy-relevant priorities follow. First, preserve the time, incentives, and ethical space for hand-finishing. Interventions should avoid measures that simply maximize throughout at the expense of finishing work that signals individual skill. Second, strengthen producer control over inputs. Collective procurement, supplier mapping, and small buyer clusters can reduce price variance, limit supplier leverage, and lower the risk of tied-credit relations. Third, protect and amplify direct maker–buyer recognition. Simple provenance devices, product cards, shop signage, and brief buyer-facing narratives, can keep value visible at the point of sale and thus constrain intermediary capture.

These priorities directly inform the short-cycle, low-cost pilots proposed in the Conclusions and Recommendations. They also explain why modest organizational fixes (pooled buying, targeted apprenticeships, fuel substitution trials, provenance labeling, and low-barrier barangay outreach) are not merely incremental technicalities but tactical defenses against the structural processes Mojares describes. In sum, the Villalimpia case demonstrates how attention to small, operational details (conversion rates, per-kilo prices, shift patterns) can be combined with historical diagnosis to design interventions that both preserve artisanal value and reduce exposure to market and supply-side capture.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

First, the workshop uses both machines and hand tools: electric grinders speed some steps, but hand-finishing still determines final sharpness and buyer trust. Second, output depends on a small team, three core workers plus interns, and targets (about 18–20 blades/day) are not met by a lone worker. Third, inputs are a clear vulnerability: scrap-metal price swings and seasonal charcoal shortages directly raise costs or slow production. Fourth, the market is narrow and price-sensitive: most buyers are local farmers and market vendors, and cheaper factory blades compete on price while handcrafted quality secures repeat customers. Fifth, there is no visible institutional support; the craft survives on owner initiative and informal training.

There are five main limits to this report. First, the evidence comes from one interview and cannot support broad generalizations. Second, two nearby blacksmiths refused interviews, so the account may not represent local variation. Third, translations from Cebuano to English may lose nuance or local terms. Fourth, the data captures a single visit in April 2025 and may miss seasonal shifts in fuel availability or demand. Fifth, the study did not include extended participant observation or independent buyer interviews to triangulate claims.

Notwithstanding these limitations, certain recommendations may be made. First, protect the hand-finishing that buyers recognize. The owner stated that grinders shorten tasks but that final shaping—what customers trust—remains manual; the workshop's reputation depends on that finish. Require that any production or sales change preserve a hand-finishing step tied to the maker's name. Practically, every blade should carry a simple provenance card naming the maker, the village, the production date, and the phrase "hand-finished." Use that card at sale to show why a hand-finished blade commands a higher price than factory pieces. When negotiating bulk

orders, the maker should refuse terms that demand machine-only finishing or that transfer finishing to outside plants; any contract must state who performs the finishing and fix a minimum unit price that preserves the margin implied by the observed retail price (~₱500) and the recorded input costs (≈2 blades per kg scrap at ≈₱70/kg).

Second, reduce supplier leverage with collective procurement while keeping decision-making local. The transcript gives conversion and price numbers that make pooled buying sensible: at roughly two blades per kilo, an 18-blade day uses about 9 kg of scrap metal, so weekly purchases are predictable. Begin with an informal buying circle of 3–6 nearby shops that pool funds for weekly bulk scrap and charcoal purchases to smooth price swings and avoid stockouts in dry months. Keep a visible ledger (paper or a shared spreadsheet) that records kilos bought, per-kilo price, and member contributions so every artisan can audit costs against output. If the circle moves toward formal cooperative status, draft bylaws first that assign procurement and branding control to the artisans before any registration so that legal form does not transfer control to outside managers.

Third, make learning paid, structured, and documented. The owner learned young and now trains interns, but successors have not always stayed. offer a short-paid apprenticeship—three months with a modest stipend—paired with a brief learning contract that names the master, lists daily hours aligned to the workshop's 06:00–14:00 rhythm, and records core skills (forging, shaping, finishing). Keep a short daily log of apprentice tasks and milestones; this log both values the apprentice's time and creates a record that supports future stipends or recognition. Avoid unpaid internships that replicate extractive labor; insist that apprentices sign informed consent for any photos or recordings and that masters retain authority to declare when the apprentice reaches independent competence.

Fourth, build maker-led market practices that reveal value to buyers. The interview shows the market is narrow and price-sensitive: most customers are farmers and market vendors, and price competition with factory blades is fierce. Test direct sales one day a week in nearby Tagbilaran or the municipal market with the maker or a designated representative on the stall. Use one-page stall material that explains the provenance card, the hand-finishing step, and basic care; pilot sales will reveal whether customers pay the implied premium. For larger intermediated orders, require written contracts that set minimum unit prices and specify payment timing; include an explicit revenue split so artisans see their share of final retail value rather than opaque middleman margins.

Fifth, guard against tied-credit and supplier capture. The artisan currently sources scrap from junkshops and faces seasonal charcoal problems; avoid any supplier credit that requires repeat exclusive purchases. If financing is needed, prefer microloans to the individual maker or to a democratically run producer group, and write terms in Cebuano with oral explanation. Reject loans that convert into input-forced arrangements or that grant suppliers rights to brand or inventory control.

Sixth, archive and control access to knowledge. The workshop's single-informant record and the informant's memories matter. Place transcript excerpts, a short how-to note, and selected photos in a barangay-controlled file or a local university repository under a simple agreement that names permissible uses and benefit sharing (e.g., copies for the makers, a small training session). No external commercial use of recordings or images should occur without signed permission.

Seventh, form governance that rotates power and keeps brand rights with artisans. If a producers' group forms to pursue pooled procurement or shared branding, elect a small artisan committee with clear minutes and a published monthly summary. Rotate roles annually and require a two-thirds artisan vote for any transfer of brand ownership or for contracts that cede long-term control to external managers.

Eighth, set ethical research and tourism rules now. Before interviews, require a brief agreement that states how materials and photos will be used and what the community receives; for demonstrations charge a fee and let artisans set schedules. This prevents unpaid extraction of knowledge and respects the maker's right to refuse visitors or publication.

Finally, each recommendation must be tested against the numbers recorded: pilot pooled buying should be evaluated by comparing per-kg prices before and after pooling against the baseline ₱65–₱75/kg; apprenticeship pilots should track whether one paid apprentice stabilizes labor availability for a target output of 18–20 blades/day; a market pilot should record whether direct sales at market stalls raise average realized retail above the shop's baseline of ~₱500 or increase repeat customers. These small, measurable pilots keep control with the makers, let the community reject what fails, and avoid handing craft control to outside actors.

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Survey of the Anti-Terrorism Initiatives of The Philippine National Police (PNP) Regional Office VII

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Abstract. Terrorists aim to destabilize their target's economic, social, and political system through violent actions. Effective anti-terrorism initiatives require knowledge and awareness programs to enhance public vigilance. This paper examines the anti-terrorism initiatives of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Regional Office 7, shedding light on efforts to maintain peace and order. The PNP Regional Office 7 has implemented various initiatives to address the threat of insurgency, including the '*Police sa Barangay*' program, collaboration with CCTN T.V. for awareness programs, enhanced intelligence monitoring by the Regional Intelligence Division (RID), establishment of the Barangay Intelligence Network (BIN), threat assessments, Basic Internal Security Operation Course (BISOC) and SWAT Course, Explosion Ordinance Disposal (EOD), and information dissemination through foldable fans and posters in terminals. Additionally, the PNP Regional Office 7 - RID has engaged stakeholders such as Muslim leaders, mall security officers, and managers of motels, inns, and pension houses through meetings, counter-terrorism inter-agency SIMEX, and regular conferences (e.g., RID Family Conferences, RPICC Conference). These initiatives demonstrate the region's commitment to combating terrorism and maintaining community peace and order.

Keywords: terrorism, anti-terrorism initiatives, insurgency, peace and order, Philippine National Police

Introduction

The Philippine state aggressively counters hostile acts against its citizens, property, or national interest, as stated in Section 2 of Republic Act No. 9372, also known as the Human Security Act of 2017. The Act aims to protect life, liberty, and property from terrorism, condemning it as inimical to national security and making terrorism a crime against the Filipino people, humanity, and international law.

Terrorism is the unlawful use of force against individuals or property to achieve religious, political, or ideological goals, often causing fear and potentially changing one's way of life. Terrorist operations are carefully planned to ensure proper execution and minimize failure, with groups often exhibiting camaraderie and cooperation. To combat terrorism, the government must develop anti-terrorism tactics using preventive defensive measures to reduce vulnerability to damage, injury, and loss. Identifying terrorist threats is crucial for establishing responsive interventions.

In light of the diverse nature of terrorism, there is a need for anti-terrorism initiatives that involve suitable awareness programs to awaken the public vigilance. Governments must consider stakeholder analysis and public involvement to ensure that general welfare of their people (Handbook on PNP Three-Tiered Defense System, 2002). Public support is crucial in the fight against terrorism. Region 7, due to its demographic characteristics and tourism, is a vulnerable target for terrorism. In fact, such as confirmed plot to kidnap tourists in Central Visayas, underscores the need for vigilance. Cebu's status as a tourism destination makes it particularly susceptible to international threats (Richter and Waugh, 1986 as cited by Hitchcock and Putra, 2007). Following the Marawi insurgency, local governments have focused on preparing for and preventing violent acts of local terrorism. This paper describes the anti-terrorism initiatives of the PNP Regional Office 7, aiming to maintain peace and order in the region.

Review of Related Literature

Terrorism: Nature and Characteristics. Terrorism is used to support military or political goals across the spectrum of conflict and plays a significant role in conventional warfare and insurgency. Terrorist actions can disrupt economic functions, increase social anxiety, undermine government credibility, and eliminate opposition leaders (U.S. Marine Corps, 2002).

Terrorists are driven by goals that lead them to commit violent acts, such as causing instability in their target's economic, social, and political environment. Short-term terrorist goals include undermining government credibility and economy, gaining recognition, disrupting communication, demonstrating power, acquiring funds and equipment, freeing prisoners, delaying the political process, influencing elections, demoralizing security forces, intimidating specific groups, and causing governments to overreact. Long-term goals include influencing top-level decisions and gaining legitimate recognition for their cause (U.S. Marine Corps, 2002).

According to Richardson (2006) as cited by Canter (2009), terrorism has seven crucial characteristics; it is politically motivated, involves violence

or the threat of violence, communicates a message, involves actions and victims that are symbolically significant, is carried out by sub-state groups, targets victims different from the audience, and deliberately targets civilians. Giddens (2009) identified two types of terrorism: "old-style" terrorism, which is primarily local and focused on nationalism, and "new-style" terrorism, which is a product of globalization and reflects the increasing interdependence of the world. Terrorism is an emerging global concern that causes a unique form of trauma (Slone & Shoshani, 2017). In fact, Bodrero (1999) stated that terrorism poses a greater threat to democracy. Therefore, identifying terrorist targets and incidents is crucial for national readiness.

Terrorism: The case in the Philippines. Since time immemorial, Philippines has faced acts of terrorism. For example, on May 23, 1976, six hijackers detonated grenades on a commercial plane at a Philippine runway when their demands were not met. In 1991, suspected terrorists attempted to bomb the United States embassy in Manila. Since 2000, acts of terrorism, including bombings in food markets, airports, buses, and ferry boats have killed or harmed thousands of Filipino people (The Hindustan Times, 2007).

The recent insurgency in Marawi City has garnered global attention. The city has long been a hotbed of insurgent movements, Islamist groups, and criminal gangs opposed to the Philippine government (Paddock & Villamore, 2017). Recently, Maute militants in Marawi City, named after a local clan that has become powerful by aligning with other extremist groups, took hostages, burned buildings, and displaced tens of thousands of residents. The conflict, which has claimed over 100 lives, has challenged the government's control over the city (Griffiths, 2017). Hernandez (2017) suggests that the Moro conflict has emerged from societal fragmentation and division, making it a complex issue.

According to The Hindustan Times (2007), Al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Abu Sayyaf are some of the terrorist groups reportedly operating in the Mindanao region. These groups have claimed innocent lives in the Philippines through staged bombings and kidnappings. They are included on Washington's list of foreign terrorist organizations. Consequently, injustices and killings have turned Zamboanga City into a lawless area (Glionna, 2009).

The Philippine congress drafted the Human Security Act of 2007 to address enduring struggles for secession and the growth of terrorist networks. The Act provides separate punishment for terrorists and secessionists, aligning with the country's policy against terrorism while protecting human rights, a key component of democracy. The Act

distinguishes terrorism from other criminal acts that threaten the general welfare, reflecting the Philippines' strong stance against terrorism through the enactment of various laws to maintain peace and safety within its national territory.

Despite efforts to prioritize domestic terrorism preparedness by national and local governments in the Philippines, researchers suggest that some local governments are not adequately prepared to respond to terrorism threats. Additionally, Maynard (2005) noted that local agencies continue to face challenges in intelligence gathering, even though law enforcement units have been mobilized to align their intelligence efforts with local needs. It is imperative for local agencies to have adequate intelligence resources to support their anti-terrorism initiatives and programs.

How to counteract terrorism? Bodrero (1999) outlines five essential processes to combat local extremism. Firstly, the planning stage involves identifying areas vulnerable to threat or attack, securing agreements from multiple agencies, and maintaining a list of response organizations. Deliberate planning enables administrators to respond effectively to terrorist incidents and aids in preventing attacks. Law enforcement must recognize terrorist threats and be prepared to deter and prevent domestic terrorist attacks. Secondly, the threat assessment stage addresses terrorist threats, evaluating and distinguishing constitutionally safeguarded rhetoric from criminal acts. A formal research and evaluation process is crucial to accomplishing this task successfully. Thirdly, the target identification stage categorizes terrorists' targets into five broad categories: (1) Symbol or public message targets, including landmarks, utilities, government buildings, universities, and businesses involved in sensitive industries; (2) Government-owned or -operated facilities, such as tunnels, airports, bridges, and law enforcement buildings; (3) Military targets like bases and testing facilities; (4) Cyber targets including air traffic control centers, financial networks, and utility distribution networks; and (5) Individual targets, such as kidnapping and assassination, to achieve terrorist objectives. Fourthly, the intelligence stage involves careful assessment of extremists' activities for evidence of criminal characteristics. Lastly, the training stage emphasizes the formation of response and emergency divisions, focusing on the functions, roles, and duties of various vital agencies.

According to Rifkind and Elworthy (2006), an effective initiative to prevent terrorism relies on social, community, and intercultural cooperation, emphasizing social inclusion and eliminating discrimination. Equality and

empowerment, making citizens feel co-responsible for shared activities, are significant in preventing terrorism at the community level. Measures may include fair employment legislation, addressing social needs, and education reforms to achieve community cohesion, decrease social exclusion, and prevent radicalization. Regular dialogue with marginalized and disaffected groups, especially young people, and risk assessment of communities to identify groups threatened by radicalization are essential.

A notable example of a successful anti-terrorism initiative is seen in Davao City, Philippines. Following the bombings at the Roxas Night Market, the city implemented various security measures and initiatives to combat lawless armed groups. These include the launch of *"Oplan Bulabog"* by the Davao City Police office (DCPO) to locate suspected terrorist group members hiding in the city, the first Davao City Anti-Terrorism Forum initiated by the city government to raise awareness and increase vigilance among focal persons and stakeholders, and the training of 900 volunteer police auxiliary (VPA) and 48 Special Weapon and Tactical (SWAT) members to enhance security. Heightened security measures and intelligence monitoring, such as increased fixed checkpoints, random inspections, and additional security cameras throughout the city, were implemented. The city also passed an ordinance penalizing individuals for leaving unattended baggage to prevent unnecessary public panic (SunStar Davao, 2017).

The need for inclusivity and participation in anti-terrorism initiatives. Terrorists do not have a specific number to be revealed, imprisoned, or killed worldwide. According to Rifkind and Elworthy (2006), their increasing numbers are controlled by the level of anger and hate that inspire people to join their ranks. Thus, addressing hate and anger is crucial. Inclusive participation in governmental activities, policy-making, and programs can help prevent extremism among citizens.

Putnam (2007) suggests that governments should effectively address citizens' demands, not merely uphold democracy. Policy outcomes in decision-making depend on the resources of different policy actors and the level of participation. In a democratic country, public policies are expected to align with the needs and preferences of citizens. Policies, whether in the public or private sphere, serve as instruments through which societies govern themselves and attempt to direct human behavior in an acceptable manner. Citizens and the government should collaborate in crafting policies to solve social problems.

In an interview with BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific (2006), Ronaldo Puno emphasized the importance of preventing terrorism through information

hardening rather than relying solely on the capabilities of police and military personnel. Planning for an attack should involve the people, work with the press, and recognize the competing demands on politicians. These actions should align with democratic norms. Simply involving citizens in domestic preparedness, beyond advising them to be vigilant, can be immensely helpful. Community participation can effectively enhance policy implementation in the policy process, leading to desired outcomes (Bell, 2004 as cited by Nunez, 2014).

Research Question

This study surveyed the anti-terrorism initiatives of the PNP regional office 7 to document peace and safety measures against insurgency in the region.

Methods

This study utilized the descriptive qualitative method. Data on the PNP RO 7's anti-terrorism initiatives were gathered through document review and in-depth interview with identified key informants. As a survey or documentation, data were presented and discussed based on the chronology of the initiatives vis-à-vis the mandated functions of the PNP.

Results and Discussion

The PNP is responsible for maintaining peace and order throughout the country, ensuring that citizens abide by the law for everyone's safety. They also implement activities and programs to inform and empower citizens about their rights and where to seek help in case of threats to life, liberty, and property, such as terrorism or insurgency. As protectors of the people, the PNP regional office VII formulated the following initiatives to prepare for and prevent acts of terrorism in the region.

'Police sa Barangay' Program. The *'Police sa Barangay'* program of PNP 7 was created through a memorandum circular issued by the regional director. In each barangay, PNP 7 assigns at least one Police Barangay responsible for monitoring the area. They monitor acts of terrorism, terrorist personalities, and terrorist threats at the barangay level, along with crime prevention and protecting the people. The program enhances information collection from the barangay level useful for intelligence operations and identifying terrorists and crime personalities. The handbook on PNP Three-Tiered Defense System against terrorism emphasizes intelligence gathering to assess suspected enemies and identify vulnerable targets. Local Government Executives (LGE) must conduct their own activities for

intelligence gathering in residential and commercial areas to ensure citizen vigilance.

Table 1: Matrix on PNPRO7 Anti-Terrorism Initiatives

Department	Mandated Functions on Human Induced Hazards	Actual Initiatives and Programs
Philippine National Police Regional Office VII (PNP 7)	The PNP shall have the ff. functions: 1. Enforce all laws and ordinances relative to the protection of lives and properties; 2. Maintain peace and order and take all necessary steps to ensure public safety; 3. Investigate and prevent crimes, effect the arrest of criminal offenders, bring offenders to justice and assist in their prosecution' 4. Exercise the general powers to make arrest, search and seizure in accordance with the Constitution and pertinent laws; 5. Detain an arrested person for a period not beyond what is prescribed by law, informing the person so detained of all his rights under the Constitution; 6. Issue licenses for the possession of firearms and explosives in accordance with law; 7. Supervise and control the training and operations of security agencies and issue licenses to operate security agencies, and to security guards and private detectives, for the practice of their professions; and 8. Perform such other duties and exercise all other functions as may be provided by law. (Section 2, RA 8551)	1. *'Police sa Barangay'* Program 2. PNP in collaboration with CCTN T.V. Channel Awareness Program 3. Strengthening the Intelligence Monitoring of the Regional Intelligence Division (RID) 4. Barangay Intelligence Network (BIN) 5. Threat Assessment conducted by PNP 7 6. Basic Internal Security Operation Course (BISOC) 7. SWAT Course 8. Explosion Ordinance Disposal (EOD) 9. Information Dissemination using Foldable Fan 10. Posters on Terminals *PNP 7 Regional Intelligence Division (PNP 7 –RID)* 1. Conduct Meetings to Stakeholders (Muslim Leaders, Security Officer of Malls, Managers of Motels, Inns, and Pension Houses) 2. SIMEX on Counter Terrorism Inter-Agency 3. Scheduled Regular Conferences (RID Family Conferences, RPICC Conference)

A notable example of the success of the 'Police sa Barangay' Program occurred on Bohol Island, as shared by PI1:

> The attack in Bohol exemplified a community-police effort. A resident promptly spotted the terrorist and reported the incident to the police. The police assigned to that barangay was the first point of contact for civilians, and they then relayed the information to higher authorities

It is true that terrorists are enemies of the people, and since most victims of terrorist activity are innocent bystanders, public support for the

war against terror is crucial (Handbook on PNP Three-Tiered Defense System against Terrorism). Therefore, community participation enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of achieving outcomes (Bell, 2004 as cited by Nunez, 2014). The *'Police sa Barangay'* program is one such initiative crafted by the PNP to prevent terrorism.

Awareness Program of PNP through CCTN channel. Every Wednesday afternoon from three-thirty to four-thirty, the PNP airs a segment on the CCTN TV channel aimed at raising awareness of significant issues related to peace and security. They invite guest speakers to discuss various topics involving peace, safety, and security, as well as showcase current policies, programs, and accomplishments of the PNP.

The CCTN-PNP program is considered one of the PNP's awareness programs and a means of disseminating important information to the public, especially on terrorism-related issues. They featured the Abu Sayyaf terrorist attack in Bohol, which was a concrete example of terrorist acts in the Central Visayas region. In line with this, the City Government of Davao conducted the Davao City Anti-Terrorism Forum, which successfully raised awareness and increased the vigilance of all focal persons and stakeholders.

According to PI1, Abu Sayyaf is considered a terrorist group because they are involved in kidnapping for ransom and killing innocent people. In fact, according to the Hindustan Times (2007), the Abu Sayyaf and the Al-Qaeda linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) are some of the terror groups reportedly operating in the Mindanao Region, claiming innocent lives in the Philippines through staged bombings and kidnappings.

The CCTN-PNP program serves as a platform for informing the public about terrorism threats, if any, and providing guidelines and security measures to prevent and minimize loss of life and property destruction. The fourteen pillars of the policy of action to address terrorism, a framework defining the government's overall agenda against terrorist acts, include the office of the Press Secretary maintaining strong relationships with the media to garner support in implementing government actions and policies against terrorism. Through media utilization, the public will be enlightened about the purpose behind these policies and actions.

Intelligence Monitoring of the Regional Intelligence Monitoring Division. The PNP has specialized units dedicated to intelligence monitoring to ensure the validation of information and the proper assessment of reports. These units are responsible for monitoring insurgency areas and terrorist threats within their jurisdiction. This proactive approach greatly aids in preventing

terrorist attacks and disseminating accurate information based on thorough investigation. Such efforts are crucial, as outlined by the U.S. Marine Corps (2002), which emphasizes the importance of understanding terrorist goals, intentions, and capabilities, as well as maintaining an active intelligence program to prepare for and prevent acts of terrorism.

Moreover, Bodrero (1999) outlined five processes necessary to combat local extremism, with the fourth stage focusing on the intelligence stage, where police officers carefully assess extremists' activities for evidence of criminal behavior.

The PNP Regional Intelligence Division accepts and gathers information from the public, community, and citizens for validation before it becomes an official intelligence report. It is important to note that raw information differs from intelligence, which is characterized as information that has been verified, validated, and carefully analyzed by experts.

KI1 added that...

> "For example, a report of a bomb threat at SM is considered raw information until verified for accuracy. Once validated, the report gains intelligence value"

According to the handbook on PNP Three-Tiered Defense System against Terrorism, intelligence involves understanding the enemy and identifying potential targets. However, Maynard (2005) noted that local agencies still face challenges in intelligence gathering, despite the government's efforts to utilize law enforcement units to align intelligence with the needs of specific localities. It is crucial for local agencies to have intelligence resources to support their antiterrorism initiatives and programs.

Barangay Intelligence Network. The BIN is responsible for gathering information at the barangay level. The PNP, led by a commander responsible for information gathering across all barangays in Cebu Province, conducts weekly or monthly meetings with various Barangay Intelligence Networks (BINs) to collect updates on peace and safety, insurgency areas, terrorist threats, and current safety and security issues.

BINs are federations due to their increasing numbers throughout Cebu Province. Each BIN includes at least one or two civilian members responsible for identifying crime personalities and criminals in their communities. Civilian members undergo a Background Information Check before approval to join the BIN.

Threat Assessment conducted by PNP 7. Threat assessment relies on reports from the public to the intelligence division of the PNP. Once a report is received, the division can assess if there is an impending threat to general safety and welfare. There are two kinds of intelligence reports/information: A1 and A2. A1 is classified as follows: if the source witnessed the event firsthand, if the source is involved in the planning of violent actions, if the source personally knows the individuals involved and has concrete knowledge of the plans, and A1 information is validated and one hundred percent true.

The second type is A2, which consists of reports or information received via telephone from an unknown individual. Threat assessment is crucial, especially considering Bodrero's (1999) study, which outlined five processes necessary to combat local extremism. The second process, after the planning stage, is threat assessment, which involves evaluating and differentiating constitutionally safeguarded rhetoric from criminal acts. A formal process of research and evaluation of circumstances, situations, and conditions is required to successfully accomplish this crucial task, which is within the capability of the PNP-RID.

Regarding terrorist threat assessment, according to KI1...

> "Cebu is generally peaceful; however, we must remain vigilant against potential terrorist threats. While we hope for continued peace, recent events like those in Marawi remind us of the need to enhance our intelligence and preventive measures"

The handbook on the PNP Three-Tiered Defense System against Terrorism emphasizes that while terrorism can occur unpredictably, past experiences can help prepare the government's defense system. To defeat terrorism, it is crucial to eliminate any openings, opportunities, or vulnerabilities. Diminishing terrorism's appeal as a political weapon involves mobilizing the masses and citizenry whom terrorists seek to control through fear. Vigilant and united action is key to weakening terrorism's power. The PNP in Region VII takes a proactive approach to addressing the threat of terrorism.

In threat assessment, the PNP Region VII evaluates specific threats or potential threats based on their capacity to commit crimes and cause destruction. KI1 explained the process of assessing a terrorist threat:

> "If a threat involves two persons carrying short firearms, it is considered negligible. A reported threat is not considered a terrorist threat if it lacks the capability to deploy any paraphernalia that can cause damage and danger"

This implies that the PNP VII assesses a specific threat thoroughly. Moreover, the PNP 7 Regional Intelligence Division conducted meetings with different stakeholders in Region 7, such as Muslim leaders, security officers of malls, and managers of motels, inns, and pension houses, to thwart terrorism activity in the region. Elworthy and Rifkind (2006) indicated that an efficient initiative to prevent terrorism builds social, community, and/or intercultural cooperation. Therefore, emphasizing social inclusion and eliminating all forms of discrimination is necessary. These initiatives aim to achieve community cohesion, decrease social exclusion, and prevent radicalization. For example, regular dialogue with marginalized and disaffected groups, particularly young people, and performing risk assessments of communities to identify groups threatened by radicalization.

Simulation Exercises and Stakeholder Conferences. The PNP 7 Regional Intelligence Division conducts simulation exercises. The objective of the Counter Terrorism Inter-Agency SIMEX is to test each member agency on their response structure, promote preparedness, test existing policies and SOPs, and train personnel in performing the desired actions based on their functions. This is in connection with the fifth step of Bodrero (1999) processes necessary to combat local extremism, which focuses on the training stage, stressing the need to form response and emergency divisions, and focuses mostly on the functions, roles, and duties of various vital agencies. The Philippine National Police Regional office VII (PNPRO7) training initiatives include the Basic Internal Security Operation Course (BISOC), SWAT Course, and Explosion Ordinance Disposal (EOD). These initiatives are necessary to improve security against terrorists.

Moreover, the PNP VII Regional Intelligence Division has scheduled regular conferences, RID Family Conferences, and RPICC Conference. Topics discussed during these conferences include significant updates, monitoring of terrorist plans/movements, and other terrorism-related matters. Ronaldo Puno stated in an interview by BBC Monitoring Asia (2006) that preventing the occurrence of terrorism through information hardening rather than relying solely on the capability of police and military personnel can fight any threat. It is important to plan for an attack in ways that involve the people, work with the press, and recognize the competing demands on politicians.

Conclusion

Formulating anti-terrorism initiatives is an inherent duty and function of the Philippine National Police (PNP), as outlined in Executive Order No. 110 - Series of 1999, the Joint Implementing Rules and Regulations to EO 110 - Series of 1999, and RA 6975. In fulfilling this function, the PNP Regional office VII has proactively introduced initiatives to counter acts of terrorism in the entire region, thereby maintaining peace and order and increasing vigilance and public awareness, leading towards more participative governance in curbing the threat of terrorism.

The PNP Regional office VII has implemented several key initiatives, including the *'Police sa Barangay'* program, collaboration with CCTN T.V. channel for awareness programs, strengthened intelligence monitoring by the Regional Intelligence Division (RID), establishment of the Barangay Intelligence Network (BIN), regular threat assessments, provision of the Basic Internal Security Operation Course (BISOC) and SWAT Course, introduction of the Explosion Ordinance Disposal (EOD) program, and information dissemination efforts using foldable fans and posters in terminals. Additionally, the PNP 7 – RID has conducted meetings with stakeholders such as Muslim leaders, security officers of malls, and managers of motels, inns, and pension houses. They have also organized simulation exercises on counter-terrorism inter-agency and regular conferences (e.g., RID Family Conferences, RPICC Conference).

These initiatives have significantly contributed to the safety and order of the region, impacting its social, economic, and political aspects. As a result, there has been a decrease in recorded cases and instances of insurgency in the region compared to other parts of the Philippines. The PNPRO7, in collaboration with various local agencies, has also implemented antiterrorism-related management programs, approved ordinances, passed resolutions, and adopted preventive measures to maintain peace and order and protect the general welfare against the growing threat of terrorism.

Recommendations

For the enhancement of programs towards responsive governance, the following recommendations and courses of action are presented based on the findings:

i. The local government unit of Region 7 should conduct a stakeholders' analysis to uncover the constituency's needs, priority concerns, and satisfaction regarding safety and security measures. This will help formulate efficient and efficacious anti- and counter-terrorism initiatives in the future.

ii. The national government, especially policy-makers, should strengthen and encourage local government units and corresponding agencies to formulate anti-terrorism initiatives through the passage of laws and resolutions providing guidelines for such initiatives.

iii. The local government unit of Region 7 should conduct a multi-stakeholder mapping to develop a holistic preparedness plan. Vital stakeholders, concerned organizations, mandated offices, and agencies can participate with the local governments of the region to map possible alternatives and focal factors relevant to prevention and preparedness for the growing threat of terrorism.

iv. The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMO) of the region lacks resources to craft anti-terrorism initiatives, even though it is mandated to do so. It is recommended that the PDRRMO be allocated additional funding to reinforce its preparedness plan other than its response plan against terrorism.

v. Since vigilance in united action is the first step to weaken the power of terrorism, it is recommended that Local Government Executives (LGEs) organize their own intelligence collectors and mandate the same for their respective subordinate LGUs for a wide range vigilance and possible assessment of questionable personalities.

vi. Preparedness is one way of mitigating damages and destruction, such as loss of lives and personnel. Thus, it is recommended to conduct rehearsals, drills, and dry runs in actual fields (e.g., schools, government offices, and private entities).

vii. To increase public involvement in government undertakings and operations, it is recommended to fortify community partnerships among LGUs. This will help prevent radicalization among citizens and achieve the aim of perpetual peace

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Contingent Valuation Method: A Practical and Participatory Resource Valuation in Upland Philippines

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Abstract. Valuing upland resources is essential to ensure its sustainability of use. This paper examined which existing method or technique of upland valuation best suits the Philippine setting. Employing a literature review, articles from different journals and websites were analyzed. Given sufficient data that Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) is practical and participatory, CVM was found to be the most commonly employed technique. These results can guide policy development on upland resource valuation.

Keywords: Contingent Valuation, Economics, Philippines, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

The planet has a plethora of resources and wonders, on which highly depends human civilization e.g. the economy. Oceans, rivers, mountains, waters, soils, and air resources are essential to human well-being (World Wildlife Fund, n. d.). Resources are categorized based on their strategic geographical positioning: the lowland and upland resources. At one hand, lowland resources are found at the foot of a slope less than 18% elevation. These are usually encompassed with rice fields and farms, where these areas are extensively used for human subsistence. On the other hand, upland resources are natural resources that inherently originate in slopes 18% or greater than elevation, such as timber, water resources, upland minerals, etc. However, both types of resources, especially upland resources, are subject to human overexploitation.

The Philippines is among Southeast Asian countries with a vast array of upland resources. The country's uplands and forestlands account for 50% of 30 million hectares of land, categorized as hilly and mountainous.

Filipinos, locals and migrants, depend on upland resources for an emporia of irreplaceable services such as provisions, regulation, culture and aesthetics (Landicho & Quizon, 2020). However, these resources are subject to challenges as the Philippine uplands are at high risk and vulnerable to

inappropriate resource utilization due to the increasing number of upland occupants (Bales et al., 2014).

One third of Filipinos (around 24 million people including indigenous, tribal, and marginalized communities) are living and cultivating an estimated upland area of 6 million hectares (Executive Order No. 606; Legaspi et al., 2021). With land utilization comes adverse effects such as abrupt degradation of the land resource and the reduction of ecosystem services.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) issued by the United Nations in 2015 aim to change the ways and means of life. These 17 goals aim to revolutionize global processes into something sustainable, innovating the realm of economic, social, and environmental spheres to be achieved by 2030 (Singh et al., 2022). This review underscores goals 11, 12, and 15: Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable, Responsible Consumption and Production and Life on land, respectively. Goal 11 acknowledged the growth of the human population and the need to build cities that adhere to the needs of the civilization, emphasizing safe space and affordable and resilient cities with green and culturally inspiring living conditions. Moreover, 11.9 of the latter goal, Implement Policies for Inclusion, Resource Efficiency, and Disaster Risk Reduction, aims to increase the carrying capacity of cities and human settlements in utilizing and commencing policies that are connected and have plans towards efficiency on resource utilization, mitigation, and climate change adaptation. Goal 12 is anchored on sustainable utilization and production patterns. This stresses the need to efficiently create policies and robust governance that focus more on regulating the consumption of resources to avoid abrupt resource depletion due to the increase of consumption along with the increasing global population making the present and future generations to avail of these resources equitably. Additionally, goal 15 stresses the need to conserve and restore the terrestrial ecosystem and sustainably manage forest/terrestrial resources, combating desertification caused by forest resource depletion due to deliberate resource consumption and land conversion (United Nations, n.d.).

Various methods were used to compensate or subsidize the effects or the usage of a wide array of services the upland provides to intervene in the effects of these unwanted effects. Valuing resources regarding economic and social significance would help the decision-makers determine the effects of choices in the amount undertaken and how long it will take to rehabilitate the damaged or overused ecosystem services (World Wildlife Fund, n. d.). This estimation of the amount involves people deciding how much they are willing to expend to rehabilitate the environment. Achieving

these goals can be addressed by applying various modalities including resource valuation methods.

This paper aimed to assess the existing valuation methods and techniques for upland resources in the Philippines. The result of this analysis would help decision-makers devise or strengthen policies on valuing upland resources towards rehabilitation, conservation and sustainability.

Methodology

This paper employs analysis of various articles from different journals/websites (Journal of Environmental Science and Management, Resources, Journal of Philippine Development and Australian Water Partnership) gathered and tabulated the journal name, article title, author/s, resources valued, and valuation method employed. Saturation point (Saunders et al., 2018) was considered to avoid redundancy of the information drawn from the surveyed literature.

After tabulation, the researcher determined that the valuation method used across the surveyed journals/websites was interpreted based on its practicality and availability of literature and applications on various research. The selection of journals/websites is based on the top five results from search engines using the keywords “upland resources,” “valuation methods,” and “Philippines.”

Results and Discussion

This section presents the articles presented in tabular form drawn from journals and websites where various researches about the existing valuation methods of upland resources in the Philippines were gathered during article finding step (Table 1).

Water is found to be a resource that is consistently valued across the articles that were surveyed (Australian Water Partnership; Palanca-Tan, 2015; Ureta et al., 2016; Jalilov, 2017), while forest resources were found the least (Francisco & Espiritu, 1999). Although Economic Valuation using Cost-Benefit Analysis, Hedonic Pricing Method, Market-Based Valuation Method, and Travel Method Analysis were also found in the articles (Australian Water Partnership; Francisco & Espiritu, 1999; Palanca-Tan, 2015; Ureta et al., 2016; Jalilov, 2017), Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) was found to be the most common. The efficiency and practicality of CVM, usually applied to water resources and rehabilitation of specific ecosystem services, is widely attested (Francisco & Espiritu, 1999; Palanca-Tan, 2015; Ureta et al., 2016; Jalilov, 2017). Thus, it is perhaps to be considered as the most pervasive method of valuation.

Table 1. Upland Resource Valuation Methods in the Philippines

Article	Journal/ Website	Author/s	Resources Valued	Valuation Method
The case for valuing the water in the Philippines	Australian Water Partnership	Australian Water Partnership	Water Resources	Economic Valuation Using Cost-Benefit Analysis
Value of Clean Water Resources: Estimating the Water Quality Improvement in Metro Manila, Philippines	Resources	Jalilov, 2017	Water Resources	Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) and Hedonic Pricing Method
Knowledge, Attitudes, and Willingness to Pay for Sanitation Services: A Contingent Valuation Survey in Metro Manila, Philippines	Journal of Environmental Science and Management	Palanca-Tan, 2015	Water Resources	Contingent Valuation Method(CVM)
Valuation of Forest Resources in Watershed Areas: Selected Applications in Makiling Forest Reserve	Journal of Philippine Development	Francisco & Espiritu, 1999	Forest Resources	Employed a wide array of valuation methods: Travel Cost Method and Contingent Valuation Method
A Ridge-to-Reef Ecosystem-Based Valuation Approach to Biodiversity Conservation in Layawan Watershed, Misamis Occidental, Philippines	Journal of Environmental Science and Management	Ureta et al., 2016	Watershed Resources	Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) and Market-Based Valuation Methods

The contingent valuation method is one of the most flexible and ideal for a wide range of resources, especially upland resources. It is a method that allows people to participate in putting value to resources through

surveys or interviews wherein the interviewer can ask the pulse and preference of the community on how much money they are Willing To Pay (WTA) for a particular service or product.

As to the availability of data, CVM has a wide array of applications wherein it can be applied in valuing any resources, either in upland or in lowland resources, and it is evident in various literature and articles where CVM was used as a primary tool of valuation. Given that the data of this method is vast, researchers or even policy-makers can use this method as a deciding factor in putting value as it is a participative type of valuation and is considered holistic since the people were given a chance to decide on how much they are willing to give up to avail on specific resources based on their collective socioeconomic status and the demand of resources in the community where they are living. Once the data are done and extrapolated, it will result in promising values that can be utilized to put a value on the resources present. Also, it has been noted that the data on the method is available, and the literature survey would be easy, which would help establish the credibility of the method itself.

However, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (n.d.), in one of the case studies that the organization has published online, CVM would implicate the services to rehabilitate the resources like in Davao City where a survey was conducted that was anchored using CVM revealed that water pollution control is not their priority or "not a high priority" of the residents. They think other environmental problems need to be funded aside from this. These responses may affect the administrators' decision once these would be the basis of contribution and funding. Hence, the contribution would be biased as it is influenced by the perception of the people as to what facet of the community or environment that is needed to be addressed and subsidized.

In terms of practicality, CVM can be used efficiently since the method can elicit real-life data and demographic information, plus the people's preference on how much they are willing to spend on a particular product. Further, combining these two (demographics and WTA) would produce a more conclusive inference on resource valuation and weighing and making decisions. However, the CVM may have been deemed a practical model for valuing resources. Still, the downside is that the approach is anchored to the assumption that the respondents provided accurate and unbiased answers to hypothetical questions that anchor to hypothetical scenarios (Baker et al., 2014). The integrity of this valuation method may be practical since it is tailored to fit the sociodemographic status of every respondent. However, it is smeared with the inaccurateness of the response of every individual who

participated during the interview or survey since the perspective is based only on a non-existent scenario, but it refers to it.

CVM can be considered as an applicable upland resource valuation method in the Philippines as this would help put a value on upland resources that have direct and indirect significance to ensure sustainability and the perpetual existence of upland resources of the country. However, the downside of the latter method is that uncertainties of responses shadow it since it is anchored to a hypothetical scenario, which may affect the perception of the respondent on how much money or subsidy they are willing to give to specific environmental resources like water resources to flourish or exist sustainably. Nonetheless, despite the disparity of the data given, CVM would be an indispensable tool to promote inclusive decision-making and service offerings.

Conclusion

CVM can be an efficient tool for valuing upland resources in the Philippines. Given sufficient data that this method is practical and participatory, it can be an ideal tool that would provide comprehensive valuation. However, a precaution when using CVM is the absence of a stable measure which might lead to the undervaluation of resources as it is contingent on arbitrary responses.

Therefore, scenarios presented to respondents must be posed in a way that elicits responses closest to the value they will actually set. Notwithstanding the practical and participatory character of CVM, the potential undervaluing of resources due to the reliance on bargaining raises fundamental ethical questions concerning the value of ecosystem resources—a pressing concern for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

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E-Class Scheduling and Room Utilization: An Innovation in the Instruction Process of BISU-Main Campus

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Abstract. This article documents the process, discusses outcomes and identifies recommendation for sustainability of an E-Class Scheduling and Room Utilization process as an innovative measure to improve instruction delivery in Bohol Island State University, Main Campus. The initiative to innovate the process springs from the chronic difficulties and problems, such as schedule conflicts, lack of classrooms in particular hours while underemployed classrooms during other hours, and sustained re-sectioning of classes, among others, encountered by all colleges during every start of a semester. A system was then devised based on gathered data from those who are directly involved in class scheduling and with the aid of Google Spreadsheet as a support software, the e-process was implemented. It was found out that after two consecutive semesters, the e-process (1) facilitated agreement and consensus among schedulers through secured plotting position, transparency of inputs, and ease of communication; and (2) generated heatmaps that indicate arbitrarily preferred day and time schedules (favorites) ushering for interventional adjustments to democratize and maximize room utilization. It is recommended that policies be effected to institutionalize and thereby sustain the e-class scheduling and room utilization for improve quality as well as effective and efficient delivery of instruction.

Keywords: E-Class Scheduling, Room Utilization, Google Spreadsheets, Innovation in Instruction, Bohol Island State University

Introduction

Quality, effective and efficient service is one requirement more pronounced and expected in the government. Section 4 of Republic Act No. 6713 (1989) specifically requires that “every department office and agency... conduct continuing studies and analyses of their work systems and procedures to improve delivery of public services.” Given its nature as a

national statue, this law is binding in government organizations and state instrumentalities, including Bohol Island State University (BISU).

One enabling aspect crucial to the delivery of quality, effective and efficient instruction – the primary mandated function of BISU – is the class scheduling process and room utilization. For the past years, paper and pen method has been the rule of the game. Individuals are assigned by Program Chairpersons as schedulers who manually plot courses to instructors and professors (including themselves) with corresponding room assignment. This usual process engenders difficulties and problems that are chronically experienced, though eventually mitigated as classes in a semester progress.

With the establishment of the College of Arts and Sciences, which has offered additional three curricular programs and centralized the offering and management of the General Education courses, the usual process is no longer tenable. Problems continue to arise because, (1) paper and pen causes more delays due to manual handling of the plotted schedule from college to college through filled-out forms or electronic files such as word doc or spreadsheets; (2) manual plotting obscures transparency of use that favors monopoly and inequitable assigning of classrooms and like facilities/resources; and (3) absence of equitable control so that any scheduler can intentionally (or not) plot over an already assigned schedule.

The solution was the development and utilization of a centralized class scheduling process using Google Spreadsheet that can act as a database to store and share information through sheet importation from one spreadsheet to another. The spreadsheet facilitates ease and efficiency in the scheduling process using truncated functions to show library details and recorded schedule and identify restrictions which are helpful for predefined logical evaluations of the scheduling process.

This presentation documents the development and utilization process of the E-Class Scheduling and Room Utilization through Google Spreadsheet, with a discussion of attendant findings and recommendation for policy development.

Methods

Gathering Narratives. Consultation, through dialogue and discussion, with the different key informants of the colleges was taken as the first step. They were generally asked about their usual process of class scheduling, difficulties encountered, counter-measures, those that were considered milestones, and suggestions for improvement.

Responses were then recorded, transcribed, sequentially organized and presented back to the informants for validation. Printed samples of past

schedules were also gathered as supplementary data. With necessary and sufficient validated data, Narrative analysis came next.

Analyzing the narratives. A set of guidelines was established based on the following criteria: (1) common techniques performed by all of the colleges; (2) common rules and guidelines on which the colleges base their scheduling process; (3) unique technique to each college; (4) unique rules and guidelines along with reasons/justifications for each taken and practiced action; and (5) legal bases and institutional guidelines with which their implementation was aligned.

Constructing the Framework. Given the set of guidelines, a framework was then developed that involved the following steps: (1) The Program Chairperson will plot or assign a group (instructors/professors) to plot the schedule; (2) The assigned scheduler is then given a link to the college library (database) where initial data were stored and registered as new program(s). He or she then, updates instructors' status including, among others, designation and de-loading, adds new set of courses offered, and updates the classroom; (3) The scheduler is given another link for him or her to plot the schedule and store the data in the sheet. The stored data are then reflected in the main database where the main database in turn broadcasts the plotted schedule to the other schedulers to avoid conflict; (4) The flow of the scheduling process starts with the plotting of (a) the major courses, (b) the General Education courses, (c) the professional courses, and (d) the courses without shop or laboratory (mostly with 3 hours duration). Scheduling conflict are reconciled between and among department/program chairpersons and schedulers; (5) After finalizing, the schedules are then printed. The printed outcome is through a sheet linked to the database that is formatted based on institutional specifications (CHED and ISO-consistent); and (6) The final step is the analysis of the database. Data would include room percentage utilization, distribution of class load, and balance and equitable shifts scheduling, among others.

Developing the software. The software was developed based on the framework of the class scheduling process that took consideration of the of availability of resources, familiarity of the users, and speed of deployment and modification. Google spreadsheet with the google app script, a JavaScript-based programming, was apt because of its data handling capabilities (Google, n.d.).

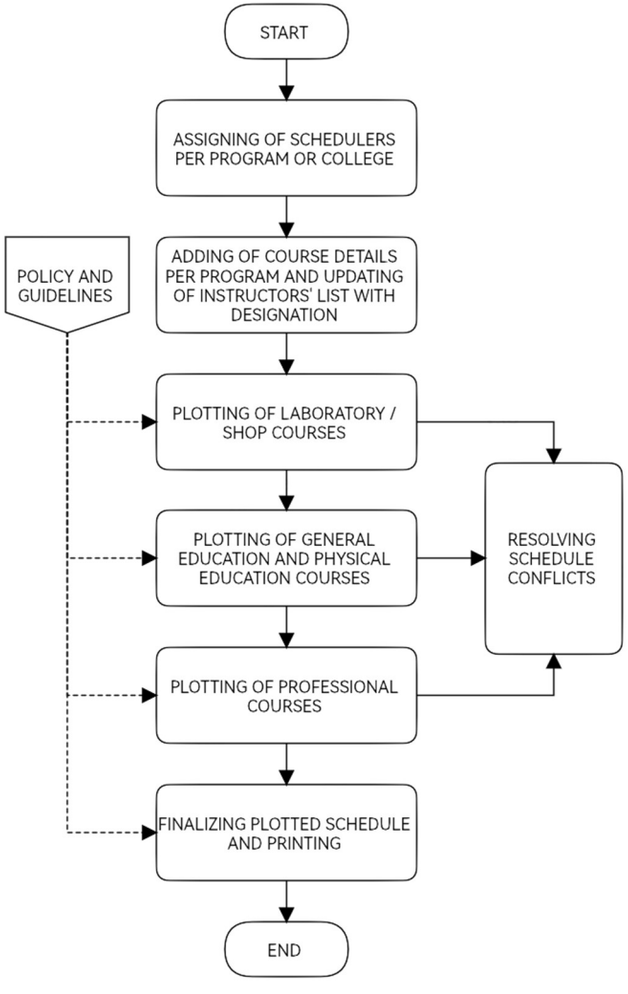

Figure 1. Framework of the Class Scheduling Process

The developed software had multiple spreadsheets linked together for diverse features and purposes. There is (1) the library which stores the preliminary data - programs, courses, instructors, rooms and other process details; (2) the scheduler's spreadsheets which adds, modifies, stores, and removes schedules based on policies and guidelines; (3) the database

spreadsheet which collects and shares the plotted schedules with the other spreadsheet; and (4) the printable sheets formatted based on institutional requirements for dissemination and compiling of hardcopy outputs.

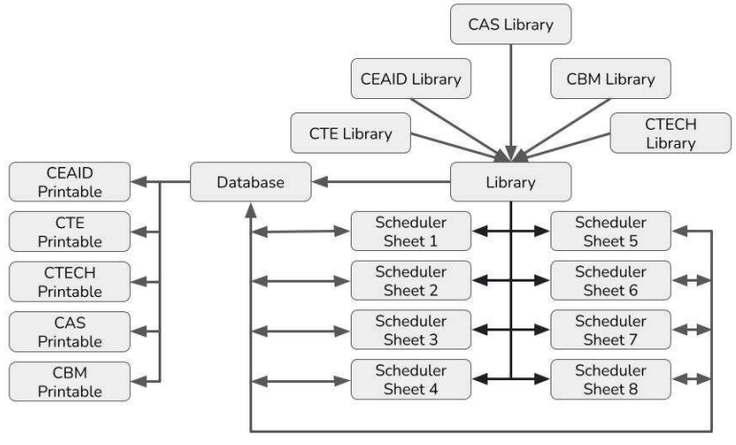

Figure 2. Centralized group of spreadsheets of the class scheduling support software

Most of the spreadsheets, with the exception of the scheduler's spreadsheet, handle and store significant data. The scheduler's spreadsheet has the internal framework of collecting from and storing data in the main library and other databases. It has three functions: (1) apply policy and guidelines, (2) present data collected from both the library and the database for scheduling purpose and for avoiding schedule conflict, as well as (3) add, modify and remove schedules from the sub-database. It also interfaces with other utility sheets for more effective and efficient scheduling process.

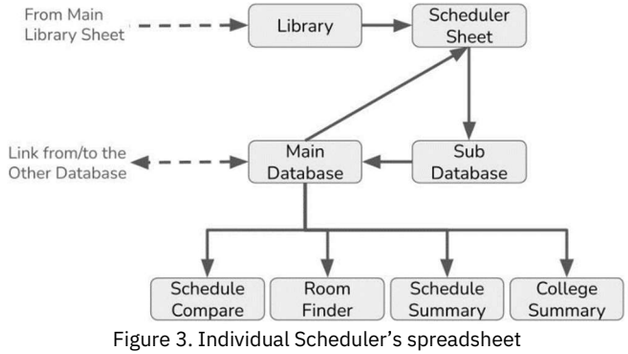

Figure 3. Individual Scheduler's spreadsheet

Implementing the Software. Based on the framework, an e-class scheduling and room utilization using google spreadsheets and google app scripts is implemented. To get started, all the necessary preliminary data are stored in the library and the scheduler's sheet is prefilled with required information.

The sheet is also embedded with needed restrictions for the scheduler to easily avoid conflicts as well as hints for already uploaded or identified instructor, class section or room.

When plotting is finalized, the schedule is stored in the database. Only the scheduler himself or herself can delete what he or she has plotted.

Testing the Software. The first implementation of the e-class scheduling and room utilization process generated the following results:

(1) Percentage of room utilization, number of face-to-face classes without room; and number of online classes; (2) Heatmap of the number of rooms with classes during a particular day and time of the week; (3) Status of classes of both instructor and student; and (4) All forms of analyses that can be extracted from the schedules.

Likewise, it was noted that there was no conflict of schedule within the system. Some were identified, though, in the actual conduct of classes due to lack of classrooms.

Results

It was observed that during the initial stage of implementation/running of the process, plotting of schedules was manually done by the Program Chairpersons who were still adjusting to navigate the e-scheduling system. They then forwarded it to the assigned schedulers who in turn encoded/plotted it in the system.

Expectedly, conflict (in schedule) could not be avoided. These were resolved, however, firstly because the system does not allow conflict, inconsistency and unnecessary duplication, and secondly, it enables all schedulers to view plotting from all ends. It is through the system that they communicate and resolve emerging issues without the need for physical presentation and discussion. Additionally, it also allows schedulers to find rooms with ease through other utility sheets like room finder and schedule compare. Likewise, it can also be easily monitored by the Program Chairpersons and Deans since it also features a college summary sheet where an overview of the load of all the instructors can be accessed and viewed.

First Semester, 2024-2025

College:	MAIN	Total # of Rooms Utilized			75	82
Time	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
7:30-8:30	35	48	23	43	31	2
8:30-9:30	57	54	27	53	32	5
9:30-10:30	56	57	26	55	37	7
10:30-11:30	52	51	25	49	38	3
11:30-12:30	37	33	7	28	21	5
12:30-1:30	49	50	23	48	37	5
1:30-2:30	56	55	24	52	39	6
2:30-3:30	55	55	29	48	36	3
3:30-4:30	58	54	36	54	39	4
4:30-5:30	56	54	44	54	50	4
5:30-6:30	56	52	43	51	47	2
6:30-7:30	36	30	24	31	30	0
7:30-8:30P	30	27	18	29	22	0

Face to face Class without room	1917	31.18%
Face to Face Class with room	2656	43.20%
Total Face to face class	4573	
Online Class	1575	25.62%
Total Class Hour	6148	100.00%
Percentage Room Utilization	54.48%	

(a)

Second Semester, 2024 - 2025

College:	MAIN	Total # of Rooms Utilized			72	82
Time	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
7:30-8:30	38	56	23	44	36	2
8:30-9:30	54	59	26	55	38	5
9:30-10:30	59	59	32	60	39	5
10:30-11:30	52	56	36	51	37	2
11:30-12:30	33	30	14	23	25	4
12:30-1:30	48	46	34	48	34	3
1:30-2:30	51	53	42	53	35	3
2:30-3:30	61	51	46	55	35	1
3:30-4:30	55	52	43	50	36	3
4:30-5:30	59	53	48	56	42	3
5:30-6:30	53	52	40	57	43	2
6:30-7:30	34	32	27	28	25	0
7:30-8:30P	29	28	20	31	21	0

Face to face Class without room	1290	23.08%
Face to Face Class with room	2741	49.03%
Total Face to face class	4031	
Online Class	1559	27.89%
Total Class Hour	5590	100.00%
Percentage Room Utilization	58.57%	

(b)

Figure 1. Tables with details on the percentage of room utilization including the heatmaps of the concentration of room utilization from (a) First Semester, 2024 - 2025, (b) Second Semester, 2024 – 2025 generated from the system

Comparing the two tables above, the result shows that arbitrarily preferred (favorite) day and time-slots have been significantly reduced indicated by the sparser or lighter color in the heatmap of the second table. Moreover, the occurrence of face-to-face classes without rooms is also significantly reduced from 31.18% to 23.08%. With proper and consistent use of the system, it is projected that face-to-face classes without rooms could eventually be cleared-out.

Overall, testing of the system indicated significant reduction in scheduling conflicts and processing time.

Conclusion

The integration of both the framework developed and the class schedule plotting and room utilization support software provides a well-defined class scheduling process which can reduce conflict and room insufficiency. After two consecutive semesters of running the system, results indicate that it (1) facilitated agreement and consensus among schedulers through secured plotting position, transparency of inputs, and ease of communication; and (2) generated heatmaps that indicate arbitrarily preferred day and time schedules (favorites) ushering for interventional adjustments to democratize and maximize room utilization.

E-Class Scheduling and Room Utilization proves to be an innovation in the instruction process of BISU-Main Campus by addressing key inefficiencies in the traditional scheduling process. The system is scalable, adaptable, and can serve as a base for favorable enhancements to properly manage both human and capital organizational resources.

It is recommended that institutional policies be implemented to sustain its use for quality, effective and efficient service to BISU's clientele.

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But You Didn't Know

"An admiration, blown to the wind. May this whisper reach thee."

Jamielaine Butawan
Bohol Island State University

Presence like a sunshine
A rare flavor of wine
Has anyone told thou art sweet as honey?
If uttered by thee, thy heart be a jumping bunny
Pair of orbs so ethereal, a gem to compare would not suffice
Can you blame me if I keep getting lost in your eyes?
Thy smile a coat on a rainy day
Like a warm blanket in some sort of way
A splendid being like you, but... you didn't know

Have I told you that thou specimen is a favour of the Gods?
Despite world's cruelty, hope against all odds?
Wishing fate would bind us with their silver thread,
Hoping my soul won't be broken and unsaid
Yet there you are, secretly singing long lamentation
From the muses who took your attention
They envy you, their words of admiration
Their words, silently an incantation
To your downfall, their jubilation
Thou an adoration, but... you didn't know

If you just know, you are a treasure,
Magnificent beyond measure
Countless fools who tried to conquer you
Like conquistadors wanting to travel faster in a bayou
May thy heart be not trapped to thee
As I await to unravel this mystery
How a maiden like you, has disturbed my fantasy
Even if it takes to spend a fortune for you to cast a glance
If thy heavens approve, my being would be in a whole trance
All of these daydreaming waiting to confide, but... you didn't know

Salimisim

"Sa pagnanasang makaligtas, hindi aakalaing hahantong sa isang mapait na wakas"

Jamielaine Butawan
Bohol Island State University

Ako'y tila isang uwak na nakamasid
Sa pinakadulong silid
Tila ito'y nababalot ng mga lihim na di dapat malaman
Hawak ang iyong kamay, tayo'y maingat na nagmamanman
Alkemiyang wari'y salamangka na sa iba'y bunga ng kabaliwan
Sa hindi sinasadyang pagkakataon, kami'y nabuking
Nakipagbuno't muntik maduling
Gamit ang mala-sangganong galaw kagaya ng bida sa mga nobela,
Liksi't lakas, ipinakita, isang kapana-panabik na sarsuela!

Hinahabol na para bang tulisan
Sa pagkuha ng bagay na makakaligtas ng sanlibutan
Kami ba kaya'y mapapasalamatan?
Sa palihim naming kabayanihan?
O di ba kaya'y mangyaring mapapasakop pa ng mas makapangyarihan?
Kung ito'y mangyari, nais kong mangatwiran
Na ang mga bagay na ganito ay para sa kabutihan
Gusto ko nang ngumiti habang papalapit sa palabas na lagusan,
Ngunit hindi ko mawari ang kakaibang nararamdaman

Taliwas sa iyong ngiti ay isa palang patibong
Isang pagkakamali ang hindi ko pakikinig sa mga bulong
Heto't naguguluhan, humahakbang ng paurong
Ideyang nais sabihin, sayo't matanong
Na ikaw ba'y kaibigan o kaaway?
Ngunit huli ko nang malaman noong ako'y nakahandusay
Sa kabila ng aking pagtitiwala,
Nais mo pala'y ako'y mawala
Habang ako'y tinutusok ng iyong patalim
Ako'y tahimik na namamaalam, nababalot na ng dilim
Mundo ko'y tumigil, mabagal na salimisim

ARTICLES

CREATIVE WORKS

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