

SOPHOPHILIA

Critical Readings in Philosophy

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PREFACE

This volume entitled **Sophophilia**—Greek word for “Wisdom of Love”—is in profound recognition of the boldness of the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas who in his philosophical works has turned philosophy on its head by arguing that philosophy to be more relevant and meaningful in its human sense should not be “love of wisdom (or learning)” but rather “wisdom of love.” In his **Totality and Infinity**, Levinas says: “Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love . . . and serves justice by thematizing the difference and reducing the thematized to difference . . . Philosophy justifies and criticizes the laws of being and of the city.”

Sophophilia is a collection of philosophical essays representing a wide range of philosophical climates, traditions, tendencies and commitments intended to prepare and introduce new enthusiasts to the academic field of Philosophy. The author has determined that an exploration of basic issues relative to these classic philosophical areas is essential for the novice to really get a sensible and meaningful grasp of philosophy in general and of academic philosophy in particular.

The author extends his sincere gratitude and appreciation to Carlos Bueno and Glenn Agbing for the finishing touches.

Ruel F. Pepa

For the generation
of
Maree Khrystin Charlize
and
Mari Khleya Lexis

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BASIC PHILOSOPHY

A Philosophical Theorizing in Search of A Method of Transformative Philosophizing

I. Philosophy As A Breaking Free from Classical Philosophy

Philosophy, as we know it (or as it is known by those who know it), consists of elaborations (or presentations of elaborations) of propositions/proposals that widen and/or deepen, analyze and/or criticize, contradict and/or annihilate preceding elaborations (or presentations of elaborations) of certain propositions/proposals. Hence, the development of philosophy, like the historic time in which it runs, is a linearity of affirmations and negations, advocacies and assaults, praises and protestations.

But however we look into the internalities of particular philosophical formulations and presentations, the linearity of movements occurs on a beaten path, nay a steel railroad, that, if retrogressive immortality may theoretically/hypothetically sustain us, unconditionally leads back to Socrates or even further back to the Pre-Socratics. As if only the ancient Greeks/Hellenes were supernaturally/magically gifted with both the spirit and the intellect to inaugurate the enterprise we now call Philosophy.

What right do we, non-Greeks/non-Hellenes, have to philosophize? Or, is philosophizing a matter of right? Are we, non-Greeks/non-Hellenes, only relegated to the sideline/periphery of the intellectual terrain/arena to discuss the history of philosophy and later, debate on philosophical issues whose roots of problematization automatically trace back to issues--however seemingly amusingly trivial and simplistic they are in the modern world of thematization--originally raised by the Greek mind?

Philosophy's history brings us to non-Greek/non-Hellene territories, no question about it, for there has been a deparochialization of Philosophy through generations marked by a temporal

boundary that separates B.C.E. (before the common era) from the C.E. (common era). There was, in fact, a cosmopolitanization of Philosophy heightened in a geographical region--Northwestern Europe and the British Isles--cartographically over and above its birthplace. Philosophy's "elevation" is symbolic of its more serious and more sophisticated level of achievement in the modern age in terms of intellectual configurations, challenges, complexities, and controversies. But the whole process and event are not a severance of linkage from what is originally Greek/Hellene. Philosophy, therefore, as we know it now, is the undying flow of Greek/Hellene problematization--the persistence of perennial global Hellenization. This is classic/classical philosophy.

And in this historic and geographic movement, could there be an institutionalization of a certain form/type of alienation that has artificialized the way intellectuals in another milieu like ours look at, interpret, anticipate, and propose to approach the crucial nodes of life in the here and now, the there and then, and even the unforeseen/unforeseeable? Or, probably our cultural location is so uniquely special so that alienation is not an issue because the categories of the so-called classical philosophy perfectly match our reality? Has classical philosophy been alienating us, or have we been the ones alienating classical philosophy? Should philosophy be always classical? Is there a way to inaugurate a philosophy that is not classical and yet, still a philosophy, no more, no less?

When the first of the "classicals"—the Pre-Socratics—started to philosophize, they looked at the world where they lived; they looked at themselves as they relate with the world; and they looked inside themselves as individuals uniquely distinguished from others. This is the universal starting point of philosophizing—non-Greek/non-Hellene or whatever. Yet, this universal point of departure can only be truly meaningful if grounded in reality. This is pure and simple philosophizing that transcends the territories of time and space or time-space/space-time. And as we look at the world we live in in the context of our present realities; as we look at the ways we relate with these realities; and as we look inside us as unique individuals affected and affecting, influenced and influencing these realities, have we not embarked into an enterprise we call philosophy/philosophizing?

II. Toward a Method of Philosophizing

Classical philosophy, as system-building, is both Greek/Hellene and metaphysical in rootage, influence, and dynamic. What I propose in this paper is not a system of philosophy/philosophical system--hence, non-metaphysical (even anti-metaphysical) and I believe non-Greek/non-Hellene (but without being anti-Greek/anti-Hellene). It's not even a philosophy but rather a philosophizing--not a system but a method. A method of philosophizing has the advantage of being universal, not in prescribing an absolute and all-encompassing paradigm or thinking/thought-paradigm/thought-system intended to fit the Leibnizian "all possible worlds," but in critically problematizing, approaching, focusing to, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating an event/the hermeneutic of an event, the causal factor(s) that has(have) effected the event, and the thought-power that has woven and interwoven the fibers of formulation that constitutes the hermeneutic of the event.

A method of philosophizing is also a pragmatico-evolutionary movement of perception-reflection-action that constitutes the dialectical spontaneity of a praxis open to the signification of flux, the disintegration of norms, and the formation of the novel and the avant-garde. A method of philosophizing, like the philosophizer equipped with it, is an authentic warrior flexible in seasons of warfare, capable to laugh at defeats and celebrate in victories. A pragmatico-evolutionary method of philosophizing is inherently transformative—a transformative philosophizing that takes the challenge of and responds to the Marxian critique of hermeneuticist philosophy ["Philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it." (Theses on Feuerbach)] I am, therefore, proposing for a philosophy that is transformative philosophizing, clear-eyed and wide-ranging in perception, deep and insightful in reflection, and empowering, influential, and transforming in action. It is a method of philosophizing to which no race, region, nation or ethnicity can ever lay claim. This philosophizing is non-metaphysical, much less non-

Greek/non-Hellene. But it has all the critical power to disentangle and disintegrate metaphysical generalizations and problematizations, seriosities, and follies, as well as all the user-friendliness to be in the disposal of anyone in any situation—paramount or virtual, national or global—in normal, even abnormal, circumstances. This method of philosophizing is aimed to ultimately de-professionalize philosophy/philosophizing. So that, philosophizing is no longer the “esoteric” and specialized task of academically “anointed” gurus and mahatmas.

III. A Method of Philosophizing Called “Transformative Philosophizing”

Transformative philosophizing consists of a multi-progressive path of transcendence and renewal. The cycle is constituted by the philosophical tasks of 1) translation: the propositionalization of a phenomenon/event; 2) hermeneutics/interpretation: the abstracting intellectualization of the components or mechanics of the interpreted phenomenon/event; 3) analysis: an investigation into the salient components or mechanics of the interpreted phenomenon/event; 4) pragmatization: the verification of how the analyzed mechanics of the phenomenon/event are operationalized in human experience; 5) synthesis: the integration of the pragmatically confirmed theorizing and the theoretically signified practice; and 6) evaluation: a propositional assessment of the transformative worth of the phenomenon/event, wherein the transformation could effect a new paradigm of existence that strengthens one’s “will-to-power” and supports her/his courage in “saying-yes-to-life.” [with apologies to Nietzsche]

Transformative philosophizing is an act of critically “gliding” along the empirico-rational milieu of the cultural apparatus with an aim to effect transformation of being and strength of character in the stability of a well-defined state of affairs through cognitive enlightenment and intellectual empowerment with the instrumentality of transformative philosophizing’s multi-procedural cycle of progression toward transcendence and renewal. Transformative philosophizing is a reflective act/active reflection that looks deeply into the ordered chaos/chaotic order of human flexibility/flexible humanity equipped with all the capability of embracing the persistence of the recurrence of eternity/eternal recurrence in space-time/time-space continuum.

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Nurturing the Imagination of Resistance: Some important views from contemporary philosophers

[This is the text of the 2004 Martin Heidegger Memorial Lecture, delivered on 28 July 2004 at the Barsam Hall Audio-Visual Room, Trinity College of Quezon City (TCQC), The Philippines]

From the Hermeneutics of Suspicion to the Post-Modern Imagination of Resistance

Stanley Honer in his "An Invitation to Philosophy" comments that philosophy does not answer questions; philosophy questions answers.

In the history of western philosophy, the most penetrating and radical questions asked by modern philosophy came out through the defiant treatises of what the French hermeneutic philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his *Freud and Philosophy* (1970) calls "the masters of the hermeneutics of suspicion" namely, **Karl Marx**, **Friedrich Nietzsche**, and **Sigmund Freud**. According to Ricoeur, the **hermeneutics of suspicion** is "a method of interpretation which assumes that the literal or surface-level meaning of a text is an effort to conceal the political interests which are served by the text. The purpose of interpretation is to strip off the concealment, unmasking those interests."^[1] It unmasks and unveils untenable claims. It suspects the credibility of the superficial text and explores what is underneath the surface to reveal a more authentic dimension of meaning.

Marx's analysis of religion exposed and opposed the illusory character of the transcendent realm conceived and taught by religion to ease the misery and hardship experienced by dehumanized people exploited in work places by the new slave-drivers of the Industrial Era — the capitalists. Hence, Marx concluded that religion is the opium of the people.

With an equally devastating attack against the religion of his time, Nietzsche saw in it a determination to elevate weakness to the level of strength thereby making weakness honorable

and worthy of praise. In such situation, the character of the religious human being is led to a state of domestication where the full potential of being human is not explored, much less realized. Because of the "moral values" of humility, pity, hospitality, kindness, among others, the human being has been deprived of the natural flow of the "will to power" which, according to Nietzsche, is the sole factor that makes humanity the bridge stretched between the "Unmensch" [beast] and the "Übermensch" [Overman].

Religion in the hands of Freud was critically presented to distinguish "the real" from "the apparent". Though religion could be a source of comfort and feeling of assurance, getting one's self in a serious problem in the warp and woof of life exposes the illusions that inhabit this house of cards. In Freud, religion is simply an expression of one's wish to be protected and defended by a father-figure called "God".

It could be said at this point that the masters of the hermeneutics of suspicion though "destructive" in their methodology did not actually aim to destroy institutionalized edifices of culture and civilization just for the senseless sake of destroying them. They embarked in their respective projects to "clear the horizon for a more authentic word, for a new reign of Truth, not only by means of a 'destructive' critique, but by the invention of an art of interpreting."^[2] It is only in destroying the false assumptions and the untenable platforms of awareness that new liberating paradigms of thought may arise to allow the human being a better interpretation of her/his reality. In the process, such hermeneutics of suspicion leads to a bi-focal critique — a critique that is not only trained towards the participant in a system but likewise towards the system itself.

However, the hermeneutics of suspicion in the post-modern climate is an expression of the same **spirit of philosophic resistance** to "a profound disenchantment with modernism (and its conviction to reason, rationalism, scientism, objectivity and progress) much earlier in Western history."^[3] Modernism is generally perceived to be predominated by the key principles of linear progress, absolute truth, knowledge standardization and rational formation of states of affairs.

Nietzsche's Imagination of Resistance: Reality as Interpretations

Of the three sources of the hermeneutics of suspicion in the modern era, Nietzsche's "prophetic pronouncements" are hailed by contemporary philosophy as most expressive of the post-modern temper — the most pregnant of post-modern ideas

Nietzsche's **imagination of resistance** is profoundly expressed in both his minor and major philosophical works. In an unpublished essay, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," which he wrote in 1873, Nietzsche argues that that which is claimed to be objective truth is nothing but a barrage of metaphors. Objective truth, the basis of scientific theories, is only an illusion. Hence, if 'truth' is relative, no amount of scientific hypothesizing can capture it.

In *Beyond Good and Evil, Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886), Nietzsche goes a step further in asserting this relativity. No absolute moral standards objectively predominate the human situation, *a priori*. There is nothing inherently abhorrent in exploitation; its moral suitability largely depends on the social status of the person who perpetrates the exploitation in society.

In another book, *On the Genealogy of Morals, A Polemic*, Nietzsche presses further on in his attack of objectivity. Traditional morality for him is tremendously influenced by the Christian valuation of weakness and hence should be torn down. The human "will to power" is tragically devastated by one's mind-set of guilt and remorse. Christianity has contrived them to control the natural occurrence of human flourishing. Nietzsche maintains that there is no absolute, objective, supernatural and universal perspective. The human existential reality is relative: "There are no facts, only interpretations." The very absence of a definite and absolute moral influence in the human existential realm, bestows on the human being the lonely task of setting his own normative guidelines.

Nietzsche's imagination of resistance is likewise reflected in his other works which he later produced like *The Case of Wagner, A Musician's Problem* (1888), *Twilight of the Idols, or How One Philosophizes with a Hammer* (1888), *The Antichrist, Curse on Christianity* (1888), and *Ecce Homo, How One Becomes What One Is* (1888).

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