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ABOUT THE COVER



“Vortex”

The cover photo displays the staircase of the Maison de Jules Verne, known as the “House with the Tower,” in Amiens, France. A globe-designed dome is atop the tower, and the perspective this photo offers us is a gaze into the vortex behind any aspiration, best represented by globalism’s championing of all desires, or the journey into the depths of our desires, such in the case of Professor Otto Lidenbrock’s wish to journey to the earth’s center. This helix of an adventure to arrive where we currently are or aspire to be is often forgotten today due to how instantaneous everything has become; yet from this vortex, the movement either up or down, comes the spiral of emotions that poetry, fiction, literature, philosophy—the humanities as a whole—aptly capture, exemplified by the writings of Verne. What remains vital for today is a consciousness of this whorl and precisely its depth, for life is not a straight line, and such makes the adventure of a lifetime exceptional. As Verne writes in his *Journey to the Center of the Earth* that the Professor was carefully examining the fissures in the rocks for the depth of every cavity is important, we too ought to desire to probe every vortex behind each of our aspirations.

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Photograph by Gian Carla D. Agbisit, 2022
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About the Journal

KRITIKE is the official open access (OA) journal of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), Manila, Philippines. It is a Filipino peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, and international journal of philosophy founded by a group of UST alumni. The journal seeks to publish articles and book reviews by local and international authors across the whole range of philosophical topics, but with special emphasis on the following subject strands:

- **Filipino Philosophy**
- **Oriental Thought and East-West Comparative Philosophy**
- **Continental European Philosophy**
- **Anglo-American Philosophy**

The journal primarily caters to works by professional philosophers and graduate students of philosophy, but welcomes contributions from other fields (literature, cultural studies, gender studies, political science, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, inter alia) with strong philosophical content.

The word "kritike" is Greek from the verb "krinein," which means to discern. Hence, kritike means the art of discerning or the art of critical analysis. Any form of philosophizing is, in one way or another, a "critique" of something. Being critical, therefore, is an attitude common to all philosophical traditions. Indeed, the meaning of philosophy is critique and to be philosophical is to be critical.

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Featured Article

Beyond Originality: The Birth of Profificity from the Spirit of Postmodernity

Hans-Georg Moeller

Abstract: This paper discusses the relation between the transition from authenticity (a technology for shaping identity through the pursuit of originality) to “profificity” (a technology for shaping identity through the curation, display, and validation of profiles) and the transition towards postmodernist philosophy in the 19th and 20th century. By analyzing core passages from the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jacques Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard, it is argued that their philosophies of interpretation, language-games, signs, and simulation are compatible with modes of identity formation under conditions of profificity. More specifically, it is suggested that performative, immanent, and constructivist views of interpretation, language, signs, and hyperreality typical of postmodernism correspond to a performative, immanent and constructivist conception of (individual and collective) identity in profificity.

Keywords: profificity, authenticity, identity, postmodernity

Introduction: From Authenticity to Profificity

It seems that the “age of authenticity” that Charles Taylor spoke of¹ is waning and giving way to “profificity”: a technology for shaping (individual or collective) identity through the curation of profiles.² In the mode of authenticity, identity is to be achieved by finding or creating an original self and expressing it truthfully. An almost emblematic formulation of the “authentic imperative” in the 19th century was coined by Friedrich Nietzsche in several variations in both his published and

¹ See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

² See Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul D’Ambrosio, *You and Your Profile: Identity after Authenticity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

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unpublished works: “Become who you are!”³ Notions of authentic self-discovery, self-creation, or self-actualization later permeated not only 20th century existentialist philosophy (Heidegger, Sartre, etc.) but also informed a mainstream political discourse centering on individuals and their rights. This discourse eventually gave rise to both opposing wings of the present culture wars raging in North America and Europe: a supposedly leftist “identity politics” and supposedly right wing “identitarian” or conservative factions championing “sovereign individuality” (as famously propagated by Jordan Peterson, one of the globally most influential public intellectuals today).⁴ In short, as an identity technology, authenticity pursues originality, and this very pursuit has been socially, politically, psychologically, and culturally formative for many individuals born and raised in the 20th century.

Authenticity, however, is inherently paradoxical, and its inner contradictions have become increasingly evident: if everyone pursues originality, this very pursuit is no longer original. In times of ubiquitous mass and social media, individuals learn how to be authentic by copying images of others whom they perceive to be authentic. Advertising, for instance, has been marketing authenticity as a consumer good to the masses and thereby simultaneously proliferated and discredited it.

The evident self-contradictions of authenticity, however, have not yet shattered the vocabulary of identity and originality which, as mentioned, still abounds in political, cultural, and commercial language. From a traditional authenticity perspective, “hell is other people”, as Sartre famously had one of the characters in his play *No Exit* exclaim:⁵ Individual authenticity is chronically threatened by the inauthenticity of conforming to the expectations of others. Similarly, for Heidegger, *das Man*, the anonymous social “they,” ontically obstructs the pursuit of authenticity. While the authentic individual may well yearn for and need other authentic individuals for its recognition, the individual must always remain sovereign. Authenticity can only be authenticated by an inner self. In authenticity,

³ See for instance *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Gay Science) 270; *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) IV, *Das Honig-Opfer* (The Honey Sacrifice), and the posthumously published fragments NF-1876, 19[40], NF-1881, 11[297] in Nietzsche’s *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Digital critical edition of the complete works and letters*, based on the critical text by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter 1967, edited by Paolo D’Iorio, <<http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB>>. All references to texts by Nietzsche in this paper follow this database and all translations of these texts are mine.

⁴ See for instance Peterson’s lecture “The Meaning and Reality of Sovereign Individuality.” YouTube video, 1:25:58, posted by Jordan B Peterson (28 July 2109), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpA5iDpnrw>>, which as of October 2, 2022, has nearly one million views.

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*, trans. by Stuart Gilbert, <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/olli/class-materials/Jean-Paul_Sartre.pdf>.

ultimate two (or more) original selves recognize one another. In proficity, however, this changes. Here, the focus shifts from the discovery of an original self to the display of a profile, and from the recognition by another original self to public attention, approval, and acclaim: Profiles derive their value from public validation.

In proficity, the old Nietzschean motto of authenticity is modified to “become who you wish to be seen as.” Applying the terminology of Niklas Luhmann’s social systems theory, the shift from authenticity to proficity can be described as a shift towards thoroughgoing “second-order observation.” While in authenticity recognition, including self-recognition, is supposed to emanate from authentic selves who see what they see in the mode of individual first-order observation, in proficity observation is more complex and is fascinated by observing how and what *others* observe.

A paradigmatic example of a profile is a brand. When we observe a commodity in terms of its brand, we do not simply observe the commodity directly, but perceive how the commodity is being perceived in public, e.g., on the market or in advertising. When we see, for instance, an apple-shaped logo on a computer, we no longer simply see the device as a device but *as a Mac*. We understand the “identity” of the device in the eyes of the “general peer,” the trans-individual mass of people who are familiar with the meaning of the logo. The logo is the visualization of the brand, and it provides information on the profile of the object. This profile relates not directly to the object but signifies it via its public observation. Accordingly, a decisive distinction between authenticity and proficity is the orientation to first-order observation in the case of the former and the orientation to second-order observation in the case of the latter. In other words, while the original self emerges in its very originality in the mode of first-order observation, the profile’s visibility and validity emerge in second-order observation.

The purpose of the present paper is to provide a philosophical addendum to the momentous shift from first-order observation to second-order observation. Instead of looking at this shift in further detail, I wish to examine here some parallel developments in intellectual history to contextualize the rise of proficity more broadly. More or less simultaneously with the consolidation of a philosophy of authenticity in the 20th century, for instance in the existentialist philosophies of Heidegger, Sartre, and de Beauvoir, alternative philosophical frameworks were elaborated and paved the way for what later came to be known as postmodernist thought. Unlike, for instance, Niklas Luhmann’s social systems theory, however, 19th and 20th-century pre-postmodernist and postmodernist thinkers, tended not to present sociological theories. Instead, at least initially, they focused on theories of interpretation, signs, or language. In this essay, I briefly trace a few postmodernist philosophies of interpretation, signs and language, and their

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immediate predecessors which historically coincided with, and arguably supported, the demise of authenticity. It is crucial to see, I believe, how these developments in philosophy moved away from understanding the meaning of language or signs as an expression of subjective ideas or objective meaning—and thus implicitly broke with the age of authenticity and its reference to originality. Instead, they proposed alternative conceptions of the significance of interpretations, language games, and the interplay of signs and symbols beyond originality.

Predecessors of Profilicity

a) *Friedrich Nietzsche*

While Friedrich Nietzsche can be rightfully claimed as a major philosophical spokesperson of authenticity, he can equally be regarded as a pre-postmodernist and early predecessor of profilicity. Nietzsche's works are often contradictory, or, to put it more positively, highly ambiguous, and it is quite futile to attempt reducing his writings—which are deliberately unsystematic, metaphorical, and ironic—to any particular “ism” or unequivocal position. Especially in his later texts from the 1880s, including the posthumously published *Nachlass* notes, Nietzsche questions not just traditional metaphysical notions of transcendent, transcendental, or objective truth, but also modern concepts of subjectivity and agency. His various critiques, scattered and fragmented as they are, amount to a series of doubtful reflections on notions of originality and loosely formulate a philosophy of interpretation.

A crucial passage expressing a critique of originality in Nietzsche's published works is the section on “The Four Great Errors” in *Twilight of the Idols* (first published in 1889). The four great errors all concern the postulation of *Ursachen*—i.e., causes or origins. Nietzsche questions the common assumption of conscious volition (of humans or Gods), or of a first cause, as the origin of certain intended consequences. While not discarding the concept of cause or origin altogether, Nietzsche suggests that human originality is a fiction that emerges in the context of larger organic life processes (including physiological and psychological processes) into which humans are inextricably integrated. In particular, Nietzsche speaks of an *Ursachentrieb*, a causality or originality drive enticing humans to erroneously ascribe agency to themselves. To illustrate the imaginary invention of human originality, Nietzsche brings up the example of someone asleep hearing a far-away cannon shot. In response to the noise, the sleeper may dream up a story that explains its origin and revolves about the sleeper him- or herself as its main protagonist. Eventually, Nietzsche suggests in section five of “The Four Great

Errors,” such ascriptions of origins emerging from the human *Ursachentrieb* have formed certain “systems” (*System*) of meaning, so that whatever may happen, “the banker immediately thinks about business, the Christian about ‘sin,’ and the girl about her love.” While not using such postmodernist terminology, Nietzsche clearly stipulates here that individual agency and human originality are fictional effects of socially constructed narratives and their interpretative frameworks.

Several notes from Nietzsche’s *Nachlass* from the second half of the 1880s correspond to the critique of originality in *The Four Great Errors*. In 1887, Nietzsche wrote:

“Subject” – *interpreted* from our point of view. So that the I is regarded as substance, as origin of all deeds, as doer. The logical-metaphysical postulates, the belief in substance, accident, attribute, etc. takes its credibility from the habit to regard all our deeds as a consequence of our will—so that the I as substance does not enter into the multiplicity of change. – But there is no will.⁶

The notion of the intentional self as the origin of agency is discredited here by Nietzsche. The subject is explicitly depicted as an *interpretation*. But who is the interpreter manufacturing this interpretation? Nietzsche says:

Is it finally necessary to put the interpreter still behind the *interpretation*? Already this is poetry, hypothesis. In as far as the word “understanding” (*Erkenntniß*) has meaning at all, the world is understandable, but it is interpretable in different ways; there is no meaning behind it, but it has uncountable meanings, “perspectivism.”⁷

There is no particular human (or divine) interpreter as the origin of stories of origination and ascriptions of meaning “behind” the world. Different perspectives produce different interpretations. The meanings of these interpretations are not due to any objective truths or intentions of subjective agents but emerge from shifting points of view within larger historical and evolutionary developments.

⁶ NF-1887, 9[98].

⁷ NF-1886, 7[60].

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b) Ludwig Wittgenstein

In Ludwig Wittgenstein's writings, many of which were published posthumously, reflections on language and signs are of prime importance. Although Wittgenstein only rarely refers to other philosophers and does not tend to argue from a historical point of view (unlike Nietzsche and many other thinkers of the 19th century), his concern with language and signs seems to be at least indirectly connected with the growing interest in questions of interpretation, perspectives, and meaning found in Nietzsche and other thinkers at the end of 19th and in the early 20th century. An important historical link between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein was the writer and philosopher Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923). In a number of works on language, Mauthner varied and expanded the Nietzschean idea of language as a system of interpretations that does not reveal truth but constructs complex systems of meaning.⁸ Wittgenstein, in turn, read Mauthner and seems to have been significantly influenced by the latter's methodological "critique of language" (*Sprachkritik*).⁹

In a post-Nietzschean manner, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* begin with a fundamental doubt regarding a traditional commonsense understanding of language (which Wittgenstein ascribes to St. Augustine), namely that it is an assemblage of words which all have some specific "meaning" by their reference to the "things" they represent. Seen in this traditional way, language is a system of signs that represents the world of things—and/or the thoughts about things and the world. Large parts of the *Philosophical Investigations* are aimed at challenging this representational conception of language and signs and try to replace it with an alternative view of language based on the *use* (*Gebrauch*) of signs which results in the practice of *language games* (*Sprachspiele*). This alternative view switches from a representational conception of language and signs to a performative one. The use of language consists according to Wittgenstein in a wide variety of activities including ordering, describing, reporting, playing, joking, etc. as outlined in *Philosophical Investigations* 23. Importantly, such a performative view of language resonates with Nietzsche's point that there is no meaning "behind" the world that constitutes "interpretations." Similar to Nietzsche's

⁸ Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, (3 volumes, Stuttgart: Cotta, 1901–1902); Fritz Mauthner, *Die Sprache* (Frankfurt: Rütten & Loenig, 1907); Fritz Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie: Neue Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*. (Munich: Georg Müller, 1910).

⁹ A short reference to Mauthner is included in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 4.0031. On Mauthner and his influence on Wittgenstein see Gerald Hartung, *Beyond the Babylonian Trauma: Theories of Language and Modern Culture in the German-Jewish Context*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 116-152.

notion of interpretations as perspectival and contingent constructions of meaning rather than as revelations of a transcendent or transcendental truth, Wittgenstein conceives of language and signs not as indicative of an objective or subjective reality that determines meaning, but as a playful activity or “life form” (*Lebensform*) that produces rather than expresses meaning.

The *Philosophical Investigations* include numerous short dialogues of Wittgenstein with himself. Reminiscent of Zen-Buddhist koans (公案), they often do not contain any propositions or explicit conclusions. Instead, they may end with a puzzling question and are perhaps intended to illustrate the very practice of philosophical language games. One of these puzzling dialogues in *Philosophical Investigations* 504 goes: “But if you say: ‘How am I to know what he means, when I see nothing but the signs he gives?’ then I say: ‘How is he to know what he means, when he has nothing but the signs either?’”¹⁰

In language, we “have nothing but the signs.” Whenever we ask for the meaning of a sign, this meaning will be outlined with other signs that are provided to us. In language, the pure meaning as such or on its own never appears. It is similarly elusive in language as things in themselves are in experience. For Wittgenstein, however, this elusiveness is not a problem. To the contrary, he insists in *Philosophical Investigations* 503, that we are perfectly content with signs and that there is no need to find their meaning beyond or behind language whenever we are playing a language game:

If I give anyone an order, I feel it to be quite enough to give him signs. And I should never say: this is only words, and I have got to get behind the words. Equally, when I have asked someone something and he gives me an answer (i.e., a sign) I am content—that was what I expected—and I don't raise the objection: but that's a mere answer.¹¹

If, in language, we do not, and cannot, get behind the words, and if the purpose of our language games is not to leave the words behind in order to get to pure meaning—then, as Wittgenstein stipulates in *Philosophical Investigations* 118, his reflections may be discarded as futile since they can be taken to destroy everything “that is great and important.”¹² However, Wittgenstein responds to this self-doubt, what is destroyed—the assumed great and important things and ideas beyond language—are edifices made

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), 139.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹² *Ibid.*, 48.

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from thin air (*Luftgebäude*), and his philosophy uncovers the linguistic ground on which they have been built.

Not unlike Nietzsche's reversal of cause and effect with regard to human agency and "free will," Wittgenstein reverses the traditional ascription of origination with regard to language and meaning. For Nietzsche, the sovereign "I" is not the cause, but the effect of perspectival interpretations, while, for Wittgenstein, ideas and things are not the origin from which language derives its meaning, but, to the contrary, language is the ground on which the meaning of signs is constructed. And this ground is, as Wittgenstein metaphorically says in *Philosophical Investigations* 107, *rauh*, or "rough."¹³ Language is not divinely pre-established, a priori rationally structured, or teleologically geared toward perfection, but a contingent, complex game resisting systematic surveillance. What is more, philosophy takes place on this ground just like any other social and intellectual activity and is therefore not in any privileged position to analyze it or to reach beyond its limits. As Wittgenstein wrote in the Preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*, the very nature of these investigations—a series of reflections on the rough ground of language on which they move along—precluded them from ever becoming a systematic whole. Instead, as Wittgenstein poetically says, they resemble sketches of landscapes made on long and winded journeys.¹⁴ This apt metaphor would probably also describe Nietzsche's pre-postmodernist philosophical method rather well.

c) Jacques Derrida

A rather early, but highly influential essay by Jacques Derrida on "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"¹⁵ combines Nietzsche's theses on interpretation with Wittgenstein's musings on language and play. In this essay, which was based on a lecture Derrida had presented at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in October 1966, Nietzsche is referenced several times, but Wittgenstein is not. Nevertheless, intentionally, or not, Wittgensteinian themes are clearly present in Derrida's philosophy in general and in his philosophy of signs and their *différance* (difference) in particular.¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vii.

¹⁵ The essay is included in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 278-284. This book was originally published as *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967).

¹⁶ See Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

Toward the end of “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” Derrida distinguishes quite programmatically “two interpretations of interpretation of structure, of sign, of freeplay.” The first one corresponds to a traditional European metaphysics and humanism and “seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering, a truth or an origin which is free from freeplay and from the order of the sign, and lives like an exile the necessity of interpretation.” The second one, “to which Nietzsche showed us the way,” is “no longer turned toward the origin, affirms freeplay and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words, through the history of all of his history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game.”¹⁷ Clearly, Derrida credits Nietzsche here for overcoming an obsession with metaphysical truth as the foundation of language, meaning, and life. After Nietzsche Derrida suggests, the *Ursachentrieb*—the originality drive—could eventually be left behind. The “two interpretations of interpretations” are set apart from one another precisely with regard to their different attitude towards originality. The crucial difference is that the new “interpretation” is “no longer turned toward the origin,” and instead “affirms freeplay.”

Derrida’s notion of “freeplay” resonates deeply with Wittgenstein’s conception of “language games.” What Derrida calls the “metaphysics of presence” corresponds to the commonsense traditional understanding of language scrutinized in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, namely the assumption that it consists of representational signs denoting present things or thoughts of them. Similar to Wittgenstein who points out the unsurmountable elusiveness of the assumed presence “behind” language—given the fact that once we use language, we “have nothing but the signs”—Derrida intends to shatter the metaphysics of presence “with the help of the concept of the *sign*.” He proposes that once it is understood that “there is no transcendental or privileged signified” accessible via the sign, “the domain or the interplay of signification has, henceforth, no limit.”¹⁸

To summarize, the traditional notion of “interpretation” that Derrida wants to overcome with the help of Nietzsche rests on a “metaphysics of presence” which in turn is engrained in a conception of language, or a semiotics, based on the distinction between present primary objects or thoughts that are represented by secondary language or signs. Derrida, however, follows Wittgenstein in “liberating” the sign from its subordination to presence as its mere representative. In a language game, or in “freeplay,” signs are no longer limited “to a privileged reference, to an origin, or to an

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 292.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 281.

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absolute *arche*.”¹⁹ Instead, in the form of play, signs are “the disruption of presence” since “the presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain.”²⁰ In Derrida’s understanding, the signifier and the signified, which in their relation to one another constitute the sign, are not splitting up a gap between presence and representation but open up a domain of signification in their interplay of mutual substitution and differentiation.

d) Jean Baudrillard

Ten years after Derrida had given his lecture on “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” his French compatriot Jean Baudrillard published another seminal postmodernist text, the book *L’échange symbolique et la mort*,²¹ or *Symbolic Exchange and Death*,²² varying once more themes of signification, language, and meaning beyond the traditional “metaphysics of presence” and the pursuit of origins. Baudrillard was clearly influenced not only by Derrida’s philosophy of *différance* and of the “freeplay” of signs, but also by quite a few other French postmodernist thinkers including, for instance Guy Debord or Michel Foucault, who had been eclipsing French existentialists like Sartre, de Beauvoir, or Albert Camus in popularity in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In essence, Baudrillard provided a somewhat more precise vocabulary for the philosophy of interpretation, language, and signs that had already been developed by thinkers like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Derrida before him. Baudrillard, however, integrated this philosophy of signification into a broader social and cultural critique with a certain Marxist bent. Unlike his earlier predecessors, but quite in line with already mentioned contemporaries like Debord and Foucault, Baudrillard assumed the role of a public intellectual always ready to comment on unfolding political events and unafraid of mass media attention.

About a decade after Derrida had already shattered the “metaphysics of presence,” Baudrillard proclaimed quite dramatically the “death of reference,” in the context of several other demises, including the “end of labor,” the “end of production,” the “end of the political economy,” and, importantly, the “end of the signifier/signified dialectic.”²³ For Baudrillard, the death of reference meant that “referential value is annihilated, giving the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 286.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 292.

²¹ Jean Baudrillard, *L’échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

²² Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 1993).

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

structural value of play the upper hand." This upper hand, he explained, now belonged to "a total relativity, general commutation, combination and simulation;" adding that 'simulation means that "from now on signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real." Simulation can be further understood, according to Baudrillard as an "emancipation of the sign" which is now released from its "'archaic' obligation to designate something" and thus "finally becomes free, indifferent, and totally indeterminate, in the structural or combinatory play which succeeds the previous rule of determinate equivalence."²⁴

Under conditions of simulation, the real is replaced with the "hyperreal" —another term Baudrillard successfully coined—or branded. As opposed to the real which is subject to reproduction, or representation, the hyperreal is, according to Baudrillard, "that which is always already reproduced" and as such "beyond representation."²⁵ The formulation "always already" is perhaps the most often used phrase not only in Baudrillard's texts but in postmodernist academic literature as a whole. It indicates, true to the critique of originality, the lack of a transcendent or transcendental grounding, or of an "absolute presence" that *precedes* its representation. Once the hyperreal is there, the assumption of the real makes no longer sense. As Baudrillard says: "Today reality itself is hyperrealist," and "reality has passed completely into the game of reality," so that "the real and the imaginary are intermixed in one and the same operational totality."²⁶

Although, as mentioned, Baudrillard speaks in relation to simulation of the "emancipation of the sign," he hardly celebrates the replacement of the real by the hyperreal as a form of liberation. To the contrary, more often than not, he depicts the hyperreal in consumerist and capitalist contexts. More than Derrida, Wittgenstein, or Nietzsche, Baudrillard seems to lament and bemoan the irreversible loss of the real. It is therefore questionable if Baudrillard should be classified as a "straightforward" postmodernist thinker, or perhaps more as a postmodernist critic of the postmodern condition.

Be that as it may, Baudrillard shares a certain paradoxical trait with other French postmodernist thinkers mentioned above: While they all agreed on the demise of originality and authenticity, they seemed intent on signaling their own originality by expressing themselves in a highly manneristic style. This manneristic style reproduced the paradox of authenticity: Similar to the "jargon of authenticity" Adorno ascribed to Heidegger,²⁷ postmodernist

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

²⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit. Zur deutschen Ideologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964).

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French writers competed against one another in the promulgation of a half scholarly, half artistic self-referential and eventually repetitive discourse ripe with jargon and catchphrases. Ironically, they seem to have pursued originality by means of an increasingly conventional critique of originality. This is not to say, however, that the concepts of *différance* (Derrida), or of simulation and the hyperreal (Baudrillard), which they developed in the wake of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and others are not very helpful for conceptualizing the present. They all contribute to the transition from authenticity to proficity.

Conclusion: Postmodernity and Proficity

The preceding very brief and highly selective survey of a few pre-postmodernist and postmodernist thinkers was meant to indicate the compatibility of their philosophies with the identity technology of proficity. This compatibility is rooted in a *rejection of originality* and of the idea that expressions in language or signs represent a primary, essential, or “present” meaning beyond the realm of language or signification. The performative, immanent, and constructivist views of interpretation, language, signs, and hyperreality typical of postmodernism correspond to a performative, immanent, and constructivist conception of (individual and collective) identity in proficity.

Similar to Nietzsche’s philosophy of interpretation, the “meaning” of a profile has no subjective or objective origin. A profile, like a brand, is continuous work in progress constructing and re-constructing a certain “perspective.” The meaning of the brand identity *Apple* does not originate from the properties of the technical devices sold with this logo. The brand also does not express any original “idea” attached to those devices by their makers or inventors. In the context of successful advertising—a success which consists to a large extent in a flexible curation of the brand—a certain *Apple* “perspective” is invented and established. Eventually, *Apple* becomes a profile that emerges through the proliferation of a dynamic interpretation of the cultural and symbolic meaning of this brand. This dynamic interpretation is shared widely throughout society and offers all those who purchase an *Apple* product not just the product, but, importantly, an interpretation of their own identity that is aligned with the identity of the product. Through the shared interpretation of the brand, the profiles of the company and the profiles of the individuals purchasing its products merge in a feedback loop: the customers become “cool individuals” because they own a product by a cool brand, and the brand becomes cool because its products are bought by cool customers. In effect, the creation of the identity profile *Apple* functions similarly to Nietzsche’s dream of the cannon shot. In response to some noise

(advertising of the brand), a shared interpretation (in the form of a profile) is constructed which almost magically constructs intentionality, subjectivity, and identity although there has been “no meaning behind it.”

If a language game functions well and creates a life form, as Wittgenstein pointed out, there is no need to “get behind the words.” The game is played with language and signs, and the point is to respond to someone else’s words with more words. This is to say, to understand a language game is to be able to actually *play* it, and not to “get to the bottom” of what the language game may “mean.” Profiles share such a performative orientation with language games. The point of presenting and curating a personal profile on social media, let’s say for instance on Facebook or Tinder, is not primarily to allow others to better understand one’s “original self,” but to mutually engage in a “game” that consists in the exchange of signs and words and that has the purpose of mutually constructing and validating one another’s identity in an interactive way. Varying Wittgenstein’s point in *Philosophical Investigations* 503 quoted above, it can be said: “When I have posted something on social media and someone gives a reply (i.e., a sign) I am content—that was what I expected—and I don’t raise the objection: but that’s a mere reply.” Profiles are signs signifying identity; and in accordance with Wittgenstein’s philosophy, their meaning is to be found in their performative use in society, that is in their communication with other signs. The profile that no one responds to has no meaning.

If the profile that no one responds to has no meaning, the profile does not represent a “privileged reference,” “origin,” or “an absolute *arche*” and thereby is not indicative of the “metaphysics of presence” debunked by Derrida. Instead, profiles are, as Derrida says about signs in general, a “signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences.” The profile of an academic, like myself, is shaped and curated by writing and publishing papers like this one. The meaning of this paper, and thereby of my academic profile, cannot be understood properly by grasping unique and original ideas—it doesn’t express any such thing. Instead, the paper can only be understood by reference to other academic papers and publications on postmodernist and pre-postmodernist philosophy. Even if, for instance, I criticize the use of academic jargon by some philosophers here, this criticism itself is inscribed in previous academic criticisms of the same kind and thus a kind of jargon itself. My paper, and my academic profile makes sense not because of any “authenticity” of my ideas, but because of the *différance* it inserts into “the movement of a chain” that Derrida metaphorically spoke of to illustrate the “freeplay” of signs.

If profiles are not representations of a present identity, but virtual curations of selfhood emerging along with the “movement of the chain” of collective interpretations and language games, they are hyperreal simulations

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and “always already” copied, as Baudrillard could have put it. Like avatars in a computer game, profiles are playfully enacted characters that one can adopt, develop, and be personally invested in. They do not represent an original self that precedes them but provide an opportunity to curate and perform individual selfhood. Baudrillard rightly criticized how the simulation of selfhood is entrenched in a capitalist consumer culture and, it sometimes seems, yearned for a return to authenticity. Such a return to the origins, however, is impossible if originality itself is “always already” unoriginal.

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The Language of Indigeneity in Filipino Philosophies (First of Two Parts)

Victor John M. Loquias

Abstract: This paper reconstructs the language of Indigeneity in the discourses of Filipino Philosophies. It starts with an initial tracing of the diachronic presence of the concept of Indigeneity in the Philippines before it was employed as a qualitative modifier for doing philosophy. Following this is an exposition of the equation of Indigeneity to the inception of the idea of Filipino Philosophy thereby making the nationalist context of Filipinization coterminous with the early beginnings of Indigenous philosophizing. The next part elaborates the post-nationalist employment of the language of Indigeneity as exemplified by various works unified by the pluralist subtext of Indigenous philosophies in the peripheries. The final part first deploys the concept of indeterminacy as the precondition for both the nationalist and post-nationalist employment of the language of Indigeneity then redescribes Indigenous philosophizing as a critical enterprise of doing philosophy in its *particularity* understood in a recognitive framework.

Keywords: indeterminacy, Filipino Philosophies, recognition, (Critical) Indigenous philosophizing

This paper explores the employment of “indigeneity” as a modification of philosophizing found among the multitude of works that fall under, or could be associated with, the now established research area of “Filipino Philosophy.” While the terms “indigenous,” or its cognates “grassroot,” “native,” or the Filipino term “*katutubo*,” are ubiquitous in the archive, the nuances and teleological ramifications of its employment in various conceptualizations remain unexamined. This work attempts to render this activity self-reflexive and provide an interpretive framework for its performance.

The notion of Indigeneity is given a thorough disclosure in the first part by tracing the diachronic presence of the experience, idea, and various conceptualizations of Indigeneity in the Philippines. Through a cursory look at the history of its emergence in texts and Philippine discourses, an initial substantiation of the idiomatic notion of the “language of Indigeneity” is put in place. The established presence of Indigeneity in the people’s experience and intellectual history is then identified as an already latent normative resource for the emergence of various works that utilized it as a modifier for doing philosophy.

The second part bridges the continuity of the language of Indigeneity to the domain of philosophy. It commences with a claim that the self-ascription of Indigeneity in the literature is coterminous with the inception of “the idea of Filipino Philosophy.”¹ The term “Filipino Philosophy” is used here to signify its earliest association with the language of Indigeneity as a field of ideational elaboration. However, this paper does not preclude the other iterations of the term, for the inception itself marked the beginning of the production of different modalities which could now be signified as “Filipino Philosophies” in the present. The plural form in the paper’s title intends to show precisely that there is no single mode in which “the idea of Filipino Philosophy” has been posited, framed, conceived, or contended with. Indigenization in this early phase was framed from the viewpoint of nationalism² where “Filipino Philosophy” was envisaged as a “premise or promise of an identity.”³

Simultaneous with the various critiques of this project of Filipinization is an employment of the language of Indigeneity that is off

¹ With this quote, I refer to an assumption from which “Filipino Philosophy” was first posited that then gave birth to the issue of its epistemic legitimacy (implied in various questions such as “Is there a Filipino Philosophy?” and “What is Filipino Philosophy?”), heralding the beginning of it as a discursive site for what has now become a multiplicity of thematizations.

² In a historico-political context, the Filipinization of the colonial State was implemented “with the Philippine Autonomy Act, commonly known as the Jones Law, which ‘placed in the hands of the people of the Philippines as large a control of their domestic affairs as can be given them.’” Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Ambrosio, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2005), 140. The Filipino philosophers in the post-war period would discourse Indigeneity in the context of an already established nation although Filipino nationalism started way back in the late nineteenth century for as Hornedo charts, “the time span of the struggle to affirm nationhood covered three regimes: the close of the Spanish era, the American era including the commonwealth, and the Japanese occupation.” Florentino Hornedo, “The Changing Core Themes of Filipino Nationalism and Their Literary Expression,” in *Unitas*, 62:4 (December 1989), 65.

³ I appropriate into a nationalist discourse this description (of “*Bikol*”) by Lagdameo in his introduction to the first issue of *Bikol Studies* where he tenders solidarity among, and with respect to, the varied standpoints of its authors in their various articles. See Federico Jose T. Lagdameo, “Constructing and Contesting What is ‘*Bikol*,’” in *Bikol Studies Perspectives & Advocacies*, 1:1 (2014), 1–4.

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tangent from nationalism and grounded on the different contexts of various Philippine ethnolinguistic and cultural groups. The third part presents this utilization of the concept among the Indigenous (Filipino) philosophies in the peripheries.⁴ The term periphery signifies both the geographical distance from the centers where Filipino Philosophy has taken mainstream, and the coverage of marginal themes, issues, subjects, and experiences of their subjects thematized. The respective (regional) assertions in the act of philosophizing among the authors in this part show a multiplicity of identities that resist singularization and homogenization. In this sense, Indigenous (Filipino) philosophies are described at the same time as a post-national employment of the language of Indigeneity. Indigeneity came to be understood more in reference to localities, the use of local languages, diverse local concepts, issues, and experiences that grant materiality⁵ to the authors' works. It will be demonstrated that instead of ethnocentrism—which is often expected from such initiatives of ethnic origination—a translocation of the philosophical enterprise is performed which mobilizes even further the critical potential immanent in the act philosophizing itself.

The final part of the paper introduces the element of indeterminacy as the primary condition for the deployment of the language of Indigeneity in philosophy. The fundamental criterion of self-identification in the claim for Indigeneity is activated in the agentic owning of the ability to philosophize as a response to the experienced indeterminacy of philosophical activity. From this perspective the normative beginnings of Indigenization as Filipinization could then be read as a critical response to the experience of extended colonialism in philosophy. Agency is prefigured as grounding either the premise or promise of an identity steered towards nationalism—the historical form of social and political resistance of the time which has likewise piloted the performance of philosophizing. The post-national employment of Indigeneity, is similarly a form of self-determination and a coping with indeterminacy but this time at a more local level. The relocation of the philosophical activity to diverse environments could be read furthermore as a critical response to the monolithic project of nationalism which has often rendered the invisibility of those in the peripheries.

⁴ “Filipino” is enclosed in parenthesis to signify the conventional turn of its signification which means that while the works included herein deflect from a nationalist project they could still be dragged and labeled as “Filipino” in the context of conventional qualifications such as geographical or sociopolitical affiliations either of its authors or of the thematic subjects of their work.

⁵ I use the term “material” in the same sense as Paolo Bolaños’s employment to unify the social with its various concerns such as the cultural, moral, and political. See Paolo Bolaños, “What is Critical Theory: Max Horkheimer and the Makings of the Frankfurt School Tradition,” in *Mabini Review*, 2:1 (2013).

The movement of these various employments of the language of Indigeneity has shown the activation of the critical potential of philosophy in its agentive and recognitive re-appraisal. The particularity that Indigenization grants to philosophizing brings home the philosophical enterprise to the material conditions of human experience from where thinking should be fundamentally grounded. In the archipelagic context of the country where material concerns are as diverse as its people (critical) Indigenous philosophizing remains to be fully mobilized in terms of its normative thrust and value.

Indigeneity as a Diachronic Concept

A cursory look into the extant texts and discourses in Philippine studies reveals that the idea and meaning of “indigeneity” has a diachronic presence in the Philippines. This part initially traces its textual emergence and semantic shifts which could provide the bridge to a better understanding of the employment of Indigeneity in the discourses of philosophy. To begin with, the English term “indigenous”

derives from the late Latin ‘indigenus’ and ‘indigena’ (native) and from the Old Latin ‘indu’ that is derived from the archaic ‘endo’ (a cognate of the Greek ‘endo’), meaning ‘in, within’ and the Latin ‘gignere’ meaning ‘to beget’, from the root ‘gene’ meaning ‘to produce, give birth, beget.’ ‘Indigena’ in Latin means ‘native’ used of plants, animals, peoples who come from a particular region. Its first known use was in 1640s when it was applied to plants and cultures in the New World. The general sense of the term applied to that produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment; also sometimes used as a synonym for ‘native,’ ‘innate,’ ‘aborigine,’ ‘endemic,’ and ‘inborn.’⁶

“*Katutubo*” is the nearest equivalent Filipino term for “indigenous.” In the old Tagalog dictionary of Juan de Noceda and Pedro Sanlucar, two entries for the term *catotobo* are encoded: the first signifies age *de una edad*, “of the same age” for *magcatotobo* and the other is *ángel de guardia* or “gurdian

⁶ Michael A. Peters and Carl T. Mika, “Aborigine, Indian, Indigenous or First Nations?,” in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49:13 (2017), 1229.

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angel”⁷ which, obviously, is an outsider’s translation of the native term *badhalang catotobo*. The latter finds explanation from William Henry Scott’s account on the religion of Luzon in the sixteenth century where he writes that each person “had an individual protecting spirit, a kind of guardian angel, called *katutubo* or *bathalang katutubo*”⁸ that guides a person’s soul or *kaluluwa* to keep it from wandering off or being lured to some strange place believed to cause fatal illnesses.⁹ The first meaning can be found again among the entries for another separate term which we could surmise as its root word—“*tubo*”—identified by Noceda and Sanlucar with living entities “born” or “growing” such as plants and animals. Similar meanings are indicated in other dictionaries like that of Marcos de Lisboa’s oldest Bikol dictionary where “*tubo*” as “*tinutuboan*” refers further to the place where a person or something grows,¹⁰ and that of Alonso de Mentrída’s evidently colonial definition in his Bisayan dictionary where it refers to something that grows, “persons, things, animals, trees, and plants *created by God*”¹¹—obviously infusing the idea of creation in the definition. The term “*katutubo*” today is still tied to the place where one is born or the origin of something but now refers as well to ethnicity. It can also denote the quality of origination of a person, of one’s race, or of a thing.¹²

For the cultural historian Raymond Williams, while the term *native* can stand more positively in a “social and political sense, as in *native land, native country, ... or person*,”¹³ it took on a negative sense as generally referring to subjugated people or people “born in bondage.” This disparaging use of *native* was used “to describe the inferior inhabitants of a place subjected to alien political power or conquest, or even of a place visited and observed from some supposedly superior standpoint.”¹⁴ The term “indigenous” thus “has served both as a euphemism and as a more neutral term”¹⁵ for “*native*” in this pejorative sense.

⁷ Juan de Noceda and Pedro de Sanlucar, *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala* (Manila: Impr. De Ramirez y Girauder, 1860).

⁸ William Henry Scott, *Barangay Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), 234.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Marcos Lisboa, *Vocabulario De La Lengua Bicol* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipografico Del Colegio De Santo Tomas, 1865), 409.

¹¹ Alonso de Mentrída, *Diccionario de la lengua Bisaya Hiliguaeina y Haraya de la Isla de Panay* (Manila: Imp. De D. Manuel y de D. Felis S. Dayot, 1841), 403.

¹² Virgilio AS. Almario (Ed.), *Diksiyonaryong Adarna* (Filipinas: Adarna House Inc., 2015), 441.

¹³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 161.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 162

The negative sense of being native is further illuminated in relation to “culture” which is “one of the two or three most complicated words in English language”¹⁶ because of its long history and various nuances. The early meanings of culture from its Latin origin are interestingly parallel to the two meanings of *katutubo*: *cultura* which developed through *colonus* or “inhabit” and the “tending of natural growth” that still imply intimacy with the land signified by *tubo*, whereas *colere* or “honor with worship” is not so difficult to associate with the precolonial native belief in their *bathalang katutubo*. *Colonus* is also where the word “colony” is derived; hence, in the western context as Robert Young astutely remarks, “colonization rests at the heart of culture, or culture always involves a form of colonization, even in relation to its conventional meaning as the tilling of the soil.”¹⁷ The significance of the cultivation of land, however, was extended more metaphorically to the process of human development—the cultivation of the human mind where culture becomes more identified with “civilization,” refinement, and social class. The pejorative meaning of “native” surfaces as a characterization of subjugated peoples yet to be civilized usually ascribed to colonial subjects. This would be the background significance of Indigeneity in the advent of nationalism in the Philippines.

In the late nineteenth-century Philippine revolution,¹⁸ the self-ascription of Indigeneity or of being *Katutubo* became entwined with colonial resistance.¹⁹ Independence from Spain was conceived tantamount to the assertion of a repressed identity and autonomy deprived of the natives. This counter definition of “native,” as traced by Jovito Cariño, figures in Jose Rizal’s annotation of Fray Antonio de Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* where Rizal posited a “nationalist counternarrative”²⁰ of history. “In Rizal’s fictive and romantic history, the Philippines had an authentic Malayan and

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁷ Robert F.C. Young, *Colonial Desire Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 29.

¹⁸ “The central theme of national consciousness during the period of 1774 to 1892 was Filipino dignity which required of Spain recognition and respect.” Hornedo, “Changing Core Themes of Filipino Nationalism,” 64.

¹⁹ In his “Indigenous Races of the Philippines,” Ferdinand Blumentritt was still employing the neutral significance of *indigena* in his description of individual peoples. Nonetheless, the thinking of race in this period was already mired with dreams of independence. This is evident for example in Isabelo de los Reyes’s “musing” of “the possibility of adopting a broader sense of the word ‘Tagalog’” that “would transcend linguistic differences” but could “delineate racial ones” which the term “Filipino” is unable to mark. See Megan C. Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Illustrados* (Mandaluyong: Anvil Publishing, 2016), 88–89.

²⁰ Cariño borrows this term from Resil Mojares to expound Rizal’s “counter definition of the term *native*” as a discursive exercise of subverting the European colonial representation of the natives. Jovito Cariño, *Muni: Paglalayag sa Pamimilosopiyang Filipino* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018), 153.

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Asian ancestry, an established culture and a pre-colonial nationality.”²¹ This nationalist legacy of Rizal, though more fictive than historical, “proved to be dominantly influential among scholars across generations and research disciplines.”²² According to Rainier Ibane, the same identification of Indigeneity with nationhood was imagined by revolutionaries like Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto in their ideological construction of *Katagalugan* as an encompassing identity of even the non-Tagalog speakers; *Tagalog*—the vernacular—was inscribed with an identity status covering all the natives in the islands.²³ “The term *katagalugan* offered a more indigenous sense of identity and righteously depicted their anti-colonial posture in contradistinction to the reformist term ‘Filipino’ which had traces of their vassal status under the Spanish regime.”²⁴ This move by the leaders of the revolution, however, was not unproblematic or uncontested as it was met with suspicion by non-Tagalog speakers “who viewed the revolution as an attempt of the Tagalogs to dominate the rest of the country.”²⁵

The current attachment of Indigeneity to ethnicity in the Philippines as ascribed to populations is affixed to territoriality and the “historical continuity”²⁶ that indigenes are acknowledged to have. This affinity with the land is also treated as a basis for defining the rights of Indigenous peoples.²⁷ The referential Indigenous subject however, as Melisa Casumbal-Salazar observes, is not singularly exclusive if a careful review is given to the “historically shifting lexicon of Philippine indigeneity”²⁸ from the colonial Philippines up to the present.

Historically, peoples now officially recognized as indigenous in the Philippines were popularly, academically, and juridically designated as *infielos* (infidels), *tribus independientes* (independent tribes), non-Christian tribes, wild tribes, headhunters, highlanders, cultural minorities, cultural communities, indigenous

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 154.

²³ Rainier A. Ibane, “Grafting Philosophy to the Tagalog Prefix *Ka*,” in *Kritika Kultura*, 12 (2009), 30–32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Noel G. Ramiscal, “Indigenous Philosophy and the Quest for Indigenous Self-determination,” in *Philosophia*, 14:2 (2013), 217.

²⁷ See Republic Act No. 8371, Indigenous People’s Rights Act, Chapter II, Section 3h, <<http://www.Gov.ph/1997/10/29/republic-act-no-8371>>.

²⁸ Melisa S.L. Casumbal-Salazar, “The Indeterminacy of the Philippine Indigenous Subject: Indigeneity, Temporality, and Cultural Governance,” in *Amerasia Journal*, 41:1 (2015), 78.

ethnic communities, and indigenous cultural communities.²⁹

Salazar unveils that this technical specification of the Indigenous is an expedient instrument for cultural governance that grants authentication of the nation in a historical and traditional milieu. This is precisely the case of the function played by the National Living Treasure Award given to “indigenous” living individuals deemed to authenticate the nation with historical continuity, or pre-colonial roots that can never be fully colonized, assimilated, or modernized, hence, should be “preserved.”

Some conceptualizations of Indigeneity seek to liberate it from the narrow confines of ethnicity and attach it to the quality of a human condition as in the case of Ibane who advocates extending the ascription of being *Katutubo* beyond one’s kin towards a more planetary significance³⁰ and Karl Gaspar, a scholar deeply immersed with the *Lumads* in the south who, in his most recent book, implies Indigeneity as a part of the human constitution retrievable in history.³¹ In the case of philosophizing in the Philippines, Indigeneity will be elaborated in the next part as the ground where the very idea of Filipino Philosophy itself germinated. From the preceding descriptions, Indigeneity was already a normative resource for the various works that emerged and utilized it as a qualifier for their philosophical pursuits.

Indigenization as Filipinization of Philosophy

Philosophizing in the Philippines first assumed the modification of Indigeneity in the postulation of the “idea of Filipino philosophy.”³² Alfredo Co captures this well in his statement that “the idea of Filipino philosophy comes with the idea of a Filipino.”³³ Higher education is the site of the emergence of this idea, in the same way that the origins of nationalism could

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁰ Ibane, “Grafting Philosophy to the Tagalog Prefix *Ka*,” 53–54.

³¹ Karl Gaspar, *Handumanan: Digging for the Indigenous Wellspring* (Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2021).

³² This could be referred to as the historical moment when “Filipino Philosophy” was “reified” as a normative concept that impelled the direction of a discourse, as an illusion, that is assumed however as a necessity in order for it to flourish. See Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland, “Five Assumptions on the Illusion ‘Filipino Philosophy’ (A Prelude to a Cultural Critique),” in *Suri*, 9:1 (2021), 76–89.

³³ Alfredo Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years from Now,” *Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays: Across the Philosophical Silk Road A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co, Vol. VI* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 58.

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be traced in its structure.³⁴ Philosophy in the Philippines was “coterminous with the beginning of the country”³⁵ as it was brought by the Spanish colonizers and became part of academic instruction in the early institutions³⁶ of higher learning in the colony. Scholasticism became the sole mode of doing philosophy which had a long-extended presence way after Spanish colonialism ended in the Philippines. Romualdo Abulad plots this period as the colonial phase of Filipino Philosophy.³⁷ The dominance of Scholasticism was only challenged in the 1950s³⁸ after the exposure to other modes of philosophizing of the post-war Filipino scholars who went abroad for their graduate studies. This exposure to difference in a way germinated the idea of Indigenization in so far as it led to the consciousness of identity in terms of doing philosophy. As Co rightly explains again, “the search for indigenous thought came with the view to discover a Filipino philosophy.”³⁹ In other words, Indigenization in this context is tantamount to the Filipinization⁴⁰ of philosophy. Abulad supports this in his articulation of the “Indigenous Phase” with a consciousness of the requirements of *originative thinking* in doing philosophy by Filipinos or by the “we” of the “imagined political community.”⁴¹

Emerita Quito who influenced a generation of Filipino philosophers in this period introduced the logical premise that facilitated the inference of a “philosophy in the Philippine culture”⁴² by positing philosophy as “the collective mind of a people”⁴³ interacting with reality. This would constitute the “popular or grassroot level”⁴⁴ of philosophy which she identified with “Filipino Indigenous philosophy” and whose task it is for Filipinos to articulate. “This indigenous philosophy,” Quito says, “may be said to be an *élan* or a spirit that permeates the Filipino as *Filipino* and without which he feels a certain malaise.”⁴⁵ Indigeneity, thus, is evidently framed by Quito in

³⁴ See John N. Schumacher, S.J., “The Philippine Higher Education and the Origins of Nationalism,” in *Philippine Studies*, 23:1–2 (1975), 53–65.

³⁵ Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines,” 28.

³⁶ Co provides a list of the institutions of learning that offered philosophy subjects.

³⁷ See Romualdo Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy,” in *Karunungan*, 1 (1988).

³⁸ Co brackets 1950–1985 as the period of New Thought and Filipino Philosophical Scholarship. Co, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines,” 54.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁰ This has to be historically plotted as the Filipinization movement.

⁴¹ This is Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

⁴² Emerita S. Quito, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1983), 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Quito writes that philosophy in the Philippines can be discussed in two different levels: the grassroots and the academic level. *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12. Italics mine.

the nationalist⁴⁶ context. Writing *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* in 1983, Quito already distinguished two groups involved in research on Filipino Philosophy: the first, where she enlists herself foremost, emphasizes language in the dissemination of philosophy, while the second, with Mercado's name on top of the list, is focused on content articulation of seminal Filipino Philosophy in the English language.⁴⁷ In charting its future at the national level, Quito vouchsafed the Filipinization of philosophy especially in the employment of the Filipino language and seemingly suggests the synthesis of academic and grassroots philosophy⁴⁸ that she has earlier distinguished.⁴⁹ Philosophy at the grassroots level is an affirmation of a latent philosophy in the collective mind of the people waiting for articulation and formalization. Although Quito anticipates that "the benefits of this Filipinization will be felt only after a long time,"⁵⁰ a formal Filipino Indigenous philosophy is optimistically *promised*⁵¹ as a futural condition *premised*⁵² on normative resources that could be allowed to surface from collective experience. One can gain this same insight in Ramon Reyes's description of "Filipino thought" as a historical event undergoing the stages of development from vital thought to reflexive thought. Like Quito, Reyes alludes to the Filipino as a people, as a "we," sharing distinctive traits drawn from normative descriptions by local social scientists.⁵³

This appears to be the running mind frame among Filipino scholars who engage/d directly or work in proximity with the "idea of Filipino

⁴⁶ This nationalist motivation of Quito has been cited in previous studies. See for instance, Emmanuel de Leon, "Emerita S. Quito (1929-): Ang Ugat ng Isang Panibagong Direksyon ng Pamimilosopiya sa Pilipinas," in *Malay*, 29:2 (2017) and Leslie Anne L. Liwanag, "Ang Pilosopiya ni Emerita S. Quito," in *Kritike*, 10:1 (June 2016), 59.

⁴⁷ Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 41-43.

⁴⁸ "This collective mind, this general attitude toward life, this concerted effort to acquire wisdom which is manifest on the popular or grassroots level constitutes the folk spirit (*Volksgeist*) of the Filipino and it should (or will) eventually emerge as a formalized philosophy on the academic level. This philosophy is, however, still in the process of formalization." Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 12.

⁴⁹ A project that she still held and even more intensified after three decades in her emphasis on the value of translating philosophical texts in the Filipino language. See Emerita S. Quito, "Ang Kaugnayan ng Wikang Pambansa at Edukasyon," in *Malay*, 22:1 (2009), 21-30.

⁵⁰ Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 57.

⁵¹ As a task of identity articulation, "an identity in the process of construction and elaboration." Lagdameo, "Constructing and Contesting What is 'Bikol,'" 1-2. For Quito, this would be premised on the "attitudes and values [that] constitute the hidden springs of the Filipino Mind." Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 12.

⁵² Based on "an assemblage of multiple and diverse perspectives based on historically constituted and precariously fragile ipseities through which worlds of meaning unfold." Lagdameo, "Constructing and Contesting What is 'Bikol,'" 1.

⁵³ Ramos C. Reyes, "Sources of Filipino Thought," in *Philippine Studies*, 21:4 (1973), 429-437.

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Philosophy.” Leonardo Mercado took this as his lifetime project using the methods of metalinguistic analysis and phenomenology of behavior.⁵⁴ Floretino Timbreza combined the path of writing in the Filipino language and drawing from the sources of vital thought.⁵⁵ Feorillo Demeterio reports two modes of Indigenization in Timbreza: exogenous Indigenization which “refers to the use of Western and foreign concepts in order to explicate native realities” and endogenous Indigenization which “meant the use of native concepts in order to explicate Western or foreign realities.”⁵⁶ In the case of Rolando Gripaldo the “indigenous” is delimited to the anthropological or cultural approaches which consist in “deriving the collective *Weltanschauung* as an expression of the collective *Volkgeist*”⁵⁷ in contrast to the other two approaches, the traditional and the constitutional. Gripaldo’s adherence to the constitutional approach appears as a practical way for him to organize and unify all the works he compiled in his bibliographical research which refuses singularity in methodology. The shift from the thematic content to the nationality of authors renders a univocal classification of all the works classified as Filipino Philosophy. What Gripaldo performs is essentially a more technical—because legal—mode of defining the contours of the idea of Filipino Philosophy in the person of the author. In other words, an agentive shift in defining Philosophy as Filipino. Gripaldo is one of the most vocal proponents of the Indigenization of philosophy in the context of Filipinization. It is in this merit that Tomas Rosario, in his “Foreword” of Gripaldo’s book could write that “Filipino scholars and researchers in the field of philosophy can seriously shift their interest from a Western outlook of philosophy to an *indigenous* philosophical world-view”⁵⁸—the *Indigenous* understood by Rosario back to the “we” as nation.

Writing in the vernacular became an instrument of the Filipinization of philosophy whether vocally or performatively. Aside from Quito and Timbreza who wrote book length works on Filipino Philosophy, Leonardo de

⁵⁴ Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban: Divine Word Seminary, 1974).

⁵⁵ One among his numerous works is *Sariling Wika at Pilosopiyang Filipino* (Quezon City: C & E Publishing, 2008).

⁵⁶ Feorillo P.A. Demeterio III, “Status of and Directions for ‘Filipino Philosophy’ in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Griplado, and Co,” in *Philosophia*, 14:2 (2013), 191.

⁵⁷ Rolando M. Gripaldo, *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography, 1774–1997*, 2nd ed. (Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2001), 4.

⁵⁸ Tomas Rosario Jr., “Foreword,” in *Filipino Philosophy: A Critical Bibliography, 1774–1997*, 2nd ed., by Rolando M. Gripaldo (Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2001), iii. Emphasis mine.

Castro⁵⁹ and Albert Alejo⁶⁰ also wrote books on ethics and philosophical anthropology respectively in the Filipino language which pulls them along the gravity of this path. Meanwhile even when the esteemed Roque Ferriols denied allegiance to the project of building Filipino Philosophy he did not think of its impossibility: “No one can create a Filipino or anything else philosophy,” he says, “*except by accident.*”⁶¹ Yet in his preface of the same journal issue where Reyes’s article was published, Ferriols has given the most pronounced philosophical articulation of the idea of Indigeneity in his terrestrial metaphor of “rootedness.” Rootedness in the human mind manifests as being:

... rooted in the insecurities and creativities of the human brain. Not a brain floating in the hot air of discussion groups, but constantly irrigated by a beating heart in a warm body. Which body is rooted to. Rootedness in the—for want of a real name—culture, I refer to the heartening-in-its-richness, -confusion, -potential, -frustration, -creative milieu in which each Filipino finds himself soaking at birth. Which he makes grow. Against which he defends himself. Within which he leaps. Under which he sleeps and dies. Which he will cherish in his blood at the resurrection.⁶²

What else was Ferriols’s employment of his Sampalokese Tagalog in his works but a gesture of this rootedness in which a Filipino *is soaked at birth?*

The “idea of Filipino Philosophy” however was also conceived apart from the employment of the Filipino language. This would be the case of some scholars in the Visayas and Mindanao who welcome the “idea” but were not so hospitable with the employment of the Filipino language as medium of philosophizing. Enshrined in the objectives of PHAVISMINDA, the oldest and largest organization of Visayan and Mindanaoan philosophers is “to philosophize within the context of the realities of the Philippines, especially the Visayas and Mindanao.”⁶³ Among vocal supporters of the

⁵⁹ Leonardo D. De Castro, *Etika at Pilosopiya sa Kontekstong Pilipino* (Diliman Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ Albert Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy! Isang Landas ng Pagunawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of the Research and Publications Ateneo de Manila University, 1990).

⁶¹ Roque J. Ferriols, S.J., “A Memoir of Six Years,” in *Philippine Studies*, 22:3–4 (1974), 339. Italics mine.

⁶² Roque J. Ferriols, S.J., “Editor’s Reface,” in *Philippine Studies*, 21:4 (1973), 407.

⁶³ Jan Gresil S. Kahambing and Feorillo Petronillo A. Demeterio, “Doing Philosophy in Central and Southern Philippines: Interviews with PHAVISMINDA Presidents Velez, Gallamaso, and Suazo,” in *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, 16 & 17 (May 2018), 185.

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“idea” traceable in their works are Quintin Terrenal, Amosa Velez, Eduardo Babor, and Raymundo Pavo. The conceptualization of Filipino Philosophy by these thinkers who relocate the philosophical enterprise instead into “Philippine realities” is no less the affirmation of a shared experience of a “we” which would be the material for philosophical reflection. Thus, the Indigenization in the context of the “we” of the imagined political community was a shared ground in the localization of the philosophical enterprise.

Furthermore, Indigeneity was likewise the ground from which “Filipino Philosophy” even flourished into a diversity of modalities mobilized by the criticisms hurled at the performance of Indigenization itself. One kind of criticism is that which has long been articulated by Ferriols’s metaphor of “mirroring” that is associated with the *intention* of developing a Filipino Philosophy for this would be a departure from the *elan* of philosophy in the experience itself. But not only did Ferriols not conceive of the impossibility of Filipino Philosophy, he also did not, or perhaps *could not*, depart from the identitarian location of his own experience from which the act of philosophizing itself will show “all the tension, combat, exoticness, rootedness of who he is begin to show their inner truth.”⁶⁴ Once more, with Ferriols, philosophizing and the use of one’s own language is *promised* as the site of the emergence not only of the “Pilipino mode” of “being alive,” but also of the modes of “Ilocano, Bisayan, Bikol, atbp.”⁶⁵ In plain words, Ferriols seems to say that Filipino Philosophy is something one cannot ascribe to one’s work, but for others and the future to claim.

Another kind of criticism is one which problematizes the legitimacy of “Filipino” as a semantic modifier of philosophy and the methodological manner of proceeding. Scholars who advance their criticisms along this thread do not in fact totally reject “the idea of Filipino philosophy” but scrutinize instead a *manner* of framing the “idea.” Abulad and Co share this mode of critique. Abulad follows Quito’s pedagogical technique⁶⁶ of allowing a differential approach in doing philosophy. Without discrediting the anthropological approach employed by Mercado and Timbreza, Abulad warns of a “dogmatic clinging to a particular philosophy” implied in such methods seeking to establish substantiality to Filipino Philosophy. He points out as well the futility of insisting on an *original* mental state from which to

⁶⁴ Ferriols, “A Memoir of Six Years,” 339.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 341. Cortez writes an elaborate and critical reading of Ferriols’s employment of the Pilipino language where he unveils that this linguistic turn in fact is a political act and a critique of colonial discourse and elitism. Franz Giuseppe F. Cortez, “The Linguistic Turn as a Political Act: Another Look at the Thoughts of Roque Ferriols,” in *Kritike*, 8:1 (June 2014), 45–77.

⁶⁶ As de Leon’s faithful exposition of Quito’s legacy states, the expository and openness to difference were Quito’s distinctive style in teaching and doing philosophy which brought a new direction for philosophy in the Philippines. De Leon, “Emerita S. Quito (1929–).”

base an Indigenous thinking amidst difference.⁶⁷ Abulad prefers instead a more inclusive, yet *originary* way of doing Filipino Philosophy. Thus, with the variety of methods and number of scholars in the field after more than three decades, the question concerning its “existence” has no longer much gravity for him than the question of how to keep on doing Filipino Philosophy.⁶⁸

Co’s critique of claims to originality and his nonchalance in searching for any Indigenous Filipino Philosophy could be misconstrued as a total negation of the Filipinization of philosophy. His objections primarily spring from his stand, gleaned from history, that the Philippines, the Filipino, is a Spanish creation.⁶⁹ But a closer look at the flow of his thought shows that this criticism is more of a prolegomenon for what he calls a “birthing of a new concept of Filipino Philosophy” instead of a negation. Co proceeds to describe anew the Filipino as a polymorphous identity and reveals most fully the direction he wants to take for this “new concept” in his redescription of the Philippines as “the meeting of the East and West.” It is not far to surmise that, as a sinologist and scholar in East and West comparative philosophy, Co was only reacting against the image of a Filipino Philosophy framed under the lens of *being* or *substantiality* gleaned from Western Scholastic metaphysics. Like Abulad, he also maneuvers the “idea” towards difference, and in the language of Buddhist philosophy, towards *becoming*.

At present, the idea of Filipino Philosophy which sprang from Indigenization as Filipinization has already thrived into a diversity of modalities. This was brought about by the paradigm shifts in the questions posed such as: “How to do Filipino Philosophy?”, “How to develop Filipino Philosophy?”, and “Why do we still ask or should still ask the question of what Filipino Philosophy is?” These provided various trajectories taken up by researchers resulting to an explosion of publications in the field. Demeterio is a notable scholar whose prolific works maintain the continuity of the idea of Filipino Philosophy to the present and even reproduces the project of Filipinization into a multiplicity of discourses.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Abulad, “Contemporary Filipino Philosophy.”

⁶⁸ Romualdo Abulad, “Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Towards a More Responsive Philosophy for the 21st century,” in *Suri*, 5:1 (2016), 1–20.

⁶⁹ Abellanosa has criticized Co at this point for disregarding the active participation of the people in the nationalist and post-colonial struggle of the people. Like the claim I usher in this part, Abellanosa rightly plots in a historical perspective the circumstances out of which it emerged as a response, that is, as “critique of colonial experience.” Rhoderick John S. Abellanosa, “Will Filipinos Ever Become Philosophers? Reflections on Philosophizing in an Age of Postcolonial Challenges,” in *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, 16 & 17 (May 2018), 39.

⁷⁰ See for example, among his numerous works, Demeterio, “Status of and Directions for ‘Filipino Philosophy’”; Feorillo P.A. Demeterio III, “Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, XLIX:147 (May–August 2014), 189–230.

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Aside from diversity, a more critical, inclusive, and dynamic approach toward the “idea” surrounds today’s scholarship. Jovito Cariño’s way of doing philosophy is one such example in his alternative frame of the becoming-philosophy of Filipino or *pagsasapilosopiya ng Filipino* in contrast to Filipinization of philosophy, or nationalism, that has, according to him, dominated the discourse until the present. In his illuminating foreword to Cariño’s book that won the NBDB National Book Award in 2019, Paolo Bolaños rightly ascribes “the stance of radical difference” taken by Cariño in moving “away from the essentialist nationalism inaugurated by Jose Rizal to the recognition of the variegated faces of Filipino philosophizing” signified by Cariño’s utility of the term “becoming-philosophy” gleaned from Deleuzian conceptual toolbox. “By doing so,” Bolaños continues, “Cariño displaces the question of Filipino Philosophy, from the desperate search for a pure national identity, that is to say, of Indigenous thought, to the openness, dynamism, flexibility, response-ability, inclusivity, receptivity, creativity, contingency, and uncertainty of Filipino philosophizing.”⁷¹ This is not to be taken, however, as a total negation of “the idea of Filipino Philosophy” because Cariño’s philosophizing “necessarily entails the question of national identity” albeit this time “pursued more critically.”⁷² He states this more straightforwardly: “*ang kailangan sa kasalukuyan ay ang konsepto ng nasyonalismo na mapagbuklod, hindi mapagbukod; mapang-angkop, hindi mapanakop; mapanuri, hindi mapang-uri.*”⁷³ What Cariño perhaps inaugurates, if not revitalizes,⁷⁴ in the language of Indigeneity is a liberation of the concept from its *confinement* to nationalism and ethnicity and the rechanneling of the philosophical energy from the identitarian focus on the self to the diverse Philippine realities, the “philosophizing from the outside” shift to the historical conditions of Filipinos.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Paolo Bolaños, “Original Foreword in English,” in *Muni: Paglalayag sa Pamimilosopiyang Filipino*, by Jovito Cariño (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018), 163.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Cariño, *Muni*, 14.

⁷⁴ It should be noted that a critical mode of doing philosophy has already been present since the early beginnings of Filipino Philosophy. Demeterio traces an “indigenous phase of critical Filipino philosophy” from the early pioneers like Fernando Zialcita. Critical philosophizing in this period generally meant “critique of political and economic structures” which largely contain Marxist undertones contextualized in the mainstream issues in Philippine setting, that is, in the nationalist-indigenous framework. See Feorillo Demeterio III, “Thought and Socio-Politics: An Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy,” in *Hingowa: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal*, 8:2 (March 2003), 45–73.

⁷⁵ Cariño’s critique of, but not cessation from, Indigenous Filipino Philosophy runs parallel to Elmo Gonzaga’s reimagination of the nation from the homogenized image of what he calls *official nationalism* to one that is “constituted by the desires of the oppressed multitude for liberation” or the differential image of a “smooth nationhood, which allows for the cooperative and creative autonomy of the multitude” read likewise within a Deleuzo-Guattarian lens. Elmo

Lastly, the very idea of Filipino Philosophy is apparently implicated in what could perhaps be the most challenging critique of Filipinization by Michael Roland Hernandez in his deconstruction of the differential construction of “Filipino identity” and modern Philippine nation. For Hernandez, the very term “Filipino” is already a colonial artefact furnished in violence and the owning of this identity becomes the “defining moment of the assimilation”⁷⁶ of the natives within European ethnocentrism. Becoming-Filipino in this sense is tantamount to the completion of the internal colonization set by colonial processes codified in the works of Burgos, Rizal, and other *illustrados*. Using Spivak’s notion, an “epistemic violence” is thus always implied in any attempt to retrieve or construct a collective identity for Filipinos as it only recycles colonial violence and oppression in the complicity with the “identity-trap” set by colonial ideology, this time a more subtle form of hegemony in a façade of the struggle for nationalist liberation. If, as Cariño writes, the campaign for Filipino Philosophy was an extension of the nationalist project,⁷⁷ then its inception and persistence has been compromised from the beginning, and that it must be held suspect of preserving in an epistemic form a sort of time-loop of oppression, unless a radical beginning is begun by “ceasing to use the language and identity within which [it] has been captured by colonial ideology.”⁷⁸ Although Hernandez has not yet written a more direct criticism of the idea of Filipino Philosophy, the logic of his argument seems to thread not necessarily on the question of its existence but on the question of its legitimacy as a representation of the “diverse reality of the different regional ethno-linguistic societies, and the sub-classes within them, together with their attendant interests, struggles, conflicts, and aspirations”⁷⁹ which it claims to subsume in a nationalist parlance.

Indeed, a nationalist discourse of philosophy is confronted with the archipelagic context of the Philippines characterized by a diversity of sociocultural contexts and political inclinations, linguistic differences, and a

Gonzaga, *Globalization and Becoming-Nation: Subjectivity, Nationhood, and Narrative in the Period of Global Capitalism* (Diliman, Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2009), 12. While Cariño writes of “becoming-philosophy,” Gonzaga speaks of a “becoming-nation” that Devilles, in his review of the book, interprets as a departure from the modernist, fascist, image of the nation. “Although it claims nation is still a worthwhile project, the kind of nation that must be attained in the period of global capitalism should be open, immanent, dynamic—a nation that is becoming, a nation that is interrogated less in the center than in the boundaries and margins.” Gary Devilles, “Review of *Globalization and Becoming-Nation: Subjectivity, Nationhood, and Narrative in the Period of Global Capitalism* by Elmo Gonzaga,” in *Philippine Studies*, 59:2 (June 2011).

⁷⁶ Michael Roland F. Hernandez, “Trapping Identities: Filipinization and the Problems of a Nationalist Historiography,” in *Suri*, 5:2 (2016), 150.

⁷⁷ Cariño, *Muni*, 155.

⁷⁸ Hernandez, “Trapping Identities,” 168.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

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“multiversity of rationalities.”⁸⁰ The designation of Indigeneity as Filipinization is therefore problematized as a legitimate representation. The “idea of Filipino Philosophy” in this case therefore, itself, served as an ideational space of contention, articulating the dangers of sidelining diverse sociocultural resources in favor of a dominant, popular, and mainstream thought that could be mainstreamed.

There is however a different employment of the language of Indigeneity that deflects from the homogenous nationalist discourse and mobilizes the philosophical enterprise in the diverse ethno-linguistic societies of the country which a critique such as that of Hernandez’s implicitly clamors for. This will be treated in the next part.

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⁸⁰ Borrowing this term from Agustin Rodriguez. See Agustin Rodriguez, *Governing the Other: Exploring the Discourse of Democracy in a Multiverse of Reason* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009).

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Time and Value: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy of Time

Sercan Çalçı

Abstract: In this text, I will focus on the four main theses on the conception of time Marx used in *Capital* and *Grundrisse* in order to deal with the problem of value and its relationship with the concept of time. These four theses appear at different stages in Marx's work, both at the level of political economy, in the analysis of capitalism as a system, and at the historical materialist level. Here, I aim to do boundary research by bringing these four theses together. In so doing, I will use a typological approach as well as a topological one in which the spheres of circulation and production of capital can be analyzed depending on its movement and the process of valuation. In the context of typological elements, I will consider three functions of the social surplus time and stage their three typological counterparts as no-one, someone and everyone.

Keywords: time, value, labour, capital

One of the major historical ruptures accompanying the birth of capitalist modernity finds its expression with the reversal that occurs in the modern development of the concept of time. We can describe this reversal as follows: As Plato, who invented the basic conceptual repertoire of ancient Greek philosophies after Socrates, stated in *Timaeus*, time is a "moving image of eternity,"¹ whereas for capitalist modernity, I think, *eternity is but the still image of time*. The ancient world of thought, trying to understand time with reference to eternity, finally grasps its concept as "time

¹ Plato, "Timaeus," *Complete Works of Plato*, trans. by Donald J. Zeyl, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 37d, 1241.

is just this—number of motion in respect of ‘before’ and ‘after’² in Aristotle’s *Physics*. However, in capitalist modernity, we witness that the concept of time is translated into the most abstract scheme according to which the motion is organized as if completing the reversal mentioned above. And the reversals both between eternity and time, and between time and motion, are extensions of a very fundamental phenomenon that can be described on the plane of the historical and political fight over the conception of social time. In the context of the determination of social time, one of the most acute aspects of this fight is exemplified by the replacement of churches’ domination over the social time by clock towers’ or monuments of capitalist modernization.

Magnificent structures such as churches, which for centuries have determined the rhythmic order of cities on the one hand and are the symbol of the representation of time on the other, were undoubtedly the primary space of time until a few centuries ago. These structures represented a logic of counting time according to social necessities, but time wasn’t measured in the sense we understand today. The way of counting time was also quite different from ours: social time was not organized as a homogeneous and abstract conception independent of cosmic movements; even in its most advanced form, it was counted by numbers instead of counting the numbers themselves. However, a few centuries ago the development of capitalist modernity confronted them with another representation of time, namely the clock towers erected in the squares of cities. The church bell rang and the mosque adhan continued to be sung, but a new logic and economy that emerged particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took a central role in determining the rhythm of social life. This new logic of development regarded time as *tempo* distinct from cosmic events and nature, and most importantly placed it at the very center of economical rationality. Just as stated in an extraordinary passage in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s *Time Regulation Institute*, one of the biggest breaks created by capitalist modernity in the representation of time was performed by counting time as an independent, abstract, and homogeneous number. One of the characters in this seminal novel says: “Civilization took its greatest leap forward when men began walking about with watches in their pockets, keeping time that was independent from the sun. This was a rupture with nature itself (...). For a timepiece is time itself, we mustn’t forget that!”³ Undoubtedly, a concept of time, which clocks not only counted but also measured, confronted theological monuments of time with a secular, homogeneous, and abstract

² Aristotle, “Physics,” *Complete Works of Aristotle*, Volume I, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1984), 219a30-219b1, 501.

³ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, trans. by Maureen Freely and Alexander Dawe (New York: Penguin, 2013), 117.

conception. Tanpinar was one of those who felt this tension between two different conceptions of time most deeply. In *Time Regulation Institute*, we see this tension in the implicit controversy between the wall clock called Blessed One, which counts time at its own calm pace and witnesses everything in the family for generations by getting an ethereal personality and a name, and the impersonal secular clock on the table.⁴ But this conflict should not be seen as a coincidence because the conception of social time has never been outside of power relations throughout human history. Especially since capitalist modernity began to organize with its own institutions and rationality, both the war between classes and the fight between rationalities have seen it as their own domains.

In this respect, it is remarkable that in one of Walter Benjamin's theses in *On the Concept of History*, the clock towers, which are the time monuments of capitalist modernization, were considered as being targeted during the July revolution: "On the first evening of fighting it turned out that the clocks in towers were being fired on simultaneously and independently from several places in Paris."⁵ Benjamin does not tell us about an ordinary anecdote here. If looked at a little deeper, the issue is actually tied to how social domination will be established over the representation of time and to which forces will dominate social time. Our question is as simple as this: If the forces that organize social time are also the forces that determine its production and distribution, is it possible today to think of time outside of capitalist economical rationality and to execute it differently in our practical world? We can begin by analyzing an indirect connection between time and economy, more precisely the conditions that make possible the subordination of the concept of time to economy. This question is now before us with its rich content that many thinkers have asked themselves. One of them is Tanpinar and he tells us that the logic that identifies clock with time also identifies work with time, and the problem is to identify the time-discipline that not only counts and measures time but places it in a paradigm of savings. A character in *Time Regulation Institute* says: "Work is a matter of mastering one's time, knowing how to use it. We are paving the way for such a philosophy. We'll give our people a consciousness of time (...). We shall declare that man is first and foremost a creature who works, and that work itself is time."⁶ The secular clock on the table has already displaced the Blessed One, the ancient clock on the wall, but the abstract time it brings with it now needs to be considered together with abstract labour.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5, 12.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. by Harry Zohn, ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 2007), 262.

⁶ Tanpinar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 117.

We are at the point where we need to rehearse Karl Marx's philosophy of time in order to analyze how time is imagined in capitalist modernity and how the relationship between capital and value is established with a certain conception of time. Marx inherited an extremely rich line of discussion on the concept of time with his analyses in *Capital* and *Grundrisse* among others. There are many critical axes on this line, from instructions that state that factory clocks must be adjusted to the time of the "nearest railway clock,"⁷ to the issue of the length of the working hours of children and "prolongation of working day,"⁸ when factory bosses exercise their pressure on time most strongly. For example, even though labour power is a commodity, the question of what it means for a labourer to work first and get his wage after,⁹ contrary to all other money-commodity exchanges, can be posed on this line. Moreover, when we ask about the value of a commodity, Marx already points out in *Capital* that the value of the commodity is the "average labour time for producing the product"¹⁰ or "socially necessary labour time."¹¹ As such, Marx's philosophy of time provides the ontological relation between value and time.

Economy of Time

In the background of the thesis "economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself"¹² lies Marx's general understanding of human activity. The link between the economical organization of human activity and its temporal organization is at the center of the problem here. If the history of human beings with the reproduction of their own means of subsistence and living existence, the broad range of this thesis suggests that not only capitalist society but also all social formations before it established a kind of connection between economy and time in various forms, and it also assumes that there is a relationship between meeting social needs and distribution of social time. But when the difference of the capitalist mode of production is taken as the production of commodities as commodities and the production and realization of surplus value, the current context of the relationship between economy and time emerges. Capital not only subordinates the productive forces of human activities to itself but also organizes the social time in which these activities take place by making them suitable for its own expansion. It

⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume: 1, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 394.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 526.

⁹ See *Ibid.*, 681.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1011.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1023.

¹² Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 173.

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is the relation of capital, then, that under capitalism constitutes the mediation between the economical organization of human activity and its temporal organization.

One of the most crucial definitions of capital in Marx's analysis of political economy tells us that "capital is a relation,"¹³ not a thing, and another assumes that capital is a relation that can only protect itself by a tendency to expand itself boundlessly. These two definitions complement each other. However, the first should be considered together with Engels' statement that "capital locked up in a chest was dead capital, while capital in circulation increased continuously."¹⁴ Capital as a thing is only a store of value and cannot be the determinant of social relations. In this sense, to say that capital is a relation is to say that it is a relation established with labour or in Marx's own words "with not-capital, the negation of capital, without which it is not capital; the real not-capital is labour."¹⁵

It is clear that the irreducible contradictions between social productive forces and existing capitalist relations of production play a crucial part in Marx's claim that capital is a relation that can only exist by expanding itself.¹⁶ Moreover, when capital's endless tendency towards valuation is taken as a characteristic feature of it, it becomes even clearer why the expansion of capital is essential. So how does capital expand and how can this relate to Marx's thesis on the economy of time? In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Engels pointed out this characteristic structure of industrial capital: "But an industry which does not expand cannot improve itself."¹⁷ Capitalist production must grow or die by increasing and expanding, and it can only expand itself by registering the productive forces of labour in its axiomatics of value, in short, by investing the commodity of labour power into production and appropriating the surplus value it produces. As such, the ontological condition of the expansion of capital is surplus value. But it must be remembered that Marx made a distinction between the production of surplus value and its "realization."¹⁸ Surplus value is produced when labour power transfers additional value to the commodity it produces. As to the realization of surplus value, this commodity must come to the market and

¹³ *Ibid.*, 676.

¹⁴ Friedrich Engels, *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*, Marx & Engels Collected Works: Volume 3, Marx and Engels (March 1843-August 1844), trans. by Martin Milligan (Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 418.

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, 279.

¹⁶ See *Ibid.*, 516.

¹⁷ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, Collected Works: Volume 4, Friedrich Engels, trans. by Richard Dixon, Clemens Dutt, Jack Lindsay, Alick West, Alex Miller, Dirk J. Sally, R. Struik, Alick West. (Lawrence & Wishart, 2010 a), 260.

¹⁸ Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, 437.

turn into money by realizing its *salto mortale*,¹⁹ and that money must be included in capital as money-capital and expand it.

Now the mediating relation established by the capitalist mode of production between the economy and time has become clearer. When social time is organized within the expansion dynamics of capital, an equation emerges that we can express in the form of the maximum value in minimum time. All time segments outside of the time of production have become an extension of this value axiomatics. Lewis Mumford provides important observations on the relation between time and labour in the development of capitalist modernity and how the movement of capital subordinates social time to its axiomatics of value: "Time-saving now became an important part of labour saving. And as time was accumulated and put by, it was reinvested, like money capital, in new forms of exploitation (...). Time, in short, was a commodity in the sense that money had become a commodity."²⁰ This is one aspect of the capitalist economy of time. However, it is not enough to deduce from this view that capital is a time thief because it offers a time-logic, a time-discipline, organizes the concept of time socially, and strives to transform itself into the original space of time.

Moments as the Elements of Profit

Marx thinks of capital-value as an abstraction "in actu,"²¹ as a functioning system. We live in this abstraction and reproduce it from moment to moment. So how do we do that? My answer to this question is as follows: Value-relation in capitalist society is established through a specific time design. Value becomes a social reality by being reflected on the mirror of time (*chronos*) as an abstraction in actu. This is one reason why time is a central concept of capitalist economic rationality. Now the concept of time has been reduced to the concept of capital-value; time belongs to a discipline and a logic of savings. The words of a factory boss portrayed by Marx in the first volume of *Capital* clearly reflect this situation: "If you allow me (...) to work only ten minutes in the day over-time, you put one thousand a year in my pocket. Moments are the elements of profit."²²

Marx's second thesis on time and one of the focal points of my analysis emerges on this axis. How can the moment be transformed into profit? Let us first ask how such a unit as the moment assumes a concept of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.

²⁰ Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilizations* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), 197.

²¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 2, Marx & Engels Collected Works: Volume 36, trans. by Samuel Moore, Edward Aveling (Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 110.

²² Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, 352.

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time a priori. What is the time according to the moment? Just as modern atomism uses the atom to explain the formation of matter by designating the atom as the smallest indivisible unit, temporal atomism records the moment as the indivisible unit of time. But since the moment is the unit of measurement, it is also incommensurable. The problem here can be expressed as follows: how is it possible that a combination of unmeasurable units can produce a measurable quantity? In fact, the moment is a fictional boundary that cannot be transcended by time, just as someone who thinks that the line is made up of points accepts the point as a fictional 'trace' that cannot be transcended. The relation of capital to this limit differs from the material limits it encounters. Since this limit is fictional, capital carries out a micro-operation of the 'economy of time' to include this boundary in its rationality.

The issue is now focused on what the minimum unit of time will be in terms of capital's own development and growth. If this minimum was a unit day, we could be content with workday analysis and disclose this logic by determining how the relationship between time and value is organized during the working day. However, the problem has spread to a much more micro level. The biggest contradiction of this question emerges when we ask whether the moment produced to construct time is itself temporal. The moment, in its both immeasurable and non-countable nature, is just a 'trace' just like a point. However, when we follow it, it is not possible to encounter the temporal itself. Because this trace is a reaction to the definition of the non-measurable fiction as a measurable reality, and this reaction for capital is extremely valuable in transcending the limits of the time of appraisal. Capital has seized this atom of the temporal sequence, occupying this fictional unit in its phantasmagoria in actu. In the words of the employer, the desire to occupy the time of the working people as a whole is evident; he knows that he would earn two thousand pounds a year if he had twenty minutes of overwork per day, and twenty thousand pounds a year if he had two hundred minutes of excessive work per day. Capital-value then aims at the smallest constituent fiction piece to capture the whole. It is now clear why the savings paradigm of the 'economy of time' puts "moment" on its target, because the employer cannot seize the smallest temporal unit, say the second, unless he seizes the whole of the relative size that he will constitute. For capital, every moment when it cannot exhaust its labour power and add value to it is determined as a time of devaluation. The moment, therefore, taken as the unmeasurable unit of time from the standpoint of temporal atomism, is made part of labour time, surplus value, and therefore profit for the capitalist economy. Now capital takes on a new operation on the micro levels of time and money identity. The main goal for capital, organized as an element of profit, is to reflect time into the mirror of value. In other words, to produce a specific equation between time and value by imprisoning the idea of eternity

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under the value form, and to organize social time according to this equation. In this respect, any moment that cannot be converted into profit is a loss. Here is one of the most critical points of the analysis of social time: The moment is commodified in the capitalist economy of time, this is the capitalist axiomatics at the root of the creation of a wage-time regime, just like the wage-labour regime. The capitalist economy of time has accomplished what any economy of time has never achieved before in history. In this regime, capital occupied the moment.

We find another striking observation of such a concept of time in Tanpinar's *Time Regulation Institute*: "If every person loses one second per hour, we lose a total of eighteen million seconds in that hour (...). It's a maddening loss of time ... a loss in terms of our work, our lives, and our everyday economy."²³ The useful side of the time regulation institute is to establish value-time identity and instill the consciousness of time in people. But there is no need for such an institute today because we are far from thinking about a time concept that would break this identity. While it is not impossible, it is very difficult for us to think of a concept of time that is not commodified and integrated into the value system. In order to achieve this break conceptually, I would like to draw up another idea such as life-time identity as opposed to value-time identity. But the first thing to do is to analyze this capitalist commodity logic in detail, which identifies value with time. Lewis Mumford gives us an important insight on this issue and presents the link between the ideology of progress of capitalist modernity and the identity of value-time. "Value, in the doctrine of progress, was reduced to a time- calculation: value was in fact movement in time. To be old-fashioned or to be 'out of date' was to lack value."²⁴ At this very point, we must now rethink the subordination of time to the economy through the spatial construction of capital in order to bring to mind another conception of time that does not progress -linear or cyclical- or turn into *chronos*.

Capital, Space, and Time

While the capital in the field of production can turn space into its own space of self-valorization, in the field of circulation, space is a stretch that needs to be narrowed and, if possible, eliminated. The main tendency of capital in the sphere of circulation is to reset the time of circulation, that is, by maximizing the speed of circulation, and perhaps by subjecting all exchange processes to a regime of synchronicity, to eliminate the amount of time spent

²³ Tanpinar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 32.

²⁴ Mumford, *Technics and Civilizations*, 180-181.

on metamorphoses of value and the space in which this time is spent.²⁵ That is to say, the space occupied by being traversed in the production field is traversed by being occupied in the circulation field. When the occupation takes an absolute form, the time of circulation will be nullified, and social time will be organized around the relations of capital with speed and space. In this sense, under the conditions of capitalism, the target of capital is the whole global space. In *Grundrisse*, Marx gives us one more clue to help understand the connections between time of circulation and speed in terms of the organization of social time, while explicitly analyzing how capital destroys space over time: "Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another."²⁶ According to Marx's analysis "even spatial distance reduces itself to time; the important thing e.g. is not the market's distance in space, but the speed - the amount of time - with which it can be reached."²⁷ While the movement of capital spatializes time in the sphere of production, it destroys space in the sphere of circulation by using this spatialized time, in other words, by the transformation of time into a social abstraction in actu as *chronos*. An occupiable design of space is required to homogenize time, and an image of time spatialized to demolish the space.

The homogeneous structure of the design of time produced by capitalist modernity also appears in Georg Lukács' analyses of the concept of abstract time as well as in Moishe Postone's concept of abstract labor which "is peculiar to capitalist society,²⁸" a mediating factor of all relations in this society. Abstract labour and abstract time are two main phenomena of the capitalist society's culture of abstraction from which all mediated and abstracted relationships between human beings stem by means of freezing all the flowing things under the capture of commodity. Lukács says: "Thus time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited quantifiable continuum filled with 'quantifiable' things (the reified, mechanically objectified 'performance' of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality): in short, it becomes place."²⁹ Under the conditions of capitalism, time is transformed into space in the field of production, and space is destroyed by time in the field of circulation.

²⁵ Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 2, 129.

²⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, 539.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 538.

²⁸ Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158.

²⁹ George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971), 90.

Therefore, our main determination is that capital in the field of circulation transforms every spatial organization into time and tends to destroy space in time, although it draws a parallel rather than a contrast between the time of production and the organization of space, and the capital in the field of production clings to the process of self-valorization.

So, what is the source of these two seemingly opposite tendencies of capital? Since the existence of capital is characterized by its constant expansion, every place it occupies is a new frontier; this being-relation now faces a block of external barriers in the sphere of circulation that must be occupied before it can be traversed, as opposed to the sphere of production. That capital is “the living contradiction”³⁰ in motion can be clearly seen by this contrast of the designs of time in the spheres of production and circulation. Capital cannot expand itself in the sphere of circulation, it has to return to the production of surplus value it needs to increase its own existence, shorten the period of capitalization of the surplus value produced as much as possible, and occupy space before it travels. Hence, every moment when surplus-value is not produced is the moment when it cannot become an element of profit in terms of capital in production and therefore cannot be included in the time of valuation, and in terms of capital in circulation, every moment when surplus-value is not produced becomes an element of loss and therefore is the moment that is part of the time of devaluation. For this reason, the capital that has accomplished the conquest of moments is a conqueror who steps and traverses the lands it now occupies. Here, the world, just like the day, is no longer a cosmic entity, but in the capitalist economy of time, the world is the market for capital. But we still have to ask what it means to make the whole world its own market, and if capital will reach its limit when this happens. What does it mean to destroy space in time, to reduce even spatial distance to time, and how is this accomplished? One of Mumford’s important observations is as follows: “Instead of a local time based upon the sun, it was necessary to have a conventional time belt, and to change abruptly by a whole hour when one entered the next time belt. (...). The entire planet was now divided off into a series of time-belts.”³¹

We are now on the brink of a new conceptualization to observe how capital destroys space by means of time. We call the process of capitalism making the whole world its own market by carrying a concept in astronomy to a political and philosophical field, as ‘terraforming.’ For the axiomatics of capital, terraforming comes before the world, and this is the premise of a space-time design that we can call terraforming the world. In fact, this concept refers to the transformation of the planets and satellites outside the

³⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, 421.

³¹ Mumford, *Technics and Civilizations*, 198.

world in a way that is suitable for the life of the living things on Earth and the application of a space-time plan in the form of the earth. The terraforming project, which is considered especially for Mars, is not only an astronomical project for our political and philosophical reading, but it can very well describe capitalism's attempt to conquer the world as its own market today. But we have to distinguish between the two interconnected contents of this concept. The first axis can be determined as 'terraforming of the world,' which we will associate with Marx's capital analysis, and the second axis as 'terraforming of other planets and satellites.' On the first axis, capital tends to overcome all spatial barriers external to it, reducing space to time, that is, what matters now is not the distances in space, but the length of time space is traversed by being occupied. In this respect, the term terraforming of the world does not refer to the same context as the first conception of world and the second one. The first concept of the world for capital is the totality of the cosmic space to be conquered, but the second one is the world as the political economy market. In astronomical terms, terraforming signifies a planetary engineering of the application of given conditions to other planets, while in terms of capital, terraforming refers to the breakdown of all barriers to exchange processes, the transition of the movement speed of capital from a maximum sequence to an optimum synchronization, and the transformation of the earth into the smooth space of the circulation of capital. But in this sense, the terraforming process began long before capitalism, and capitalism has found the accumulation of centuries that have formed trade routes, port cities, and networks of transport to be advantageous. However, the terraforming process of the world entered a new phase in the nineteenth century, with mechanization that increased the speed of production, the time of circulation for capital became a bigger obstacle. Considered from this point of view, the time of circulation limits the occupation of world-space by capital, as it contains obstacles to both the process of recapitalizing the surplus value produced and the transition to productive capital. Today, the judgment that the tendency of capital in the sphere of circulation is to decrease the time of circulation by increasing the speed of circulation at the maximum level is displaced by the judgment that it is possible to reset the time of circulation. However, the terraforming process of the world is not completed, and completing this process in terms of the movement of capital means converting all distances into time. Capitalism terraforms the world with its terrestrial movement; it occupies the world geography, but it cannot be the movement itself.

Free Time and Its Critique

The concepts of surplus time are pieces of social time outside of necessary time. Neither of these parts directly intervenes in the equations between value and time. In other words, they are factors indirectly involved in the value-time relationship and must be studied around the question of the distribution of social time. We need to show the distinctions between the three types of social surplus-time, which in Marx's terminology are disposable time, leisure time, and free time. The first thing to put forward is that leisure time is only a part of social time in which the bourgeoisie is the denominator. In Marx's words, "the worker is here nothing more than personified labour time."³² From this we can draw important conclusions about the temporal constitution of the class; for example, leisure time is personified in the bourgeoisie and embodied in it. The fact that workers get a share of leisure time does not mean that they have become the denominators of leisure time. This dichotomous structure is also on the agenda of Marx's analysis of capital, but his goal is neither to arrive at a society of leisure time belonging to someone nor to a time economy in which time is subordinated entirely to the economy. Marx is after an idea of collective time. I think the concept that gains importance here can be understood by analyzing the thought Marx expressed with the concept of everyone. Who is everyone? Undoubtedly, every era has a different design by everyone. So, what is everyone's time? For Marx, free time belongs to everyone—on what line can everyone be placed in Marx's analysis of surplus time?

First of all, we should point out that the concept of everyone in question does not appear as personified in a certain class; Marx's concept of free time can, in one aspect, be understood within the horizon of communist society, where classes are transcended, as a "historical counter temporality."³³ With the concept of free time or time of everyone the horizon of the capitalist economy of time is shaken and subjected to neither disposable time or time of no-one (the first function of surplus-time, universal negation, no-one) for capital, nor leisure time or time of someone (the second function of surplus-time, particular affirmation, someone) for the bourgeoisie. Everyone is the communal subject who has the power to establish surplus time as free time for herself. But it would also be hasty to say that all the content of free time belongs to post-capitalist society. Marx's concept of free time expresses a process of breaking from bourgeois society to human society or from bourgeois humanity to socialized humanity. Someone is a deviation of no-

³² Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, 352-353.

³³ Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, trans. by Peter D. Thomas (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 3.

one, everyone is a divergence of both someone and no-one. Everyone does not mean a society of citizens, but human society, the development process of socialized humanity. We can clearly see this idea of human society and socialized humanity in Marx's tenth thesis on Feuerbach. In the period between *Theses on Feuerbach* and *Grundrisse*, there have been many ruptures in Marx's thought on many levels, but for his thought, these ruptures can also be understood as a condition of continuity of some problematic. At this point, we need to take a closer look at the connection between this idea of human society and leisure time in terms of our temporal analysis.

According to our analysis, human society can only be thought of as the deviation of no-one and someone, that is, as everyone. Let us now try to make a dialogue with Marx's statements about human society and explore how this concept relates to free time. In the tenth thesis of *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx says: "The standpoint of the old materialism is 'civil' society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or associated humanity."³⁴ Marx's new materialism takes as its point of view a horizon that eliminates the dichotomies of the capitalist time economy and embodies the goal of ending the paralogical uses of temporal determination. In this sense, human society abolishes the hierarchy established on someone's property of the means of production in the anonymity of everyone, on the one hand, and heralds the emergence of a new individual, on the other. This individual is a communal being embodied as socialized humanity. However, for such an individual to exist, it is not enough to eliminate the dichotomies of the capitalist time economy, it is necessary to establish the perspective of socialized people in free time. In this sense, the third function of surplus-time has to break up the capitalist value-center, which, unlike the previous two functions, synthesizes three value forms of capital and seizes infinity.

So, how can the intervention of free time, which is the founding concept of the point of view of this new individual emerging with socialized humanity, to the capitalist value-center be analyzed? How, according to Marx, can free time express the birth of a subjectivity that transcends the limits of the capitalist time economy? In *Value, Price and Profit*, Marx says: "Time is the room of human development. A man who has no free time to dispose of, whose whole lifetime, apart from the mere physical interruptions by sleep, meals, and so forth, is absorbed by his labour for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden."³⁵ Free time also includes the possibility of the

³⁴ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx & Engels Collected Works: Volume 5, Marx and Engels (March 1845-August 1847), trans. by C. Dutt, W. Lough, C.P. Magill (Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 8.

³⁵ Karl Marx, *Value, Labour and Capital*, Marx & Engels Collected Works: Volume 9, Marx and Engels 1849, trans. by Jack Cohen, Michael Hudson, Clemens Dutt (Lawrence & Wishart, 2010 a), 142.

transformation of the subject who uses it and starting from this contradiction that gnaws the economy of time from within, the social relation clusters imprisoned in the value-center begin to penetrate the horizon of the capitalist society. In this point one should ask does leisure design tend to destroy all economies of time, or is it just capitalist rationality at its goal?

As opposed to the first function, which turns all social time into its own time of self-valorization, free time interferes with the founding concept of the capitalist value-center, that is, the production of value as a social relation. In a human society, where free time is possible for everyone, it is impossible to talk about such a category as time of self-valorization. But this function that makes social time homogeneous, measurable, and expendable—that is, the function of surplus time as disposable time for capital, despite deviations in the value-center—can carry this function of being spendable to free time. Here is the ambivalence of the concept of free time. Personified free time attacks both capital's time of self-valorization and therefore the existence of capital as a social relation, and it acquires its condition of possibility through the concept of surplus time of capitalism. Social time appears in Marx's idea of communist society in the form of free time disposable to everyone, not time disposable for capital. At this point, however, we need to make a distinction between the intervention of the concept of free time in the actual plan of the value-center and its intervention in virtual plan. On the one hand, free time initiates an attack on the founding logic of the capitalist value-center and thus brings to our agenda a concept of social time that does not open up any space for capital's time of self-valorization, but on the other hand, it reconstructs social time by reproducing it as a measurable, homogeneous quantity, which is continued to be a negative, a surplus, more precisely a residue of necessary time. For this reason, we think that free time is a concept that is strong enough to break the actual boundaries of the capitalist economy of time but, in reality, it cannot escape from its virtual limitations.³⁶

One of the reasons our analysis has reached this point is that we have determined that as no-one is to disposable time for capital so is everyone to disposable homogeneous social time. Everyone is a deviation in a certain

³⁶ Although the historical and philosophical analysis of the relations between the state and social time is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that the modern state has been instilling its own bureaucratic logic into the social body by organizing social time from the perspective of chronos for several centuries. Only through the bureaucracy of chronos, relations between things overcome relations between people. If communist society is understood as a movement arising from the inherent contradictions of capitalist modernity, the question of whether there is a break or a repetition in terms of the paradigm of time may arise here. While the principle of "each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," theoretically increasing the possibility of rupture, history of socialist experiences doesn't show that repetition is out of question.

logical order, not a deviation as deviation, both as the deviation of no-one and someone. In terms of its logical form, it belongs to the same universal-particular and negation-affirmation paradigm. But Marx offers us another hint for analyzing the temporal dimension of the distinction between this human society and bourgeois society, saying that free time opens up an essential space for human development. Human being using free time (this human being is no longer proletarian or capitalist, nor even free citizen) initiates necessary changes in the constituent elements of her existence. Since she is no longer subject to the socially necessary labour time system which is not a sum of the quantity of the social labour corpus but a “connection and relation,” and “a regulatory principle,”³⁷ a space has emerged in which the social being can develop its abilities. The source of Marx’s emphasis on the production of time for science, art, and other activities while analyzing the categories of surplus time is that free time opens up this transformative space. Now disposable social time is considered a space of metamorphosis and creation space of socialized humanity that cannot be translated into labour time. Indeed, at first glance, there is no difficulty to think that a design of social time that is not subject to the *chronos* of capital can correspond directly to the time of free activity. But this commonsense way of thinking completely obscures how the virtual boundaries of the capitalist time economy are reproduced as free time remains a function of social surplus time. With this third function, surplus time, in the mode of free time, immediately disconnects capital and time (cancels the capital’s time of self-valorization), but it preserves the social codes of capitalist time design to move to another social memory. A critique of free time has not yet been made.³⁸ To think of this mode of time as the temporality of communist society means to reproduce the *chronos* of capital in another social formation. The value-center confines infinity to value forms and the concept of free time that shatters the value-center but preserves disposable, abstract and homogeneous social time breaks up the value relation but cannot free the imprisoned eternity.

Hence, human society has liberated itself by time (free time) but not from time (from non-labour time or the domination of the negative). Free time cancels labour time, the founding concept of the capitalist value-center, while it carries a copy of surplus time into the value-center of the post-capitalist world and thus continues to mediate the relation between time and value.

³⁷ Stavros Tombazos, *Time in Marx: The Categories of Time in Marx’s Capital*, trans. by Khristakis Georgiou (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 4.

³⁸ Undoubtedly, the history of philosophy gives us many clues for the criticism of free time. However, I am also talking about the critique of the horizon in which free time appears, that is, the horizon that determines eternity as either transcendent or bad infinities. Today, we are at the point where we need to decipher this horizon in order to break through the epistemological paradigm of capitalist modernity.

The annihilated value relation continues to preserve the phantasmagoria of the *chronos* of capital, the logic of capitalist modernity that divides desire and labour, and, of course, the distinction between necessary time and surplus time in a quantitatively abstract and homogeneous design of social time. The inner relation between the first function of surplus time and free time brings with it the idea of organizing social time in the form of disposable time.

In the context of the economy of time, Marx's thesis of free time is a thesis on whole society, because the third function of surplus time concerns everyone, not no-one or someone. However, everyone in question does not appear to us now as an existence belonging to a certain class. Free time is thought of as an empty space in which the class determinations generated by capitalist society are eliminated. It is clear that everyone who carries the attributions of this concept is a communal subject. The focus for a criticism of free time can be found by considering the possible relationships that this subject might establish with the eternity imprisoned in the value forms. A horizon that will liberate free time from *chronos* can only be reached through this criticism.³⁹

Conclusion

The four theses we examine based on Marx's analysis of capital can be best understood through an analysis of topological and typological elements.⁴⁰ Production and circulation fields at the topological level present the main axes to comprehend the temporal plan of capital movement. Determining a temporal quantity specific to each is a critical step in analyzing the relationship between value and time. On the other hand, the concept of time of turnover formed by the combination of time of production and time of circulation constitutes the existential rhythm of this relation-being called

³⁹ The history of actual experiences of socialism has shown that clues of a critique of the capitalist paradigm of time are inherent in the axiomatics of capitalist modernity; however, it does not promise us much about how an experience of time that is not subject to *chronos* can be constructed. Everyone has not stepped onto the stage of history as everyone, it is another subjectivity that can only bring it onto the stage by negating itself or functioning as the operator of negation: any-one. This subjectivity can appear historically when viewed from another horizon, which prevents the typological axes of capitalist modernity from overlapping exactly with the topological axes: always before the state and where time opens to eternity.

⁴⁰ While these four theses sometimes take an implicit role in the texts of Marx and Engels and are hidden in the argumentation, sometimes they appear directly as a constitutive thematic. In the first case, the discussion of time settles on a problem, while in the second it appears as an obvious thematic. However, in some cases this distinction becomes invalid. For example, in the discussion of circulation time in the second volume of *Capital*, thematic and problematic axes are intertwined. This shows that the distinction between typological and topological axes is only at the level of abstraction, that in the actual world every typology is linked to a topology as a particular problem, and every topology to a typology as a particular thematic.

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capital, which can only exist by expanding. The time of turnover thus marks the period of return of a quantity of capital-value.

As for the typological elements, the first determination manifests itself in the determination of the working class as personified labour time. However, most of the typological elements belong to the category of surplus time rather than necessary labour time. It is clear that the working class is enrolled in the necessary labour time. However, the concepts that are distinguished as disposable time, leisure time, and free time contain serious differences in terms of the distribution regime of social time. Leisure time always belongs to someone, that is, to the bourgeoisie class. The fact that the bourgeoisie does not have to work in a capitalist society and the fact that millions of workers have to work are two sides of the same phenomenon. Leisure time and labour time are mutual conditions for their essential determination. In a capitalist society, although the worker may have a share of leisure time, its absolute denominator is the bourgeoisie, that is, someone as the logical typology of the bourgeoisie. But disposable time belongs to no-one, it is neither of the bourgeoisie nor of the proletariat, for disposable time refers to the form of surplus time that results from the reduction of the socially necessary average labour time as a result of capital's relative surplus-value production. It solves the question of how to personify disposable time and the impersonal existence of capital and registers it in the persona of capital as no-one.

Perhaps we need a new and critical reading of Marx's concepts of time in order to think of a concept of time that will turn free time into *freed time* by adding the *d* of Jacques Derrida's *différance* and will break any kind of time-savings paradigm and any economy of time. Such a concept of time can no longer be dependent on the *chronos* of capital and described in terms of measurability and linearity. In order to reconsider the modern reversal between eternity and time mentioned above, we need a new conception of time that cannot be organized by the time regulation institutes of capital machine: a living time or fire, a concept of freed time or time of any-one, that cannot be fired by someone, no-one or everyone.⁴¹

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⁴¹ Any-one can be thought of as a new form of subjectivity in which historical meta-centered determinations are dissolved. Any-one is to everyone as the proletariat is to the working class; that is, it is a subjectivity that has the power to annihilate itself: the fourth plural person of politics.

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State Ideology and Propaganda with Chinese Characteristics: The Hidden Struggle between Confucianism and Marxism in Contemporary China¹

Ting-mien Lee

Abstract: This article discusses a new definition of “Chinese characteristics” in recent propaganda works in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The definition associates the expression with ancient Chinese civilization and traditional Chinese thought. As the new definition is gaining currency in state propaganda, some scholars interpret it as a signal that the Chinese Communist Party is ready for reconciliation with Confucianism or an experiment to replace, at least partially, Marxism with Confucianism as the state ideology. Some Confucian scholars thus try to formulate an account of Confucianism that could negotiate power with Marxism. This phenomenon shows that the practice of state ideology and propaganda in the PRC sometimes does not aim to shape people’s beliefs or value systems. Instead, it aims to channel the intellectual efforts of the educated toward memorizing the official interpretations of the *settled* state ideology or decoding *new* propaganda messages. The function of new propaganda messages resembles “calls for papers”: they invite academics to participate in building theoretical grounds for new formulations (such as mottos or slogans) or making policy suggestions that resonate with the formulations.

Keywords: Confucianism, Marxism, Chinese propaganda, state ideology

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Despite its frequent appearance, the meaning of the expression “Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese* 中國特色) remains largely unexplored. Although most Chinese official or authoritative encyclopedias and dictionaries contain an entry on “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi* 中國特色社會主義), almost none of them have an entry on “Chinese characteristics.”² It thus remains unclear how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officially interprets the meaning of this expression. Like many loaded political expressions, “Chinese characteristics” is associated with various connotations. Rather than clarifying the exact meaning of the expression, this article focuses on an emerging definition associated with traditional Chinese culture. First, I describe why the new definition is gaining currency. Then, I consider the reactions of some Confucian scholars that have led to tensions between Confucianism and Marxism. This discussion sheds light on the continuity of ancient traditions in China’s contemporary practices of state ideology and propaganda. A key function of a “settled” state ideology—meaning, that it has already been written into the Party Charter (*dangzhang* 黨章) and installed in education—is not necessarily to indoctrinate the people a belief and value system. Instead, such ideology is intended to channel the intellectual efforts of young people (such as high school and university students) toward memorizing and rationalizing the ideology presented as a system of complex codes. This strategy resembles the function of classicism (*jingxue* 經學) in the imperial examination (*keju* 科舉) in ancient China. When a new line of ideology begins to take shape, its components, such as recently proposed formulations, emerge in propaganda writings and speeches.³ This type of propaganda carry the function of a call for paper or call for policy suggestions: it is an invitation for academics to elaborate on the new formulations or to provide policy suggestions that resonate with certain new lines of propaganda.⁴

² Many encyclopedias and dictionaries have entries on “socialism with Chinese characteristics” but not on “Chinese characteristics.” See, for example, *Zhexue da cidian* 哲學大辭典 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe 上海辭書出版社, 2010), 126; *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* 現代漢語詞典 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 2016), 1695.

³ For an in-depth discussion on China’s political formal discourse, see Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992).

⁴ For a lengthier discussion on the function of “calls for papers,” see Ting-mien Lee, “Rethinking Chinese Propaganda: The Continuity of the Ancient Art of Governance,” presented at the workshop *Imaginary Worlds and Imperial Power: The Case of China*, Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academic of Sciences, December 19, 2022.

New “Chinese Characteristics” and New Confucianism

Since the 1980s, the expression “Chinese characteristics” has frequently been used in state propaganda as part of the formulation “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” This formulation was explicitly put forward by Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997) in his opening speech to the 12th Party Congress to refer to the reform and opening-up policies.⁵ The slogan signaled the CCP’s adoption of capitalism and market economics without entirely giving up its ideological commitment to Marxism, Maoism, and socialism. Since then, this phrase has been widely used in the propaganda works of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” suggested that given China’s socioeconomic circumstances at the time, the party had to pragmatically adopt certain policies that did not cohere with its previous official ideology. In this regard, one could say that the phrase “Chinese characteristics” refers vaguely to China’s socioeconomic circumstances. What was left unsaid, however, was that Marxism, Maoism, and planned economy were sidelined to give way to capitalism and market economy to encourage the country’s economic growth. In this context, the expression “Chinese characteristics” had little semantic content. Instead, its main function was to euphemistically explain why Marxism and Maoism were not followed and, more importantly, to ease the tension between Deng’s policies and the party’s original ideological commitments. By employing the expression “Chinese characteristics” in this manner, the political authorities did not necessarily intend to indicate any features that would describe the PRC or China as a country with an ancient civilization.⁶

However, the situation has changed in the last two decades. The widely known driving force behind this change has been China’s enormous economic growth, which proves that the approach of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” has been successful. As a result, the CCP no longer needs to resort to “Chinese characteristics,” an expression that vaguely refers to China’s special socioeconomic circumstances, to support its decision to adopt a market economy. In this situation, a new meaning emerged: there are indeed certain Chinese characteristics that have substantially contributed to the success of Chinese socialism. The consequent assumption is that “Chinese characteristics” refer to some elements of Chinese traditional culture that have contributed to China’s economic success in the past and can probably

⁵ “Deng Xiaoping yu Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi” 鄧小平與中國特色社會主義 [Deng Xiaoping and socialism with Chinese characteristics] (accessed November 29, 2022), <<http://politics.people.com.cn/BIG5/n1/2021/0727/c1001-32172039.html>>.

⁶ However, I am not suggesting that the expression “Chinese characteristics” is not used by Chinese speakers to refer to the characteristics that are unique to the CCT, the PRC, or China.

also contribute to China's success in other areas of domestic and international matters. Therefore, what was originally an "empty" phrase has come to refer to thoughts and practices rooted in ancient Chinese civilization. Concomitantly, the changing meaning of "Chinese characteristics" increasingly enjoys more attention than "Socialism" in the PRC propaganda messages.⁷

This new understanding and definition of "Chinese characteristics" has become more and more explicit during Xi Jinping's 習近平 reign. Many of his speeches associate "Chinese characteristics" with ancient Chinese civilization. In March 2021, for example, Xi paid a visit to Zhu Xi Garden (Zhu Xi *yuan* 朱熹園) and said the following:

When I went to Shandong for an inspection visit, I paid a visit to the Confucius Mansion and the Confucius Temple; when I was in the Wuyi Mountains, I paid a visit to the Zhu Xi [Garden]. [...] Without the five thousand years of civilization, would there be Chinese characteristics? Without Chinese characteristics, would we possibly have the success of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics?⁸

It is clear that "Chinese characteristics" in Xi's statements refer to ancient Chinese civilization, which, according to him, laid the foundation for the success of "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The new meaning of "Chinese characteristics" has often been invoked in Xi Jinping's speeches, official documents, and state-owned media reports during his reign. This new definition also began to appear frequently in academic discourse in various research fields, such as "management with Chinese characteristics" in business studies and "international relations theory with Chinese characteristics" in international relations.⁹ It could be

⁷ Kelvin Chi-Kin Cheung, "Away from Socialism, towards Chinese Characteristics: Confucianism and the Futures of Chinese Nationalism," in *China Information*, 26:2 (2012), 205–218.

⁸ "Xi Jinping de wenhua qinghuai: women yao tebie zhongshi wajue Zhonghua wuqian nian wenming 57hiji de jinghua" 習近平的文化情懷: "我們要特別重視挖掘中華五千年文明中的精華" (accessed on August 8, 2022), <<http://www.scjc.gov.cn/scjc/zhyw01/2022/7/4/b071708eaf0440aebbfab192544852a8.shtml>>.

⁹ See, for example, Yunzhou Du 杜運周 and Ning Sun 孫寧, "Jiangou Zhongguo tese de guanlixue lilun tixi: biyaoxing, kexingxing yu silu" 建構中國特色的管理學理論體系: 必要性、可行性與思路 [Constructing management theory with Chinese characteristics: necessity, feasibility, and thoughts], in *Chinese Journal of Management*, 19:6 (2022), 811–872; Song Qiu 邱松, "Xinshidai Zhongguo tese daguo waijiao de lilun yu 57 hijian yiyi: jian lun guoji guanxi lilun zhongguoxuepai de jiangou" 新時代中國特色大國外交的理論與實踐意義: 兼論國際關係理論中國學派的建構 [Theory and practice of big countries' international relations with Chinese

argued that “Chinese characteristics” imply that ancient Chinese culture or thought remains alive in or is still relevant to China today.

The increasing popularity of the new meaning of “Chinese characteristics” also changed the status of Confucianism. Although Confucianism used to be marginalized to some degree, it has come to be regarded as the icon of Chinese civilization. Under this new line of propaganda, more and more scholars from the social and political sciences have begun to employ Confucianism to address contemporary issues.¹⁰ Some scholars have also seized the opportunity to use Confucianism to theorize about the CCP’s legitimacy and state policy. According to this trend, some scholars from the humanities have also expressed their visions about the country’s future and have promoted national studies (*guozue* 國學) and classicism (*jingxue* 經學) to further their influence in sociopolitical discourse.¹¹ The most notable iteration of this trend is “Contemporary Mainland New Confucianism” (*dangdai dalu xin rujia* 當代大陸新儒家), whose most recent generation is called “Kangism” (Kang Youwei *zhuyi* 康有為主義).¹²

One well-known controversy around Kangism involves the debate dubbed “Mainland vs. Hong Kong/Taiwan New Confucianism Controversy.”¹³ The debate is often viewed as a bitter quarrel between

characteristics in the new era: on the construction of Chinese School of International Relations], in *Xin Shiye*, 3 (2019), 81–87.

¹⁰ Scholars proactively participate in the discussions on Confucian theory concerning the world order and the community with a shared future for mankind. See, for example, Gaozheng Zhu 朱高正, “Ruxue dui Zhongguo xiandaihua yu chongjian guoji zhixu de yiyi” 儒學對中國現代化與重建國際秩序的意義 [The relevance of Confucianism to China’s modernization and reconstruction of international order], in *Philosophical Analysis*, 3:6 (2012), 137–149; Yuxia Xu 徐瑜霞, “Renlei mingyun gongtongti de rujiazhexue jichu tanxi” 人類命運共同體的儒家哲學基礎探析 [On the Confucian philosophical foundation for “the community with a shared future for mankind”], in *Qi Lu Journal*, 4 (2022), 70–81. Attempts are also made in English language academia; see, for example, Tongdong Bai, *Against Political Equality: The Confucian Case* (Princeton: University Press, 2019).

¹¹ For detailed discussions on related topics, see Jinsong Sun 孫勁松, “Guoxue xueke jianshe mianlin de jige wenti” 國學學科建設面臨的幾個問題 [Some problems facing the construction of the discipline of national learning], in *Guoxue xuekan* 國學學刊 4 (2010), 10–15; Arif Dirlik, “Guoxue/National Learning in the Age of Global Modernity,” in *China Perspectives*, 1 (2011), 4–13; Ming Fang 方銘, “Guanyu guoxue ji guoxue yiji xueke sheli de yixie wenti” 關於國學及國學一級學科設立的一些問題 [A few problems with the establishment of national learning as a first-level discipline] (accessed August 16, 2022), <<http://www.guoxue.com/?p=3188>>; Ting Shen 沈庭, “Sheli ‘guo xue’ yiji xueke shi dangwuzhiji” 設立“國學”一級學科是當務之急 [It is urgent to establish “national learning” as a first-level discipline], in *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (accessed August 18, 2022), <http://www.wenming.cn/wmzh_pd/ws/gx/zxdt_9879/201507/t20150713_2726833.shtml>.

¹² For a brief overview of Kangism, see Ting-mien Lee, “A Preliminary Overview of Kang Youwei Studies in China Today,” in *Oriens Extremus*, 58 (2021), 175–190.

¹³ See, for example, Zhaoguang Ge 葛兆光, “Yixiang tiankai: jinnianlai dalu xinruxue de zhengzhi suqiu” 異想天開：近年來大陸新儒學的政治訴求 [Asking for the moon: the political

Confucians based in Mainland China and those in Hong Kong and Taiwan. As the Kangists also published a book with the highly controversial title *China Must Be Re-Confucianized* (*Zhongguo bixu zai ruhua* 中國必須再儒化), Contemporary Mainland New Confucianism, or Kangism, is often (mis)understood as mainly a nationalistic movement of cultural chauvinism stemming from China's economic rise.¹⁴ It is also (mis)understood as a self-proclaimed correct interpretation of Confucianism that aims to compete with the interpretations held by Confucian scholars who endorse Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. However, as the Kangists and their Mainland observers have said on many occasions, their target interlocutors are leftists (*zuopai* 左派) or scholars of Marxism in Mainland China rather than other Confucian scholars.¹⁵

To better grasp the nature of this Confucian movement, one must consider the process described above—that is, how the phrase “Chinese characteristics” in the expression “socialism with Chinese characteristics” gradually became an ideological component equal in importance to socialism.¹⁶ This process eventually resulted in a power struggle between Marxism and ancient Chinese thought, especially Confucianism. Born in the context of an official emphasis on “Chineseness,” Contemporary Mainland New Confucianism is not mainly intended to offer academics an alternative interpretation of Confucianism. It is more of an attempt to negotiate power with Marxist ideology; Marxism can be Sinicized, but it cannot be Chinese after all. Mainland New Confucians are, or once were, convinced that they could bring Marxism to the bargaining table or even replace Marxism as the state ideology because of the widespread expectation that Confucianism has

appeal of Mainland New Confucianism in recent years], speech delivered in 2017 (accessed July 18, 2022), <<https://www.aisixiang.com/data/104951.html>>. For an English translation, see Ownby, David, “Ge Zhaoguang, ‘If Horses Had Wings’” (accessed on September 9, 2022), <<https://www.readingthechinadream.com/ge-zhaoguang-if-horses-had-wings.html>>; Stephen C. Angle, “The Adolescence of Mainland New Confucianism,” in *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49:2 (2018), 83–99.

¹⁴ Yun Ji 紀贇, “Xin rujia yu wenhua shawen zhuyi” 新儒家與文化沙文主義 [New Confucianism and cultural chauvinism] (accessed on August 15, 2022), <<https://www.rujiazg.com/article/11689>>.

¹⁵ Ming Chen 陳明, “Chaoyue Mou Zongsan, huidao Kang Youwei: zai xinde lishi zhexue zhong lijie rujia de fazhan” 超越牟宗三、回到康有為：在新的歷史哲學中理解儒家的發展 [Transcend Mou Zongsan, return to Kang Youwei: understanding the evolution of Confucian studies in the new context of history and philosophy], in *Tianfu xinlun*, 2 (2016), 16–26; Xu Zhang 張旭, “Dalu xinrujia yu Kang Youwei zhuyi de xingqi” 大陸新儒家與新康有為主義的興起 [The emergence of Mainland New Confucianism and Neo-Kangism], in *Wenhua zongheng*, 6 (2017), 98–107.

¹⁶ As Cheung showed, the phrase “Chinese characteristics” has been frequently invoked as its own term rather than being used to describe “socialism.” See Cheung, “Away from Socialism, towards Chinese Characteristics.”

gained leverage because of the increasing relevance of “Chinese characteristics” over “socialism” in many propaganda messages.

In addition to defining “Chinese characteristics” in terms of China’s ancient civilization, Xi Jinping also proposed the new motto “confidence in our culture” (*wenhua zixin* 文化自信) and affirmed its importance by adding it to Hu Jintao’s theory of “Three Confidences” (*sange zixin* 三個自信) in 2016. The theory of “Four Confidences” (*sige zixin* 四個自信)—confidence in our path (*daolu zixin* 道路自信), confidence in our system (*zhidu zixin* 制度自信), confidence in our theory (*lilun zixin* 理論自信), and confidence in our culture—was officially established by including it in amendments to the Party Charter at the 19th National Congress held in 2017.¹⁷

Bearing in mind that “confidence in our theory” refers to Marxist theory and “confidence in our culture” refers to traditional Chinese culture, we can see why some academics have come to believe that Confucianism can enjoy equal status with, or even higher status than, Marxism. Because “confidence in our culture” is the signature doctrine of Xi Jinping’s thought, popular speculation holds that the four confidences are not of equal significance. According to this line of thought, in Xi’s theory, “confidence in our culture” is the basis of the other three confidences, as Xi Jinping stated that without China’s ancient civilization, the country’s successful path would not have been possible. In other words, the CCP’s socioeconomic policies (confidence in our path), political system (confidence in our system), and Marxist ideology (confidence in our theory) were conceived and constructed based on traditional Chinese culture. Moreover, Xi Jinping frequently emphasizes that contemporary Chinese scholars ought to promote the excellent elements of Chinese traditional culture (*Zhonghua chuantong youxiu wenhua* 中華傳統優秀文化) and use them to carry out the mission of the “Sinicization of Marxism” (*Makesi zhuyi Zhongguo hua* 馬克思主義中國化). These developments have prompted some intellectuals to wonder whether Xi Jinping and/or the party favors traditional Chinese thought over Marxism. Against this backdrop, during the 2010s, the controversial Mainland New Confucianism, or Kangism, emerged and thrived.

From Red Confucianism to Classicism Confucianism

As mentioned earlier, with the success of “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” the concepts of socialism and Chinese characteristics gradually became equally important elements in state propaganda. However,

¹⁷ Pengzhi Feng 馮鵬志, “Cong ‘sange zixin’ dao ‘sige zixin’” 從“三個自信”到“四個自信” [From “three confidences” to “four confidences”], CCP News (retrieved May 24, 2017), <<http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0707/c49150-28532466.html>>.

since the start of the 21st century, the expression “confidence in our culture” has gained greater regard. In this context, Xi Jinping has urged scholars to explore how traditional Chinese thought can yield insights for the task of the “Sinicization of Marxism” and provide possible approaches to tackle the challenges faced by China in the 21st-century international arena.

Some Confucian scholars believed that the party was ready for a reconciliation with Confucianism or an experiment to replace Marxism with Confucianism as the state ideology. This belief was not merely shared among a small group of Confucians but was in the air across intellectual and public communication. At a superficial level, this interpretation seems to be naïve because it is, to a large extent, grounded in what is said in propaganda messages. However, the interpretation is also likely based on intellectuals’ speculations about the unstated crises faced by the CCP.

One feature of Chinese propaganda is that what is left unsaid is sometimes much more important than what is actually spoken out loud. For example, what is left unsaid could be an attempt to highlight the CPP’s new crises or agendas. Having observed China’s chronic domestic problems in previous decades and the escalation of tensions with the West after its economic rise—both of which can potentially threaten regime stability and legitimacy—some Confucians have begun preparing for a second triumph of Confucianism.¹⁸

In the late 20th and early 21st century, economic success gradually transformed the way in which the Chinese public perceives the source of power legitimacy.¹⁹ More and more people are inclined to think that the legitimacy of the CCP regime lies in the country’s economic achievements. Reliance on performance legitimacy is not unique to the PRC and is common among authoritarian regimes. However, in the case of the PRC, the switch from reliance on an ideological commitment to policy performance inevitably brought about confusion and controversy. In the eras of Jiang Zemin 江澤民 and Hu Jintao 胡錦濤, the CCP had already sensed the trickiness of the party’s commitment to Marxist ideology. On the one hand, Marxism continued playing a key role in articulating the legitimacy of the CCP’s power because its denial would implicitly shatter the CCP’s historical and ideological

¹⁸ As is widely known, the first triumph of Confucianism took place during the Han Dynasty. See Homer H. Dubs, “The Victory of Han Confucianism,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 58:3 (1938), 435–449. For a further discussion, see van Hans van Ess, “Ban Gu’s View on the ‘Second Victory of Confucianism’ and the Fall of the Former Han,” in *Early China* 45, (2022), 1–35.

¹⁹ Yuchao Zhu, “‘Performance Legitimacy’ and China’s Political Adaptation Strategy,” in *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 16:2 (2011), 123–140; Yih-Jye Hwang and Florian Schneider, “Performance, Meaning, and Ideology in the Making of Legitimacy: The Celebrations of the People’s Republic of China’s Sixty-Year Anniversary,” in *China Review*, 11:1 (2011), 27–55.

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legitimacy. More importantly, discarding Marxism would lead to a collapse of the existing patronage networks, which were built, consolidated, and reinforced through enormous state investment in propaganda and education. For example, to safeguard its historical and ideological legitimacy, the CCP has invested generously in “education in thought and politics” (*sizheng jiaoyu* 思政教育) by installing a “thought and politics” curriculum in high schools and higher education and by establishing schools of Marxism studies (*Mayuan* 馬院) in higher education. On the other hand, the party’s commitment to Marxist ideology became a burden or even a potential threat to regime stability. China’s impressive economic success has “let some people become rich first” (*rang yibufenren xian fuqilai* 讓一部分人先富起來) and resulted in a serious income gap and social injustice. Problematic wealth distribution is a breeding ground for social turmoil. Especially during the era of Hu Jintao, state propaganda tended to downplay Marxism and Maoism; instead, it highlighted the value of harmony (*hexie* 和諧) and the task of easing the majority’s resentment against the rich (*choufu* 仇富).²⁰ The signature concept of Hu’s theory, as has been indicated by many scholars, was the “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui* 和諧社會). During Hu’s reign, the expression “stability maintenance” (*weichi wending* 維持穩定, or, in short, *weiwen* 維穩) was frequently invoked and became a fixed formulation in official documents.²¹ The promotion of social harmony, as many intellectuals sensed, revealed an attempt to downplay the revolutionary traits of Marxism and Maoism and to avoid depicting class struggle in a positive light. This provided Confucianism with a place in propaganda crafting—for example, as in the case of a Confucian theory of social harmony.²² Nonetheless, such attempts did not essentially change the status of Confucianism in the PRC: it was an alternative form of the tradition of “red Confucianism,” which either interprets Confucianism in ways that render it compatible with Marxism,

²⁰ On this topic, see, for example, Xiangxin Lu 陸相欣, “Bufen ruoshi qunti chansheng ‘choufu xinli’ de yuanyin jiqi huajie zhengce” 部分弱勢群體產生“仇富心理”的原因及其化解政策 [The causes and solutions to “the resentment against the rich”], in *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou*, 5 (2007), 109–111. Some would argue that “choufu” fails to capture the real issue: it is not the majority’s anger at the rich but rather their anger at the policies that resulted in an unfair distribution of wealth that have produced inharmonious situations.

²¹ Yongnian Zheng and Keat Tok Sow, “Harmonious Society and Harmonious World: China’s Policy Discourse under Hu Jintao,” in *Briefing Series*, 26 (2007), 1–12.

²² For some examples, see Meihua Lu 盧美華, “Ren dao: hexie shehui de daode jishi – dui ruxue daode jiazhi guan jiben jingshen de xiandai sikao” 仁道: 和諧社會的道德基石—對儒學道德價值觀基本精神的現代思考 [The way of benevolence: the moral foundation of a harmonious society – a modern reflection on Confucian moral values], in *Xueshu jiaoliu*, 12 (2009), 50–53; Baoxin Zhao 趙寶新, Lixin Zhao 趙麗新, and Wenhai Zhang 張文海, “Kongzi hexie shehui sixiang dui dangdai hexieshehui jianshe de yiyi” 孔子和諧社會思想對當代和諧社會建設的意義 [Kongzi’s thought on harmonious society and its modern relevance for the construction of a harmonious society], in *Daode yu wenming*, 6 (2012), 85–88.

applies a Marxist framework or terminology in interpreting Confucianism, or uses Confucian notions or theories to complement what is explicitly stated in propaganda.

The situation changed in the early 21st century, especially during Xi Jinping's first presidential term. As mentioned above, in the Xi era, "Chinese characteristics" clearly took on the new meaning of traditional Chinese culture or civilization. Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism, began to be attributed essential importance along with Marxism. Xi Jinping often quotes Confucian texts and expresses his endorsement of the ancient Chinese legacy. The underlying reason for this emphasis on traditional Chinese culture, as some have speculated, is to communicate the message that the strategy of downplaying Marxist ideology and resorting to performance legitimacy no longer works. In responding to the "calls for papers" and "calls for policy suggestions" made by new propaganda messages, some Confucians have suggested, though implicitly, switching from performance legitimacy back to ideological legitimacy, with the latter's content being Confucianism instead of Marxism.

The gradual shift from ideological legitimacy to performance legitimacy from the Deng Xiaoping era until the Jiang-Hu era saddled Xi's administration, as political scientists have noted, with an unprecedented challenge. In addition to poverty issues and a serious income gap, Xi also faced the problem of the predicted economic slowdown, as China cannot keep achieving high growth rates.²³ This means that the CCP must switch back to ideological legitimacy and/or construct alternative accounts of performance legitimacy. The party has explored both approaches. Rather than focusing on overall economic growth, the party has tried to demonstrate its determination to tackle the problem of uneven wealth distribution. The new enterprise of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" in the Xi era no longer revolves around "letting some people become rich first" but instead focuses on "lifting people out of poverty" or "the battle against poverty" (*tuopin gongjian zhan* 脫貧攻堅戰). The top socioeconomic mission of the Xi era, therefore, is to "construct a comprehensive moderately prosperous society" (*quanmian jiancheng xiaokang shehui* 全面建成小康社會). This new line of socioeconomic policy entails a new line of propaganda, which defines the enterprise of battling poverty as a crucial step in the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" (*Zhonghua minzu de weida fuxing* 中華民族的偉大復興). Both the new agenda and its propaganda line contain clear references to Confucian classics. The "White Paper on China's Comprehensive Moderately

²³ See "'Shisan wu' jingji zengzhang duokuai cai heshi" 十三五" 經濟增長多快才合適 [What is the appropriate estimation of economic growth for the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan?] (accessed September 8, 2022), <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-11/03/content_5003673.htm>.

Prosperous Society” (*Zhongguo de quanmian xiaokang baipishu* 中國的全面小康白皮書), which was released by the news office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, quotes the *Book of Odes* (*shijing* 詩經) and the *Book of Rites* (*lijì* 禮記), stressing that “moderate prosperity has been the dream of the Chinese nation since ancient times” and that “moderate prosperity” (*xiaokang* 小康) is deeply rooted in ancient Chinese civilization.²⁴ All this, as some Confucian scholars have interpreted it, seems to suggest that Xi might favor Confucianism over Marxism or that he would welcome a proposal that uses Confucianism to solve the crises faced by the PRC.

However, scholars who want to respond to this “call for papers” should first answer the question regarding which kind of Confucianism can help maintain the stability of the regime and its power legitimacy and even substitute Marxism as the state ideology. For Contemporary Mainland New Confucians, or Kangists, the answer is Kang Youwei’s Confucianism, or New Text classicism (*jinwen jingxue* 今文經學). Elsewhere, I have provided a preliminary answer as to why Kang Youwei was chosen by some scholars over other Confucians.²⁵ In this article, I will briefly introduce two general reasons. The first is that Kang Youwei’s Confucianism is not an academic philosophy but a politically oriented classicism—a difference that will be explained shortly. More importantly, his Confucianism is New Text classicism, a version of Confucianism that triumphed and was established as the state ideology in the Han Dynasty.²⁶ The second main reason is that Kang had predicted and provided solutions to problems that China would inevitably encounter once it became a modern country or a “nation state.” In general, Kang Youwei was chosen because he was a leading scholar of New Text classicism and the leader of the One Hundred Days of Reform; he symbolizes dual-faceted Confucianism, emphasizing both classicism and modernization. The political subtext is that China may want to consider Kang’s proposal to revive classicism Confucianism as the state ideology to deepen its reformist approach, which is inevitably in tension with Marxism and Maoism. For these reasons, we witnessed the “Kang Youwei Fever” (Kang Youwei *re* 康有為熱) during the 2010s.

²⁴ *Zhongguo de quanmian xiaokang* 中國的全面小康, Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua she 新華社) (accessed September 8, 2022), <http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-09/28/content_5639778.htm>.

²⁵ Lee, “A Preliminary Overview of Kang Youwei Studies in China Today.”

²⁶ Ting-mien Lee, “Ideological Orthodoxy, State Doctrine or Art of Governance? The ‘Victory of Confucianism’ Revisited in Contemporary Chinese Scholarship,” in *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 51/2 (2022), 79–95.

The School of Marxism Studies vs. the School of National Studies

To better understand the hidden struggle between Confucianism and Marxism, it is important to remember that “confidence in our theory” refers to Marxist theory (Makesi zhuyi lilun 馬克思主義理論) rather than Marxist philosophy (Makesi zhuyi zhexue 馬克思主義哲學), and that the distinction between Marxist philosophy and Marxist theory is only applicable in China. In the West, theory and philosophy are often conflated. Since 2005, Marxist theory has become a first-level discipline (*yiji xueke* 一級學科) under the category of legal studies.²⁷ Marxist philosophy, however, is a second-level discipline. Along with Chinese philosophy, it falls under the first-level discipline called “philosophy,” which is classified under the category of “philosophy.” To study Marxist philosophy, one must study Western and/or Chinese philosophies. However, to study Marxist theory, one must study politics, economics, Maoism, state propaganda, and public administration and be familiar with recent domestic and international social-political events. In other words, it is Marxist theory rather than Marxist philosophy that represents the state ideology of the PRC.

The distinction between Marxist philosophy and Marxist theory is analogous to the distinction between Confucianism as a philosophical tradition and Confucianism as classicism.²⁸ The Confucianism that helped legitimize the Han Dynasty and triumphed by becoming a state ideology was classicism (more precisely, New Text Confucianism). The Confucianism that was promoted by subsequent empires as state orthodoxy was also classicism instead of Confucianism as a philosophy. Accordingly, if the PRC were to consider replacing Marxism with Confucianism, the type of Confucianism it would promote would likely be classicism rather than Confucian philosophy.

Similar to the discipline of Marxist theory, classicism also covers the areas of politics, economics, and government administration. In addition, in imperial times, classicism performed the same functions as today’s Marxism. Classicists elaborated on the classics canonized by political authorities and theorized the power legitimacy of the authorities. More importantly, a large portion of the imperial examination was based on classicism. It required the examinees to memorize terms, lines, and paragraphs from the classics and

²⁷ Before 2005, Marxist theory was a second-level discipline under the category of politics. See Jingrong Zhang 張景榮, “Makesi zhuyi lilun yiji xueke jianshe’ yanjiu zongshu” 馬克思主義理論一級學科建設研究綜述 [An overview of “the establishment of Marxist theory as a first-level discipline”], in *Jiaoxue yu yanjiu*, 8 (2006), 77–82.

²⁸ Whether classicism Confucianism is a form of religion is another complex debate; see Anna Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Yong Chen, *Confucianism as Religion: Controversies and Consequences* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).

their authoritative commentaries and annotations. In all these aspects, the role of Marxist theory in today's China is equivalent to the role of Confucian classicism in imperial China. To pass the entrance or civil-service examinations in China today, young people memorize the mottos and slogans of state propaganda along with their authoritative interpretations, annotations, and commentaries.

To reclaim the status of state ideology, contemporary Mainland Confucians adopted two approaches, which correspond to their two main reasons for choosing Kang Youwei over Confucius 孔子 (trad. 551–479 BCE), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), and other Confucians. The first approach was to support the creation of local academies for classical studies (*shuyuan* 書院) and classicist institutions in universities and to establish schools of “national studies” (*guoxue* 國學) or “classical studies” (*gudianxue* 古典學) in higher education institutions. This was intended to make classicism institutionally equivalent to the schools of Marxism studies.²⁹ The other approach involved developing a classicist version of Confucianism that could serve as the basis for “confidence in our theory,” “confidence in our path,” and “confidence in our system” and offer better solutions to China's domestic and international problems than Marxist theory.

In proposing Confucian classicism as the state ideology, the obvious historical references are Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE) and Kang Youwei. The former was a key figure in New Text classicism, which triumphed in the Han Dynasty and theorized the legitimacy of the Han Empire; the latter was a key figure in the 19th century, calling for the revival of New Text classicism to justify not only political reform but also the emperor's position. For the purpose of installing Confucian as the state ideology of the PRC, Kang is a better fit than Dong not only because he provided answers to contemporary problems but also because his Confucianism is a milder deviation from Marxism. Kang Youwei's ideals of “moderate prosperity” (*xiaokang* 小康) and the “great unity of mankind” (*datong* 大同) are obviously in line with current propaganda. The former ideal echoes the domestic policy of “lifting people out of poverty,” while the latter matches the Chinese international relations theory of “community with a shared future for mankind” (*renlei mingyun gongtongti* 人類命運共同體).

Regarding the establishment of classicism in education, Kang Youwei is once more an interesting case study. The first modern Chinese

²⁹ Note that I do not suggest that everyone who promotes national studies is a Mainland New Confucian or a Kangist. It should be kept in mind that scattered “calls for papers” that appear here and there in different official speeches or documents produced at different times may result in various responses.

university was established based on Kang Youwei's reform proposal. Ironically, he has hardly been studied in the field of Confucian studies. The main reason is that Confucian studies are conducted in philosophy departments, but Kang's scholarship is better classified as Confucian classicism, which had no corresponding discipline in modern universities until the end of 2020. Establishing national studies or classical studies programs and institutions has been a longstanding struggle. Although many schools of national studies (*guoxue yuan* 國學院) have been created over the past two decades, "national studies" was only decreed to be an official institutionalized discipline in December 2020. Previously, such programs were often organized in the departments of philosophy, history, or literature.³⁰ However, as national studies scholars have argued, classicism involves interdisciplinary research that covers politics, economics, policy making, and so on. Moreover, according to traditional Chinese knowledge categorization, classicism is hierarchically above philosophy, history, and literature. From this perspective, it makes little sense to assign classicism to these departments. Therefore, some scholars have argued that national studies should be a first-level discipline.³¹ However, to become a first-level discipline, national studies must first become an official discipline. To become an official discipline, it must belong to a disciplinary category. Thus, if national studies could not be classified under the category of philosophy (the "most sensible" option in the previous categorization), it needed to become a category of its own or find a new category to which it could belong. In December 2020, the Degree Committee of the State Council (*Guowuyuan xuewei weiyuanhui* 國務院學位委員會) and the PRC Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyu bu* 教育部) eventually announced the creation of the category of

³⁰ Ting Shen 沈庭, "Sheli 'guo xue' yiji xueke shi dangwuzhiji" 設立"國學"一級學科是當務之急 [It is urgent to establish "national learning" as a first-level discipline], *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (accessed July 22, 2022), <http://www.wenming.cn/wmzh_pd/ws/gx/zxd_t_9879/201507/t20150713_2726833.shtml>.

³¹ Ming Fang 方銘, "Guanyu guoxue ji guoxue yiji xueke sheli de yixie wenti" 關於國學及國學一級學科設立的一些問題 [A few problems with the establishment of national learning as a first-level discipline], *Guoxue wang* (accessed July 25, 2021), <<http://www.guoxue.com/?p=3188>>. Confucians have been asking for the status of a first-level discipline; see, for example, "Rujia xuezhe changyi she ruxue wei yiji xueke, xiang xihua de xueke tixi yao hukou" 儒家學者倡議設儒學為一級學科，向西化的學科體系要戶口 (accessed August 10, 2022), <<https://kknews.cc/culture/jklbl.html>>.

“interdisciplinary research” (*jiaocha xueke* 交叉學科),³² and national studies finally became an independent discipline under this category.³³

Kang’s theory possesses numerous features that make it a good fit for developing a kind of Confucianism that would be compatible with Marxism and could make greater contributions to the political agendas of 21st-century China. First, it is compatible with Marxism. Due to his advocacy for “moderate prosperity” and the utopian goal of “great unity,” Kang has rarely been harshly criticized by Red Confucians or Marxist scholars. Second, as mentioned earlier, Kang’s theory aligns well with the propaganda of Xi Jinping’s New Era. More importantly, according to Kangists, Kang’s theory is more helpful than Marxism for contemporary China, as suggested in their controversial and bold claim that “the legislator of modern China is neither Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong nor Zhang Taiyan. Kang Youwei is the very legislator of modern China.”³⁴

This claim delivers at least two implicit suggestions. One is that the CCP may want to bid farewell to the age of revolution. Kangists and other intellectuals may have good reasons to pursue this new direction. As mentioned earlier, following the success of “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” the poverty gap has become a serious problem. An emphasis on revolution and class struggle may risk further fueling social tensions and ultimately undermining regime stability. The second implicit suggestion concerns the ethnicity issue. The vehement debate between Kang Youwei and Zhang Taiyang (and Sun Yat-sen) represents two opposing standpoints on whether China should embrace the idea of an ethnic revolution and follow the Western path of building a nation state.³⁵ Kang strongly opposed Zhang’s anti-Manchu revolution (*paiman geming* 排滿革命). Inciting ethnic hatred is indeed an efficient means of political mobilization, but its consequences can be disastrous. The revolution succeeded, and the Qing Empire was overthrown, but as Kang Youwei rightly worried, China soon faced ethnicity

³² “Jiaoyubu: guoxue, zhongguo wenhua jingdian jiaoyu, shufa deng jiaocha xueke zhengshi chengli” 教育部：國學、中國文化經典教育、書法學等交叉學科正式設立 [Ministry of Education: the discipline of interdisciplinary research, such as national studies, education in Chinese culture and classics, calligraphy studies, have been officially established], *Pengpai* (accessed June 12, 2022), <https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_10921849>.

³³ At the time of writing, it has not yet become a first-level discipline, nor is Confucianism placed under the category of philosophy (even Chinese philosophy is a second-level discipline).

³⁴ Yang Gan, et al., “Kang Youwei and Institutional Confucianism,” trans. by David Ownby (accessed on September 8, 2022), <<https://www.readingthechinadream.com/kang-youwei-and-institutional-confucianism.html>>.

³⁵ Chunsong Gan 幹春松, “Minzu, guomin yu guojia — Kang Youwei, Zhang Taiyan guanyu jianli xiandai guojia de fenqi” 民族、國民與國家——康有為、章太炎關於建立現代國家的分歧 [Nation, citizen, and state — the disagreements between Kang Youwei and Zhang Taiyan on the approach to establishing a modern state] (accessed on August 23, 2022), <<https://www.rujiag.com/article/21236>>.

issues after becoming a modern country and inheriting the territory of the Qing Empire. To ease ethnic tensions, Kangists suggested consulting Kang Youwei's proposal to cultivate cultural belongingness. Several of the Chinese empires in the past were not ruled by the Han ethnic group. These non-Han rulers justified their legitimacy and unified the empire by demonstrating their commitment to Confucianism, especially classicism. The imperial examination based on Confucian classics continued to exist until the last empire of China. The Kangist proposal implies that due to China's ethnicity issues, classicism is superior to Marxism at performing the function of justifying power legitimacy. A derivative message is that China as a multiethnic country should have a hereditary ruler whose power comes from his commitment to the ideology of the ethnic majority.

Observing the political and intellectual scenes in 2022, we can see that Kangist suggestions have been minimally accepted. During Xi Jinping's reign, presidential term limits were removed, and traditional Chinese culture has been promoted. However, the approach that Xi has adopted to tackle the problems of the uneven distribution of wealth has involved waging a never-ending large-scale anti-corruption campaign, putting aside the "social harmony" propaganda, and doubling down on the CCP's uncompromised commitment to class struggle and revolutionary spirit.³⁶ This decision might have surprised those who speculated that the wind would blow in the *right* (*you* 右 or Deng Xiaoping's approach) way and answered the "calls for papers" in the first term of Xi's reign on this speculation. During his first trip after obtaining the presidency for the first term, Xi went on a "south tour" (*nansun* 南巡).³⁷ People gauged this trip as a signal of a deepening reformist approach because it seemed to be an implicit reference to Deng Xiaoping. However, after the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi made his first trip to the CCP's base of operations during the war with Japan and the Chinese Civil War in Yan'an. Is this an allusion to Mao Zedong? To respond to new rounds of "calls for papers" in the coming five years, Chinese academics may first want to find an answer to this question.

³⁶ See, for example, "Xi Jinping zheyang qianguang ganyu douzheng" 習近平這樣強調敢於鬥爭 [Xi Jinping emphasized the spirit of daring to struggle] (accessed on September 7, 2022), <http://www.dangjian.cn/shouye/dangjianyaowen/202111/t20211129_6250590.shtml>; "Xi Jinping: Jianchi ziwo geming quebao dang bubian zhi, bubian se, bubian wei" 習近平：堅持自我革命，確保黨不變質、不變色、不變味 [Xi Jinping: persisting in self revolution to ensure that the party remains its nature] (accessed on September 7, 2022), <<http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0123/c1001-32337511.html>>.

³⁷ This kind of speculation is also popular in the West; see, for example, "The Symbolism of Xi Jinping's Trip South," in *BBC News* (10 December 2012) <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-20662947>>.

Conclusion: Propaganda with Chinese Characteristics

This article analyzed the interplay between the emergence of a new meaning for the expression “Chinese characteristics” and the invisible struggle between Contemporary Mainland New Confucianism and Marxism regarding state ideology. This interplay illustrated the historical dimensions of Chinese practices of state ideology and propaganda.

Many people may believe that state ideology is mainly about a state indoctrinating its people with a system of thought and that propaganda messages aim mainly to influence people’s ways of thinking. It is often overlooked that state ideology in China involves propaganda writings meant to explain the rationale of and underlying theories behind significant policy shifts. A new formulation proposed by party leaders that becomes frequent in propaganda messages involves the launch of “calls for paper,” whose goal is to encourage academics to assist in articulating the meaning of the new formulation, to theorize the content behind the formulation, and to make theoretical or policy suggestions based on their understanding of the formulation.

This article elaborated on the traditional distinction between Confucianism as a philosophy and Confucianism as classicism for civil service examinations and, on a similar distinction, between Marxist philosophy and Marxist theory as state ideology, as illustrated by the case study of Kangist Confucianism. With these distinctions, we can see more clearly that whereas Confucian and Marxist philosophies involve the critical study of the ideas of Confucian thinkers and Karl Marx, classicism and Marxist theory have little to do with changing one’s beliefs or value systems. In the past, when one had to prepare for and take the imperial examination, memorizing the difficult lines from the Confucian classics and their even more complex annotations and paleographic notes did not imply fully understanding or even believing in the obscurities stated there; instead, the point was being able to apply a certain “linguistic code” in relation to contemporary politics. Some types of contemporary Chinese propaganda writings and speeches are no less difficult to understand than Confucian classics. They often appear to be a pile of unnecessarily abstruse mottos and slogans. It is dubious to assume that the government intends to use such coded language to influence people’s thinking. Some Confucian scholars’ reactions to the newly fixed formulations, such as “confidence in our culture” or of “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” show that new formulations may be better understood as calls for papers or calls for policy suggestions. One aim of these formulations is to encourage scholars to speculate about possible solutions to the country’s problems. However, this

characterization of “propaganda with Chinese characteristics” is a highly preliminary account, and more detailed analyses are needed.

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Book Review

Foucault, Michel, *Confessions of the Flesh*¹

Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland

Pope Paul VI's 1968 *Humanae Vitae* was his last encyclical that is widely remembered for being a landmark document stating the Catholic Church's view on contraceptives, the family, and, notable for this review, the two goals of marriage—union and procreation.² He sought to clarify the Church's official stand vis-à-vis the progressive social climate of the time, and this view was further explained in the context of the Sacrament of Marriage in the eventual publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church more than 30 years later.³ On this point does Michel Foucault's *Confessions of the Flesh* spark immense interest. The English translation of *Les aveux de la chair* published in 2021 is the last installment to the History of Sexuality series, a planned six-work investigation into sexuality as an object of discourse. However only four books have been published, none corresponding to what Foucault initially envisioned. This current fourth book was intended to be the series' second installment yet far from the exact scope. Upon completion of its initial draft, Foucault, though sought the need to probe the Greco-Roman world—thus books two and three, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* respectively—before revising the manuscript prior to its planned publication by October 1984. But Foucault was unable to complete it due to his passing in June 1984.⁴ This book allows readers the apogee of just how engaged Foucault was with Christian literature, previously only known to us through the first volume or through some scattered insights on governmentality in his lectures at the *Collège de France*.

¹ Ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Book, 2021, 396pp.

² Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), <https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html>, §12.

³ See Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1664.

⁴ See Frédéric Gros, forward to Michel Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Book, 2021), xi and Stuart Elden, Review: Michel Foucault, 'Confessions of the Flesh,' in *Theory, Culture & Society* (20 March 2018), <<https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/blog/review-michel-foucault-confessions-of-the-flesh>>.

Foucault tells us that the series has changed direction toward what he regarded as a hermeneutics of the self considering the desiring subject.⁵ A genealogy of sexuality, neither simply intercourse nor what is usually associated with sexuality, breaks away from its static image, moving toward rooting out the sources of power that direct, if not totally regulate, its progression. Foucault already presents in the series' first volume, *The Will to Know* (published also as *An Introduction*), broad sketches of the regulation of sex between spouses.⁶ He argues that we lack actual discourses on it for what abounds in the sheer quantity of *apparent* discourses are forms of regulation if not simply general insights into what intercourse is. On this note, the *Confessions of the Flesh* begins with the aphrodisia regime "defined in terms of marriage, procreation, a disqualification of pleasure, and a respectful and intense bond of sympathy between spouses" that is found in the writings of the Church Fathers yet abound even prior in "pagan" literature.⁷

Returning to how I began, what makes Foucault's book profoundly interesting is his effort not to decouple the Christian tradition's two aims of marriage but to show how this was not always the view. Foucault juggles different readings of sex, from a consequence of the Fall, something practiced even in the Garden of Eden, for the twin goals of unity and procreation, to something that solely unites spouses. The return to the Patristics is significant because the Church Fathers had to interpret and defend the faith against the heretic claims from Pelagius and Arius among others without relying on the councils that we have today. Foucault shows how the Church Fathers were quite practical in their ministry's orientation, not simply talking about eschatological realities but also about procreation, progeny, or sex, even linking these to pagan authors of the time. Their efforts, in fact, became the basis for what later emerged as the Christian pastoral and the subsequent regressive hypothesis, of which Foucault previously provided a critique in the first volume.⁸ However, to think that this book is only about sex is to totally miss the point.

As a whole, one ought to remember that Foucault presents a genealogy of sexuality, and this is the guiding insight throughout the 12 chapters grouped into three parts—concerning the art of pleasure, virginity, and married life (four chapters under the first part and three chapters each for the remaining two parts)—with some notes compiled as appendices at the end. I usually provide the exact titles of the sections in presenting the book's

⁵ See Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, History of Sexuality Vol. 2, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 6ff.

⁶ See Michel Foucault, *The Will to Know*, History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 37.

⁷ Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 3.

⁸ See Foucault, *The Will to Know*, 17ff.

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overview, but this is an exception for most of the section titles are provided not by Foucault himself but by the editor, Frédéric Gros, the editor of all of Foucault's works published by the *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* and of his *Collège de France* lectures. Gros played a crucial role in the book's current form, the extent to which he explains himself.⁹

The first part begins with the aphrodisia theme, i.e., the right economy of pleasures.¹⁰ This is a crucial theme, yet one that may be easy to ignore, since it provides the eventual link between virginity and marriage. What this brings to the fore is the instigation of governmentality, summed up as the *ars artium*.¹¹ The art of arts points to the formation of an individual Christian's identity as of primal importance, forged through spiritual direction, self-examination, and confession. This identity is generated due to constant introspection that finds its apex in monastic communities. However, this discipline, prior and after baptism, ultimately points to self-renunciation, that the "search for truth about oneself must constitute a certain way of dying to oneself."¹² This generates the truth of oneself, yet *truth* does not capture its entirety. Instead of this being simply an epistemological gain, this signifies *the formation of a new experience* (the title of the first part) since one's identity is sandwiched in this experience of the right economy of pleasure between a battle inside of oneself—self-examination, discernment, and reflection—and even outside through penance and mortification. The language that Foucault uses here closely follows the spiritual tenor of the Church Fathers but is, at the same time, juridical, a deliberate choice consistent with his lectures that probe governmentality throughout Church history. From this dual direction—interiority and exteriority—proceed the next two parts of the book: virginity and married life.

The second part prods the interiority of this *ars artium* through virginity. Virginity is re-evaluated according to distinctive views: barrenness, nature's interruption, a form of remembrance of paradise, and above all dissimilar to continence. Concerning the last point, what may be observed is a shift from a negative view of the self as merely restricted (continence) to a positive image of preparing oneself (virginity). This transition signifies the conversion from pagan to Christian tradition. Foucault expounds on the relationship between the practices of virginity and the development of the techniques of the self.¹³ With this, it is unsurprising that athleticism and warfare come up as methods to illustrate virginity, but with special emphasis

⁹ See Gros, forward to Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*.

¹⁰ See Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 12.

¹¹ See *Ibid.*, 87.

¹² *Ibid.*, 110.

¹³ See *Ibid.*, 158.

on the former, as the regulation of the will upon oneself.¹⁴ Ultimately, this *ars artium* at this first level conjures subjectification through the gaze's internalization. One is made to speak of the truth of oneself and to constantly be vigilant of one's intentions.

Presenting the high reputation virginity has, Foucault exposes an obvious question, whether this takes precedence over marriage. With numerous saints exalted as virgins—e.g., Agnes, Agatha, Philomena, and Mary—and even Christ's explicit use of virginity in the parables, tensions may arise concerning this spiritual form of continence and married life. Their contrasting reputations are not taken on equal dimensions, and Foucault labors to present these from Patristic literature. This forms part of the third part in which *ars artium* is linked with marriage. Foucault points out the absence of any specific *techne* of married life, unlike virginity on which numerous authors have provided treatises.¹⁵ Yet, despite this apparent dearth, the regulation of marriage is quite familiar; St. Paul writes to the Ephesians that spouses have duties toward each other.¹⁶ This passage of *submission* found in Paul brings marriage closer to subjectification. Foucault works on Patristic literature to show this within the context of the regulation of desire, *epithumia*, a different form of chastisement than virginity.

At this point, the view of marriage is that it is similar to monasticism in regulating desires (preventing fornication) and meriting salvation, with progeny not considered as an essential aspect.¹⁷ The Christian view of marriage though did not end with this, and the last two parts of the book generally treat St. Augustine's view of the goods of marriage and the role of the libido, especially in the institutionalization of a particular form of governmentality linked to the *societas*.¹⁸ Considering the sexual drive as part of an involuntary (natural) urge, Foucault situates it within marriage to underscore not the morality of the act—although this is the textual basis from the Church Fathers—but the use of the body therein.¹⁹ Each spouse has this duty to one's partner—to give oneself is a participation in this economy of pleasure that one *voluntarily* engaged in. The juridical term is of grave importance here to highlight the movement of the will (in consenting to marry) and at times the inability of the will to engage in sexual acts (when the libido goes contrary to what one wills). Progeny only enters the discourse through, weakly, the serious consideration of the command to be fertile and multiple and, better, the desire for immortality assured through offspring and

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶ See Eph. 5:22ff., NABRE.

¹⁷ See Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 218ff.

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁹ See *Ibid.*, 280.

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the creation of the *societas* only possible through humanity's multiplication.²⁰ Marriage, hence, is understood as a bond among spouses that brings each of them to the community as an expression of both a pact and a sense of faithfulness with progeny as a tangible sign, an effect, of this shared commitment.²¹

The final phase that Foucault provides in this book is how the economy of pleasure becomes regulated by the libido. The libido demarcates what is permissible from what is not within the juridical bounds of marriage, citing the legitimate nuptial ends as the union of spouses and progeny, which for more than a millennium and a half will be further elaborated by the Church.²² It is at this point that we notice the equation between the *bonum conjugale* and the *bonum sexuelle* in that the latter is placed within the bounds solely of the former, spiritualized to the level of a sacrament.²³ Concerning the economy of desire, Foucault presents this movement from an internal struggle to an external consideration of proper relationships; whereas virginity is the relationship of the soul with one's own body, marriage is that with another's. This shows how the codification of sex becomes the seedbed for its governmentality that later, in history, is evident with the Christian pastoral that Foucault critiques in his other works.

What this book offers is not a groundbreaking alteration of his philosophy or a radical shift in his intellectual focus but a confirmation of his intellectual might through another demonstration of his critical inquiry into the movement of power. This is another insight into his genealogical inquiry, but this time raised to the Patristic era. Returning to the Patristics requires explaining how they had to confront the issues of their time. Foucault did precisely this, and his academic rigor is admirable for such a textual encounter with expansive references to Patristic literature, at times multiple books by a single author. A reader who is knowledgeable of this period would be taken aback by Foucault's ability to guide through several works of towering figures such as Philo and Clement of Alexandria, Basil of Ancyra, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine among several others. Reading this book thus, for a believer, serves partly as an apology of certain beliefs since Foucault clearly explains the view. Parenthetically, this admiration becomes even greater with the knowledge that he himself did not consider himself a Catholic.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 249 and Gen. 9:17, NABRE.

²¹ See Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 245.

²² See *Ibid.*, 283.

²³ See *Ibid.*, 256.

As common to any work on Foucault, there are two registers that are essential to consider. The first pertains to the actual accounts that illustrate the narrative, while the second refers to the general development of the theme he wishes to root out. In this book, the first appeals to the Christian who wishes to learn more about one's faith, the erudition of the Fathers, and the practices of the early Christians. The second appeals to the scholar who wishes to see Foucault's genealogical inquiry into power formed within the Catholic tradition. Balancing these two is the ideal approach to the work. It will be easy for those who solely focus on either of the two to miss Foucault's entire point due to the sheer range of authors he cites for the former, while those who are only interested in the latter need to pay close attention to the development of the former to root out Foucault's intentions. As such, those without at least basic knowledge of the Patristic era or who are not exposed to the Christian faith would encounter some initial difficulty in reading this work. It is extremely helpful to already have a working understanding of who these individuals are, their place in the timeline of the Patristics, and also how they have contributed to the faith's formulation, especially against heresies of the time. Also, usual to Foucault is the constant use of untranslated terms or phrases be it in Latin or Greek which is maintained in this oeuvre that a neophyte to the ancient languages might need to return to previous pages to remember Foucault's initial usage.

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Book Review

**Gabriele, Matthew & David M. Perry,
*The Bright Ages:
A New History of Medieval Europe*¹**

Jovito V. Cariño

The medieval ages have always been cast in a bad light. I would have written “dark light” but that would be oxymoronic. Just the same, the common predilection among the uninitiated is to take “middle ages” and “dark ages” as though they are synonymous or worse, synchronous (that is, they inhabit the same period of time). They tend to unwittingly disregard that the term “dark ages” (an expression credited to the humanist Renaissance poet, Petrarch) refers to the immediate aftermath of the fall of Rome and the label “middle ages” is a post-medieval coinage used by modern historians (like Leonardo Bruni [15th c.] and Christoph Cellarius [17th c.]) in reference to the long interlude between the antiquity and the modern period. It is difficult to disabuse the popular imagination of the horror, violence, and decadence ascribed to the middle ages due largely to modernist historiography, which propagates the reified notion of what they seem. The recurrent accent given to such horrendous episodes like the crusades, the Inquisition, church scandals and Black Death continuously fortify the belief that the medieval world is nothing but a wasteland. Very little thought is lent to key developments like the formation of cities, the rise of universities, the institution of democratic government, the opening of global trade routes, the flourishing of empirical sciences and the spread of modern logic and mathematics, all of which could be traced back to their medieval roots. This is precisely what the book of Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry, *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe*, attempts to supply. As indicated by the title, the book aims to render “a new history of medieval Europe.” The “new history” here, however, does not mean a history that hitherto remains untold but simply, a new way of telling and seeing the same history we’ve read and heard time and again. In fact, there is nothing in the book that has not been written about by other medieval historians like John Marenbon,

¹ New York: Harper, 2021, 364 pp., EPUB.

Steven Marrone or Norman Kretzmann. Notwithstanding the familiar content, the reader will likely welcome the different narrating of history afforded by a book, which reads almost like a literary piece in its own right. In this tome, Gabriele and Perry deviated from the usual post-mortem style of history-telling by weaving seemingly disparate, even marginal events, into a narrative that is replete with details but free from that somber and tedious aura of a scholarly work. A case in point is their presentation of the life and exploits of Moses Maimonides,² undoubtedly one of the most significant intellectual figures of the Middle Ages. Rather than merely dishing out the sophisticated details of Maimonides' intellectual oeuvre, Gabriele and Perry framed his biography within the larger context of the Jews' intermingling with the Arabs and Christians of the time and showed how their contact among each other facilitated the free and safe passage of goods and ideas despite the divide between their religions, territories, politics, and worldviews. The result was a surprisingly exciting historical tale that conveys the right information minus the dizzying overload common among the standard medieval chronicles. The same thing may be found in their reportage of the Muslims' conquest of Jerusalem in 638 which—thanks to an agreement forged by Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, and Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem—created a space for both Muslims and Christians to co-exist and inhabit the place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance.³ Gabriele and Perry thought it was this kind of benevolent arrangement which made it possible for Islam to expand rapidly and successfully within the Middle Eastern region and beyond. As they explained:

That coexistence was often uneasy and always unequal, but is at least part of the reason that Islam was able to spread so rapidly throughout large chunks of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Indeed, what we see with the arrival of these new believers is more continuity than change. Certainly, the coming of Islam brought subjugation and pressure to convert but also the attraction of intellectual continuity with Rome, and in any case, despite the protestations of certain Christians at the time, nothing approaching an 'abomination of desolation.'⁴

² See Matthew Gabriele & David M. Perry, *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe* (New York: Harper, 2021), EPUB, chapter 11.

³ See *Ibid.*, chapter 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, chapter 3.

Consistent with this corrective approach, Gabriele and Perry should also be commended for providing a more gender-inclusive account of medieval history. This is a far cry from historical accounts which often present medieval events through the lens of male figures like popes, emperors, knights, or clerics. In such recounting, women were often relegated to the role of the anti-hero—like heretics and witches—consigned to be punished and burned at stake. Such one-sided portrayal of history does reinforce and perpetuate the common bias which projects the middle ages as a male dominion. What Gabriele and Perry did was not really to revise history but to write a counter-history by shedding light on individual women whose role and influence were often glossed over or unsung. They did this in their portraits of the likes of Galla Placidia, the influential mother of Emperor Valentinian III of Rome,⁵ the Lombard queen, Theodelinda,⁶ the female characters of *Beowulf*, the leading women of the medieval England,⁷ the miraculous Ste. Foy⁸ and such lesser known but equally significant female personages, such as Hildegard of Bingen, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, and the author of *Guigemar* (an old French story), Marie de France.⁹ As Gabriele and Perry noted: "...women are the skeleton giving this society its shape...The 'Dark Ages' imagines a world of violent men and subservient women, a world that conforms to stereotypes; the Bright Ages, attentive to the sources themselves and not our own preconceptions, finds something much more nuanced."¹⁰

The book did deliver on its title, *The Bright Ages*, by putting the image of light at the front and center of each chapter. Gabriele and Perry achieved this with each chapter developed around the image of light in its multifarious forms. A cursory glance at the titles of the said chapters would bear this out, e.g., "Shimmering Stars on the Adriatic" for Chapter 1, "The Gleaming Tiles of the New Rome" for Chapter 2, "Dawn in Jerusalem" for Chapter 3 and so on and so forth. As they elaborated in an explanatory paragraph:

The Bright Ages contain the beauty and light of stained glass in the high ceilings of the cathedral, the blood and sweat of the people who built them, the golden relics of the Church, the acts of charity and devotion by people of deep faith, but also the wars fought over ideas of the

⁵ See *Ibid.*, chapter 1.

⁶ See *Ibid.*, chapter 4.

⁷ See *Ibid.*, chapter 5.

⁸ See *Ibid.*, chapter 8.

⁹ See *Ibid.*, chapter 12.

¹⁰ See *Ibid.*, chapter 5.

sacred, the scorched flesh of the heretics burned in the name of intolerance and fear. *The Bright Ages* reveal the permeable nature of the interwoven cultures of Europe in the thousand or so years before Dante. *The Bright Ages* looked outward from Europe but were not constrained to Europe. They were aware—as the medievals themselves were—of a much larger, round globe.”¹¹

With this inspiration, they meticulously mapped out the medieval historical landscape in search of the best, or should I say, brightest way of disclosing the rays of light which illumine the panorama of what they counted as “the bright ages.” They made sure readers won’t miss the luminous effect of light in its natural form (as in the case of the 8th-century British kingdom of Northumbria in chapter 5) or in its spiritual sense (as in the glorious city of Jerusalem in chapter 9) or in its intellectual expression (as in the depiction of the legacy of Moses Maimonides in chapter 11) or in its architectural manifestation (as in the marvelous stained glasses of the cathedral of Notre Dame in chapter 14). The best depiction of light is reserved in chapters 1 and 17, the opening and closing chapters respectively, where Gabriele and Perry glance back at Ravenna, the location they choose to introduce and conclude their chronicle of the Middle Ages as an illumined epoch. The eastern coastal area of Ravenna is the place that connects Chapters 1 and 17 being the site identified with Galla Placidia’s chapel, famous for its mosaic starry ceilings, and the final days of the Florentine poet, Dante. Galla Placidia and Dante are the alpha and omega of the Middle Ages. Galla Placidia was one of the last witnesses of the glory that was Rome; it was she who, through her imperial persuasion, sought to erect a memorial (the chapel and its luminous mosaics) to immortalize its illustrious memory. Dante, on the other hand, was one of the last figures who watched the Middle Ages in its passing; his death marked the crossing of the medieval times into Renaissance. Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is hailed by Gabriele and Perry as the ultimate medieval testament to light. In their words:

The *Divine Comedy* as a whole drives toward the luce eterna (“eternal light”)... The *Inferno* begins with Dante in total darkness...The *Purgatorio* concludes with Dante cleansed, reborn, and ready for Heaven...And then, finally, at the end of the *Paradiso*, Dante returns to earth, having seen the eternal light, his ‘instinct and intellect

¹¹ *Ibid.*, chapter 1.

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balanced equally . . . by the Love that moves the Sun and the other stars.’¹²

Readers searching for an alternative account of medieval history will definitely find *The Bright Ages* a delight. That it is able to relate this in a manner that combines both scholarship and literary flourish is yet another reason why this book qualifies as a must-read.

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¹² *Ibid.*, chapter 17.

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