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Problems and Prospects of Geoaesthetics

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Abstract

Geoaesthetics is the project of making aesthetic sense of nature through geological phenomena. The aesthetic appreciation of nature has recently become urgent because of the serious influence of the natural environment on human beings. The author’s geoaesthetical research is categorized into three problems: art in geology or geology in the arts as the close relationship between art and geology, geological cognition of nature and natural cognition in environmental aesthetics, and the geoaesthetical approach through works of art. Geologic forces and processes have become significant materials for aesthetic sensations. Based on the geoesthetic perspective, the author explores the ultimate purpose of art as a return to natural order. It seems partly to be related to the ontological problem of art. Here we can feel earthly dynamics, universal calmness, and the contemplative atmosphere simultaneously.

Keywords

Geoaesthetics, Geological Phenomena, Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature, Geoesthetic Perspective

1. Introduction

To know the world has been one of the main tenets of philosophy since the advent of philosophical history. Although there are heated debates over the problems of knowing, we understand that it is closely linked to the problems of perceiving. According to an empirical standpoint, knowledge has its origins primarily in our sensual perceptions. Further common perceptions enhance our communicative competence and diminish the gaps between nature, art, and the sciences (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: xii-xiii). As far as we know the context of A. G. Baumgarten (1714-1762), the first giver of a scientific name, aesthetics is a study of sensuous cognition. “The topic of aesthetics is forms and possibilities of process oriented perception. Aesthetics is concerned with mode of perception” (Seel, 1998: p. 341). The cognitive has an influence on the sensuous. The cognitive and the sensuous affect each other (Saito, 2010: p. 382). Sensuous cognition plays a key role in the field of knowledge.
So it is naturally related to the area of aesthetics. Since the so called ancient imitation theory of nature in art, we have experienced many theories and trends, such as formalism, expressionism, modernism, postmodernism, etc.

We are living in natural surroundings as well as cultural surroundings. Nature itself has offered us many materials for aesthetic sensations among our natural surroundings. Nature as the counterpart of finite man, marks, remarks, completes and renews man. We have a human project of making aesthetic sense of nature, for example geological phenomena. The contemplation of natural beauty is related, according to Kantian aesthetic theory, to the exercise of reflective aesthetic judgment (Shapiro, 2004: pp. 110-111). Besides, we accept the free play between the understanding of nature and aesthetic imagination. More precisely, instead of the free play it can be substituted as a suitable proportion between understanding and imagination. With the intervention of this proportional relation, imagination can keep up with understanding (Plessner, 1981: pp. 317-321). “Many cultures have a long-standing tradition regarding the aesthetic appreciation of nature and environment that is often inseparable from their general worldview” (Saito, 2010: p. 383).

Recently the aesthetic reapprreciation of nature has become more urgent because of the serious influence of the natural environment on human beings. The natural environment is situated at the center of our daily lives, affecting us in global warming, air and soil pollution, tsunamis etc. Geological forces and processes are significant instruments for aesthetic sensations as well. Art has been an important way to appreciate geology. Geological phenomena bring aesthetic understanding and form an aesthetic concept. With this aesthetic concept artwork depicts geological features. Geoaesthetics will be a turning point for reorientation toward the threefold relation between human beings, art, and nature. Geoaesthetical approaches make us think about the basis for this threefold relation. Baumgarten isolated aesthetic perception as a kind of cognition. Specifically aesthetic cognition is foregrounded in the triadic relationships among geology, art and human beings.

Through geoaesthetical examination, the author will review the way art can contribute to the alleviation of today’s deformed state of nature in natural catastrophes and ecological degradation, and restore harmonious co-existence with nature. According to Finnish geologist, Toni Eerola, geoaesthetics can be defined as aesthetics produced by natural geological processes, geological elements or concepts creating art1. The author is going to look for the sensuous presentations from the geoaesthetical perspective. Geological features are applied and arranged according to the character of aesthetic objects. The relationship of art and geology has been approached in painting, photography, poetry, sculpture, and performance, etc. The research and investigation of this relationship is included in the field of geoaesthetics. Geoaesthetics comprises various formations, structures and cleavages of rocks, minerals and outcrops, natural monuments, and landscapes. The use of rocks or other geological elements in decoration, and architecture are displayed in land or earth art. Especially in the fields of sculpture and installation we can see this linkage between earth and art. In ancient rock engravings we can observe that artists used geologic materials to create art. In the main discourse of the author he will provide definite examples for these trends, especially in painting, sculpture, and installation2.

For geoaesthetical research, the author has categorized three problems: art in geology or geology in arts as the close relationship between art and geology; geological cognition of nature and natural cognition in environmental aesthetics; and the geoaesthetic approach through works of art by Hongtae Kim, Soyoung Chung, Isamu Noguchi, and Maya Lin. Nature provides aesthetic sensation in all of us. It enlarges the fields of our aesthetic experiences. Geological forces and their appearances are efficient materials and instruments for aesthetic expression in the context of invisible vitality and various vital figures. We admire and appreciate beautiful landscapes originating from wonderful minerals, fossils, volcanic eruptions, icebergs, sedimentation, erosion, natural monuments, etc. All these evoke in us aesthetic sensation and the perception that we can have distinctive experiences. We can use these aesthetic objects in architectural decoration, sometimes as land or earth art. Viewed in the relational context of art and geology we can apply geoaesthetical approaches to painting, photography, poetry, sculpture, installations, performance, film, and many other artistic fields. We can consider all of these within the category of geoaesthetics. In geoaesthetics, geological elements, concepts and processes can be expressed and represented. In connection with empathy, self-expression, and self-knowledge we can consider the relation between the expression and the expressed in nature. And finally we can remove the gap between human being, art, and nature (cf. Green, 2008).

2Robert Smithson’s earthwork, “Spiral Jetty” shows us earth moving. In addition, Bernhard Edmaier’s “Geoart”, James Turrell’s “Roden Crater” as the site of an earthwork are good examples.
2. The Relationship between Art and Geology: Art in Geology or Geology in Arts

In geoaesthetics it is important to consider how closely related art and geology are. Geoaesthetics combines art with geology. It unifies classical concepts of landscape and geological beauty with the perspective of microscope pictures, satellite images, and geological maps (For this Friedl et al., 2012). In landscape beauty, “landscape once meant a picture or painting of a view; then it came to mean the view itself” (Shapiro, 2004: p. 105). In evaluating or appreciating landscape, aesthetic sensibility and human activity are intertwined with each other. This problem is particularly motivated by the recognition of nature through the long history of art in the West and East, despite of some differences between them.

We need geoaesthetical understanding that moves from outer appearances to inner essentials. Geological mapping is produced from the observation of geological phenomena. Aesthetic reconstruction of this geological mapping like the rock cycle, earth figure, continental drift, gives us good material for aesthetic expression in painting, sculpture, and installation etc. For example in viewing the desert, “our perception of desert regions, where space abounds, makes us conscious of the brevity of human life and, in contrast, of unending time. For an artist, the plants, animals, rocks, and hills transform into visual elements of dark-light, surface textures, geometric and amorphous structures, colors, shapes-an array of contrasting images and suggestive interactions of space which intrigue, overpower, and precipitate creative ideas” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 19). The geologist reviews and integrates a myriad of rock details, and he has experience in viewing earth materials. On the other hand, the artist appreciates landscape itself and brings it to aesthetic formation. The origins of life wriggle beneath and within the desert rocks and soils, and finally come out for air. Ancient seeds are lying dormant below the surface of the earth. Here we can perceive the mystery and persistence of life. Life force is linked deeply with the root. The origin and end of life has been a long theme of the arts.

In this point we can consider the rock as the root of life. What’s the meaning of rock in rock art? In rock art, rock has a symbolic image, sometimes produced as a part of ritual, manmade markings and carved features on to natural stone. The creation of rock art was itself a shamanistic and ritual act. In confrontation with the enormity of nature, rock played a magic role to console the human being for his finiteness and incompetency. Rock art is integrated into the natural world in a way that few other humanly made objects have been. Marks on rocks as unique to rock art have become integrated into the natural site. The aesthetic appreciation of marks on rocks offers us an alternative model for the enjoyment of human creativity (Heyd, 2003: p. 43). Some prehistoric rock art may appear like abstract and symbolic art. We can read the aesthetic import of vital lives at that time in condensed and symbolized images. Aesthetic appreciation of rock art also calls for factual knowledge of rock. And to be fully appreciated, things need to be understood within aesthetic context in relation to human feelings and emotion.

Geologically speaking, a rock is a solid, cohesive aggregate of one or more mineral materials. As seeds of the earth, rocks are pressed upward in infinite regeneration. So rock is closely related to the age of the earth. “Massive geologic forces stir within the thermal cauldron, which lies a scant distance below the desert floor. The land heaves upward in spasmodic releases of energy. The earth, by its mass and size, generates internal heat energy to deform and crumple its thin crust” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 20). From this process, geological sediments produce various figures in layers, and also yield horizontal beds, which compose the demarcation between earth and sky. It is similar to the abstract linear composition in the case of all-over painting. The fragments of the earth are sliding, rolling, and flowing over the river or along the valley to the sea. Sometimes under the uncompromising pull of gravity these may be temporarily restrained by natural dams or lowland areas which in turn create beautiful landscapes. Vertical forces of the earth are created by thermal instabilities, and are sometimes frozen into transitory parallel layers that are in disequilibrium. The parallel layers disrupt earlier forms, and various changes are produced from the deforming and reforming process, but, if there is no net gain or loss of material, layers can remain stable in equilibrium.

The layers of the earth are sliced by fractures that lie exposed to the action of surface erosion. Visually overwhelming in size and its intricate landscape show us picturesque grandeur. Huge walls are viewed aesthetically as relief structures and as murals which lend themselves to imaginative interpretations. The thick sequence of ancient rocks is exposed in the wall-layers and severances. They create shifting, sectional compositions as wide and high as vision allows us to encompass. The contrasts of stratified textures and stains exhibit nature’s har-

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3 Various perceptual phenomena of the earth like this can be seen in the photos of Edmaier and Jung-Hüttl, 2008, Earthsong (New York: Phaidon).
monic design despite of the various differences and transformations. Especially, mode of imaginative perception contributes to aesthetic interpretation. Such contrasts promote to fantasy and curiosity, as well as geological reality (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 21). These contrasts show us dynamic changes of vision and form, and then balance.

Lava is a common product of volcanic eruptions, especially black lava which derives its capacity for light absorption from the complete mixing of its component colorful minerals. The structures of the lava flow can still be clearly seen. Molten rock, with its elements in the finest possible state and thoroughly diffused, abruptly pours out on to the cold land surface. After a few initial spurts of ash, lava begins to flow quietly from the craters (Edmaier & Jung-Hüttl, 2008: p. 94). The use of black as the lone color in a work of art emphasizes the significance of texture, light, and form. It also acts as a unifying force and conjures multiple meanings. Inner tensions from dark depths come to life, pulsate, and enlarge under varied light conditions. Changing light also drastically alters form as it yields to surface contours. Volcanic rock is so prevalent in desert regions and becomes mirror like and glows luminously white in this environment. “Lava flows exhibit a wrapping aspect when a cooled or frozen exterior contains a still flowing molten interior. Nature, like some works of art, adds to our understanding of the roles of time, motion, and essence itself, thus moving us to larger perspectives of mental and visual balance” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 23). At this forming moment of the various geologic phenomena we can find the process of natural equilibrium. In other words, this equilibrium is related to the earthly balance of change and circulation.

With color itself and changes of color we can follow the process of expression and creation of dynamic tension, plasticity, depth, and forces that often thrust beyond the boundaries of the conscious. The geologic world contains a great deal of expressiveness which can be the ground for expression. Visual objects are full of expressiveness. Object’s expressiveness derives from the artist’s own self-expression. Exquisite color in the desert shows us the result of exploring, expressing, and energizing intangible forces. The artist sees colors with his entire organism through a complex personal process. The artist feels, generates, and rearranges pigment into visual fields which he strives to arrange with a sense of unity and harmony. “Color is the artist’s vehicle, his way of relating to, transcending, and inventing his world” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 33). Various ranges of colors in desert landscapes or the desertification process reflect and verify attempts to achieve stability and equilibrium within an environment. Plants are not only producers of color, but are themselves sensitive to color. Desert soils are stabilized by processes—such as rainfall, temperature changes, and oxidation. Lines and wrinkles form along planes of weakness and the softer parts are collapsed or removed. The desert appears to be a quiet environment of well-adjusted rocks and plants. Climatic zones shift over time. Topography changes as global temperatures are changed (Montgomery, 1995: p. 192).

In a work of art, lines force the eye to explore surfaces and depths through movement, creating patterns of varied velocities. Lines are the equivalent of time for the geologist as well. Many geologic sections contain features referred to as time lines. Lines and planes play a role to form geo-construction or geo-building. The prirordial, infinitely varied lines of profile or shift of the earth are as distinct as the unique lines of painting or sculpture. “The serpentine loops of a desert canyon resemble the trail of a sidewinder, the cracks which form in the mud of a drying desert arroyo look like the interconnecting plates of a desert tortoise shell, the branching of a tree seems to copy the branching of the tributaries of a desert wash eroding into a hill of soft mud. The artist may intuitively and coincidentally develop abstract motifs that already exist in nature: colors, shapes, textures, and patterns” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 53). And these elements like strata of rocks, patterns of plants, anatomical structures of animal, infinite arrangements of space and structure closely resemble those of the arts. These various changes are also similar to multi compositions of canvas in figurative art and installation. We are invited to consider material representation unifying art as humanistic activity and natural phenomena.

Geological texture of rock is characterized as the size, shape, and arrangement of components. This texture is applicable to the aesthetic contents. Stripped of plants or the presence of old eroded sediment, the desert surface portrays the power and omnipresence of gravity. Gravity as an attractive force and as a creator of spatiotemporal curvature, holds the fragments of the earth together. Textures are also inherent in the materials the artist uses. Textures increase tension, movement, and a wide range of contrast. “Light absorption and reflection are intensified and controlled by the nature of the medium or through the rendering of textural illusions developed out of the medium itself. Textural concerns and contrasts are as alive as the world around us” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 63).

Fertile fields bring contrast to glistening plains of spawn lava where sturdy plants can be found pushing their
way from beneath the lava surface to air and light. Sudden rainfalls turn deserts green and bring them to life. And with melted snow streams begin to flow from the mountains. A natural cleavage on a craggy precipice may have a mature, substantial tree or cactus firmly rooted and flourishing. Here we can find the vital energy of life. In a work like van Gogh’s “Starry Night” (1889), we can see that “energetically applied impasto pigments awaken passions and affirm life. The odors and textures of paint and canvas linger, stimulate, and involve our other senses” (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 71). The vital richness of the natural world and the lasting images of works of art enliven the senses and cultivate a better quality of human life.

In search of geoaesthetic meaning we want to retreat in contemplation to heighten spiritual understanding. Through deepening contemplation we can find a healing process. There are some elements in this process that are physical, emotional, and spiritual. Of course there can be various healing methods and modalities. Healing as a process of getting well is more than eliminating or suppressing symptoms or illness. Healing is a path to restore one’s true nature and the meaning of life. Healing through geoaesthetics means to look at the natural order. Looking at and being absorbed in natural phenomena like a sunset, canyon, waterfalls, etc. can facilitate healing. The solitude and silence of primitiveness are to be esteemed, and thus each word uttered is full of meaning and clearly heard. The author thinks, Nietzsche’s meaning of the earth, grasped as loyalty to the earth, is grafted into here⁴. The desert is covered with deep stillness, therefore every sound has the significance of being itself. Soundless space and motionless time invite us to contemplation. Those who practice it watch an outcrop of desert rock and project the solid matter into forms and shapes that penetrate the earth and interpenetrate each other. As the earth compresses, folds, pulls open, and buries, solid rock becomes fluid. Mixed by the compound of time, nothing is solid. Time is a path to reach nothingness and finally existence itself. All is dynamic and flowing. Color, line, and texture in geologic phenomena are the fundamentals interacting to build the visual plasticity and meaning of the composition (Abbey & William Fiero, 1986: p. 4).

**Figure 1** of spawn lava shows us abstract and at the same time concrete aspects of rocks. It is transformed into the artistic expression, can be named “Happiness” in **Figure 2** of Rita Dein Abbey (1930-) who is famous for abstract landscape paintings. There are various possibilities to interpret aesthetic meaning from this geologic phenomenon. In the sight of “Raindrops” in **Figure 3** at San Juan riverside, Utah, we encounter “Moments of Time” in **Figure 4** by Rita Dein Abbey. Moments of time are expressed lying one upon another in raindrops. Raindrops as physical phenomena are well contrasted with moments of time and life as psychological consciousness. I think and imagine original time on the earth could have begun with raindrops.


⁴The Moenkopi is a geological formation that is spread widely across New Mexico, northern Arizona, Nevada, southeastern California, eastern Utah, and western Colorado, USA.
Figure 2. Rita Deanín Abbey: 1977, acrylic on canvas, 50 × 70 inches.

Figure 3. San Juan River, Utah.

Figure 4. Rita Deanin Abbey: mixed media on canvas, 70 × 50 inches.
Here, let’s give attention to the two terms, geo and bio. Generally speaking, geo is concerned with a lifeless thing, an inanimate or inorganic substance. On the contrary bio is concerned with life, organic substance. Although geological phenomena such as rock, cave, wind, valley, etc. have no lives in themselves, but these have an influence on living things. In this context we have to read bio through geo, and geo through bio. So in geoaesthetics, there is not a separation of geo and bio, but a connection of geo and bio in terms of art. It will be result in an expansion of emotional qualities—so to speak—sympathetic or empathic communication with each other.


The earth has changed continuously since its pristine formation, undergoing some particularly profound transitions and upheavals. The record and document of fossils establish when different kinds of plant and animal groups were propagated and then disappeared on the earth. Since the advent of the human race we human beings have had an enormous impact on the earth. Geologic observations are combined with experiments, measurements, and calculations to develop theories of how natural processes and natural systems operate and interact. In nature, the geoscientist is often confronted only with the results of the experiment and must deduce the materials and processes involved (Montgomery, 1995: pp. 4-8). To understand the concept of nature is complicated by the problems of geologic time and geologic phenomena. In order to make an artistic approach to geologic time and geologic phenomena we groped our way toward the relationship between art and geology in the previous section. In search of the harmony between art and nature, first, we have to rethink the concept of nature.

Allen Carlson, a pioneer in environmental aesthetics and honorary professor of philosophy at the University of Alberta, Canada, argued for the aesthetics of nature. He judges nature as “what it is”. Empirical knowledge informs us of what the object is (Matthews, 2002: p. 39). This judgment can only be acknowledge with a scientific understanding of nature. We appreciate nature as what it in fact is, that is as natural environment. “We must appreciate nature in light of our knowledge of what it is. This knowledge is provided by the natural sciences, especially the environmental sciences such as geology, biology, and ecology. The natural environmental model thus accommodates both the true character of nature and our normal experience and understanding of it” (Carlson, 2002: p. 6).

Before cognitive account of the appreciation of nature, we have to understand that “scientific knowledge is required for the correct appreciation of objects insofar as appreciation involves an element of knowledge, but in categorizing nature, science also focuses our attention on relevant aspects of nature for appreciation” (Matthews, 2002: p. 37). Everything in nature has various aesthetic values under the title of natural beauty or natural landscape. According to Carlson, scientific categories are required in order to appreciate nature correctly, and these make us pay attention to our relevant aspects of nature for appreciation. Scientific knowledge of nature is “only a finer grained and theoretically richer version of our common, everyday knowledge of it, and not something different in kind” (Carlson, 2002: p. 7). Roughly compared, scientific knowledge of geology is shaped by the science of ecology in the meaning of earthly balance through circulating change. Knowledge in art is obtained through self-reflection, self-understanding. According to Roger Paden and others, aesthetics must be based on an evolutionary understanding of nature. Carlson elaborates an ecological approach to environmental aesthetics. We appreciate a natural object in terms of “real nature” (Paden, Harmon, & Milling, 2012: pp. 124-125). In the aesthetic appraisal of nature we can see it in a “real” eye and with an “ideal” mind. Of course reality can be idealized, or ideality can be realized. Various figures of the reality were converged into the ideality. Sometimes landscapes are idealized on the ground of the real scenes.

In the service of environmental protection and preservation, Carlson provides aesthetic challenges. Carlson’s positive aesthetics, his focus on the functionality of human environments, and his integration of aesthetics and ethics have great import for those seeking to use aesthetics to assist in addressing environmental controversies. Discussion about environmental ethics would benefit from taking environmental aesthetics more seriously. Scientific cognition plays a crucial role in Carlson’s positive aesthetics, because he derives positive aesthetics from scientific cognition. Positive aesthetic qualities are composed of qualities such as unity, order, harmony, and balance. Ecology shows that qualities such as unity, order, harmony, and balance necessarily characterize ecosystems (Paden, Harmon, & Milling, 2012: p. 126). Ecology before Ch. Darwin (1809-1882) was based upon an idea of the balance of the nature, but after Darwin this idea was largely abandoned. Ecology has undergone a
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characterized the Chinese world view as human being is a double being. Aesthetic experience is always contextual. The aesthetic aspect of any human reciprocity that constitutes both the person and his place of living. Genuine beauty lies in coexistence and habitat is an essential part of its desirability. The aesthetic perception of environmental nature shows us the experience on human life. Arguing for the idea that environment is not merely a setting for people but fully integrated and continuous with us. According to him, a person is located in the perceptual center, and belongs to both an individual and he considers the human person as an active contributor in the context that includes and is continuous with the environment continuum in both theoretical terms and concrete situations. According to his environmental aesthetics, intergrated and continuous with us. Arnold Berleant (1932-) explores the aesthetic dimensions of the human-environment continuum in both theoretical terms and concrete situations. According to his environmental aesthetics, he considers the human person as an active contributor in the context that includes and is continuous with the participant. According to him, a person is located in the perceptual center, and belongs to both an individual and a member of a socio-cultural group. Life world is shaped by geographical and cultural factors. In this respect a human being is a double being. Aesthetic experience is always contextual. The aesthetic aspect of any human habitat is an essential part of its desirability. The aesthetic perception of environmental nature shows us the reciprocity that constitutes both the person and his place of living. Genuine beauty lies in coexistence and harmony with the natural environment.

Our aesthetic imagination and freedom are located between environmental nature and human technique. This research is based on the environmental aesthetics including land or earth art. Land art or earth art derives part of its aesthetic appeal from its transient nature (Saito, 2005: p. 171). This project shows the many problems of global environment, human desire, and artist’s vision. More than anything else, the author tries to find out a new alternative to explore and restore naturalness in the human mind from a long historical view of geology. We need to understand the principle of naturalness which lies in the change of geologic phenomena. All depictions of nature are not necessarily reflections of reality. Thoughts are projected onto nature, which nature reflects to us. In the context of perfect harmony or coexistence with nature it would be rather good to express naturalness or pan-naturalism.

There are differences between the depiction of nature based on correspondence and construction of the world. Environmental aesthetics focuses on aesthetic value in nature. It provides the aesthetic reconstruction of landscape and earth art. Gary Shapiro, emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Richmond, tries to describe the aesthetic sense of nature through designed environment like garden or landscape architecture. According to him, “nature is essentially a social construction, not an absolute given, and points to the specific historical factors that lead to transformation in taste” (Shapiro, 2004: p. 104). Landscape is “a composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence” (Jackson, 1984: p. 38). Geoaesthetics is the linkage between earth and art in organic unity. For example, we can experi-

Pan-naturalism as a kind of Asian naturalism is a pan-Asian view of the world, nature, religion, and way of life. Once Joseph Needham characterized the Chinese world view as “organic naturalism”. This term seems to be closely related to pan naturalism.
ence the ancient tradition of rock art, forest art etc. and are inspired by impressive works of art owing to a sense of mystery and awe. The materials in sculpture and wall paintings have geologic significance in primitive way in which forms and patterns of lives were carved. Through geoaesthetics the author explores the desirable forms of natural life on the earth. It will be closely connected to the problems of geological duration and sustainability.

Geological phenomena such as erosion, volcanic ash, basalt volcanic throats are simply extensions of the ordinary descriptions of crevasse, ridge, hummock, and geographical features of mountains (Carlson, 2002: p. 221). As an extension of an enquiry into the laws of nature we can find a role for natural science in our aesthetic appreciation of nature. The appreciation of nature plays a key role in understanding the circumstances of earth’s environment. It was discussed in the main concepts of geoaesthetics through geological phenomena and principles. Further, we can realize the possibilities and prospects of geoaesthetics by analyzing and interpreting the materials and works of some leading artists. The aesthetic direction of the geologic earth lies in the meaningful problem for better quality of life, found in contemplation and equilibrium.

4. Geoaesthetical Approach through Works of Art: Hongtae Kim, Soyoung Chung, Isamu Noguchi, Maya Lin

Using the geoaesthetic approach the author will review the work of two Korean artists, Hongtae Kim, Soyoung Chung; a Japanese American, Isamu Noguchi; and a Chinese American, Maya Lin. Through four artists the author explores the ultimate purpose of art as a return to natural order. From the works of Hongtae Kim (1947-), who studied at the graduate school of education, Hongik University, Korea, we can experience freedom, contemplative motivation, and homesickness or nostalgia toward something original and primitive. The consistent theme of Hongtae Kim’s work is the exploration of primitiveness, which is represented in the child’s mind. A child’s mind has a primitive tendency, and makes us back to the origin. A child’s mind and primitiveness are encountered each other from the viewpoint of simplicity and innocence. All meanings are condensed in simplicity and have strong symbolic character. He scratches and adds parts on picture from the bottom and removes them to uncover the buried figure in the foundation. He gives a sense of tension and draws dynamics through the appropriate division of surface. In addition, he shows us the emergence of root by giving a hint of a symbolic sign. Occasionally, he reveals the hidden figure, which is situated at the base of our consciousness by restraining the expression and organizing the space.

His fundamental pursuit is the harmony of yin and yang principles, embedded in Far-East Asian sentiment. The bright side as yang and the dark side as yin don’t have an antipathy to each other, rather they are elements of co-sharing and co-existence. Yin and Yang are both sides of ether or energy as a principle of the universe creation. In Western painting, various elements are put in dialectical conflict and opposition, but for East Asians, they give vitality in harmonization and non-division. Besides, our aesthetic consciousness is contemplative and static because it appears through line rather than plane. Even though line is not dynamic but static, it is original and vital because of its primitiveness. That is the origin of vitality, and life is primitiveness itself.

The primitive figure, carved in the image of child’s mind in Figure 5, is composed of spontaneous and unintentional lines. Essentially, the art of the prehistoric age is delineated by line contour. The primitiveness and originality in cave murals, however, introduced by Hongtae Kim reveals dynamic and vital force through strong light that is formed naturally over a long time. This dynamic force is the most basic impulse, possessed by human life. Human beings who are not eternal, pursue the infiniteness, and are basically born with religious inclination. This religious inclination is revealed in naturalness and spirituality. It has also adjusted to the present time. Therefore, we have the expression of primitive force, incantatory image, abstraction and symbolism.

We draw the buried and hidden things in our unconsciousness and transform them into figuration. This partly irregular and inharmonious figuration creates harmony on the whole and shows dynamics. For Hongtae Kim, a child’s mind and primitiveness appear as one and the same according to the automatic operating of hand. His automatic hand-working is something related to the spontaneous and unintentional mind. It seems to derive from highly refined professional discipline and long period of practice, however. Hongtae Kim establishes order from chaos, associating with the primitiveness that appears in African sculpture, and mural images. In terms of technique, sometimes, he draws natural feeling of tactile impression by using powdered sand and rice paper. And at other times, he aims at various effects through mixed materials. We can see the possibility of healing through returning to primitiveness and child’s mind. Almost all diseases originated from disorder as well as the loss of
K. M. Kim

Figure 5. Primitiveness + child’s mind, 2008 (mixed media on Canvas 60.6 × 145.4 cm).

origin. The author hopes that Hongtae Kim’s works of art will give us the motivation to suggest a vision of contemplation and healing opportunity in contemporary Korean art.

Soyoung Chung (1979-), who studied at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris, France, has displayed some remarkable work at shows under titles such as “Innerscape” (Gallery Miss China Beauty, Paris, 2006), “A different Kind of Tension” (Kumho museum of art, Seoul, 2007), “Zero Construction” (Project Space Sarubia, Seoul, 2008), and “On the Ground floor of the Geology Building” (OCI museum of art, Seoul, 2011). She tries to show the interrelation between nature and urbanism. From the ground of observation on the physical transition, her plastic installation changes the established space and creates cyber space. This based on the geological perspective she captures of topographic elements and their structural system in spatiotemporal city life. She displays a series of installations and photographic works, in the format of maps, of the chronological development of the land. In her works like “Waterway” (2011), “Geo-construction” (2011), “Chronology of Construction” (2011), and “Urban geology-building” (Figure 6, 2011) we can watch her topographical consideration and follow after her moulding experiment in the way of avant-garde.

In terms of geo-scape and earth landscape she tries to reconcile the disharmony between order and disorder, cosmos and chaos, man and nature. Her interest originates from the artistic reflection on natural disaster or catastrophe from crustal movements. She seeks to pursue an original order or a natural order, of the thing itself. The author thinks geologic formation or layers have a connection with mental topography. Invisible force behind physical appearances is located in the center of the depth of the earth. Natural principle as the order of nature, and natural appearance as chaos, are beautifully coexistent. In her work “Inkdrop” (2007), a falling state is associated with stalactites, which are formed in caves over long periods of time. The ink like water drops and falls from the tip of a stalactite deposit. Soyoung Chung works on sculpture installations deconstructing and reorganizing the structural materials, creating her own peculiar sculptural space. With an aesthetical approach to the physical force of nature, she tries to transform and crystallize the aesthetic equilibrium of gravity. Especially, Figure 6 shows the placement, age and thickness of rock units exposed in the building as if in the geologic formations.

Environmental artist Maya Lin (1959-), who studied architecture and sculpture at Yale University, is immersed in searching for the forces of nature. Her environmental visions reflect the unbroken flow of land and sea, water and wind. Her interest in landscape is influenced and inspired by natural topographies and geologic phenomena. She finds aesthetic inspiration in rock formations, water patterns in watery landscape art and urban situation, solar eclipses and aerial views of the earth. She leads efforts to understand the meaning of the specific site before finding the optimal formation. For her, site specific arts are possible only on the ground of physical surroundings. This site is given to shape a trend toward minimalism and abstraction. Richard Andrews, Director of Henry Art Gallery at Seattle, once said about her, “Maya Lin has an extraordinary ability to convey complex and poetic ideas using simple forms and natural materials.” Maya Lin tries to keep in mind a memorial to a vanishing natural world. In her memorial we can read and feel eternity instead of instantaneousness.

In her works “Wave field” (1993-95), “Open-air Peace Chapel” (1988-89) we can feel the exquisite coexis-

Kim, Kwang Myung, 2012, Review on Hongtae Kim’s Solo Exhibition, James Gray Gallery, Nov. 17-Dec. 16, Bergamot Station Art Center, Santa Monica, California, USA.
tence between man and nature. Her inspiration is derived from nature itself like ocean waves, mountains, natural stones, etc. As a landscape sculptor, she is looking for natural beauty from the natural environment. In her exhibition “Three Ways of Looking at Earth” (Pace Wildenstein Gallery, New York, 2009), and especially through her work “Blue Lake Pass” (Figure 7, 2009), she displays her efforts to visualize topographical features that are composed of plane, layer, grid, place, etc. Here we can perceive both earthly dynamics and universal calmness simultaneously.

Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), who studied at Leonardo da Vinci School of Art in New York City, was a prominent Japanese American artist, and landscape architect. He extended the concept of sculpture with the broad application of new materials like water, light, sound, etc. instead of stone, steel, and wood as traditional materials. He carves stone as a symbol of earth and nature. By him even a piece of stone is connected symbolically to all parts of earth. In his works we can feel the atmosphere of static space and contemplation of nature as well. According to him, the essence of sculpture is really to perceive the space, and the perception of the space is the continuum of our existence. Stone doesn’t appear to us as either old or new, but as a primordial element of the earth. Stone plays a role of the primary medium to deliver the generating and disappearing history of the earth. Stone as nature exists where it is, and where we have an experience. Everything can be changed and brought into a formation of a sculpture. With his marvelous capacity of formation he could transform any material, any idea into a sculpture. The visible world enters our consciousness as emotional knowledge with spatial meaning. Through him, the promise of sculpture is to project the inner presence of space into forms that can be recognized as important and meaningful in themselves as a room for contemplation.

Isamu Noguchi designed “The Garden” (Figure 8, 1963) for the Beinecke Plaza as Rare Book and Manuscript
Library in one of several collaborative efforts with architect Gordon Bunshaft (1909-1990) who was among the first American architects to embrace European Modernism tradition. Garden extends to the library’s paneled walls and its sunken courtyard is covered with creamy Vermont marble. And it evokes a contemplative mood. The cold materials of the space inspire not emotion but contemplation, reinforcing a studious atmosphere in the adjacent underground reading room. The mood seems to be similar to that of a Japanese Zen garden\(^8\), quietly balancing cosmic forces symbolized by the circle filled with sunlight and its energy, the pyramid characterizing the ancient history of the earth. This synthesis of Eastern and Western mood also unites past and future. His ultimate objective is to create and enhance public spaces through sculpture beyond individual space. Although Noguchi’s sculptures began as simple geometric shapes, he soon moved toward more organic forms. In the end he merged geometric and organic forms. For him, gardening is considered as sculpturing of space for contemplation. His sustainable gardening work makes it possible to achieve the harmonious existence between man and

nature. Noguchi’s works show it to us so well. Owing to Noguchi we can acknowledge the aesthetic sense of nature through gardening landscape.

5. Conclusion

In raising the problems and considering the prospects of geoaesthetics, we have considered the relationship between geology and art, the concept of nature in geology and environmental aesthetics. From the long history of geologic earth we can feel both impermanence and permanence at the same time. There must be some reason for this, namely we as human beings live in the moment, and the continuation of moments make long history on the earth. The geological history of earth follows the major events in earth’s past based on a system of chronological measurement. This measurement is based on the study of the earth’s rock formations and layers. Earth was initially molten due to extreme volcanism and frequent collisions with other bodies. As the surface continually re-shaped itself over hundreds of millions of years, continents formed and broke apart. Undergoing repeated cycles of glaciation and thaw, ice can deform, reform, and transform the ground on the earth. And the structures of lava flow are still in progress somewhere on the earth. Deserts give us the feeling of deep stillness. On the horizon of the desert, we can see the connection between earth and sky, linkages of nature and art. Native artists used the geologic materials to create art by carving, scratching, and piling. The materials in sculpture also have geologic significance to create this connection that links earth and art.

The author considers geoaesthetics in relation to environmental aesthetics. The author suggests that approaching geologic formations aesthetically allows a more reciprocal grasp of environmental aesthetics. Natural things or appearances such as light, water, wind, and even climate change, etc. have much influence on the environment and the aesthetic formations of the environmental artist. Illumination of human existence and artistic sublimation give a strong impression on a unique form of contemplation. Contemplation, self-renunciation, and inactivity are the main elements for a geological mind viewed over a long period of time and infinite space. In this context the author briefly suggests the need to differentiate the ways of Western and Eastern approaches to art. As both two sides of the same coin, “being” and “nothingness” are equal in the end, there is really no such thing as a pictorial “nothingness” in the East. Being is only possible in primordial time, that is to say, time itself. History runs its course in time. Thus the development of history falls within time. M. Heidegger (1889-1976) interprets human being as temporality Human being is grounded in the mode of temporalizing in the temporality (Heidegger, 1962: pp. 480-488). With the completion of time, being is transformed into nothingness. “Nothingness” itself is a metaphysical entity. The fundamental thing that the author pursues here is the harmony of man and nature, buried in the geological mind. Man and nature, like yin and yang, don’t have an antipathy to each other, rather they are elements for sharing in the long history of earth’s formation. For this reason we have to restore naturalness. Naturalness gives us circular vitality and energy. And the origin of vital life lies in geological thinking. In geological thinking as a representative of the appreciation of the nature we find the natural order and natural forces (Carlson, 2002: p. 120).

Naturalness comes from the geological thought behind everything. The contrast between figure and background, as shown in the Gestalt psychology, is well expressed in the relation of man and nature. This research will contribute to the reorientation of art in the face of ecological crisis. Furthermore, this research will draw attention to the significance of the harmonious coexistence of man and nature for a better quality of life on earth. In addition, this research will promote to extend the aesthetic category in the interdisciplinary method of art and geology so that we can solve the questions about sustainable theory in the aesthetic field for the future. Ultimately through this research, the aesthetic appreciation including pan geo-environmental perspective can restore the harmonious status between human beings, art, and nature on the same planet.

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New Epistemological and Methodological Criteria for Communication Sciences: The Conception as Applied Sciences of Design

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Abstract

There is a need for new epistemological and methodological criteria for communication sciences. This necessity is underscored by the important developments of communication in recent years, due to the information and communication technologies (ICT). Consequently, we should overcome interpretive schemes until now dominant, which see communication sciences only as social sciences (or even as it were a mere professional practice based on past experience). Hence, the reality of a new conception is required to specify communication sciences which are analyzed as applied sciences of design. Thus, the theoretical approach—in cognitive and processes—fits best to the reality of new communication phenomena. Within this novel framework, which deals with the current reality and the future projection of the communication sciences, the conception of them as applied sciences of design can follow several steps in order to present its characterization: 1) the scope proposed to do research regarding communicative phenomena; 2) communication science as applied disciplines (subjects focus to solve specific problems) that work on designs (they seek to enlarge the human potential communication); and 3) the new criteria that carry out this proposal about the epistemology and methodology of communication sciences (where the knowledge used in the designs is oriented toward artificial aims and, consequently, the processes will follow the lead of the designs in order to obtain the expected results).

Keywords

Communication Sciences, Applied Sciences, Sciences of Design, Sciences of the Artificial

1. Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed an enormous outpouring of work on communication sciences because of the
massive amount of new communicative phenomena. Yet the epistemological and methodological criteria used for these new phenomena remain old: they are commonly focused on the traditional approach of communication sciences as social sciences. This approach is clearly insufficient to deal with all the contributions made to this realm by the information and communication technologies (ICT). The new communicative phenomena, in which Internet plays an important role, require the criteria of the sciences of the artificial. This can lead to a new conception of communication sciences as applied sciences of design.

Following the new characterization of economic phenomena within the sphere of the applied sciences of design, the emphasis is no longer on the social dimension of these phenomena but rather on the enhancement of human communication. Thus, these sciences of the artificial seek to enlarge the human potential communication. Consequently, the task of these applied sciences is to solve specific problems in a practical domain, and the focus moves toward aims, processes, and results. In this regard, the analysis requires taking three main aspects into account: i) the scope of research proposed for communication phenomena in terms of designs; ii) the processes of communication sciences as applied disciplines that are seeking to expand the human communication potential; and iii) the new epistemological and methodological criteria used to grasp the recent communicative results.

2. Scope Proposed for the New Scientific Research

So far, the dominant trend in the study of communicative phenomena has emphasized the realm of the social sciences. Sometimes, the vision has been as mere communicative patterns in form of “techniques”. At the same time, the instrumental role of technology has been highlighted as a vehicle that enables progress. The first approach—the social perspective—emphasizes the need of human beings to interact and communicate with our social environment. The second approach—the technological one—reflects the way to expand that inherent human characteristic of relationship. In fact, communication processes are increasingly dependent on technological developments.

However, these two approaches—the social-scientific perspective and the technological-instrumental viewpoint—are insufficient to adequately grasp the scientific articulation of these disciplines. With just the two of them, we are not able to reflect neither the object of study that communication sciences address nor the type of problems they seek to solve. The object and the kind of problems require a new epistemological and methodological framework. The new approach is in the sciences of design as applied sciences, which is followed by a scientific application. The approach of communication sciences as applied sciences offers more relevant elements than the usual options mentioned. It is also a more comprehensive approach than the previous ones, both in structural and dynamic terms. Within this new realm it is worth pointing out the components that configure the communication sciences.

Initially, there is a dual starting point for these disciplines: the social and the artificial. Because communication sciences—as it is also the case with another disciplines, such as economy—are driven by two different key aspects. On one hand, it has a social component attach to them, which is inherent (the natural capacity of human beings of relationship); and, on the other hand, it has an artificial ingredient, which is built by human beings in order to broaden and extend human possibilities (Gonzalez, 2012a). Hence, communication sciences have a fork in its origin: a) to study the human need of communication, and b) to analyze how these communicative possibilities expand, reaching goals that go far beyond the basic needs of social communication.

This second task is done through artificial means. Some results are obtained by drawing some designs, which use specific technologies as a way to obtain specific goals. This implies that communication sciences are in the realm of the artificial by its aims, processes, and results. Hence, communication sciences elaborate designs that are aimed at solving specific problems, which are well defined in space and time. Therefore, they are applied science because they solve specific issues in a practical domain (Niiniluoto, 1993). They have in themselves an

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1 Regarding the characteristics of these applied sciences of design, see Bereijo, 2011, and Gonzalez, 2012.
2 The features of the applied sciences in general are in Niiniluoto, 1993. The sciences of design are a land of the sciences of the artificial, see Simon, 1996.
4 The difference between “applied science” and “application of science” was described in 1993 by Niiniluoto. On this topic there is a whole section in Gonzalez (2013) pp. 11-40.
empirical *modus operandi*. They also have a high degree of complexity insofar as they have a social as well as an artificial aspect (Gonzalez, 2008b).

If we go further into the roots of the communication sciences as applied sciences of design, then there are several steps to be taken into account. Firstly, we have to identify the characteristic features of the science. Secondly, we have to specify the different ways in which science is diversified. Thirdly, we have to find the right place for communication sciences within the current scientific categories. Doing so, we will get two commitments, since—in addition to promoting its internal configuration as scientific knowledge—we will be defining where the communication sciences stand in the realm of knowledge.

### 2.1. Characteristic Features of Science and Its Presence in Communication

To characterize the communication sciences as scientific disciplines, requires a first step, which is to take into account the characteristics of a science. a) Science has a specific language, it carries terms with a sense and a well-defined reference. b) It has its own structured theory, which in case of applied sciences is aimed at solving specific problems. c) Science employs a rigorous type of knowledge. d) Science has characteristic methods. When it comes to applied sciences, science seeks to solve specific problems. e) Science is configured as a human activity of a social nature: a dynamic reality permeate by historicity. f) Science is related to a set of values, some internal (consistency, simplicity, objectivity, versatility, etc.) and some external (social, cultural, economic, etc.). g) It is ethically evaluable, both from an internal perspective (reliability, honesty, etc.) and from an external perspective (science is not detrimental to the user, provides accurate information for decision-making, etc.) (Gonzalez, 2005, 2013; see also Arrojo, 2007).

General philosophy and methodology of science deals with the study of these characteristic features of a science. It does so from a broader perspective: it looks for valid statements that work for every science. Meanwhile, special philosophy and methodology of science reflects on the specificity of each science. Then, there are two aspects of this second consideration: I) the broad perspective, which seeks the links between the general science (or a group of sciences) and the specific discipline that is studied; and II) the restricted viewpoint, which is focused to specific problems and it is developed by specialists in each discipline (Gonzalez, 2012b). In the case of communication sciences, we can find the two aspects of special methodology of science. It can be seen in the relationships with general features of a science or groups of sciences. Also, communication has its own specialists for methodological issues that are distinctive to this sphere.

Within the second aspect to be considered here—the different modes in which science diversifies—is the distinction between the formal sciences and empirical sciences. Here, regarding this distinction, communication sciences belong to the second group. The reason is clear: the “sciences of the artificial” and, among them, the sciences of design are in the domain of the empirical sciences. It is the field of the human-made that can make empirical statements (Simon, 1996, 2001). The sciences of the artificial commonly use designs. They are focused on aims, processes, and results of human activities (economics, documentaries, communicative, etc.), which can be tested by observation and experimentation.

In addition—as a third step to find the right place for communication sciences—is necessary to consider that scientific research is not always carried out in the same way. Certainly, we can make a distinction between basic science and applied science depending on aims and processes (Niiniluoto, 1995a, 1995b). The primary aim of any basic science is to expand the knowledge of reality by means of explanation and prediction. Thus, basic sciences specify the events (or facts of the world) that occur and seek generalizations to describe collections of phenomena (Simon, 2001: 32). Meanwhile, applied science is oriented towards resolving specific problems with a domain. It follows three moments in this regard: aims, processes, and results. Applied science includes predictions and prescriptions.

According to Simon, “Laws connecting sets of variables allow inferences or predictions to be made from known values of some of the variables to unknown values of other variables. Inferences and predictions can be used, in turn, to invent and design artifacts (e.g., arches) that perform desired functions (support the weight and other stresses placed on them), or to anticipate and adapt to future events on the basis of knowledge about the present and past. At the times the predictions are realized, the new data can be used, of course, to test whether the laws continue to hold” (Simon, 2001: 32; see also Gonzalez, 2007).

Following these features, communication sciences can been seen as applied sciences: they make predictions regarding the possible future, and they propose prescriptions to solve specific problems. The traditional view of communication sciences, which is still dominant, is to consider them as social sciences. This view recognizes
the instrumental support of information and communication technologies (ICT).

But there is an increasing tendency to see communication sciences cannot be confined to a sociological study or considered just because of their technological constraints. It is clear that there is now an increasingly use of ICT in the communication sciences. However, we need the perspective of sciences of the artificial to characterize communication sciences today, which includes to understand them as applied sciences of design. In this respect, communication sciences can solve specific problems starting from the use of designs. This is done based on a set of ends, using the means that technology make available.

2.2. Epistemological and Methodological Framework of Communication: From Social Sciences to Sciences of the Artificial

Under these new epistemological and methodological criteria, communication sciences are a twofold kind of science. On the one hand, they have components of social sciences, insofar as their concerns to human needs; and on the other hand, they are sciences of the artificial, insofar as they work with designs, where there is a high degree of dependence on technologies (Gonzalez, 2008b; Arrojo, 2012). The social sciences components come from the inherent human need to interact with others and their environment (Backhouse & Fontaine, 2010). These links are based on intentional human actions, which take place in a social environment. Thus, these disciplines analyze the origins, development, and consequences of human actions related to the social role of communication (Bishop, 2007), within this sociocultural environment where such communication takes place.

At the same time, communication sciences enlarge the communication possibilities of the human beings, because they offer us new options. They allow going further than the immediate vital horizon to reach the “global village”. The constant expansion of the communicative possibilities, which are due to human designs, are studied by these disciplines as sciences of the artificial. Communication sciences give a scientific perspective to a human activity based on professional practice. Then, they broaden the huge possibilities of communication reaching new commitments by using the available tools of technology (Arrojo, 2008).

In this regard, communication sciences need the contribution of technology in order to achieve their aims. Technology is by definition a creative transformation of reality (Gonzalez, 2005, 2013). Therefore, it provides the device that is the instrumental support to achieve the selected aims. Technology gives the operative channels that lead the communicative content. It does so using its different channels as image, sound, signal, etc. When a new communicative phenomenon starts, there is commonly a technological device that operates to look for some chosen aims (Arrojo, 2007, 2013). These aims have been previously chosen by the professionals, those working on the media. After these aims, there are some processes, which are indispensable to achieve the expected results.

These processes are made based on a design that relies on predictions to trace the possible future. Thereafter, it is prescribed with patterns of kind of action to solve a specific problem defined in space and time. Thus, there are a few goals and designs to achieve those goals along with guidelines for action, as it is typical of applied sciences of design (Gonzalez, 2007). The communication sciences are then displayed as science of the artificial: we are in a field of the “human-made”, both in terms of aims and processes, and when it comes to results (Gonzalez, 2008a).

3. Communication Sciences as Applied Sciences of Design

Within the sciences of the artificial, communication sciences are a clear example of applied sciences. i) Its subject is not in nature but in the field of the artificial: the transmission channels, formats, programs, interactive content, slots, etc. ii) They are oriented to solve specific problems of communication; which includes looking for patterns of action, strategies that are directed towards achieving a result. The targets may be oriented towards reaching the widest possible audience, the best program quality, or the optimal economic results. iii) These sciences are evaluated in terms of usability and usefulness of processes and results (Arrojo, 2007).

This scientific-applied dimension of the “communication sciences” highlights that the field of study cannot be reduced to the perspective of the social sciences. Moreover, there is a net expansion of the initial possibilities of communication. This is encouraged by the information and communication technologies (ICTs). All the media uses ICTs to enable the creation and dissemination of increasingly elaborated messages. Hence, the media expands our communication skills, those that are natural to us as social beings, those we have inherent to us as human beings. They are artificial factors in communication sciences and bring an increasingly sophisticated as-
pect to them. This practical aspect has been articulated in terms of the science of design, which considers aims, processes, and results (Arrojo, 2013).

3.1. The Communication as a Science of Design

Initially, as they are social sciences, communication sciences deal with a type of intentional human actions that take place in a social environment. These disciplines analyze the origins, developments, and consequences of human actions related to the social role of communication (Bishop, 2007). In this respect, they are sciences that consider the socio-cultural environment where communication takes place (Arrojo, 2012), where the language—in its various specifications—plays a key role.

Increasingly, communication sciences expand human possibilities of subjective report: they look for more sophisticated goals. Their contents need the use of the technology, which gives tools and elements to broadcast. After a creative transformation of reality (Gonzalez, 2005), technology offers a device (radio, television, Internet, etc.) serving as an instrumental support for the transmission of communicative content, and to obtain the selected aims (Gonzalez, 2007). The communication sciences shape the design of a communicative phenomenon that takes place based on specific aims that require an adequate technology (Arrojo, 2012).

These constant communicative field extensions, which are due to human designs, are studied as the sciences of the artificial. In this regard, communication sciences give a scientific perspective to a human activity based on professional practice as well as expanding the existent possibilities, insofar as they work with designs (Niiniluoto, 1993). Thus, as they are sciences of the artificial, they have three relevant features: a) these communications disciplines have new aims that appear in their designs; b) they use some processes for achieving those goals; and c) they can obtain concrete results. In this case, we can say that communication sciences fit into the sphere of sciences of design (Gonzalez, 2007).

3.2. Communication as Applied Science

Within the set of scientific disciplines, communication sciences are applied sciences, insofar as they are aimed at solving specific problems (Niiniluoto, 1995a). Thus, they are aimed at addressing specific issues within a diverse practical domain, as it is the human communication. On one hand, communication sciences deal with the structural aspects of communication phenomena. They research the teleological function of communication, i.e., the task of providing targeted communication to specific aims. On the other hand, they analyze their dynamic aspects, those that are concerning the changes that occur in human communication. These changes are due to changes that occur in the environment and lead to variations to fit the changing environment (Arrojo, 2012).

This dynamic aspect of communication sciences initially focuses on three successive elements of the “internal” to the communicative phenomenon: aims, processes, and results. These components comprise a working knowledge geared towards achieving goals. It is, therefore, a dynamic of applied sciences of design (Niiniluoto, 1993), where the purpose modulates the rest of the investigation process. The communication sciences work with some designs that are geared towards specific communication aims. These aims are deliberately chosen to expand the human communicative potential. Thus, communication sciences, understood as applied sciences, research the human ability to solve specific communication problems (Arrojo, 2012). By doing so, they have to consider the “external” communicative phenomenon (legal, economic, etc.).

According to Herbert Simon, when we talk about “the sciences of the artificial”, knowledge entails action (Simon, 1996a). As they are applied sciences of design, communication sciences help to solve present and future problems. So, as applied sciences, they combine prediction with prescription (Simon, 1990; Gonzalez, 1998). To that purpose, they study what solutions have been appropriate among all who have been used by the professionals. After that, they seek to create scientific guidelines for action (Arrojo, 2012). First they deal with “internal” aspect to the communicative phenomena and, then, they take into account the “external” factors that influence and modulate the possibility and extent of the communicative phenomena.

4. Epistemological and Methodological Criteria of Communication as a Science

For the epistemological and methodological criteria of communication as sciences, we have to consider two main aspects. First, communication has to be analyzed from the internal dimension of science, which is based—from the instrumental point of view—on the support given by technology. Second, we have to study communi-
cation from the external perspective, which is due to environmental factors related to the phenomena at stake. These aspects can be considered successively as these disciplines are sciences, applied sciences, and part of the group of the sciences of the artificial (specifically as sciences of design).

For the study of communication as a scientific activity, we must analyze the epistemological and methodological criteria through two pathways: internal and external, which deal with the components of the cognitive contents and the processes used. But again, it is worth pointing out that the “internal” criteria of communication finds different aims, mainly in the cognitive sphere. Insofar as communication sciences are applied sciences, they seek to solve practical problems in a particular area (Niiniluoto, 1993, 1995b). In order to achieve this task, which requires setting priorities, they require an instrumental technological component. Hence, communication gets it aim when it uses the right device to perform certain operational functions for the remote transmission of content (Gonzalez, 2008a: 170-171).

As communication sciences are applied sciences of design, they are not limited to the content of knowledge (explain and predict). In addition, the design plays a fundamental role in both cognitive content and the practical uses. Unlike any basic science, communication sciences as applied sciences seek practical guidance of the scientific knowledge (Niiniluoto, 1993: 6). But, besides that internal aspect of science, which requires the instrumental use of technology, there is an external component that modulates both cognitive content and the practical uses. In this respect, communication involves values such as: social, ethical, political, legislative, economic, etc. These values have a great impact on communication processes that depend on the available opportunities that technology and the current economic, legal, and social conditions offer (Arrojo, 2007).

Each of these two aspects (internal and external) affect the aims, processes, and results of communication sciences. It is worth pointing out three successive epistemological levels: a) the rationality of science as such, which is shared by the various scientific fields; b) the rationality of a particular discipline, which corresponds to the specific scientific activity; and c) the rationality of the agent that makes decisions (Gonzalez, 2003). In this epistemological analysis, Wenceslao J. Gonzalez focuses on the case of another science of design—economics—highlighting the human cognitive ability and the role of agents with their decision-making.

On this basis, we can distinguish three different levels of epistemological rationality in the sciences of the artificial. i) The rationality given by the fact that it is a kind of science, which differentiates its research from other human activities such as technology. ii) The rationality that is characteristic of the specific discipline, which in this case affects the communication designs, communicative processes, and results. iii) The rationality of the actors involved in the field of these sciences, which includes their criteria when making decisions (Gonzalez, 2008a: 172). Thus, there may be different uses of rationality that influence the achievement of the set of goals considered (Gonzalez, 2003: 75-76).

These three epistemological levels can be found in the communication sciences as applied sciences of design. The first feature is the common rationality of being a science, which varies according to the different scientific disciplines. The second aspect can be seen on the rationality of communication as such, i.e., a scientific activity that is connected with other disciplines, both in the social sphere as well as the artificial realm. The third factor of rationality is associated with the decisions of the agents. This feature includes the communicative rationality of the agents within their companies.

Regarding rationality in the communicative sciences, we can think of Herbert Simon’s approach to rationality as bounded. Without addressing specifically the communication sciences, and from a conception of human rationality of the agents, he wanted to emphasize that agents have a bounded rationality. “1. In a broad sense, rationality denotes a style of behavior (A) that is appropriate to the achievement of given goals, (B) within the limits imposed by given conditions and constrains. 2. In particular contexts, (A) and (B) of the definition may receive more exact specification” (Simon, 1982 [1964]: 405; see also Simon, 1972: 161). Within this framework, bounded rationality is not a maximizing rationality in the sense of being able to get the best possible. Moreover, it is empirically testable. Thus, it is worth pointing out the observation of behavior of the communicative agents in the development of their own behavior. This behavior can be tested empirically, rather than simply accept a previous theory, formulated in previous considerations.

4.1. The Epistemological Approach: Instrumental Rationality and Evaluative Rationality

Simon insists on the empirical approach of the rationality, because he looks at rationality with a descriptive point of view: how agents make decisions, rather than follow the prescriptive look: how agents should chose.
There are other authors, such as Nicholas Rescher or Reinhard Selten, who offer features that complete the analysis of human rationality and include more real and actual elements to it. Hence, they lean more towards the prescriptive view. Rescher approaches it from a philosophical perspective and Selten from an economic viewpoint.

Rescher distinguishes three types of rationality based on the object of rational deliberation. 1) Cognitive rationality, which is anything that may be believed or accepted both in the formal and empirical knowledge. 2) Practical rationality, which makes decisions about the actions to take. 3) Evaluative rationality that dictates what is to be preferred or valued (Rescher, 1988: 3). This set of types of rationality affects the communication as human phenomenon, where we can see cognitive, practical and evaluative components.

On the role of the rationality of the agents, insofar as there is choice and decision making, we should point out three different dimensions of rationality: i) the epistemic or cognitive, where rationality is an attribute of content accepted by the agent; ii) the practical, which is being able to achieve the optimization of their actions within their situational constraints; and iii) rational evaluation, where the agent has to make decisions about appropriate uses. This set of possibilities directly concerns to the application of communication sciences: the agents of the professional firms are the ones that have to make decisions about what to do in each case.

Simon’s approach takes into account the cognitive rationality and practical rationality. But rational evaluation does not appear as such in his work, since Simon does not assume a rationality of ends but only a rationality of means (Gonzalez, 2003: 71). Meanwhile, rational evaluation does appear in Rescher: “Rationality hinges not on what we do want, but on what we ought to want—on what ends we are well advised to have in the actually prevailing circumstances” (Rescher, 1988: 112). Consequently, “rational choice is a matter of opting not for what is preferred, but for what is preferable” (Rescher, 1988: 112).

Following Rescher’s general approach to rationality, its position can be used to focus the rationality of science. This task can also be done in three different levels, which correspond to three successive philosophical realms: epistemology and methodology of science, when the emphasis is on the cognitive component and, consequently, on the processes; ontology of science, when the activity itself of researching is highlighted; and ethics of science and axiology of research, when the determining factor are the ends—modulated by values, which includes ethical values.

On the other hand, if the attention is placed on Simon’s perspective, his position focuses exclusively on the rationality of means. “We see that reason is wholly instrumental. It cannot tell us where to go; at best it can tell us how to get there. It is a gun for hire that can be employed in the service of whatever goals we have, good or bad” (Simon, 1983: 7-8). Therefore, he thinks the rationality should not evaluate the ends or aims because he see rationality as merely instrumental. It doesn’t seem to be aware of the rationality of ends (Simon, 2003: 60), which leads us to choose the preferable rather than merely selecting the preferred.

Although Selten is influenced by Simon, in this respect he is most accurate than him. Even when Selten accepts the instrumental rationality, he also supports the presence of an evaluative rationality. Therefore, unlike Simon, Selten argues that we can evaluate the ends and not merely the means. Basically, Selten assumes that rational choice is dictated not by what is preferred, but what it is preferable. He, therefore, accepts the rationality of means and the rationality of ends are two aspects of the economic rationality (Selten, 1990: 656; see also Selten, 1998, 2001).

It seems to me that it is worth using these approaches to analyze the field of communication sciences in the proposed sense: as applied sciences of design. This is because in communication there is a rationality of ends (or evaluative rationality)—we have to select what we really want to communicate—and, to get to the goal, there is a rationality of means (or instrumental) in the selection of the appropriate means for its intended end (Rescher, 1988). This affects on how we create the applied science, but also to the application of science itself.

As a matter of fact, the agents specialized in communicative production contribute to design and to shape the final product. This result is the product of the combination of all the ideas of the people involved in its preparation. This idea requires prediction and prescription. It allows associating the act of communication to a prescription. Within the prescription can be “planning” or, what is the same, calculation and distribution of space and time in communication. The reason is clear: in order to achieve the expected results, the prescription need to follow some guidelines through different processes (Gonzalez, 1998). Any prescription is based on a prediction of the future. Thus, the prescription is based on a statement about what could possibly happen (in a short, me-

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This has direct consequences for television programming, which is the application of the Science. TV professionals need to know how to choose the preferable, under a set of values, rather than merely select what is preferred, with the consequent stagnation.
medium, or long term). Then the patterns of prescription can be translated into planning, which includes the direction of the action in time and space (Gonzalez, 1996).

Let me stress that it is important to point out that the communication does not only stay in the rationality of means or instrumental, since it also involves an evaluative rationality or rationality related to ends. Commonly, any communicative phenomena are nowadays based on the decisions made on the communicative production. This is done under professional standards, even when the decisions may be conditioned to a greater or lesser degree by issues unrelated to the communicative content (cultural, social and economic conditions, policies, etc.). In that case, they will form an actual result from many possible outcomes (Rescher, 1999: 79, 80, 82, 172).

So, we can see a rationality of means or instrumental—where the best means are used to achieve the intended end—and a rationality of ends or evaluative, leading to choose the appropriate purposes for the activity developed (Gonzalez, 2003: 71). In other words, the communication process—not just aims—involves an evaluative rationality, which selects a preferred aim among many other possible (Rescher, 1999). In addition, to reach the desired end, the phases of the communicative process respond to a particular form of communication, which requires knowing how to use the available technological resources. This is a rationality of means or instrumental rationality, which is used for the selection of appropriate means for its intended end (Rescher, 1988).

4.2. The Methodological Approach: The Problem of Methodological Universalism in the Face of Complexity

As noted above, we can distinguish three main levels of scientific research: i) science in general (especially the empirical disciplines); ii) a group of sciences, such as natural sciences, social sciences and the sciences of the artificial; and iii) the specific sciences, such as biology, economics, computer science or communication sciences. There is a tendency to think of the possible existence of a methodological universalism in science, which would be valid for all sciences. This stream of thought tries to find a unit in science from the research processes. These levels can take advantage of the various options of a methodological universalism in scientific research.

Among the three different levels of scientific research—the general field, on group, and the specific one—the proposed methodological universalism are sometimes explicit (e.g., in the ideal of a unified science of logical positivism), while, in other cases, the approach is rather implicit (e.g., in the case of some evolutive perspectives where their point of view may sometimes have expanded beyond the initial expectations). Both orientations—explicit and implicit—have serious problems from the methodological point of view (Gonzalez, 2012b).

Moreover, these varieties of methodological universalism could lead to a methodological imperialism. They can do it depending on the extent of the scope of their subject area (its “natural” region) and because of its extension to other thematic areas (occupying other territories). The methodological imperialism could be regarded as the general methodology of science. This could be the case, for example, of the development of a methodological proposal based on logical reasons. This means assuming the idea of the universal validity of logic for developing science. But it is also possible to think of a methodological naturalist type of imperialism, a position based on, for example, evolutionary Darwinian approaches (Gonzalez, 2008a).

In the methodological universalism we could be facing the case of instrumental rationality, which is based on the belief of a certain attributes and the recognition of their correctness (Bicchieri, 1992). A clear example is the instrumental rationality proposed by Simon (1983: 7-8), where what matters is the success in the use of means. Such an approach ignores the evaluative rationality: first, the ends are given or assumed as given—they are not evaluated as such--; and, second, the agent is always instrumentally rational. That is to say, he or she must make practical decisions about means, depending on the ends already given.

The ideal of a unified science—logical positivism—can be seen as a methodological universalism rooted in logical reasons, where physics are presented as a key science in the field of empirical sciences (Carnap, 1932, 1995). Another version of an alleged methodological universalism is the acceptance of the “scientific method” as such, i.e., a method that serves for all sciences of empirical type. But any kind of methodological universalism does not resist an historical review. In addition, it cannot be accepted a universal method to deal with all the possible object of scientific research.

In addition, the idea of a methodological imperialism is also problematic. To begin with, all possible methodological imperialism must necessarily be temporary, since, at any time, another conception of the method could be developed to replace the dominant methodological perspective (Gonzalez, 2012b: 161). Furthermore,
the continuity of the methodological principles seems almost impossible due to the critical attitude of science, which involves a constant review of processes in order to achieve new aims (Niiniluoto, 1984). However, the main obstacle of methodological universalism is the existence of the complexity. The communication sciences viewed as applied sciences of design are intersected by two different types of complexity: the one that looks after its structural component and the one that looks after the dynamic dimension.

Both the structural complexity and dynamic complexity have their own epistemological and ontological elements (Gonzalez, 2012c). This complexity—structural and dynamic, epistemological and methodological—affects the objects, problems and methods of some sciences. In addition, complexity is relevant for the aims, processes, and results of applied sciences such as communication sciences. Thus, depending on the objects and problems to be researched, applied sciences use a variety of methods. Consequently, there is not one single research method to be used all the time in communication sciences. That is the ground for new epistemological and methodological criteria to be used in the analysis of communication sciences. This feature of complexity goes in line with another relevant trait: the scientific methods used progressively in many disciplines tend to go towards a greater multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary.

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A Philosophical Appraisal of the Concept of Common Origin and the Question of Racism

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Abstract

The quest for a definite answer to some certain ageless philosophical questions such as: What is man? What is his origin? What is his destiny? How is he like other beings in the universe, and how does he differ from them? These have up-till date; remain fundamental questions, which are begging for answers in all human societies. In spite of several attempts from the religious, scientific, cultural and sociological theories to explain the issue of common origin, the problem of racism with all its contradictions persists. This paper is to critically evaluate on one hand, the concept of common human origin, using the various theories to analyse the basis for its justification; on the other hand, examine the issues relating to racism, with the aim of arguing that the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of the universe must start from our understanding of human person and his existence. The philosophical method of conceptual clarification and critical analysis are employed to establish the view that man is the key to the understanding of the whole of reality. Thus, whatever disrespect human dignity regardless of colour, race or sex is to be absolutely rejected.

Keywords
Human, Universe, Racism, Existence, Origin

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine the concept of common origin of human persons in relation to the question of racism in the society. The paper attempts to clarify the two dominant theories that explain common origin which are monogenesis and polygenesis. Just as the former posits a common descent for all human races, the latter asserts that different human races descended from different ancestral roots. Following this, the paper proceeds to analyze the ideology of racism which was invented on the belief that human races were not just different from one another, but that some were superior to others.
However, attempt is made to examine the views of some philosophers, who in the past time postulated about racial differences. Their argument seems to lack moral respect for mankind and deny the rule of equality from the universal point of view. To this end, the paper concludes that since rationality is central to all mankind, the question of racism then becomes untenable.

2. The Concept of Common Origin

There are two dominant theories that explain the concept of common origin; these are monogenesis and polygenesis. Monogenesis is the theory of human origin which posits a common descent for all human races. It adhered, on the one hand, to the biblical creation story in asserting that all humans descended from a common ancestor, perhaps Adam and this belief in all human descendants of Adam is central to traditional Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Stephens, 2000). On the other hand, it considers human evolution from a single ape, following Darwin who convinced the scientific community, that humans had a single ancestral origin (Eloise, 1994). This common origin to Darwin is essential for evolutionary theory and thus known as the single-origin hypothesis.

The traditional Christian preference for monogenism is established on two grounds. For some Christians, the defense of the thesis is based directly on certain passages of the scripture. In the Catholic tradition, however, much more emphasis has been placed on monogenism as the only view consistent with the doctrine of Original Sin (Kenneth, 2011). There are passages in both the Old and the New Testaments that suggest a monogenetic origin for the human race. The story of Genesis 2 - 4 depicts the record of the first two human beings. In the same view, Paul’s sermon to the Athenians (Acts 17: 26) further establish monogenetic claim of common origin; “from one man”, “one blood” and “one stock”. However, Catholic theology, in its traditional support of monogenism maintains a consistent view with the doctrine of Original Sin.

Pope Pius XII in his encyclical Humani Generis wrote:

For the Christian faithful cannot maintain the thesis which holds that either after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all, or that “Adam” signifies a number of first parents. Now it is in no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the magisterium of the church proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own (Kenneth, 2011).

The above reveals the account of the origin of human race and explains the state of Original Sin which afflicts each human being from his first moment of existence. However, natural science speak more precisely on genetics which leads to the conclusion that although man probably came into being at “one place”, the size of that place is only probably a relatively small place and could be as large as the entire old world, the population size might be relatively small but surely not a single couple (Kenneth, 2011). It seems, therefore, unlikely on the basis of scientific evidence that there was a single first couple which emerged alone from a biologically prehuman population to become the ancestors of all human beings. Neo-Darwinism also lends support in favor of polygenism.

However, polygenesis is a theory of human origins positing that the human race are of different lineages, in other words different races of human beings had evolved from different apes. Polygenists reject the argument that human races must belong to a single species because they can interbreed (Jackson & Weidman, 2005). Polygenism describes all alternative explanations for the origin of humankind that involved more than two individual “first people”. Following this, there are three main argument posed against the biblical account of common origin, these include; Pre-Adamism, Co-Adamism and incompleteness of the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 (Livingstone, 1992).

Pre-Adamism claims that there were already races of man living before the creation of Adam. This position was strongly rejected in Christian terms and considered heretical. Co-Adamism argues that there was more than one Adam or small groups of men, created at the same time in different places across the earth, and therefore that the different races were separately created. The Garden of Eden to them is believed to be more than one. The contention of this polygenist on the Table of Nations is that many of the races on earth, such as Negros and Asians were not featured in Genesis 10 and that the author’s knowledge was limited to their own region, hence, to them the Bible does not concern the whole of earth’s population. Given the above, polygenesis was criticized in the 20th century Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius XII, on the grounds that it is incompatible with the
doctrine of Original Sin as quoted in the above passage.

By way of summary, the theories of monogenesis and polygenesis discussed above has made scholars to view these two concept as a mixture of biblical and scientific thought in ways that made scriptural exegesis a scientific activity. Also, it has device a two modes of knowing, one based on the data of revelation favoring monogenesis and the other on the data of observation favoring a polygenetic account of human origin.

3. Racism

A precise definition of racism is a bit controversial because there is a little scholarly agreement about the meaning of the concept race. Some scholars argue that the term is applied differentially, with a focus on such prejudices by whites and defining mere observations of racial differences as racism. However, racism is usually defined as views, practices and actions reflecting the belief that humanity is divided into distinct biological groups called races and that members of a certain race share certain attributes which make that group as a whole less desirable, inferior or superior (Newman, 2012).

Similarly, racism is seen as the theory or idea that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect or culture and combined with it, the notion that some races are inherently superior to others (Benton, 1980). In this regard, racism has to do with unfair treatment of people and violence against people that belong to a different race other than your own; also it is the belief that different race of people have different character and abilities and that the qualities of your own race are the best (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995).

Tracing the beginning of racism, according to Moore, it is not mere coincidence that racism was invented during the time that tens of thousands of Africans were being captured, enslaved, and transported in chains to the Americas to work as field’s hands and manual workers for European owners. It is interesting and important to note that the institution of chattel slavery, in which human beings were considered as mere property, was put into place before scientific racism was invented (Moore, 2008). The point here is that racism is a recent invention, with its assertions about inherent human inequality, whereas slavery was a very old institution in the Mediterranean region of the old world. Following Moore’s view, therefore, blackness in ancient times was not equated with the status of slaves, citing the example of Rome where prominent black men, like Emperor Septimius Severus, Consul Lusius Quietus, and a Roman general who became Saint Maurice, the patron saint of medieval chivalry. The only invisible, inherent differences among men which led some to be kings and others to be slaves, according to Plato is the only supposed inequalities among men, which Author Stephen Chorover called “the most frightening document in European history” (Moore, 2008).

Following the above, there is the need to examine the views of some early philosophers, who have contributed in one way or the other to the issue related to racism in the society. This would enable us to secure a good base for a thorough appraisal.

4. Arguments on Racism and the Concept of Common Origin

Having defined racism and the concept of common origin, attempt is made here to critically examine some arguments that form the basis for racism. Voltaire in his 1734 book Traite de metaphysique wrote that “Whites… Negros… the yellow races are not descended from the same man”. In his later work, he further found biblical monogenism laughable as he expressed:

It is a serious question among them whether the Africans are descended from monkeys or whether the monkeys come from them. Our wise men have said that man was created in the image of God. Now here is a lovely image of the Define Maker: a flat and black nose with little or hardly any intelligence. A time will doubtless come when these animals will know how to cultivate the land well, beautify their houses and gardens, and know the paths of the stars: one needs time for everything (Voltaire, 1769).

Further to the above view, Voltaire, while comparing Caucasians to Negro claimed that they are of different species:

The Negro race is a species of men different from ours as the breed of spaniels is from that of greyhounds. The mucous membrane, or network, which nature has spread between the muscles and the skin, is white in us and black or copper-colored in them (Voltaire, 1733).
The argument of Voltaire against the black race is quite derogatory to humanity. His idea on polygenesis as a theory of human origin led to his hasty conclusion about the black race, which is highly inhuman.

David Hume, in the same vein exhibited his contempt and aversion for the black race. He placed his argument on the premise that a person’s intellectual ability or otherwise is a function of his or her nativity or racial descent. Hume held that the African is incapable of logical thinking and is therefore intellectually unproductive among other inadequacies. Hume believes strongly in the idea that Europe is the model for humanity, culture and history itself. It is this notion of his that led him to conclude that:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized notion of that complexion; or even any individual eminent in action or speculation (Guido et al., 2003).

From the above, it is clear that Hume attaches great importance to complexion and accords it a prominent role in the determination of a person’s rationality or irrationality. It may not be a mistake to conclude that Hume is a racist and racial prejudice has greatly influenced his philosophical insight.

Moreover, Immanuel Kant in his early work, shares the same thought with Hume and ascribed rationality to skin color (white and black) he avers:

“This fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid” (Popkin, 1999).

Kant here was not making an empirical hypothesis as Hume had, but was offering a “transcendental” basis for the distinction between whites and blacks. And in so doing Kant established a racial dichotomy between the whites and other people of different skin color. He went further to divide the human race into four groups. First race Northern Europe, second race-copper red (America), third race Black (Senegambia), fourth race, Olive yellow-Indians. To this end, Kant falls into the same racial prejudice and narrow-mindedness which characterized Hume’s writing and exposes their lack of genuine philosophical attitude of open-minded and objective way of seeing things beyond self.

Hegel in contradiction to Aristotle stated that of all races; only the Caucasian race (white Europeans and the descendants) have this inherent capability for rationality. According to Hegel the African, Indians and other races lacked the capability for rationality. Thus, they cannot be classified as human; at best they are to be treated as sub-humans.

The summary of the views of these philosophers whose work though might have brought enlightenment to understanding nature, yet is racially sentimental to describe some set of people as incapable of reasoning, primitive, just because they are of different race or origin. Thus, there is no moral, rational and logical justification for such derogatory conclusion or thinking. If for instance, one may ask; to what extent can this claim be true since the race which Hegel excludes from the class of rational beings has been part of the great civilization and center of learning since time immemorial, looking at example of a place like Egypt. By implication, Hume appeared to have committed fallacy of ignorance.

5. Philosophical Appraisal

Philosophical discussions on the concept of race are divided into three schools of thought, following the disagreement on the possible ontological status of different conception of race. According to Mallon, there are three metaphysical camps, these are: racial skepticism, racial constructivism, and racial population naturalism (Mallon, 2006), these are in conjunction with two other normative camps (eliminative and conservationism). Racial skepticism holds that because racial naturalism is false, races of any type do not exist. Thus they contend that the term race cannot refer to anything in this world since biological races have been proven not to exist. Prominent in this school of thought are Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zach who adopt normative racial eliminativism, which recommends discarding the concept of race entirely because of its historical genealogy and logical incoherence.

Racial constructivism refers to the argument that, even if biological race is false, races have come into existence and continue to exist through “human culture and human decisions”. Race constructivists accept the skeptics’ dismissal of biological race but argue that the term still meaningfully refers to the widespread grouping of individuals into certain categories by society, indeed often by the very members of such racial ascriptions. The third school of thought regarding the ontology of race is racial population naturalism. This camp suggest that, although racial naturalism falsely attributed cultural, mental, and physical characters to discrete racial groups, it
is possible that genetically significant biological groupings could exist that would merit the term races. Importantly, these biological racial groupings would not be essentialist or discrete: there is no set of genetic or other biological traits that all and only all members of a racial group share that would then provide a natural biological boundary between racial groups. Thus, these thinkers confirm the strong scientific consensus that discrete, essentialist races do not exist.

Given the above, the views of each school of thought have its own merits and demerits, and by implication, there is none of them that are absolutely error free. It is against this background that the question of morality becomes relevant in line with the issue of racism as a subject of discussion. Lawrence Blum in addressing the moral status of the concept of race and the problem of racism argues that “racism” be restricted to two referents: inferiorization or the denigration of a group due to its putative biological inferiority; and antipathy, or the “bigotry, hostility and hatred” towards another group defined by its putatively inherited physical traits (Blum, 2002).

The point here is that, it should be noted that racism in the light of morality deserves condemnation; this is because it violates moral norms of respect, equality and dignity and also it is historically connected to extreme and overt forms of racial oppression.

Still on the moral status of racism, Angelo Corlett observes that most people agree that racism is a bad thing; however, it is important to understand why racism is morally wrong. A consequentialist would argue that racism is wrong because it brings a balance of economic, social, political and moral evil over good in the world. A deontologist, on the other hand, would argue that racism is to be rejected in that it does not treat humans as ends in themselves, but rather as mere means to the end. Thus, racism disrespects the dignity of humans qua humans, regardless of their respective ethnicities (Corlett, 1998).

The historical connection between racism and extreme oppression from time immemorial has made some scholars to argue against using the term race to distinguish certain group of people from the other. Blum is one of those who advocates using the term “racialized group” instead of the term “race” to denote those socially constructed identities whose supposedly inherited common physical fruits are used to impose social, political and economic costs. To Blum, “racialized group” creates distance from the biological conception of race and it admits other individual according to their racialized identities.

Anthony Appiah in his own metaphysical racial skepticism appear to maintain normative position of eliminativisms, he is “against races” but for “racial identities” (Appiah, 1996). He maintained that there is a wide social consensus that race exists; individuals are ascribed to races regardless of their individual choices or desires. This being the case, racial identity remains far more salient and costly than ethnic identity, thus mobilization along racial lines is justifiable, in order to combat racism. But even at this point, Appiah still fears that racial identification may constrain individual autonomy by requiring members of racial group to behave according to certain cultural norms or “scripts”. Hence, he concludes, “racial identity can be the basis of resistance to racism; but even as we struggle against racism… let us not let our racial identities subject us to new tyrannies”.

The metaphysical view presented by Appiah in this context is observed by some critics that Appiah remains an eliminativist rather than a racial constructivist. He prefer to be free of all residual constraints entailed by socially constructed races, he is therefore not a radical critique of race. The point to note here is that the position maintained by Appiah is to buttress further the idea that race or racism should better be perceived from the sense of being a mark of identities which should not constrain individual autonomy. To this end, the extent to which this can be realized without constrain is the concern of his critique.

On this note, the arguments of the racialist philosophers as pointed out earlier appears untenable, it lack moral respect for mankind and denies the rule of equality and as well dehumanize human race from the universal point of view. To this end, central at the heart of humanism are two key ideas. First, humanists hold that human beings, while an inherent part of nature and subject to its laws, nevertheless have an exceptional status in nature because of the unique ability arising out of human rationality and sociability to overcome the constraints placed upon them by nature. Second, humanists believe in the unity of humankind, holding that all humans possess something in common, a something that is often described as a common “human nature”.

Following these two key ideas, the concept of common origin invariably can be established on the premise of human rationality and common human nature. Thus, the question of superiority or inferiority which racism brought to the fore cannot hold, so far beyond all reasonable doubt it has been universally established that common to all men, in respective of the skin color is found rationality and common human nature as manifests in flesh and blood. The point here is that, the singular fact that all human persons are rational is enough a logical reason to establish the claim that all men have common features. What differentiate them is not more of internal
(nature), rather it tends towards other factors that are external.

6. Conclusion

This paper sets out to clarify basic concept of common origin. In doing this, an effort was made to define the two dominant theories which are monogenesis and polygenesis. The question of racism which is central to this paper was discussed and the views of philosophers who could be termed as racist was analyzed. The three main schools of thought in philosophy of race were brought to the fore with a critical view from the morality of the whole issue. The conclusion hinged on the fact that most arguments raised in favor of racism, lack moral respect for mankind and negate the common feature possess by mankind which is rationality.

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The Libyan Revolution: Philosophical Interpretations

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Abstract
Libya, one of the notable African countries was engulfed in political crisis in February 2011. The protests were targeted towards the draconian rule of one of Africa’s longest reigning despots, Muammar Gaddafi who ruled Libya for forty two years without showing any sign of relinquishing power until the unavoidable bloody uprisings eventually claimed his life. This paper chronicles the Libyan revolution and X-rays its philosophical importance. It is of the strong view that the greatest political challenge facing many African countries today (including Libya) is the inability of its political leaders to see politics as an opportunity to render selfless service to the masses through political governance. This singularly accounts for the reason behind so many unfortunate dictatorial tendencies in governance in some of these African countries. The issue of sit-tightism in office as aptly exemplified by Gaddafi is indeed a worrisome development not only to Libya but also to some other African countries that share the same unfortunate and better forgotten political experience with her. The paper strongly believes that the Libyan revolution should indeed serve as a serious warning signal to other African leaders who share Gaddafi’s retrogressive leadership philosophy of holding tenaciously to power to the detriment of their countries and their helpless citizens whom they hold in brazen perpetual political captivity.

Keywords
Revolution, Philosophical, Interpretations, Libya, Crisis

1. Introduction
The 2011 Libyan Civil War which is popularly referred to as the Libyan revolution was an armed struggle and conflict in the North African state of Libyan which was fought between forces loyal to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and those that sought to oust his government. The war was preceded by orchestrated protests in Benghazi.
which began on 15 February 2011, which led to clashes with security forces that fired on the crowd that gathered in the city.

The protests later escalated into a full-blown rebellion that spread across the entire length and breadth of the country, with the forces opposing Gaddafi establishing an organized front, an interim governing body known as the National Transitional Council (NTC). On 16 September 2011, the National Transitional Council was recognized by the United Nations as the sole legal representative of the Libyan nation, thus replacing the Gaddafi government. This singular action by the United Nations sent a clear message to Gaddafi and his cohorts that their days in power were actually numbered and that they were indeed living on borrowed times.

The United Nations Security Council passed an initial resolution precisely on 26 February, 2011 freezing the assets of Gaddafi and his inner circles, restricted their movement and also referred the matter to the International Criminal Court at the Hague for investigation. These developments seemed to have taken Gaddafi and his allies by surprise, little wonder, they regrouped and in early March, his forces rallied, pushed eastwards and re-took several coastal cities before finally attacking Benghazi. In furtherance of its ruthlessness against Gaddafi and his allies, the United Nations further resolved and authorized member states to establish and strictly enforce a no-fly zone over Libya. In response to this onslaught, the Gaddafi government announced a ceasefire which unfortunately, it failed to uphold. In August, rebel forces engaged forces loyal to Gaddafi in a fierce coastal offensive and recaptured most of the territories they had lost earlier and eventually captured Tripoli, the capital City of Libya. The revolution eventually came to a climax on 20 October 2011 when Gaddafi was captured and killed in Sirte while he was trying to escape from the forces of the National Transitional Council (NTC).

2. A Brief Excursion into the World of Philosophy

Philosophy from time immemorial has been a very curious discipline. It is indeed a puzzling enterprise both to the lettered and the unlettered. The question that readily comes to mind then is what is philosophy? According to the Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy (Mautner, 2000: 422-423) the term philosophy is used in a variety of senses. Philosophy as an intellectual activity can be variously defined, depending on whether the emphasis is placed on its method, its subject matter or its purpose.

Olusegun Oladipo, a notable Nigerian philosophy scholar in his incisive and scholarly essay titled “On philosophy” elaborates on the primary purpose and uncommon importance of philosophy. According to him, “The primary purpose of this essay is to provide an insight into the nature of philosophy not only as an academic discipline but more importantly as an aspect of the general human (intellectual) endeavour to acquire self-knowledge that is knowledge of the human person in relation to the environment in which hr activities take place. The primary reason for doing this in this context is to underscore the importance of philosophy as a means of stimulating people to think about the basic problems of existence both in their universal and particularistic manifestation. Philosophy, it is emphasized is nothing unless it permits the kind of self-examination that enable persons-as individuals and as social collectives to look into themselves and affect their environments in positive ways (Oladipo, 2007: 13).

Onigbinde (2006: 1) puts the issue of the definition in another perspective. According to him, the word philosophy is not easy to define, even though it belongs to everyday language. Yet, if we are going to understand what someone means by it, we do not require a definition. Nevertheless, even though the term “philosophy” is one with which we already have some familiarity, it is not a simple non-controversial matter. This may tend to startle the reader but some explanations would clear the fog of confusion that may be created by the non-precision nature of our subject-matter.

Speaking further on the role of philosophy in human affairs, Onigbinde (2009: 1) opined that most people probably have never bothered to know how philosophy can and does touch their lives. Some simple examples may help to show some connections between philosophy and human life. When someone in anger, blames the world for his misfortunes, he states unconsciously, basic belief. When someone declares his love of life, in some joyous moments, he too expresses a view of the world in general. Of course, statements like these need not to be final as they might later be modified or totally abandoned.

In his own analysis, Harrison-Barbet (1990: 1) asserted that: The question “what is philosophy?” unlike the apparently similar questions “what is history” and “what is science?” does not admit of a straight forward answer. Indeed it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say, paradoxically, that the question is itself philosophical one in so far as different philosophers tend to have different conceptions as to the nature of their cho-
sen discipline.

Philosophy comes from two Greek words—philos and Sophia which literally means love of wisdom. Philosophy is a study that seeks to understand the mysteries of existence and reality. It tries to discover the exact nature of truth and knowledge and to find what is of basic value and importance in life. It equally examines the relationship between humanity and nature as well as that between the individual and the society.

The term philosophy cannot be defined precisely because it is so complex as well as controversial. Different philosophers have different views of the nature, methods and range of philosophy. Philosophy has enormous influence on the daily lives of people. Daily decisions taken by human beings involve Philosophical decisions which help to shape and reshape human destiny.

3. Libya: A Historical Sketch

The history of Libya includes the history of its rich mix of ethnic groups added to the indigenous Berber tribes. Berbers, the bulk of Libya’s population, have been present through the entire history of the country. For most of its history, Libya has been subjected to varying degrees of foreign control, from Europe, Asia and Africa. The modern history of independent Libya began in 1951 (cf: Wikipedia Encyclopedia available at http://www.wikipedia.com/nigeria).

Before attaining independent status in 1951, Libya was under the control of other nations including the Roman, Spanish, Italian, French and British Empires. On 21 November 1949, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution stating that Libya should become independent before 1 January 1952. On 24 December 1951, Libya declared its independence with representatives of the three major regions that make up the country namely: Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan declaring a Union which culminated in the country being called the United Kingdom of Libya. At its inception, the new country had a Federal Government with the three sates of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan being autonomous. The kingdom also had three capital cities namely: Tripoli, Benghazi and Bayda. When Libya achieved its independence in 1951, it became the first African country to achieve political independence through the United Nations. Libya was faced with some challenges when it achieved independent status. The country had no colleges and had just few college graduates. This meant in essence that the nation lacked requisite manpower. Equally disturbing was the fact that many of its citizens were not literate.

The nation of Libya had rich oil deposits and the first oil field was discovered in the country in 1959, while it began oil exportation in 1963. The federal system of government was changed in 1963 to reflect the name of the nation—kingdom of Libya—which depicted a monarchial set up.

The monarchical rule in Libya came to an end on 1 September 1969 when a group of young, overzealous and enthusiastic military officers led by Muammar Al-Gaddafi staged a coup d’etat against the ruling monarch then, King Idris I while he was away to Turkey for medical treatment. As a result of the success of the military intervention, the country was renamed the Libyan Arab republic.

4. Gaddafi and the Remaking of Libya

On 1 September 1969, Muammar Gaddafi staged a bloodless military coup in Libya at the age of 27, thus making him one of the youngest rulers in world history at that time. His coup toppled the monarchical rule of king Idris I who had been in the political saddle of Libya since its independence in 1951. After the bloodless coup, Gaddafi established the Libyan Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) headed by himself and abolished the monarchy and the old constitution and proclaimed the new Libyan Arab Republic with the Motto “Freedom, socialism and unity” (cf: www.Globalede.com available at http://globalede.msu.edu).

On coming to power in 1969, Gaddafi’s government under the Revolutionary Command Council initiated some reforms especially in the education, health and housing sectors for the entire citizenry. His reforms, though not entirely effective, had their effect on the lives of Libyan citizens. Public education in the country became free and primary education became compulsory for both boys and girls. Medical care was also available to the public at no cost at all but providing housing for all is a task Gaddafi’s government was not able to accomplish effectively before his eventual ouster from power (cf: Housing. www.Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at http://www.britannica.com).

Under Gaddafi’s long reign, Libyan economy improved tremendously and that literally translated to increased standard of living for many Libyan citizens. Under Gaddafi, per capita income in the country rose to
more than 11,000 US dollars, the fifth highest in Africa (cf: “African countries by GDP per capita > GDP per Capital (Most Recent) by Country”, Nation Master, available at http://www.nationmaster.com). The increase in prosperity which came about as a result of the increased oil revenue accruing to the country was unfortunately accompanied by a controversial foreign policy and also increased political reprehension and agitation at home. Official corruption perpetrated by Gaddafi and his cohorts who looted the wealth of Libya with brazen impunity helped in no small way to derail the growth of the Libyan economy.

One of the worst controversies that surrounded Libya as a country throughout the long reign of Gaddafi was the frequent change of the country’s name. Indeed Libya’s name was changed several times during Gaddafi’s tenure. At first, the name was the Libyan Arab Republic. This took place immediately Gaddafi took over the leadership of the country in a bloodless coup in 1969. In 1977, the country’s name was changed to Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Jamahiriya is a term coined by Gaddafi himself which is popularly translated as “state of the masses”. The country was yet again renamed in 1986 to the Great Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. During the 1980s and 1990s, Gaddafi openly supported international terrorism as well as independence movements especially in Africa. He massively supported the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa which eventually won independence for South Africa in 1994. He was equally a well-known supporter of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Polisario Front (PF). All these engagements led to Gaddafi being regarded in the International Community as an international terrorist whose views and actions were critically scrutinised with a lot of disdain and unbridled suspicion. It equally led to the country having unfriendly foreign relations with several countries of the world which came to a head with the United States bombing the country in 1986 which eventually led to a breakdown in diplomatic relationship between the two countries. The relationship between Libya and the United states was however normalized after the 9/11 attacks.

The whole world will not forget in a hurry the Lockerbie bombing incident of 21 December 1988 of a Pan Am Flight. A bomb exploded during the flight and the fiery explosion which followed destroyed several houses and resulted in the death of 11 residents as well as 259 occupants of the plane who were citizens of twenty-one different nations. It was later revealed that Colonel Gaddafi personally gave the order for the Lockerbie bombing, an accusation Libya and Gaddafi denied for many years. However, in 2003, events took a new twist when Libya accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing episode and agreed to pay compensation to victims’ families.

5. 2011 Civil War and Collapse of Gaddafi’s Government

Despite the existential fact that life was relatively and averagely good for the masses in Libya under Gaddafì’s long reign, one thing was lacking. It was freedom. Libyans were ruled with iron fists. They were gagged in so many aspects of life. It was obvious that Libyans lacked basic freedom. Freedom of association and that of expression were totally lacking in the country. Libyans lived in perpetual fear and Gaddafi’s government never tolerated opposition of any sort. This was indeed the lowest point for the Gaddafi government while it lasted.

However, the events in sister North African countries of Tunisia and Egypt which led to the ouster of the draconian rules of Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt through people-oriented and implemented revolutions in these two countries must have encouraged Libyans so much to take their destiny in their own hands against Gaddafi’s long and oppressive regime. The Libyan Civil War, one of the shortest ever fought in the continent of Africa was an armed conflict fought between forces loyal to Colonel Muammar Gaddafì, the self-styled saviour of the Libyan masses and those who sought to force him out of government. The war was preceded by protests in Benghazi which began 15 February 2011.

The protests escalated into a full blown rebellion that spread across the entire length and breadth of the country, with the rebels opposing Gaddafì’s regime establishing an interim governing body named the National Transitional Council (NTC) led by Mustafa Abdul-Jalil. On 16 September 2011, the National Transitional Council was recognized by the United Nations as the legal representative of Libya, thus replacing the Gaddafi government on a permanent basis. The Security Council, an important organ of the United Nations passed a resolution on 26 February 2011, barely 11 days after the commencement of the Libyan civil war freezing the assets of Gaddafì and his inner-circle and restricting their movement. However, in March, forces loyal to Gaddafì rallied, pushed east wards and re-possessed several coastal cities before finally attacking Benghazi. In August, the National Transitional Council forces engaged the pro-Gaddafì forces in a coastal offensive and re-took most of their lost territories and captured the Capital City of Tripoli which was seen by the International Com-
munity as a monumental achievement. Gaddafi managed to evade being captured when Tripoli fell and remained at large until 20 October 2011 when he was captured and killed in a fierce exchange of gun battle between troops of the National Transitional Council and forces loyal to his crumbling regime. Gaddafi fell to the fire power of the rebels while he was attempting to escape from Sirte. After the gruesome killing of Gaddafi, the National Transitional Council declared the liberation of Libya and also announced the official end of the Libyan Civil war on 23 October 2011.

6. The Libyan Revolution: Its Philosophical Interpretations

Philosophy remains a very germane discipline that has continued to remain very relevant over the centuries in human affairs. Philosophy therefore has continued to play a leading role in fashioning human activities. More often than not, human actions and inactions are interpreted from the stand point of philosophy as rational and irrational decisions mainly help to shape the universe either positively or negatively. It is in the light of the foregoing that this section discusses the philosophical interpretations of the Libyan revolution. This is very important as people’s actions and even inactions affect not only themselves but the whole of humanity in general.

The Libyan revolution is one of the greatest revolutions that will be remembered in the history of the African continent for many years to come. The reasons for this assertion are not farfetched. First of all, Gaddafi was a well-known dictator who had an open disdain for opposition. He indeed spent a lot of time and huge Libyan resources monitoring his political opponents, making sure he handled them the way he deemed fit. Many of them he silenced for life while others he made to go through horrible, excruciating and horrendous tortures in order to weaken and silence them perpetually. Secondly, the living conditions in Libya were to a very large extent good and pleasurable by African standards hence by the mistaken calculation of Gaddafi and his cohorts, there was no need for the masses to take to the streets as they did. However, Gaddafi and his men got it all wrong. Gaddafi being clever by half gave Libyan citizens some measure of comfort but denied them freedom. When a man is denied his basic freedom, his humanity is indirectly called to question. This was what Gaddafi did to the Libyans for very many years. Libyans were not allowed the freedom to express themselves freely without being hounded like common criminals. Again, they were not allowed to form associations’ especially political parties which could have afforded them the opportunity of having an organized platform to oppose Gaddafi’s rule.

Freedom according to the Dictionary of Political Science (Chaturvedi, 2006: 123) is “the ability to think or acts one wishes, a capacity which can be associated with the individual, a social group or a nation”. For The new International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2004: 503), freedom means the exemption or liberation from slavery or imprisonment. It is also exemption from political restraint or autocratic control. Between 2009 and 2011, Libya was rated as the most-censored state in the whole of North Africa and the Middle East. Dissent was illegal under Law 75 of 1973 and in 1974, Gaddafi asserted that anyone guilty of founding a political party would be executed (cf: Report of the Working Group on the Universal periodic Review: Libyan Arab Jamahiriya).

For a whole nation to have remained under the bondage of one hopeless dictator for 42 years is to say the least absurd, unbelievable and almost unthinkable. Indeed Gaddafi succeeded in reducing the Libyan state to a family affair keeping the country under the tight and firm grip of himself and his family members and had an unopposed opportunity of helping himself with the resources of the Libyan nation. He ostensibly made himself and his family members very rich at the expense of the Libyan citizens. Indeed, the wealth accruing to Libya as a nation from oil could have made more meaningful and direct impact on Libyans had it been judiciously and prudently managed. Unfortunately the reverse was the case.

Gaddafi’s understanding of power and leadership is another disturbing issue. Gaddafi saw both concepts as being personal and should therefore be personalized hence he and his family could rule Libya for 42 years without ever thinking of the adverse effects such longevity in power could have on the social, economic and political pedestals of the country. For Nnoli (1986: 77) an adequate understanding of the concept of power is crucial for the comprehension of politics. In all sincerity, leadership should be a collective responsibility where people come in, play their part and give way so that other people can equally come in to make their own contributions too.

According to Ojukwu (2005: 18):

*One essential demand of leadership is to be like a waste-paper basket, a dustbin where all dirt and rubbish are heaped. Whoever is not ready to accept such treatment does not qualify to be a leader. A leader must...*
be prepared to have rubbish heaped on his head.

Perhaps what Ojukwu was referring to here was servant-leadership, a concept in leadership that Gaddafi and his cohorts were not ready to hear about let alone contemplate or even practice it. For Gaddafi, leadership was a personal issue.

7. Lessons for Other Sit-Tight Leaders

According to Nwala (2007: 74), “Each society contain within itself what it is and what it ought to be. The goals before it as well as the means for it to achieve these goals are immanent within the society”. Africa as a continent has not been very fortunate as far as political leadership is concerned. It is the view of most scholars on Africa and Africa-related issues that its leaders in the various countries that make up the continent are squarely responsible for the sorry state in which the continent have found itself. Okolo (1994: 5-6) dwelt extensively on this. According to him:

The point is that the rallying views of many African intellectuals and political leaders particularly in the late fifties and sixties were that the cause rested squarely on Africa’s former colonial masters and their continued overt and covert activities in the continent. However, there have been significant shifts in their views in recent years as several internal, social, political and economic combustions began to erupt in different African nations with coups, counter-coups, political assassinations, tribal wrangling, fratricidal wars, etc. One must not forget, too the calibre of such statesmen as Idi-Amin, Bokassa and Nguema and their record of leadership in Africa. It is increasingly the conviction of many today that the black man, rather, the African need not go beyond himself in search of the roots of his problems. The African condition is created by the African himself. He is his own enemy.

Perhaps one of the greatest problems that have plagued many African states since their independence till now is the inability of many African leaders both past and present to see politics and leadership as service. Indeed for many African rulers, politics is business and power is an opportunity for wealth acquisition. This accounts for the reason why many African politicians could go to any length to acquire power. They do so not necessarily to serve but to be served and to be liberated from the shackles of poverty that has afflicted them before they came to power. Once they grab power, it is used for personal aggrandizement and they can perpetuate all types of absurdities in order to retain it. They can change their countries constitutions with brazen impurity in order to go for third, fourth, fifth or even sixth tenures. They could come into power as military rulers through military coups and later transmute into civilian presidents.

In addition to Gaddafi who ruled his country Libya for 42 years, there are numerous other African leaders who have continued to perpetuate themselves in power even arbitrarily. Ben Ali of Tunisia ruled his country for 23 years before he was chased out of power this year, while Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt for 30 years before he was also dethroned this year. Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire’s longest ruling dictator ruled his country for 31 years. Current sitting African dictators include Mbasago of Equatorial Guinea who has been in power since 1979, Jose Santos of Angola, who has also been in power since 1979. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has been in power since 1980, while Paul Biya of Cameroon has been in power since 1982. The list is almost endless and the scenario is unfortunate for the continent of Africa.

Indeed, it is a very worrisome development in Africa. Many citizens of most African countries have virtually lost faith with the political and democratic processes in their countries. The reason for this is not far-fetched. According to Oguejiofor (2001: 35), “in a situation of incompetent, self-serving political leadership, corruption and embezzlement became so endemic that they have come to be regarded as normal”.

The question is: can African leaders, especially those ones who have continued to perpetuate themselves in power learn from the misfortune of Gaddafi? Will they understand from now onwards that leadership is a collective responsibility and not a one-man-show? In the words of Okeke (2001: 107): “Government is an institution of the state. It is an agency or machinery through which the will of the state is formulated, expressed and attained”. Indeed governance has become so problematic and polluted in Africa that people especially those of African descent have continued to devote much attention o it. According to Ekweke (2007: 13):

*It is only necessary that we discuss one of the issues that is sufficiently problematic in today’s Africa. This concerns the phenomenon of governing and the importance of he that is involved to be alive to the respon-
sibility of this privileged exercise: an exercise that is necessarily predicated on service.

Almost re-echoing the same view, Fayemi (2006: 63) lamented:

*It has almost becoming nauseating to recount Africa’s problems: political instability, ethnic conflicts, bloody wars, permanent economic depression injustice and ugly faces of social disorder pervades the continent.*

Perhaps the greatest lesson all sit-tight African leaders should learn from the misfortune of Gaddafi is that revolution is like a wild fire that can hardly be contained. They must realize that people are becoming increasingly aware of their rights and are ready to fight for these rights any time, any day. The clamour for democracy and good governance is becoming louder on daily basis in Africa and cannot be suppressed on the altar of dictatorship. It is the turn of Gaddafi today; it may yet be another person’s turn tomorrow.

8. Conclusion

It is certainly not out of place to state that Libya as a nation was under the bondage of Gaddafi and his cohorts for forty two years. Indeed it was forty two agonizing years for millions of Libyan citizens who were brutalized and traumatized while thousands were killed for daring to oppose the “almighty” Gaddafi the “political messiah” of Libya.

However, since it is a truism that there is time for everything, the political uprisings in North Africa particularly in Egypt and Tunisia gave a lot of hope to the Libyan rebels that they can also stand up and be counted. Indeed, they took the bull by the horn, stoop up and were indeed counted. With the tacit support of the International Community, they were able to fight Gaddafi and his allies to a standstill despite the stiff opposition they mounted. The defeat and eventual murder of Gaddafi is a pointer to the age-long myth that those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable.

Perhaps, if Gaddafi had agreed to step down as he was advised, he would not have ended tragically like he did. Perhaps there could have been some atom of respect for a man that earned himself the title of the longest ruling African head of state. There is a great burden placed on the shoulders of the National Transitional Council (NTC) who are currently overseeing Libyan affairs as they have a herculean and daunting responsibility to rebuild Libya, a country that its former leader, Muammar Gaddafi helped to build while he was in power and at the same helped to destroy as a result of his inordinate ambition to hang on to power perpetually. Only time will tell whether they will be able to accomplish this onerous task or not. They have the golden opportunity of putting right in Libya what has gone wrong for the past 42 years. It is indeed a daunting responsibility. They cannot afford to fail. The world is watching with keen interest.

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The Misconceived Search for the Meaning of “Speech” in Freedom of Speech

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Abstract
In this (very) short essay, I establish these points: All speech is symbolic; any conduct can be used to communicate a message (i.e., symbolically); government’s purpose in regulating, and not a speaker's intention to communicate, defines the realm of freedom of expression; and determining the value of speech has a denominator problem.

Keywords
Speech, Symbolic Speech, Low Value Speech, Governmental Purpose

1. Introduction
There have been and continue to be numerous law review articles and judicial opinions debating whether something is or is not “speech” within the meaning of freedom of speech. Benjamin and Wu debate whether computer code is “speech” in the relevant sense (Benjamin, 2013; Wu, 2013). Calvert analyzes whether tattoos and tattooing, “Likes” and “Liking” on Facebook, and begging are “speech” in the relevant sense (Calvert, 2013). Sixty-seven years ago the Supreme Court decided, over dissents, that movies were speech (Winters v. New York, 1948). And almost fifty years ago the court distinguished “speech” from “symbolic speech”, concluding that the latter was due less constitutional protection than the former (United States v. O’Brien, 1968).

These debates are misconceived. All speech is symbolic. That is, there is no category of non-symbolic speech. Conversely, any token of conduct can be employed to symbolize an idea, a word, a syllable, or a letter. Any conduct can constitute a communicative code. Making marks and uttering sounds are common forms of employing symbols to communicate. But smoke signals, semaphore flags, facial expressions, and an almost infinite variety of other conduct can be employed as communicative symbols. Shooting the mailman may be an effective way of conveying the thought that one is fed up with the mail service. Covering oneself with chocolate may be an effective way of spoofing performance art, and so on.
Because all speech is symbolic, and because any conduct can be used as a communicative symbol, asking whether computer code or tattoos are or are not speech is misconceived1.

What about speaker’s intent? Can we distinguish conduct that is speech from conduct that is not by reference to whether those engaged in the conduct intended thereby to send a message? In a word, no. The person who shoots the mailman does not raise a free speech issue—even a losing one—by claiming, sincerely, that he did so to protest the mail service. Similarly for someone who rehearses his lines in a play in his apartment in a loud voice that comes across as unintelligible and irksome noise to the other tenants. Conversely, even where there is no speaker, and thus no speaker’s intent, a free speech claim may rightly lie. If the pounding of waves on the rocks has left the marks “Throw the rascals out”, and government closes off the beach to prevent people from seeing those marks and taking their “message” to heart—perhaps they will think this is a message from God—then I would submit that the government is doing what freedom of speech forbids. It is likewise doing what freedom of speech forbids if it forbids a certain line of research—say, into racial differences in intelligence—because it fears the message that the findings might convey, even though the researchers are not intending to send any message by conducting the research2. And a fortiori, the same is true when there is a speaker, but the speaker has no constitutional rights—as when the speaker is dead or is a foreigner. Karl Marx’s writings come within freedom of speech even though he is both dead and foreign—at least if the government suppresses them because of the ideas Marx expressed.

The only proper basis for a free speech claim is whether government is attempting to prevent an audience from receiving certain ideas. That is why message-based suppression of speech is central. But message-based suppression is central no matter what symbols are employed to express the content. If computer code is regulated to suppress ideas, that is a free speech issue. If it is regulated for other reasons, that is not a free speech issue. If tattoos are regulated to suppress ideas the tattoo artist is attempting convey, or the ideas the one tattooed is attempting to convey, free speech is in play. But if tattoos are regulated for reasons of health, say, and irrespective of the ideas they are conveying, free speech is not in play.

When I say free speech is not in play if government is not regulating symbols to suppress the receipt of certain ideas, I am ruling out of free speech’s domain all content-neutral regulations, including so-called time, place, and manner regulations. Indeed, if people are forbidden to say “Gosh”, not because of any idea conveyed thereby, but solely because Bill Gates owns the letter G and has not granted permission use it, no free speech issue is present. That is a strong position, but it is a corollary of the position that free speech is in play when—and only when—government is regulating to prevent the receipt of an idea. Moreover, all content-neutral regulations—the entire corpus juris—have speech effects: they affect what gets said, by whom, to whom, and with what effect. And there is no viewpoint-neutral perspective that a court or any other governmental body can take on which speech effects should invalidate a content-neutral regulation and which should not3.

The upshot: Attempts to regulate the messages that people receive raise the issue of free speech (though they are not necessarily violations of free speech). Attempts to regulate the media through which speech is conveyed, unless for the purpose of regulating messages, raise no issue of free speech, a few derelict Supreme Court cases to the contrary notwithstanding4. This analysis exposes two errors the Supreme Court made in United States v. O’Brien (1968). The first was to deny that Congress’s purpose in forbidding the destruction of draft cards was material to whether that statute violated freedom of speech. The second was to argue that even if the statute was really just the regulation of the medium of expression and not an attempt at suppressing a message, O’Brien would still have a free speech claim if he lacked adequate alternative means of conveying his message. The Court in subsequent cases admitted the materiality of government’s purpose in regulating media of expression and thus corrected its first error5. It has never corrected the second error, which would presumably give free speech protection to one who paints his message on the wall of a government building, steals another’s printing press, commandeers another’s TV studio, or burns another’s money (to protest inflation) so long as one has no

1Although this is not an essay seeking an originalist understanding of the First Amendment’s meaning of “the freedom of speech”, Eugene Volokh’s research has, I believe, revealed that my analysis is at least not at odds with that meaning (Volokh, 2009).

2I owe this example to my colleague Dov Fox.

3This point is elaborated at length in chapter two of Alexander (2005).

4See, for example, Schneider v. State (1939) (striking down a ban on pamphleteering enacted to reduce littering) and International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Inc. v. Lee (1992) (striking down a restriction on distributing literature in an airport enacted to protect passengers from annoyance and delay).

5See, for example, Wayte v. United States (1985) (asserting the relevance of government’s purpose to a first amendment claim) and Mt. Healthy City Board of Education v. Doyle (1977) (same). See generally Rubenfeld (2001) and Alexander (2005: ch. 3).
equally effective means of reaching his intended audience with his message. I think it fair to surmise that the Court did not really mean what it said in O’Brien on this point, or that if it did, it will ignore what it said and render its error harmless.

2. Addendum

A related issue: Some free speech jurisprudence turns on the idea that some types of speech are “low value” speech, and that other types of speech lack any redeeming social value. (So-called “adult” books and movies are said to belong to the “low value” category (Young v. American Mini Theatres, Inc., 1976); hard-core pornography is said to belong to the “no value” category (Miller v. California, 1973; Roth v. United States, 1957)).

But there is a major problem with assigning value to types of speech, a problem analogous to the so-called “denominator” problem in takings jurisprudence. (That problem stems from the Supreme Court’s making the determination of a regulatory taking turn on the effect of the regulation on the parcel taken as a whole, which seems arbitrary because both space and time can be infinitely divided or added to (Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council, 1992)).

The analog of the denominator problem for low and no-value speech can be easily illustrated. Suppose a medical text in the public library is only looked at by people pruriently interested in its pictures of naked men and women. For its actual audience, it functions as pornography. On the other hand, suppose some hard-core porn—Debbie Does Dallas, say—is used in several college classrooms and research projects for the purpose of examining human sexual psychology, the sociology of deviant sexuality, or some other serious scholarly purpose. One might conclude that for purposes of determining the value of some speech token, one should use as the denominator the larger environment in which it occurs—much as one does not isolate its sexual descriptions from the rest of Lady Chatterley’s Lover, or a steamy sex scene from a high-brow movie. In terms of the overall context, the medical text may be low or no value, whereas Debbie Does Dallas may be very high value.

Of course, once one appreciates that a speech token’s value is a product of its broader context, we will see how hard it is to determine a speech token’s value. Perhaps the scholarly research using Debbie Does Dalles will itself turn out to be valueless or even harmful. Perhaps the prurient use of the medical text will produce some unanticipated benefit. The contextual lens can be ever and ever widened spatially and temporarily, just as it can be narrowed to the sex scene within a high-brow book or movie.

The focus should be, not on the value of the speech type or token, but on why government is regulating what it is regulating.

References


The following draws an earlier article of mine (Alexander, 1989).
L. Alexander

An Inquiry into Habermas’ Institutional Translation Proviso

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Abstract

The task of this paper is to argue against the opponents of Habermas’ institutional translation proviso. The opponents argue against Habermas on the grounds that 1) religious utterances are like cultural differences, ethnic differences and philosophical differences, 2) there are numerous cultures with their distinct religious potential truth contents that are not scientifically demonstrable. The latter argument is based on Occult/Paranormal experiences which are realities of life, hence should be allowed into the public sphere. However, this paper argues that religious utterances as Habermas articulates them are not equiparable to cultural, ethnic and philosophical differences and also that, Occult/Paranormal experiences are restricted to few adepts in it, hence, lacking general accessibility. In mind of our increasingly pluralistic society, there is need for common understanding of religious potential truth contents for general agreement and unity of purpose. Hence, we say that anyone who wants to bring religious potential truth contents into the public sphere seems to have no option other than to translate them into secular language for common understanding. It is based on common understanding that participants in the public sphere enter into a meaningful rational-critical debate resulting in mutual agreement.

Keywords
Public Sphere, Religion, Occult/Paranormal, Ogwu, Translation

1. Introduction

In recent times, the phenomena of public sphere and religion seem to have taken the centre stage in intellectual discourse and many intellectuals have joined the fray in the bid to provide a philosophical principle that will provide a comfy place for religion in the world’s volatile pluralistic society. Religion seems to be the most sensitive element in human society that breeds source of conflict easily in our contemporary world. It is in the bid to
help provide a comfortable place for religion in our world that Habermas postulated his principle of *institutional translation proviso* which means that religious potential truth contents must be “translated” in the course of informal public sphere into secular reasons that have general accessibility or language shared by all, before they are transferred to governmental institutions like parliament, court, etc. But in the course of his postulation, critics of Habermas maintained that he based his line of thought solely on the secular outlook, supposedly, to the neglect of others, nay, religious outlooks. It is in the light of the neglect of these latter outlooks, that Habermas’s translation proviso is said to be inadequate because some of the potential truth contents in religion defy among other factors, scientific explanation which *ipso facto* defy translation proviso of Habermas thereby making his postulation not far reaching enough as he has purported it to be.

This paper will argue against the critics’ claim of inadequacy of Habermas’s institutional translation proviso with a discourse based particularly on “*Ogwu*” (an aggressive, harmful medicine) phenomenon found in Igbo traditional religion under the general canopy of Occult/Paranormal experiences. In line with this, this paper unfolds by first of all looking at Habermas’s articulation of public sphere: The meaning, historical origin, structural transformation and what public sphere ought to be according to Habermas. Second, the paper delves into the conception of religion from Habermas’s perspective; the relationship religion has with public sphere and subsequently, the postulation of translation proviso by Habermas. The third part of this paper evaluates the translation proviso of Habermas in relation to Occult/Paranormal experiences with particular reference to “*Ogwu*” phenomenon in Igbo culture based on Igbo traditional religion. Lastly, the paper concludes with meaningful recommendations for peaceful co-existence in pluralistic society.

2. Public Sphere

The concept public sphere *ipso facto* presupposes private sphere, as such, it is *ad red* that we distinguish these basic concepts. According to Habermas (1989: 11):

“private” designated the exclusion from the sphere of the state apparatus; for “public” referred to the state that in the mean-time had developed, under absolutism, into an entity having an objective existence over against the person of the ruler.

Having delineated these concepts, Habermas (1989: 27) therefore articulated public sphere thus:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of the private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent; People’s public use of their reason (*öffentliche Räsonnement*).

2.1. Historical Background of Public Sphere

In tracing the origin of public sphere, Habermas argued that during the middle Ages a split within society, between “the public” and “the private” was never in extant. The semblance of “publicity” that was experienced actually was epitomized by the king. The kingship or Lordship was represented before the people and not for the people; hence, Habermas described this feudal kind of publicity as merely status symbol:

“representation” in the sense in which the members of a national assembly represent a nation or a lawyer represents his clients had nothing to do with this publicity of representation inseparable from the lord’s concrete existence, that as an “aura”, surrounded and endowed his authority. When the territorial ruler convened about him ecclesiastical and worldly lords, knights, prelates, and cities (or as in the German Empire until 1806 when the Emperor invited the princes and bishops, imperial counts, imperial towns, and abbots to the Imperial Diet), this was not a matter of an assembly of delegates that was someone else’s representative. As long as the prince and the estate of his realm “were” the country and not just its representative, they could represent it in a specific sense. They represented their Lordship not for but “before” the people.
In the words of Schellings (2011), when the estates—in the course of eighteenth century—divided into private elements (the church) and public elements (the bureaucracy, the military and to some extent the administration of justice), the modern states surfaced and separation between public and private started to show itself. According to Habermas (1989: 12): “out of the estates, finally the elements of political prerogative developed into organs of public authority: partly into a parliament, and partly into judicial organs”. As such, they represented the new publicity, that is, public authority. Against this public authority a realm of private autonomy founded in occupational status emerged as well, and this, heralded the coming into being of a civil society.

Schellings (2011) citing Habermas opined that the advent of early finance and trade capitalism in the thirteenth century, aided the development of this new social order. In essence, the introduction of traffic in commodities and news, centered in towns and local markets which were marks of the new commercial relationships of early capitalist long distance trade, contributed to the actualization of a public sphere.

In the very words of Habermas (1989), a horizontal network of economic dependencies, from thirteenth century onward, started crystallizing; following the vertical regulation of the commercial exchange by the estates, as travelling merchants, to be successful in their trade became dependent on information from elsewhere. Commercial towns then were not only connected by trade roads, but also by frequent communication in relation to economic affairs. At the beginning, these news items were particularly earmarked for merchants and traders, but from the last days of the seventeenth century news items were within the reach of the general public.

Coming in the manner of weekly published political journals, some part of the actual news which were not deemed important by the merchants or edited by the government got to the public. Displayed news agenda were not only for commercial purposes. Inclusively, news from different sources like: abroad, court and more local news pertaining to “miracle cures and thunderstorms, the murders, pestilences, and burnings” as Habermas (1989: 21) itemized them were equally introduced.

Although critical public sphere in the seventeenth century has not yet developed, news has become a commercial product in its own right, and the new state authorities began to make use of the press for administrative goals.

Through their ordinances and instructions the state got their administrative measures in the pretext of public interest. It turned out to be that such proclamations were not only a better facilitation of their administration but by explicitly informing the public, that is, the population in general, the authorities made their administration a public affair. Sequel to this development, the administration of the authorities came under critical evaluation of the public.

Even though the authorities targeted the general populace in their promulgations, eventually it was at best the “educated classes” that received them, not the “common man” (Habermas, 1989). By the educated classes Habermas meant the bourgeoisie.

Hence Habermas (1989: 22-23) said:

Along with the apparatus of the modern state, a new stratum of “bourgeois” people arose which occupied a central position within the “public”. The officials of the rulers’ administrations were its core-mostly jurists. Added to them were doctors, pastors, officers, professors, and “scholars”, who were at the top of a hierarchy reacting down through schoolteachers and scribes to the “people”… the “capitalists”, the merchants, bankers, entrepreneurs, and manufacturers belong to that group of the “bourgeois” who, like the new category of scholars, were not really “burghers” in the traditional senses.

Echoing Habermas thesis, Schellings (2011) opined that not only was the bourgeoisie middle class an educated group of people, and consequently a reading public, but also, a greater percentage of its class belonged to those occupational groups that had almost all to do with the authorities’ regulations and control. Furthermore, she says although the authorities’ measures equally had their clout on the life of every consumer, and accordingly touched a much broader audience, it is not out of place that these taxes and duties and generally, official interventions into the privatized household finally came to constitute the target of a developing critical sphere centered in the bourgeoisie.

Having come thus far, one cannot but see that the public sphere was a domain of critical opinion initiated by the bourgeois public against state authority. As such, Habermas (1989: 24) articulated public sphere as a critical sphere in the sense that: that zone of continuous administrative contact became “critical” also in the sense that it provoked the critical judgment of a public making use of its reason. From the foregoing, one can unequivocally assert that that which makes the public sphere authentically a critical sphere is nothing but the use of reason.
The importance of the press toward critical public sphere can never be overlooked for it was the press that opened up public affairs to society. Describing succinctly the task of the press, Schellings (2011: 22) said: “All the bourgeois public now had to do was slightly adjust the functions of the press, so that it would not only inform them, were it about economical or administrative topics, but also would provide space for criticism”. According to Habermas (1989: 24-25):

As early as in the last third of the seventeenth century journals were complemented by periodicals containing not primarily information but pedagogical instructions and even criticism and reviews… In the course of the first half of the eighteenth century, in the guise of the so-called learned article, critical reasoning made its way into the daily press.

It must be pointed out that this occurrence was not a sudden one for these learned articles were closely tied to the authorities’ orders, and scholars had to write based on instructions given by the government authorities. However, as Habermas (1989: 25) would maintain, “In this instance the bourgeois writers still made use of their reason at the behest of the territorial ruler; soon they were to think their own thoughts, directed against the authorities”.

Having examined historical background to the origin and development of the public sphere, it is equally germane to highlight the structural transformation of the public sphere.

2.2. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

In the course of history, Habermas maintained that the public sphere transformed structurally right from the family because of the interference of the state through her welfare system. This transformation is as a result of the public authority’s intervention in the domain of the private sphere and private sphere’s intervention into the public functions of the state, hence, Habermas (1989: 142): “Only this dialectic of a progressive ‘societalization’ of the state simultaneously with an increasing ‘stateification’ of society gradually destroyed the basis of the bourgeois public sphere—the separation of the state and society”. Categorically, Habermas (1989: 142-143) averred:

The downfall of the public sphere, demonstrated by its changing political functions (chapter vi), had its source in the structural transformation of the relationship between the public sphere and the private realm in general (chapter v).

Pin pointedly, Habermas (1989: 188-189) demonstrated the practical collapse of the public when he enthused:

The more their effectiveness in terms of publicity increased, the more they became accessible to the press of certain private interest, whether individual or collective. Whereas formerly the press was able to limit itself to the transmission and amplification of the rational-critical debate of private people assembled into a public, now conversely this debate gets shaped by the mass media to begin with. In the course of the shift from a journalism of private men of letters to the public services of the mass media, the sphere of the public was altered by the influx of private interests that received privileged exposure in it—although they were by no means eo ipso representative of the interests of private people as the public.

Habermas maintained that the structural transformation of the public sphere is seen in the family where the state intervened by providing for the family members’ needs through welfare system. Families in turn obliged the state her biddings. This is seen vividly according to Habermas (1989) from the reduction of family property to the incomes of its individual wage and salary earners in addition to covering of classical risks such as unemployment, accident, illness, age, and death through state welfare system usually in the manner of income supplements. With this private and public spheres became indistinguishable, which he termed “refeudalization”.

From the foregoing, Habermas showed what he meant by structural transformation of the public sphere, that is, an anomalous development that stands in need of re-direction. Habermas (1989: 208) warned that: “Any attempt of restoring the liberal public sphere through the reduction of its plebiscitarily expanded form will only serve to weaken even more the residual functions genuinely remaining within it”.

As a remedy Habermas (1989: 208) said:

The public sphere commandeered by societal organizations and that under the pressure of collective private interests has been drawn into the purview of power can perform functions of political critique and control,
beyond mere participation in political compromises, only to the extent that it is itself radically subjected to
the requirements of publicity, that is to say, that it again becomes a public sphere in the strict sense.

Public sphere in the strict sense simply means, according to Habermas, public use of reason. And nothing
short of this qualifies as public sphere. And that is what it ought to be.

Whether public sphere is realizable in our today’s world under mass democracy of social-welfare state,
Habermas (1989: 210) answered in affirmative by positing that:

Institutionalized in the mass democracy of social-welfare state no different than in the bourgeois constitu-
tional state, the idea of publicity (at one time the rationalization of domination in the medium of the critical
public debate of private people) is today realizable only as a rationalization—limited, of course because of
the plurality of organized private interests—of the exercise of societal and political power under the mutual
control of rival organizations themselves committed to publicity as regards both their internal structure and
their interaction with one another and with the state.

Specifically, what runs parallel to Habermas conception of public sphere is publicity. And whether this pu-
blicity is realizable under democratic dispensation, Habermas (1989: 219) had this to say:

Publicity was, according to its very idea, a principle of democracy not just because anyone could in prin-
iple announce, with equal opportunity, his personal inclinations, wishes, and convictions-opinions; it could
only be realized in the measure that these personal opinions could evolve through the rational-critical de-
bate of a public into public opinion—opinion publique.

Thus, publicity, nay, public sphere is an integral part of democracy. Having seen the meaning, historical ori-
igin and development of the public sphere, the transformation undergone in the course of history and what it
ought to be from the perspective of Habermas—all these necessitated because: in the domain of formal public
sphere, Habermas jettisoned all religious arguments (Habermas uses arguments, reasons, truth contents to repre-
sent religious utterances, experiences or ideas. We shall be using the terms interchangeably in this discourse)
and in the realm of informal public sphere, what Rawls called “background culture”, Habermas brought his pro-
viso to bear which purports that religious arguments are allowed on the condition that they are translated into
arguments equally within the reach of all before they gain entrance into the formal public debate, Loobuyck &
Rumens (2013). It is the centrality and leit motif nature of public sphere in his thought that led us thus far into
having a full meaning and understanding of what public sphere is all about. We now turn to Habermas’ stake
with religion for it is these two concepts—religion and public sphere that formed the fulcrum on which his in-
stitution translation proviso was lifted in the background of human society.

3. Religion

Habermas has been criticized for paying little attention to religion in the writing of his monumental work The
Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Calhoun (1992) recorded in Habermas and the Public Sphere
which he edited that, it is not only Habermas’s relative neglect of religion but his rather antireligious assumption.

When Habermas woke up from his rather “dogmatic slumber”, he commenced his discourse on religion with
the issue of “The Political”. He used the concept to portray the fact of interconnectedness of politics and religion,
hence Habermas (2011: 18) said: “And it is this symbolic dimension of the fusion of politics and religion for the
description of which the concept of ‘the political’ can properly be used”.

On religion, Habermas (2011: 17) said that, “religion” owes its legitimizing force to the fact that it draws its
power to convince from its own roots, that is, religion is a self-enforcing and convincing reality. And sourcing
the root of religion Habermas (2011: 17) maintained that: “It is rooted, independently of politics, in notions of
salvation and calamity (Heil und Unheil) and in corresponding practices of coping with redemptive and mena-
cing forces”.

In recognition of the towering importance of religion, Habermas (2011: 27-28) thus opined:

As long as religious communities remain a vital force in civil society, their contribution to the legitimation
process reflects an at least indirect reference to religion, which “the political” retains even within a secular
state. Although religion can neither be reduced to morality nor be assimilated to ethical value orientations,
it nevertheless keeps alive an awareness of both elements.
From the above, one may ask, what is the connection between religion and the public sphere in clearer terms? (Habermas, 2011: 27) minced no words in showing the intricate link between religion and the public sphere as follows:

… in the course of its democratic transformation, “the political” has not completely lost its association with religion. In the democratic discourse secular and religious citizens stand in a complementary relation. Both are involved in an interaction that is constitute for a democratic process springing from the soil of civil society and developing through the informal communication networks of the public sphere.

Having recognized the place and importance of religion in human existence, nay, the public sphere, Habermas maintained that there is need for the religious participants in the public sphere to make their own contributions in the rational-critical debate in a manner that eschews misunderstanding and impasse but one that has universal accessibility in terms of understanding. As a result of this Habermas proposed what Loobuyck and Rummens (2013) called middle-ground position known as, institutional translation proviso.

According to this proposal, all citizens should be free to decide whether they want to use religious language in the public sphere. Were they to do so, they would, however, have to accept that the potential truth contents of religious utterance must be translated into a generally accessible language before they can find their way onto the agendas of parliament, courts, or administrative bodies and influence their decisions.

Here, Habermas (2011: 66) does not mean all religious utterances and it is not religious motivations, but it’s specifically those justifications which are not amenable to being shared because they are based on either cultic experiences, from which many are excluded, or they are based on references to inherently non discursive authority, to something outside.

It is the “must” element in Habermas translation proviso that draws angst against this aspect of his Critical Theory enterprise. For even if the religious and secular citizens agree to this translation proviso, will not the excluded religious utterances not translate to denial of some voices in the public sphere?

4. Questioning Habermas’ Translation Proviso

Habermas, his critic will argue, was not far-reaching in this particular postulation. Charles Taylor, precisely, argues that Habermas’ postulation contravenes state’s neutrality. Taylor (2011: 37) said:

Indeed, the point of state neutrality is precisely to avoid favoring or disfavoring not just religious positions but any basic position, religious or nonreligious. We can’t favor Christianity over Islam, but also religion over against nonbelief in religion or vice versa.

Taylor means by the above that Habermas has favoured religious utterances over secular reasoning or language. Strongly he argues that religious utterances are the same like cultural differences, ethnic differences, philosophical differences, and as such, should not be favoured over them. We think that Taylor got it wrong here for religious utterances as Habermas has amply defined is not open to all, hence, impeding general understanding. Cultural, ethnic and philosophical differences all stand on the same pedestal of cognition; they are and thrive in secular reasoning. People easily understand and reconcile the differences here. But religious utterances as Habermas delineated it are esoteric, closed and only open to few selected initiates or adepts in the said religious experience. The position of Habermas will be well appreciated by the time we take up an indirect opposition to Habermas’ postulation, extrapolated from Igbo Traditional Religion with the phenomenon of Ogwu as a reference point.

This school of thought, though in a remote sense, implying opposition to Habermas’ position alludes that, the translation proviso was restricted to Western world outlook that is predominantly scientific with nomological characterization of reality. Juxtaposing this school of thought and Habermas’s thesis, it criticizes Habermas’s position as seeming to portray that every phenomenon in reality is reducible to cause and effect empirical demonstration and that is why Habermas is saying that potential truth contents of religious utterances “must” be translated into a generally accessible language before they can find their way onto the agenda of parliament, courts, or administrative bodies and influence their decisions. But the question is, the potential truth contents of
the religious utterances that Habermas proscribes, do they not amount to denial of fundamental human rights of those concerned as these utterances seem to defy secular translation? Habermas, this school of thought will argue, is beclouded by his western world outlook, because some realities are accepted to be real but they defy translatability into secular language or reason. Shall we, this thought will argue, because of the defiability of such phenomenon deny the religious citizens of that extract their voice in the public sphere? The postulation of Habermas suggests this, this thought will argue. This school of thought will argue as well that his institutional translation proviso lacks objectivity and universality that it purports because people have been denied the basic right of participation which the philosophy of Habermas in general tends to portray. To bring home the fact at issue here, we call up the phenomena that suggest the questioning of Habermas’ position by this latter school of thought. It is the phenomena of Occultism and Paranormal experiences ably illustrated by one of Ikenga Oraebunam’s articles entitled: A Philosophical Critique Of Some Judicial Attitudes To Juju-Related Crimes in Nigeria. Before narrowing down to the specifics of this school of thought, it is pertinent that an elucidation is done on the concepts of occultism and paranormal.

According to Onwuama (2012: 61):

Cultisms of evil inclinations are widely and conveniently known as Occultism. Occultism derived from the Latin word “occultus”, meaning “hidden or secret”. The word “paranormal” consists of two parts, “para” and “normal”, with the prefix “para”, a Latin term meaning against, counter, outside or beyond the norm. Thus in most definitions of the paranormal, it is described or used to describe anything that is beyond or contrary to what is deemed humanly, experimentally and scientifically possible.

In the context of this discourse, Occultism and Paranormal are taken to be the same and are used interchangeably. (Onwuama, 2012: 61) supporting his own view quotes the definition of Paul Kurtz on Paranormal as: “that which is beside or beyond the range of normal experience and explanation”. Furthermore, Onwuama (2012: 64) talked about the division of Occult and Paranormal thus:

Most Paranormal/Occult phenomena could be categorized by whether they are mental, such as, ESP (Extra Sensory Perception), divination—(Igba afa), etc. or physical, such as, witchcraft involving paranormal influence on objects, event, or living things, often, however, this distinction is blurred, as there are also miscellaneous Paranormal/Occult phenomena that do not fit into either category. These divisions of the paranormal as classified above could further be classified as, 1) Paranormal in thought; 2) Paranormal in action; 3) Miscellaneous paranormal.

From the preceding, one may ask, is Occultism/Paranormal a reality or not? To this Onwuama (2012: 63) said: “Today, beside the real world of experience, which we know, one also seems to envisage the existence of a ‘parallel’ world beyond the reach of human senses. And as it were, this ‘parallel’ world is in the words of James Kiernam, peopled by witches, ghosts, demons and deities”.

Onwuama (2012: 65) points out further that: “Belief in the reality of the paranormal is an old chestnut in anthropology, in philosophy and even in theology. That it is a cross-cultural and quasi religious phenomenon”.

Strengthening his view, (Onwuama, 2012: 65) quotes G.C. Bond who warns that: “One must be careful however not to restrict it to any one religion of the world or to any historical period”. Similarly, Onwuama (2012: 65) calls the authority of James Kiernam in the foregoing point who maintained that this belief system, Occult/Paranormal, is a “Universal dimension of human experience”.

Having established the belief in occult and paranormal, Onwuama (2012: 75) sourced the philosophical (Epistemological) foundation of paranormal thus:

Various philosophers while accepting the reality of intuition see it from various perspectives, some of which could give credence to the practice of the paranormal in thought, like ESP (Extra Sensory Perception). For instance, there are philosophers who uphold that intuition is a higher kind of knowledge different in nature from that disclosed by the senses and the intellect, while others believe that intuition may enable one to gain a vision of reality to receive the inspiration of an “immanent god” (Aja, 2004: 104). A closer look at these perspectives of philosophers on intuition would easily indicate that intuition clearly goes in line with ideas in support of the paranormal, at least paranormal in thought.

Specifically, giving the instances of Occult/Paranormal experiences, Onwuama (2012: 65) also said: “Hence we hear everywhere in Nigeria today, strange tales of mournful deeds and beliefs which involve everything from
ritual murder to pin casting and many other activities whose causal mechanism are ‘extra physica’”. Propping up the instances further, Onwuama (2012: 65) cites Oguejiofor as saying:

There are stories of rich people who purportedly got their wealth through occult and magical means; those who have to offer their loved ones in human sacrifices in exchange for wealth; those who made pacts with the devil, in which they are obliged to fulfill bizarre conditions; stories of young people whose businesses collapsed because rivals siphoned their money through mystical and mysterious means; students who passed their examinations with the help of magical powers; women whose wombs were tied up, thus prevented from conception through witchcraft.

In Igbo tradition, an ethnic group in the South Eastern part of Nigeria in West Africa, the instances of Occult/Paranormal stated above can be seen vividly under the phenomenon called “Ogwu”. Ogwu is translated into English language to mean “Charm”. This is charm in its peculiar negative sense in the sense that it affects its victims so negatively that the victim is under the mercy of the individual wielding the charm (Ogwu). It is not charm in the sense of attractiveness or pleasantness. It is charm in the sense that there is a kind of magnetic field that exists between the victim and the person wielding it so that the victim is controlled as if he/she has no reason of his/her own any longer. Also “Ogwu” in Igbo ontology is seen as medicine as well. It is medicine used in preventing, curing and protecting human health. Equally, it is seen as harmful and aggressive medicine used against the well-being of the other. In the context of this discourse, however, Ogwu as medicine, in the latter sense, and translated as charm in the negative sense, are adopted and used, interchangeably to mean infliction of negative influences on people that often result in bad state of affairs for the victims. Whether health, business, etc. When Ogwu is referred to as poison, it is understood in terms of spiritual force causing harm to the victims without any visible cause and effect to explain it. It is not poison in the ordinary usage of it that is known to all, especially the Western conception of it. According to Adibe (2006: 6): “Ogwu” is an Igbo word that in English principally designates medicine and “charm”, “when it is used as charm it also means poison, a means of harming and terminating life”. Due to its nature it is variously designated as aggressive or harmful Ogwu. The use of this phenomenon has caused a lot of inexplicable harms to people and because it defies translation into secular reasons or language, many people in Africa have been deprived of their justice when they bring issues that are Ogwu related to law courts. This is so because Africa due to colonization has come to have every aspect of her governmental existence in western form. And for the fact that western world-view has little or no experience of Ogwu phenomenon, they have come to jettison any reason related to Ogwu especially in the courts of law. And by this, Habermas’ postulation that potential truth contents of religious reason “must” be translated into secular reasons appears unconvincing enough because the inability of such phenomenon not to be translated into secular language should not make a good segment of the population not to participate in the public sphere, nay, being deprived of their rights to just and fair hearing in the law courts. Those are the objections that the schools of thought under consideration against Habermas’s stand imply. Through this powerful metaphysical means people have been maimed and even killed, and when the relations of the victims sought for redress in the court —now of western formation and operation—they are more often than not looked at as people bereft of reasoning and consequently, they are denied of just hearing and fair treatment because such phenomena have their truth contents untranslatable to the western secular language. So, how universal, far reaching is Habermas’ institutional translation proviso, against this background? How objective is it in line with this denial of some voices in the public sphere? Is it not violating the state principle of neutrality which according to (Taylor, 1992: 37) means “… avoid favouring or disfavouring not just religious positions but any basic position, religious or nonreligious?”

In line with this part of religious reasons untranslatability into secular reasons and the harm done to the people as a result, Oraegbnunam (2005: 188-189) lamentably in commentary manner questions thus:

… there are yet in Nigeria and Africa in general “mysteries” which are still difficult to explain. But the questions is: should civil law refuse to recognize these “mysteries” and simply dismiss them as primitive notions nurtured by illiterates, miseducated or ill-equipped Nigerians who have to imbibe the European culture in its totality?

The phenomenon of Ogwu which in this context includes experiences like witchcraft, juju, occultism, sorcery, charms, spiritual poisoning, black and sympathetic magic, and generally all “actions at a distance” what in local language, according to Oraegbnunam (2005: 185), is called “spiritual remote control”, under the broad umbrella
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of Occult/Paranormal, defies western scientific casual explanation, and on the strength of this, has been dismissed as being unreasonable in the western judicial system which is the norm this day in governance. And in the context of our inquiry, it is so because such experiences are “untranslatable” to secular reasons thereby lacking general accessibility, so to speak. Permit us at this juncture to bring in an excerpt in full from Oraegbunam to illustrate the supposed inherent bias in Habermas’ institutional translation proviso.

Oraegbunam (2005: 189): In R. V. Nwaoke (1939, 5 WACA: 120), for instance, the appellant was charged with murder of one Nwaocha and was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour. He appealed to West Africa Court of Appeal (WACA) against this conviction. It was explained that the deceased was at one time the wife of the accused. She refused to continue to live with him and, as a result, the accused asked for the repayment of his £1.10 s being the “head money”. Both Nwaocha and her mother promised to repay the money as soon as they could do so. The accused not being satisfied with these promises, brought a Juju called “Onye Uku”, pointed it towards the deceased and said something like since you refuse to pay me my money, this juju will kill you or since you refuse to pay me you shall no more eat or drink.

He left the Juju in the house of the deceased. It was proved that Nwaocha the deceased was much affected in mind by this Juju and the threat. She became very depressed although there was no evidence that she stopped eating or drinking or that her physical health was in any way affected. Six days after the accused had brought the Juju, Nwaocha went out to hang herself by the neck with a cloth from a tree so high that her feet hung six feet above the ground. Butler Lloyd, A. G. (C.J) Nigeria, Graham, Pauland Brooke, J. J. (1939, 5 WACA: 120) said:

There is no evidence whatever that the invoking of this juju, to the knowledge of the accused at the time he invoked it, would be reasonably likely to cause the deceased to take her own life, and in our own opinion, that element of reasonable likelihood must be present in order to make section 310 applicable.

Hence, the appeal was allowed and the conviction and sentence quashed. Okonkwo and Naish (2002: 21) hold that it is not easy to agree with the reasoning of the Court of Appeal. The court seems to have placed undue weight on the vagueness of the evidence relating to the powers of the juju whereas in fact what ought to be looked for is the foreseeable capacity of the Juju to constitute a source of fear to the native mind. And according to Ojo (1978: 32) in a place like Africa where many people believe in the force of native medicine, such threats as these ought to have been severely punished. After all the accused left the Juju in the house. The mere sight of this would continually terrify the deceased.

The excerpt above simply shows that the truth contents of this Igbo religious reasons was simply dismissed by the Court (of western formation and operation) because in the language of Habermas, it is “untranslatable”, that is, spiritually, mysteriously oriented and not open for all, hence unreasonable and should not be allowed in the formal public sphere, the court. Sequel to the above, the school of thought under our consideration against Habermas’ position will argue that he was not inclusive enough in formulating his translation proviso. That he is circumvented in his thinking by cause and effect orientation to the detriment of other means of knowledge acquisition. And it is on the strength of this lack that his thesis is quite inadequate. Some religious potential truth contents are not explainable in the mode of Western scientific understanding such like aggressive, harmful “Ogwu” in Igbo culture. Phenomenon like “Ogwu” seems to have defied Western scientific-mind’s understanding but it is a reality among Ndi-Igbo (Africans). Therefore, is Habermas’s institutional translation proviso not exclusive of this religious potential truth contents? If it is, how objective and far reaching is the principle of translation proviso that purports to solve the issue of religion in relation to public sphere considering the sensitive and easily divisive elements inherent in religion in the face of our contemporary world that is quite pluralistic? The above among others are the questions against Habermas’s institutional translation proviso.

5. Responses

At this juncture, we will say that the critics of Habermas in this aspect of his Critical Theory are not convincing enough in their questioning of Habermas’ translation proviso. This is because the society in view is a pluralistic one that harbours people of different cultural origins with their unique religious bents. If religious utterances, languages or ideas or reasons summed up in the concept of Occult/Paranormal experiences are allowed untranslated to the public sphere, especially the courts, then human society will suffer. For people will hide under the cloak of the esoteric nature of the Occult/Paranormal language, with its non universal accessibility in terms of understanding to go scot free with their crimes.
Experiences of Occult/Paranormal are elusive and only understandable to few adepts in it thereby making it subjective. In line with the above, Onwuama (2012: 63) citing Peter Geschiere said: “The term Occult/Paranormal, shrouds a multiplicity of referents; including: What is concealed, obscure, mysterious, secret and sinister, which seems to connote an inversion of the ordinary”. For Binsbergan (2001: 213), the paranormal is a: “Universe of mystical agencies and conduit beyond that which constitutes the social and cognitive domain of classification and normative discourse”. Hence, due to the peculiarity, exclusivity and mysterious nature of Occult/Paranormal of which Ogwu in Igbo traditional ontology is part of, it should not be allowed into the public sphere “untranslated” until they have become accessible to all. People who have had recourse to these mysterious services in time of difficulties have their stories better imagined than experienced. This made Onwuama (2012: 81) to say that: “In Nigeria today, many families have been thrown into crisis, a lot of intended marriages aborted, numerous people wrongfully killed and many communities thrown into confusion, all in the name of information sourced from a diviner or prophet”, products and agents of Occult/Paranormal phenomena. It is due to lack of general accessibility in terms of understanding that made people fall prey to them, hence, the need for it to be translated into secular language understandable to all for effective and maximum benefits. It will go a long way in curbing the menace of religious fundamentalism as well. When it is accessible to all, for instance, both the judges in the courts of law and lay people will have common ground for arguments, and understanding based on the forceless force of better arguments will be reached without any elements of confusion, coercion, doubt, fear or suspicion. From the foregoing discourse, Habermas’ institutional translation proviso stands insurmountable in view of the negative consequences that will result if these closed “untranslated” religious utterances are allowed into the public sphere.

6. Concluding Remarks

There is no denying the fact of Occult/Paranormal reality. Its attendant facts like Ogwu with its bad effects are self-evident. No doubt people have been dealing with its negative efficacious power and unable to find redress in the courts of law due to its untranslatability into secular language. However, the consequences of such phenomena will be higher if allowed “untranslated” into secular language before its entrance to the public sphere, nay, the courts of law. This is because they lack objectivity, common ground of understanding. Our contemporary society is increasingly pluralistic and already tensed with the cultural diversity therein. To bring in experiences that have no ground for common understanding will further heat up the relationship in our human society that is already volatile. It is of imperative importance, therefore, that people who want these esoteric experiences into the public sphere, especially the courts of law in the course of adjudication of justice, should endeavour to make it generally accessible to all for common understanding. Until this is done, Habermas’s institutional translation proviso is still much more preferable especially in the society of today that has become more pluralistic.

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History as Contemporary History in the Thinking of Benedetto Croce

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Abstract
In this brief consideration of mine, trying to remain as faithful as possible to the texts taken into exam, I will first try to introduce the concept of history as contemporary history in the thinking of Benedetto Croce, whereas the second part of the reasoning will point toward proving and meditating on how such concept crosses the whole philosophical system of the Italian intellectual. What does contemporary history mean according to Benedetto Croce? Why is the spirit of the historian fundamental in the description of this concept? What kind of connection exists between story and contemporary history? What does pathology of history mean? How does the concept of contemporary history relate to that of awareness, of finished and thinking? These are but a few of the questions to which I tried to find an answer with this essay.

Keywords
Benedetto Croce, History, Philosophy of History, Historical Knowledge, Contemporary History, Pathology of History, Heidegger, Rosmini, Idealism

1. Introduction
I would like to begin my consideration by taking into account “Storia, cronaca e false storie”, a brief 1912 deliberation originally born as a “memoir” for the Accademia Pontiniana of Naples, which will later merge into the 1917 “Teoria e storia della storiografia” (although the first edition was published in Germany in 1915). Evidences concerning the composition of this piece of writing lead us in German territory, where the thoughts of the philosopher circulated among the entire academic environment. In 1909, the publishing house Mohr of Tubinga encourages Croce to write a manual of Philosophy of History, which he will replace with his very own “Teoria e storia della storiografia”, marking the ultimate estrangement from the Philosophy of History. As proof, in 1912 he wrote to Medicus that “in no way I could write a handbook of Philosophy of History, because I deny it: you
That being said, Croce establishes the problem of history as contemporary history in the very first pages. He states that “contemporary history” usually refers to a near past: if we were to ask someone on the street what they mean by contemporary history, it is very likely that their answer will refer to historical events happened between the second post war period and today. In actuality contemporary history is that which begins in the moment I perform an action, it is defined as the actual present: he states that, while writing these pages, he is within the boundaries of contemporary history. On the contrary, the history which is defined as “non-contemporary” or “past history” is what we find in front of ourselves, a history that is already fully formed and, in some sense, one we cannot partake in.

Either way, this must not be excluded from the general conception of history. Why? Because the entirety of history is in a way contemporary, for the fact that it is present inside the mind of the historian: it makes a specific instance identifiable as “contemporary”. For example, let us suppose that it is true that the spirit of today’s world is that of the United States of Europe: it makes contemporary that part of European history in which Europe was present as an empire. According to this idea, Carlo V is our peer, although he lived in the 1500s, since he is the one who reunited Europe. In that case, the opposition was represented by the Districts, which in this situation may be compared to Padania or any other nationalist ideology. History that does not belong to this specific instance is not contemporary history; it is the present that makes history contemporary.

2. The Relationship between History and Spirit

As a matter of fact, it is interesting to remember how an important philosopher such as Carl Schmitt, wrote in “L’epoca delle neutralizzazioni e spoliticizzazioni” that “from Hegel on, and in the best fashion Benedetto Croce, they made us realize that every historical knowledge is knowledge of the present, which means that it finds its source in the present, since every spirit is just present” (Schmitt, 1932: p. 167).

Therefore, if contemporary history is like that because it “vibrates inside the historian’s mind” (Croce, 2002), from life itself will rise the one we are used to call non-contemporary life, for the fact that only the interest toward contemporary history is present and it can drive me to get involved with something past. This is the reason that lays at the basis of history as life’s teacher: “every true story is contemporary history (...) contemporaneity is not a class of history, rather it is the intrinsic aspect of every story. We have to conceive the close relationship between history and life as one” (Croce, 2012: pp. 59-60). History is contemporary when it is tied to life not in an abstract way, but rather when it is both tied and distinct at the same time. Past history is contemporary history in the sense that, through historical research, we manage to make past history as well actual, present and contemporary. This happens because the developments in past history have implications in present history; hence, non-contemporary history rises from life, for the fact that it originates from an interest toward present life, too.

Thereof history cannot be acted or thought of without a human mind thinking of it or acting it: history is history of an immanent spirit, which cannot rise from metaphysics or Philosophy of History where the path has already been traced. This consideration requires a mention of the topics of disease and pathology that will be analyzed further on. The fact that Croce conceives history as the development of a story whose protagonist is an immanent spirit, so that nothing can precede history or decide what the order of things will be, causes him to debate with some fundamental philosophical figures. Consider the concept of disease according to Kierkegaard: it is about an ontological disease, rather than a historical one; in this sense, man is ontologically ill, that is before any history. Of the same opinion, we find Sartre, who in “La Nausea” speaks of an ontological disease, which can be overcome only by art. Take the character of Roquentin, a history student whose solitude brings him to understand that men constantly give a noble and high sense to their own existence. This awareness makes the protagonist nauseous of himself and the world around him, acknowledging that only art can soothe this disease (Sartre, 2010). The French writer accepts Kierkegaard’s premise according to which the artist is sick because the disease is ontological. The difference between him and Croce, we will see, is enormous since the Italian philosopher talks about a moral disease, in which the man who makes history is involved.

3. The Role of Documents

Once you come to this point, it is relevant to analyze a query that was asked by Croce in order to better explain the matter: do Greece and Hellenic spirit have to be part of this new modern empire? In this case, are we speaking of contemporary history? The relationship with the Greek civilization, if it is a contemporary one, thus cannot do a treatise or handbook with a negative thesis” (Picardi, 2002: pp. 34-38).
meant as something deeply tied to my being like a love that I am nurturing or a danger that looms over my existence, allows Greece to be tied to Europe and to the context we are offering: “in that case, the Hellenic life is present inside of me” (Croce, 2012: p. 60). Consider a current example: if we consider contemporary the crisis we are living now, the same will be for the other crises recalled by it. Then, however, how can The Crash of 1929 be conceived as contemporary history? According to Croce, only in one way: through documents; they are the medium through which we make it contemporary. History is contemporary in its relationship with the document: we might say that, from an insider point of view, history is contemporary to life, while from an outsider point of view it is made alive through the documents. The spirit of time, or rather the historical development, will rise from this relationship between document and life. It is nothing else but the spirit of today, it is not something past and imaginary. If there were no relationship between document and life, history would not be controllable. Besides, resuming the matter touched earlier, the same pathology arises when this relationship is broken, leaving only empty words: “what remains is no longer history, and we may keep calling it history only in the same way we call “man” a man’s corpse, for what remains is nothing” (Croce, 2012: p. 63).

4. Contemporary History Is Not a Simple Story

At this point, Croce suggests a distinction between history and story, between contemporary history and dead or past history: if history is contemporary, we have to separate it from mere story. Contrary to the general belief, this distinction does not rely only on the fact that history summarizes the most important events while story those most ordinary: the crucial point does not lie in the fact that the first is about the crisis and the second is about Balotelli’s latest tweet. But then, what is the relationship existing between history and story? As I said, contemporary history is tied to life, to the living: contemporary history is no heaven and its parts of dead history maintain the possibility to live. Story is conceived as a non-living history, from which you can only make a dead story. So, in the relationship between history and story, which of the two comes first? From this point, it is important to acknowledge the ocean that divides logical approach and chronological order: the logical approach is the historical one (history coming before story), while story is not logical, rather it is only of chronological kind. We might say that every history becomes story when it is no longer thought, but only remembered in abstract words.

In this respect, Croce digresses into the historical novel: it has nothing in common with the historical reality; it contains truths that are not present in the novel. Now, if the historian establishes a link with the document, what is the connection established by the writer of the historical novel? Probably, it is the one with a non-living event in the spirit of the historian.

Now it appears clear that the document conceived as detached from life becomes just a “thing” and, in turn, history detached from the live document becomes just story. So, do these dead documents or stories exist or not? In a way, they do not because the things outside the spirit do not exist; as a matter of fact, we know that story exists as an act of will: just like the corpse is at any rate a process of vital creation, those dead documents exist as well since they are expressions of new life. Transcribing empty stories and collecting dead documents is an act of life; the moment will come in which they will reproduce past history in our spirit, making it present. Many documents that are mute to us (what, to us, is now story) will restart speaking, coming back to life. With this in mind, it will be necessary to remember that spirit itself is history: spirit already carries in itself the whole history and it would relive its history even without those external things, which are stories and documents. Nevertheless, those external things are instruments and preparatory acts that he does in order to activate inner revival.

5. The Pathologies of History

From this point, Croce evaluates the existence of some mental forms, such as history, story, philology, which may move from physiology, that is from being real and rational, to pathology. In summary Croce is asking himself: what are the diseases of history? He points out three of them: philological history, poetic history and oratory history.

5.1. Philological History

As far as philological history is concerned, Croce states that he feels enormous respect toward philologists (by the way, profound philological studies were the starting point of his researches). The philosopher explains the
reason of his position against philological history: it is reduced to the transfer of different books or different parts of many books, into a single book. Philological history is a compilatory thesis, because in it the relationship between document and historian’s mind was broken. It spares the effort of analyzing more books, since they are presented in a single one (for example, a philosophy handbook). They do not contain any historical thought (the philosophy handbook has no historical thought): philological history is a compilatory one because the presented entries are placed in an unrelated way in respect to the tale we are telling. Once acknowledged that it brings stories and documents, but no histories, what are the three flaws of philological history? The first one is traced to the idea and claim of composing history through documents and tales (stories that are buffed up and reorganized, truth-less stories). The second is the belief that it has any sort of truth; story refers to its own authority and not to its own truth. The third and final flaw is that it is not interesting neither, being not true, and therefore in contradiction with true history: only critical history is true history. Philological history is untrue because it is not interesting; this term shows a determination of practical and ethical kind.

The fact that philological history proceeds without truth and passion, explains the reasons of the vivid conflict between philological historians and historians in the strictest sense of the word. The best example of such diatribe can be found in Bolingbroke’s 1751 “Letters on the study of history”, in which he defines erudition as magnificent ignorance (Croce, 2012: p. 79). However, we should acknowledge that simple philosophers, poor scholars, archaeologists, bring only positive factors and, were they to disappear, we should have to replace them immediately (Croce, 2006).

Philological history perishes not because of its opponents, rather because of its enthusiasts that destroy it by conceiving it as detached from life, as mere exercise. The passage concludes with his friend’s irony who, after reading a handbook of ancient Rome history, said to be the mightiest among philosophers because they come to the conclusion of knowing nothing by constant efforts.

5.2. Poetic History

As stated previously, philological history is the history which is not interesting, in the sense that it has no practical and ethical interest; poetic history stands as critique of philological history and it is not about an interest of thinking, but rather of feeling. Examples are given by “affectionate” biographies, saints’ biographies, but also those satirical of hated ones or patriotic stories, or the tale told by an anti-Semite that depicts the Jew everywhere. It is not history truly lived, but somehow fomented by feeling, on one side by the corrupt political class and on the other by the angry people: I analyze this situation through the pretty or non-pretty, not through the true and non-true. Poetic history is at the same time history of what is pretty and of what is not, while contemporary history is history of what is true and what is false. The value of feeling concerns life, while the value of history lies in the values of thinking. Philological history is both an objective and neutral history: in this case fantasy is mixed in and it goes beyond a mere empty description. Nonetheless, a misunderstanding remains: this fantasy must not be separated from historic synthesis, distinguishable from pure poetic fantasy, bound to thought, and for the sake of thought itself.

Already it appears clear how contemporary history presumes subjective thinking, a rise of the historian in both thought and action; contemporary history presumes the exaltation of historic subjectivity, thinking or acting, as subjectivity of thought.

5.3. Oratory History

The third kind of pathology of history is to be found mainly in ancient times, in what was defined as oratory or rhetoric history. It presumed to teach philosophy through example: to move someone to virtue, to institute the best possible political or military organizations, to delight; and it is found also nowadays (often translating into morals or educational systems).

The structure of rhetoric history presumes a clearly preformed history (poetic or philological) which is narrated to a practical end. In any case, we speak of practical act, which uses history as a mean; oratory history always comprises two elements: history, and a practical end, which lead to a practical act. It takes the shape of a history apart, as it is not only a simple history of emotions: first, it has an end to meet and second, such an end is not imposed from the outside, but coincides with the very essence of this history: we should consider it as halfway between poetic and practical.

Once identified the pathologies of history, Croce states that: “History is (ideally) contemporary” (Croce, 2012:
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p. 98), as it becomes such in thinking, through the actions of the historian whose end is to reestablish the historic reality of a determined dimension: this history is contemporary in thought. Therefore, if I want to make history, I must necessarily make use of subjective thinking, in order to be able to comprehend and then act upon that very thought.

5.4. The Role of Pathologies of History

It is now important to understand how those pathologies, previously spoken about, are not deconstructed: they could be if realized as facts, yet they are simple presumptions. This mistake, actually, is nothing but the negative or dialectic moment of the spirit, necessary for the realization of the positive moment. The perfect example is found within us: while examining the historic subject, fondness and aversion arise (our poetic history), along with our intentions as practical human beings (our oratory history) and our chronicle memories (our philological history). As we go beyond these, we find ourselves in possession of a new and deep historic memories: thus is history affirmed, distinguished from non-history by overcoming the dialectical moments born from them.

6. Knowledge

At this stage, the issue of knowledge is opened. We must recognize how narrow our knowledge actually is, especially compared to our thirst for it: the only way out seems to be focusing on that detail which answers a determined problem, and which constitutes the living and acting history: that is, contemporary history, as “no fact remains unknown, in the act of being carried out” (Croce, 2012: p. 107).

In this regard, Croce quotes Tolstoy, criticized as the perfect example of those writers of historic novellas for his decision of narrating battles through hearsay, voices and tales: Croce stresses how nobody can predict the outcome of a battle, or even know how it actually played out because the very moment it is over, a legendary and artificial account spreads around, and only a fool would take it as historical.

Croce states that in any given moment, we know every side of history that we care to know, and what is left out doesn’t matter to us: for this reason we don’t possess the prerequisites to know it.

What is left out, we will know once it is of interest to us: it is nothing but the eternal ghost of la “cosa in sé”\(^1\), the fantastic projection of our endless process of acting and knowing.

The historian doesn’t stand outside the thinking process, he stands indeed as the thinking process, which may never go beyond its own historic situation.

6.1. The Historic Knowledge as the Entirety of Knowledge

Before concluding this consideration, I would like to hint to another work by Croce, to better comprehend in detail how he imagined knowledge. It is the year 1938, the title is “La storia come pensiero e come azione”, an interesting work where Croce upholds his fundamental philosophical system, built in the first 15 years of the century, which he had abandoned after 1920 after studying aesthetics. According to my point of view, this is an essential work, as in it, Croce reaffirms the principle of historic knowledge as the entirety of knowledge. He says that every judgment is, doubtlessly, a historic judgment or history: if this judgment is relationship of subject and predicate, the subject being judged will always be a historic fact in continuous evolution. Even inanimate objects are considered in this (as per the example of the rock I move from my path).

From this statement we can infer another consequence: historical judgment is not only an order of knowledge, but knowledge itself, the form filling the whole cognitive field, leaving nothing out of its scope: it is indeed undeniable that any cognitive process is bound to life, or action. Croce’s absolute historicism clearly shows here.

6.2. The Historic Knowledge and the Natural Science

Yet now we could ask ourselves: what role will natural science and philosophy take? Even natural science is based upon the practical needs of living, and to their fulfillment: the idea was introduced by Francis Bacon (he who merged medicine and history) according to Croce, who here proposes an interesting passage, with an ex-

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\(^1\)The term is hardly translatable form the original Italian. To better understand it, in other area of philosophy such an expression is synonymous with “noumenon”. I took the liberty of either translating it as “his reasoning”, mainly for purposes of semantics and better sentence flow, or leaving it untranslated.
ample. One may memorize the entirety of the medical knowledge, every kind of sickness and their characteristics but, quoting Montaigne “it’s good for Galeno, not the sick” (Croce, 2002: p. 27). This is so because we know little in this way, as little as someone who analyzes history through conscience. Knowledge is not knowing every kind of sickness, knowledge is the historic knowledge of the sick person, knowledge of an individual in relation to all the others. Why? Because only in relation to others can I recognize him as sick.

Therefore, historic knowledge is not in contrast with natural science as the latter also works in the world. What about philosophy though? Traditional philosophy has its eyes trained on the sky: following this, it is based on a dualistic conception of a reality transcending reality, of a metaphysics upon physics: its peculiarity is to have something of the divine, where God’s name is indifferently God or Matter, Idea or Will, but always a principle transcending the world, historically speaking, and in opposition to an inferior phenomenal reality.

Now though, historical thinking has rendered traditional philosophy historic by going beyond its dialectically unresolved dualism: all its doctrines and concepts have been interpreted as historical facts, born of fulfilled and unfulfilled needs.

Following this process of making philosophy into history, Croce affirms how the former has lost its autonomy, that is the metaphysical aspect: what it is now is not philosophy anymore, but history: this historic philosophy is defined in its core by the principle of identity between individual and universal.

7. The Finite Is Ideal

7.1. The Knowledge of Universal History

Now I would like to get back to the main point of this paper, and introducing by doing so the concept that it is necessary to surpass any dualism between history and “sopra-storia”2. First, this surpassing is an idea bound to Croce’s way of interpreting universal history and the concept of finite as ideal. Having analyzed the concepts of knowledge and history, and thus acknowledging how we can know nothing but the finite and the particular, must we renounce the knowledge of universal history? Croce’s answer is affirmative, but he also reminds us that we are renouncing something which we could not hope to get, and therefore should not be of grievance to us: even universal history is not a fact, but a pretense. Indeed if we were to be watchful, we could see how universal history always reveals particular histories or in other words, histories born of a specific interest and hinged on a single problem.

It is now clear how the gaze of God, watching History as-it-becomes, is a mere fantastic projection, as it is a finite gaze repeated an infinite number of times: to negate universal history doesn’t mean to negate the knowledge of the universal in history.

7.2. Beyond the Separation between Finite and Infinite

From this point forward, Croce develops his concept of finite as ideal. The finite gaze is limited not by fantastic projection as much as by thought, and for this reason thought is considered universal. The finite only exists in abstract: history deals with the subject of thought, something ideal, which Croce always considers an immanent ideal, impossible to figure as real outside of its historical situation.

We can only operate with, and know the finite: la “cosa in sé”, there is no external gaze which sees history before it is such. This gaze must not exist, otherwise we should have to acknowledge a separation between essence and existence in history: if such a separation were to be admitted, then we should speak of Philosophy of History. History is thought, and as such is thought of the universal in its concreteness, it is infinite thought of something which is determined, finite: the mere finite and particular only exists in abstract, the reign of the individual. The concept introduced by Croce is, if we believe the separation between finite and infinite, known history and as a thing in itself, we cannot recognize history as it is.

8. The Contemporary History and the Historic Philosophy

Furthermore, he affirms that by failing to tell history from philosophy we are left entangled in a discourse without exit, and a whole series of unresolvable dualisms. However, if history gains the knowledge of the eternal present, it reveals itself as being one with philosophy, which is of its own the thought of the eternal present.

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2The term refers to the concept of a stage above that of simple history.
Croce also states that if history is correctly interpreted, it negates the need for a universal history and thus, immanent philosophy is identical to history and eliminates the idea of a universal philosophy. In conclusion history, in becoming contemporary history, as philosophy becoming historic philosophy, frees itself from the burden of being unable to know what is unknown, as it was and will be known, and philosophy from that of never reaching an absolute truth.

This critique of dualism is directed at religion too. We are pilgrims wandering in this world in preparation of the eternal life, seen as opposed to history: to reach the eternal present, one must go beyond such chronology. Religion, when not philosophically intended is based on the dualism between truth of fact and reason, finite and infinite, thought and reality, rational and real: all these options are seen as in opposition, not linked one to the other. In what the philosopher calls the dualistic vision of history and philosophy, this study is built on the premise that there is in fact a thought which sees the concatenation of facts.

9. Croce, Heidegger, Rosmini

In this regard, I would like to conclude by citing two authors. First, it appears clear that Croce opposes the view Heidegger introduces in “Essere e Tempo”: what Heidegger describes is not a subject of thinking, but one of life, of existence. He says that the subject encompassing being is one of life and existence indeed: what it comprises is not a product of its own thinking as much as the revelation of being through this existence and life. In truth, the subject is just the link to what being means: the “existing” is not a thinking subject but the vehicle with which being reveals itself. Now, if the existing subject is what we just said it is, being is then something which foreruns real history.

Secondly, I would hint at the famous debate against Rosmini, and analyze the first chapter of the 1906 “Saggio sullo Hegel” (redacted by Croce the previous year, where he translates the “Enciclopedia delle scienze filosofiche”), titled “La dialettica o sintesi degli opposti”. The debate originated from an objection raised by Rosmini on Hegel, about the concept of dialectics (Croce, 2007). We know that the German philosopher did recognize the importance of the negative moment as the impulse which starts the entire dialectic mechanism, and the fact that the first moment must be in the becoming, not in the thesis, as it already comprises thesis and antithesis. Indeed, if we were to start from an empirical analysis, the synthesis would be the third element, while according to both Hegel and Croce it is the first. The starting point is the becoming, which I conceive as antithesis of being and not being. The becoming precedes this, and the terms being and not being are conceivable only in this becoming. Now, this becoming is understood as a dynamic initiated by a negative, a lack of: it is interpreted as a shortcoming which starts the becoming of good. Having explained this, if the first moment is neither being nor nothing, but the becoming, it comprises both being and not being: in this case, Croce affirms how the becoming, in Hegel, resembles the concept of Dionysian in Nietzsche. Thus, philosophy as a universal concreteness is called Dionysian. Such an element, which is in fact the becoming, scares the feeble thinkers, amongst whom Croce places Rosmini.

On the other side, what does Rosmini say about Hegel? He criticizes Hegel by stating that history must be observed from the outside. The becoming has to observed by some mind; the mind which oversees, knows and sustains the becoming must not be mistaken with the becoming’s own mind. Furthermore, what reason could bring one to negate oneself? If madness is the negation of identity, how would one explain the mad idea of negating oneself? The important point for our discussion is that madness is the attempt of negating the positive, therefore the negative or antithesis. Rosmini also states that by placing the becoming as the first moment, he turns the being mad or opens the doors to madness in everything.

Such a discourse prompts Croce to answer by affirming that Rosmini is stuck in “his reasoning”: he cannot agree with Rosmini because according to the latter madness is the reason of history not observed from the outside while according to the former the same history is comprehensible only with a wider scoped gaze, one encompassing history in itself through a logic of instincts and not of dualistic elements. From this we could open the debate of spirit in relation to pathology and the concept of Hegelian dialectics in Croce’s work. Perhaps another time.

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References


“Like Olive Shoots”: Insight into the Secret of a Happy Family in Psalm 128

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Abstract
Beset by all kinds of ideologies that divest it of its divinely endowed values, family in our contemporary society suffers greatly from those who purport to have a better way of fulfilling its divine mandate. All who understand the importance of family are greatly concerned at the overt derailment that has proved detrimental to human society. The Sacred Scripture offers us varied insights into solving the problem in which we find ourselves. Psalm 128 chosen for this paper is one of those texts in the Bible that reflects on family and its value in human society. As a Wisdom Psalm and didactic in nature, the poem presents to its readers what family is in dire need of at this time. The meaning of this Psalm is coded in its rich poetic techniques and similes that the paper endeavours to explain in its immediate context as a Song of Ascents and in the contexts of other Wisdom texts of the Old Testament. Its theological thrust, the fear of God, which is introduced at the beginning and iterated in various phrases within the Psalm comes out clearly as messages the Psalm offers to worrisomely deformed image of family in our time.

Keywords
Family, Psalm 128, Wisdom Psalms, Fear of God, Retribution, Vine

1. Introduction
Perplexed would anyone, who truly understands the sacredness of marriage as the oldest divinely instituted reality, be at the face of the perverting situation of the surging concepts of human family in our society today. Who would not be startled by the many new forms of constituting a family? Well-meaning individuals of varied religious professions as well as those who claim to profess nothing marvel at how human beings themselves are steadily eroding and desecrating marriage. Ubiquity and frequency of divorce seems to have degenerated into unnatural and deplorable form of marriage of both partners of same sex. Some resort to wilful and premeditated

single parenting whereby an individual opt to rear children exclusively and outside marriage. One also finds some who have agreed to live together but are devoid of that divine love that ought to bind the couple together and of which the Creator intended in his symbolic gesture of making the primordial parents of humankind share common substance (Genesis 2:21-24). A Preparatory Document of the Third Extraordinary Synod of Catholic Bishops articulates these unusual phenomena which deviate from God’s plan for human family in these words:

Concerns which were unheard of until a few years ago have arisen today as a result of different situations, from the widespread practice of cohabitation, which does not lead to marriage, and sometimes even excludes the idea of it, to same-sex unions between persons, who are, not infrequently, permitted to adopt children (Synod of Bishops, 2013: 1).

Repercussions of these ills stare at all of us in the face and engender diverse social anomalies because nature has been distorted and divine plan apparently thwarted. Family as the nucleus of the society has been adversely punctured and this action rebounds on all its aspects. Deformed families which we experience today contribute immensely to our social ills. Terrorism of various shades and shapes and multifaceted corruptions in all sectors of life are invariably upshot of unhealthy family and clear evidence of lapses in parenting skills. Therefore, it is timely that the Catholic Church is reflecting, in a twofold Synod (Extraordinary and Ordinary in 2014 and 2015 respectively), captioned “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization”, on the indispensable place and role of family in our contemporary society. With this exercise, the Church intends to continue to play her prophetic role in re-directing human race aright whenever there is growing concern as we are experiencing today.

The Church’s foremost working tool is the deposit of her faith, Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, for both contain the divine plan and role of family is prominent in this repertoire of God’s words. The two accounts of creation at the beginning of the Book of Genesis reveal God’s plan on this. Human beings, created as male and female (Genesis 1:27), participate in perpetuating and preservation of creation (Genesis 1:28). Procreation of human beings is intended in an indissoluble union between a man and a woman. This was affirmed by man in these words: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23), and the concluding explicatory observation of the narrator: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (New Revised Standard Version, 1993; Genesis 2:24). Jesus in his teaching sealed and confirmed this Old Testament teaching: “Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matthew 19:6). What God joins together, as we read in the Bible, is one man and one woman. The grace that accompanies the indissolubility of this union is intrinsic in the divine act of joining them. It rests on those bound by this marriage bond to recognise this grace and uphold it, bearing in mind that “the family is a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004: 211).

Psalm 128 chosen for this study succinctly articulates in a clearly Wisdom language the status quo of an ideal family that has recognised the inherent divine gift in their midst and has set it aglow in the life of all its members. This text features in the annual liturgical Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and as a key prayer in the celebration of marriage. The choice of Psalm 128 in this contribution has been inspired by its liturgical use and its teaching on ideal family that proffers solution to the general concern many express about the state of family in our society today. The paper focuses on the study of this Biblical text, which is a poem and a Wisdom text, with the intention to elicit from it features of the ideal family depicted therein.

2. The Text of Psalm 128

1 A Song of Ascents Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.
2 You shall indeed eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; happy are you and it shall go well with you.
3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the inner part of your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.
4 Thus shall the man be blessed, who fears the Lord.
5 May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
6 May you see your children’s children.
Peace be upon Jerusalem!
The Hebrew text of Psalm 128 does not manifest outstanding textual issues when read with some ancient versions. In verse 2, for instance, what has been identified as an emphatic (Briggs, 1986) kī is omitted in the Septuagint. Actually, acting as an adverb here, this particle accentuates the verb (tōʾ kēl) that follows it. The sense of the phrase could read: you will certainly eat the labour (“produce of” intended) of your hands. This adverbial nuance strengthens the meaning of the blissful state of the God-fearing person carefully coded in the phrase ‘ašrê (“happy is...”) in verse 1. Again in verse 2 the rare expression ‘ašrêkā with pronominal suffix of the second person masculine singular on ‘ašrê occurs again in Deuteronomy 33:29 where it is predicated of the People of Israel: “Happy are you, O Israel!” (cf. also Isaiah 32:20 and Qohelet 10:17). In Psalm 128:2, its apposition, w’tōb lāk “it shall go well with you”, embodies the meaning of ‘ašrêkā. Another word that needs attention in verse 3 of our Psalm is šētîlē, masculine plural construct of šātîl which occurs only here in the entire Hebrew Bible (Brown, 1979) with the meaning “transplanted shoot or slip”. It is construed in Psalm 128 with olive, hence the rendition “olive shoots” as a simile for the children of the God-fearer depicted in our text. Again kī in verse 4 is omitted in a good number of Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac and in St. Jerome’s translation; it is also observed that many modern translations seem not to take notice of it. Could this particle have the same emphatic function as in verse 2? The answer seems affirmative here even though the phrase, hinnēh kī in our text is another hapax legomenon. It has been observed that kī “is used sometimes with adverbs and interjections to add force or distinctiveness to the affirmation which follows” (Brown, 1979: 472). Basing on its supposed emphatic value in verse 4, hinnēh kī heightens the divine blessing on the God-fearer of our text: he shall be surely blessed. Subtle as the points of emphasis might appear, the writer of our poem has its focus with which readers could come to grips in a close look at its structure.

A cursory reading of Psalm 128 will not fail to observe an alternation between parts of the text that are constructed in third person masculine singular (verses 1 and 4) and parts that that in second person masculine singular (verses 2 - 3 and 5 - 6). In verse 1, the use of the participles yērēh (“he who fears God”) and hōlēk (“he who walks”) adds vividness to the declaration expressed by ‘ašrê (“happy is...”) at the beginning of the text. It is an alternation between declaration and direct address. Some scholars deduce from this the presence of a soloist who walks”) adds vividness to the declaration expressed by ‘ašrêkā. Some scholars deduce from this the presence of a soloist who walks”, or simply “within your house”. One also observes the word, ‘ašrêkā, but it is used sometimes with adverbs and interjections to add force or distinctiveness to the affirmation which follows” (Brown, 1979: 472). Basing on its supposed emphatic value in verse 4, hinnēh kī heightens the divine blessing on the God-fearer of our text: he shall be surely blessed. Subtle as the points of emphasis might appear, the writer of our poem has its focus with which readers could come to grips in a close look at its structure.

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The first declaration in verses 1 is followed by the contents of what is declared, stated in verses 2 - 3. A closer reading of these contents perceives more segments for, although both are linked by their common feature as extra, verses 4 - 6 are extra. It is on blessing from outside the house of the righteous person, who fears YHWH. The blessing he experiences in the innermost part of his house extends to the wider society of which his house is micro-society. This second part of the Psalm takes up again some of the key words of the first part: bānēkā “your children” and tôb “prosperity”. With this, the Psalm can be divided into two major parts:
verses 1 - 3 and verses 4 - 6 (Ravasi, 1997; Girard, 1994). There are, however, some (The New Revised Standard Version, 1993; Terrien, 2003) who perceive a tripartite structure in Psalm 128; that is, verses 1 - 2; 3 - 4; 5 - 6).

The literary genre of Psalm 128 is clearly marked by the first word, 'ašrê (“happy is...”), that begins it; therefore, it is generally categorised as a Wisdom Psalm, or Psalm influenced by Wisdom, as some prefer to call it (Murphy 2002). This word, ‘ašrê (“happy is...”), is a characteristic of Old Testament Wisdom Literature, whose aim is pedagogical, to teach from human experiences (Crenshaw, 1998). Each of the Old Testament Wisdom writings has a specific message to convey. They “deal with daily human experience in the good world created by God” (Murphy, 2002: 1). What could be the goal of the author of Ps 128? The initial phrase of this Psalm gives its readers an interpretative clue as to its meaning. One who fears the Lord and walks in his ways is proclaimed happy. The rest of the text explores the reason behind this interjection. Other features of Wisdom writings in our Psalm include the fear of the Lord; many children as blessing from God; use of similes; illustrations from nature; rewards and retributions (Bullock, 2001). Actually, what Wisdom Psalms and Old Testament Wisdom Books have in common is mostly the opposition between pious and godless, an opposition seen in many parts of the Book of Proverbs (Westermann, 1989). Psalm 128 subtly makes this comparison, even without employing any of the common Hebrew words that depict the godless.

Besides being a Wisdom Poem, Psalm 128, as we can read from its superscription, šîr hamma’ālōṯ (A Song of Ascents), is a Pilgrimage Psalm in the collection of Psalms 120 - 134. With the exception of Psalm 132 these Psalms are short. They are known for their varied expressions of trust in God and belief in Jerusalem as the source of blessings and symbol of national unity. One of the characteristics of Pilgrimage Psalms is their focus on the family, its agricultural pursuits, hopes and joys (Zenger, 2005). Other features of this group of Psalms include courage, optimism, homely similes, and Aramaisms (Goulder, 1997). Psalm 128 shares these features with other Psalms in this group as it combines the traits of Songs of Ascents and Wisdom Literature. Other Songs of Ascents like Psalm 127 and 133 have also been identified as Wisdom Poems (Hermann & Begrich, 1998; Obiorah, 2010; Obiorah, 2011). In fact, there is a well calculated concatenation between Psalms 127 and 128; both share some themes in common, especially that children are a gift from God and a reward for good deeds. One notes in particular the phrase, ‘ašrê (“happy is...”) in both texts. “The placement of Psalm 128 after Psalm 127 is enlightening. Beginning where Psalm 127 ends (“happiness”), Psalm 128 shares much with its predecessor, including its four emphases (household, city, labor, and children), terms (“eat”, “fruit”), and the focus on reward (Segal, 2012). It has also been argued that there is a cumulative course movement to which each of the Pilgrimage Songs contributes (Mannati, 1979). According to this, Psalms 128 - 129 respectively contribute blessing and curse to this course movement, and it is true of Psalm 128 for it is all about blessing and happiness of one who fears the Lord.

A related question often asked when reflecting on the genre of a text like ours is about the life situation that engendered its composition. There are some who surmise that it was performed in the worship service with priests and singers, particularly as pilgrims ascended the Jerusalem Temple (Hermann & Begrich, 1998). This could be true of Psalm 128 from its genre as a Song of Ascents and also from its alternating structure described above. This notwithstanding, its sapiential character could make it defy any specific Sitz im Leben for Wisdom sayings transcend boundaries and are relevant at all times.

3. Reading Psalm 128 Closely

Every Biblical text bears its interpretative value in conjunction with other texts of the Bible. One arrives at their integral meaning when studied in the entire context of the Divine Revelation. Psalm 128 shares its text and contents with some other traditions in the Bible. Firstly, it is a Wisdom poem with the characteristic features of Old Testament sapiential and didactic writings. Secondly, it belongs to the group of Songs of Ascents which have their distinctive marks. Thirdly, our Psalm contains prominent elements of Old Testament traditions on family and its expectations. Fourthly, Old Testament teaching on retribution is also represented in our text. With these sketched out milieux and basing on its interrelated bipartite structure seen above, we begin our study of the text of Psalm 128 with much emphasis on what it conveys about family. The first part (verses 1 - 3) of Psalm 128 focuses on the blessing of the family and happiness of the God-fearer; while the second part (verses 4 - 5) is on how this household blessing relates outside. The hinge that holds both together is fear of the Lord, which is presented in the text as a prerequisite for this divine gift.
3.1. Blessing within the Family (Verses 1 - 3)

When ‘ašrē (“happy is…”) is predicated of an individual, often in Wisdom writings like Psalm 128, the content of the blessing, that is, what merited such proclamation of blessedness, is proposed to all to emulate. This means that the person of whom the proclamation is made has achieved concrete act that necessitated the recognition. The use of ‘ašrē (“happy is…”) is very frequent in the Psalter; occurring about twenty-six times out of forty-five times it appears in the Hebrew Bible. Its significance, especially in the Psalter is that it pronounces happiness on someone or some group of individuals for their fortunate state of life and sometimes for an already realised situation in life which very often has to do with their right relationship with God. The proclamation of ‘ašrē (“happy is…”) on persons also functions as an implicit exhortation, for in proclaiming blessedness on persons, the speaker indirectly recommends the good actions that merit for the bearers of ‘ašrē (“happy is…”) their fortunate life (Obiorah, 2004).

In the first part of Psalm 128 (verses 1 - 3), as well as in the second part (verses 5 - 6), the act that deserve this recognition and exhortation is stated in participial phrases, adjacent to each other in almost a distich synonymous parallelism: kol-y’rē YHWH “everyone who fear the Lord” and explained in the next stich as hahōlek bidrākāw “who walks in his ways”. It belongs to traditional Wisdom (Flores, 2013; Abulad, 2013). The fact that the two verbs in these stichs are constructed as participles means that the person being described here bears these actions as his habit. His life is to fear the Lord which also means to walk in the ways of the Lord. Furthermore, there is sense of an aphorism in this strophe; it is a general dictum that happiness is the lot of anyone who fears the Lord. What does it mean to fear the Lord? In Psalm 112:1, the author explains it as delighting in the commandments of the Lord; that is, keeping his commandments: “Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments” (Psalm 112:1). The expression “Fear of the Lord” in Psalm 128 is another sapiential tag besides the proclamation of happiness at its inception. It is a frequent phrase in Old Testament Wisdom Literature particularly in the axiom: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7). The aspect that is emphasized in Psalm 128 is fear of God as devotion to Torah (Fuhs, 1990), for “ways” of the Lord, as we read in our text, is a synonym of Torah. “Strict adherence to Yahweh and his will is the issue, in accordance with the life and theology of the period” (Gerstenberger, 2001: 349).

Verses 2 - 3 of Psalm 128 state the reward of such fundamental option in a person; it is a decision that is vital in the entire life of the righteous. Psalm 128 “celebrates the domestic happiness granted to the upright, in accordance with the teaching of the sages on earthly retribution” (The New Jerusalem Bible, 1990: 947). The Reward for righteous deed or retribution could be understood in the sense that Psalm 1 has presented it. The simile for the God-fearer in this portrays his fate. Whoever enters into the realm of the divine becomes like all those within it. The tree planted by the riverside, according to Psalm 1, cannot but be like all other trees in this ambient; they are ever green.

In verse 2 the first aspect of this retribution is that the righteous person will be able to enjoy the fruit of his labour, for it is the lot of those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways. Those who keep the commandments of the Lord have their reward beginning here on earth and they will live to see it realised in their lifetime. This is part of the blessing for obedience as delineated in Deuteronomy 28:11-14. Psalm 128:2b uses a metonym to accentuate this when it employs the noun y’gā’ā which primarily means “labour”. Furthermore the presence of emphatic kî, translated as “certainly” lays more emphasis on this reward that the righteous person will inevitably obtain because he has made a fundamental option to walk in God’s ways. “Walking in the ways of the Lord is receptivity to the blessing of the Lord” (Mays, 1994: 404). The second stich of verse 2 elucidates what the first expresses as eating the labour of one’s hands. It means, according to this stich, to be happy, ‘ašrēkā, and more especially in the phrase w’fōb lāk translated by some as “it shall go well with you” (cf. The New Revised Standard Version, 1993); literally, “happiness shall be yours”. In other words, both expressions—‘ašrēkā and w’fōb lāk—are further emphases on the initial ‘ašrē (“happy is…”) at the beginning of the Psalm.

The righteous, y’rē YHWH (“who fears the Lord”), has his reward in his domestic life, in the recess of his house. The poet outlines this in a four stich strophe of verse 3 beginning first with the wife and then the children, presenting this family as an ideal. The wife is likened to a vine, gepen, which bears fruit, pōrlyāh. One notes the unusual construct form ‘ešrēkā instead of iš’kā of išsāh (wife); this form is another hapax legomenon in the text. She is not merely a vine but vine that is fruitful. We have here a symbol derived from the agricultural life of the people. Vine like many trees and crops in the Bible are symbolic of the real life of the psalmists’ contemporary situations.
Vine is one of the seven species with which the land of Israel is blessed (Deuteronomy 8:8). It is a symbol of the People of Israel. In Psalm 80:8-13, for instance, Israel is a vine that God brought out of Egypt, drove out the nations because of his people, planted it and cared for it. Isaiah 5 employs the symbol of vineyard to describe God’s unconditional love for his people, in spite of their unfaithfulness. “Theologically, speaking, the grapevine, its fruit, and the luxuries that it produces, such as grape juice, grape honey, and grape cakes (often with other typical products), are viewed positively as visible signs of the blessing of Yahweh and of the fruitfulness he brought about in the land Israel inhabited” (Hentschke, 1997: 58-59). Generally in the ancient Near East a wife is often described as a vineyard in which a man plants seeds that bring forth children (Vamosh, 2007). Vine symbolizes the vitality and beauty of the wife who achieves a close and harmonious relationship with her numerous children who are depicted as olive shoots (Rogerson & McKay, 1977).

The wife of the righteous man is like vine filled with its fruits in the innermost parts, y’rēkā, of his house. The noun y’rēkā used in the plural indicates here the intimacy that exists in the family; this is the fertile soil that makes the woman what she is, for she could not have been fruitful in a chaotic condition. The fruitfulness of the woman calls to mind the ode to a capable wife in Proverbs 31:10-31, which is “a paean of praise to women’s success at what we now call “multi-tasking” essential to the survival of the biblical household” (Vamosh, 2007: 6). From the text of Proverbs 31:10-31, particularly verse 20, one also perceives that the happiness of the family is also due to the “fruitfulness” of the wife. For the author of Psalm 128, this is part of the blessings of the righteous, who fears God and walks in his ways. An aspect of this reward is the gift of a fruitful wife. It is also observed that in giving their daughter in marriage, parents and relatives in their matrimonial blessings wish that the bride be fruitful. Thus, Rebecca’s relatives prayed for her in these words: “May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads” (Genesis 24:60).

Using another symbol in form of a simile, the psalmist expatiates further on the joy of the family of the God-fearer in our Psalm. The children of this righteous person are like tender and healthy saplings in his house, for “it is a universally valid truth that blessing dwells only in a house in which the fear of God reigns and provides the inner strength and unity of the members” (Weiser, 1962: 769). The children in such a happy home are like š’tîlê zêtim “shoots of olive tree” (It is not “branches of olive” as we read in some translations, especially in our liturgy); in other words, they are potential full-fledged olive trees with all the rich features of this symbolic Biblical plant. “Offshoots that surround an olive tree grow both from the roots and the trunk of the tree” (Hareuveni, 1989: 83). Olive tree, zayit, is one of the seven species with which the land of Israel is blessed (Deuteronomy 8:8). It is ever-green even when other trees wither and exfoliate in extremely harsh weather. Thus the righteous who takes refuge in God’s house compares himself to olive tree in these words: “I am like a green olive tree in the house of God” (Psalm 52:8). Olive is known for its longevity; it is believed that olive can reach the life span of about one thousand years. Its tree radiates with beauty, especially when it is laden with fruit: “A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit” (Jeremiah 11:16). The shoots of olive sprout from its roots and protect the trunk, and, if it is cut down, they ensure its continued existence (Feliks, 1996). “The young green olive trees in the comparison symbolize the vital strength of the growing children. It is an idyllic picture that the psalmist paints here. He wants to describe the rich blessing of the family in an inner joy (Kraus, 1993). All these features of olive are understood in the simile that portrays the children of the righteous.

The rich symbol of shoots of olive is completed in the phrase that follows it: sâbîb l’ṣâlīhānēkā “around your table”. In this text, table is reminiscent of Psalm 23:5 and Proverbs 9:1-2 as well as the fruit of one’s labour mentioned in verse 2 of Psalm 128. The members of the family of the righteous stay together around one table. We have here a sign of communion, peace and harmony. The picture of the children around the table carefully concludes the proclamation of blessings on this righteous person which begins with his being able to eat the fruit of his labour (cf. verse 2). This obvious inclusion further confirms the bipartite structure of the Psalm into verses 1 - 3 and verses 4 - 5. In the first part of the text, the blessings of the righteous are expressed by botanical similes of vine and olive tree which are part of the staple products of Palestine. The author of Psalm 128 is an optimistic believer in the principle of God’s retribution (Van Niekerk, 1995). God generously rewards all who trust in him for he is nobody’s debtor (Allen, 2002).

3.2 Divine Blessing from Family to the Society (vv. 4 - 6)

This second segment of Psalm 128 concentrates on the blessing of the righteous person by the Lord and in a place where he shares in common with other people; in this case, it is Zion also called Jerusalem. The righteous
in our text still retains his designation as “he who fears the Lord”. There is, indeed, some continuity in the two parts of the Psalm, because the exclamation phrase introduced by hinneh ki kën y’boraq gâber “thus indeed shall the man be blessed” (verse 4) links the preceding verses 1 - 3 to this second part. The righteous who fears the Lord is proclaimed happy in the first part because of the fundamental option he had made to adhere to God’s ways. He is richly blessed by a good fruitful and harmonious family, bestowed on him as a reward of his good life. Similar blessings are enunciated in the second part introduced with some emphatic particles that are probably employed here to accentuate the supposedly priestly blessings that follow in a cultic setting.

There are considerable similarities between the contents of verses 4 - 6 and the seven elements of Old Testament formula of blessings (Ravasi, 1997). First, YHWH is the source of blessings; he blesses from Zion where he dwells; this forms the background of the theology of Zion Songs in the Psalter (cf. Psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87 and 122). Psalm 128 clearly specifies this when it says in verse 5a y’bârek’kâ YHWH missiyôn “may the Lord bless you from Zion”. Second, the first content of blessing is always communitarian; it concerns the common good. It inserts the person into the society in which the person belongs. In the same way, the first content of the divine blessing invoked on the righteous of our Psalm is stated in verse 5b as piy y’rûsâlîm “prosperity of Jerusalem”. The same is wished on his behalf in the first part of the Psalm. His personal prosperity or wellbeing has value when understood in the context of the common good. Third, blessing is not partially given; it involves the whole life of a person: kot y’mê hayyêkâ “all the days of your life” (verse 5c). The personal history of the faithful and that of the community are under God’s paternal care. Fourth, the second content of blessing is family and personal fertility, gift of children to the person and his family: ur rûshânîm l’tânêkâ “may you see your children’s children”. Besides this meaning, it is worth noting that to know one’s grand children is a sign of longevity (Proverbs 17:6; cf. Genesis 50:23; Job 42:16). Fifth, blessing is not vague and intangible; rather, it is a lived experience; thus the use of the verb of experience r’h “to see, experience”. Sixth, blessing is also presented as peace, sâlôm, which can be used as a final liturgical greeting. It has social, spiritual, corporal and messianic dimensions. All these aspects of sâlôm qualify Psalm 128 its position among the Songs of Ascents. Seventh, the backdrop of blessings, particularly in Psalm 128 is that of retribution. One’s faithfulness to God attracts divine blessing. He fears YHWH and walks in his ways and he is in turn rewarded for this.

These seven elements of blessings elicited from Psalm 128 have social dimension which has its root in personal disposition towards God. There is a pendular movement in this because a person does not live in isolation; he lives his faithfulness to God in a society and the society also contributes to this personal endeavour. “Thus the destiny of the Holy City and the personal fate of the believer are intimately twisted together: an unmistakable sign of early Jewish theological thinking” (Gerstenberger, 2001: 351). The effect of the personal life of an individual is manifested in all aspects of his life, represented in Psalm 128 as one’s labour and family life. This personal life is the raison d’être for the beatitude that proclaims in our Psalm the happiness of family life in the context of Jerusalem and of Israel (Alonso Schökel & Carniti, 1993). Again, “the final blessing (verses 5 - 6) is, however, broader in scope, and suggests that the prosperity of the nation itself rests on the foundation of a sound family life” (Sabourin, 1974: 385).

The botanic symbols of vine and olive typifying the mother and the children respectively in Psalm 128 are both symbols of the People of Israel. This explanation clarifies further the relationship between family and society. In fact, in Ezekiel 19:10, Israel’s nation is called mother and symbolised as vine: “Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard transplanted by the water, fruitful and full of branches from abundant water”. Similar image is used to describe the mother in the family of the YHWH fearer in Psalm 128. The symbol of olive for the children of the righteous seen in Psalm 128 is also attributed to Israel in Jeremiah 11:16 (cf. Isaiah 17:6). Therefore, the image of mother/sons of the first part of our Psalm is reproduced in the second part in that of Jerusalem (often understood as mother in the Old Testament) and Israel as son. “The mother image melds into Zion/Jerusalem (feminine terms) and the ‘children’ into the People of Israel” (Segal, 2012). Like many other Songs of Zion, Psalm 128 shows dominant movement toward the centre which is Zion and Jerusalem, with city and the house as additional such images of the centre. “The blessing enjoyed by the family will overflow into the general prosperity of Jerusalem and Israel” (Rogerson & McKay, 1977: 128); for the family is “an invaluable asset, the natural setting in which life grows and develops and a school of humanity, love and hope for society” (Synod of Bishops, 2014: 31). All these make the link between family and nation in the two segments of Psalm 128 more realistic and disproves the argument of some who aver that the second part of this Psalm is a mere gloss that renders it more appropriate for public use (Briggs, 1986).
Fear of the Lord entails unreserved obedience, spurred on by faith, to all aspects of God’s law, without any exception. In Psalm 128, happiness is proclaimed on the person who fears the Lord. Part of his reward is peace and unity in his house. Although these are divine and unconditional gifts, human beings dispose themselves for them. Psalm 128 describes this disposition as fear of the Lord, explained in another way as walking in the ways of the Lord. This is a key concept in this Psalm for it first links the two parts of the Psalm and makes a precise transition from the first part to the second. “God’s blessing in the family is based on the fear of the Lord. Thus, a satisfying home is based upon the fear of the Lord” (Cole, 2013).

The divine mandate, the first given to humankind, in Genesis 1:28 “be fruitful and multiple, and fill the earth and subdue it”, in the first account of creation, is complemented or rather explained in the second account (cf. Genesis 2:24): “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh”. The complementarity in these two texts lies in the fact that the fulfilment of the first command in Genesis 1:28 should be in an established institution alluded to in Genesis 2:24. It implies that this procreation intended in the divine mandate should be between a man and a woman joined by lawful bond of marriage. “In creating man and woman, God instituted the human family and endowed it with its fundamental constitutions” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994: 2203). A close reading of Genesis 2:24 in its immediate context reveals that this union of a man and a woman is indissoluble. This is deducible from the aetiological story succinctly narrated in the creation of our primordial parents in Genesis 2. Jesus, referring to this in Matthew 19:1-9, conveys his uncompromising assertion of the sacredness and indissolubility of marriage: “So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matthew 19:6). Jesus clarifies or puts aright the use of writ of dismissal permitted by the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 24:1), which Jesus’ interlocutors cite to contend their point.

Jesus’ argument follows the law of creation: God created male and female and gave them the command of procreation (Genesis 1:28). In Genesis 2, creation of our first parents is creation of a couple, male and female. From these, the institution and nature of human family is lucidly stated. The seed of God’s design for human family has been sown and the Creator expects us to follow it duly in fulfilling his mandate of procreation. The sin of our first parents must have blurred human view from perceiving clearly this divine intention, like in many other natural and divine laws. Family, without confusing extended family system practised in some parts of the world, should consist of a man and a woman, and children as God’s blessing to their union. Similarly, procreation should be according to the order established by the Creator: male and female in a lawful union. This obviously excludes polygamy, which “is a radical denial of God’s original plan” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004: 217), “because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive” (John Paul II, 1982: 19). Anyone who infringes on this law, that is, the union of one man and one woman violates the Creator’s plan for human family, which Jesus convincingly affirmed.

Unfortunately, this natural and divine order of procreation and family values has been contravened to an alarming point in our contemporary society. All forms of ideologies that militate against family and procreation today contradict both the divine and natural law. Undue clamour in favour of same-sex union by some individuals, groups and states impels many people to raise an eyebrow at the motive of the enthusiasm of those who defend such unnatural way of forming a human family. It is first against natural law and far from God’s design for marriage; the Creator intended the human family to be between a man and a woman. It would be a great challenge to humanity today to justify same-sex union; the growing number of those involved in it makes it an enormous concern in the context of evangelisation. The ideal family presented in Psalm 128 reflects the primordial design of God for human family. It is between the two complementary genders created by God: “male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). It is one man and one woman that are joined together in conjugal love, according to God’s plan (Genesis 2:24) and not two persons of the same sex.

The phenomenon of single mothers or fathers, individuals, who want to have children outside wedlock abounds. Some young women find means of either bearing their own children by engaging in temporary inordinate relationship that cease as soon as they achieve their aim; some illegally adopt children. In the same way, some men do the same to evade forming their own families which they consider wearisome or unfashionable. It is all about the culture of false freedom, which has its repercussions on the society. In Psalm 128 family formed
according to God’s plan for human beings is a micro-society or replica of society. “By synecdoche, the family (Psalm, 128:3-4) stands for the city (Psalm, 128:5), which in turn stands for the nation (Psalm 128:6)” (Miller, n.d.). This is embedded in the use of the same symbol for the members of this family and the larger society of the People of Israel.

Closely related to the above are many cases of cohabitation. A man and a woman decide to live together without any form of formal and approved agreement. Often they lack, mutual love, which is the essence of marriage. They see each other as object of self gratification, which can be discarded at any time that each of the partners ceases to supply this satisfaction. This, indeed, is another way of going against the divine plan for human family which should be rooted in a genuine love for each other. The Lord grants this love to those who fear him and walk in his ways.

The harmony and peace of the family in Psalm 128 is a lesson for a society that records very high rate of divorce or disunity of various kinds that make life unbearable for parents and children alike. Many cases of separation even after very few years of marriage actually defile God’s intention for man and woman forming one body. Jesus affirmed this indissolubility of marriage (cf. Matthew 19:1-9). All these have their adverse effects on human society for the condition of any society is determined by the quality of families that make up such society. This is because, “the family, as a community of persons, is thus the first human ‘society’” (John Paul II, 1994: 7). It is in this nucleus of human society that all the treasured moral values of society are nurtured. If families are in disarray, as we are wont to experience today, the society suffers and humanity loses sight of its essence in divine plan.

While Psalm 128 celebrates the joy of fertility and of family with many happy children, the practice of abortion of unwanted children, particularly by couples duly and lawfully married, appears a gross contradiction of natural law and of God’s plan for human family. It is contradictory to God’s plan for human family, for the conjugal union stipulated in Genesis 2:24 is at the service of the command of procreation in Genesis 1:28. When life is destroyed for selfish reason by those who should produce and protect it, marriage loses its fundamental motive and becomes incongruous and strange to its nature. “Fear of the Lord” aids human beings in perceiving the absurdity of this action.

As we reflect on the status of family in our day and the message of Psalm 128, there is urgent need for a redirection in the current understanding of family and marriage. In order to sustain and keep alive God’s plan for human family, it is indispensable to make a fundamental option that ought to be a constant guide; it is the “fear of the Lord”.

5. Conclusion

Psalm 128 forms an essential part of both Jewish and Christian celebrations of marriage, and it is also the responsorial Psalm for the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Church uses it in this way in her liturgy because she finds in this Psalm some elements of her teaching on human family which are her interpretation of God’s design stated in the Christian deposit of faith: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. Psalm 128 in its contents articulated in its bipartite structure provides a solution to the various understanding of family today and at the same time gives the reason why we have such misconceptions on human family. Human beings have drifted from the original plan of God because of noncompliance to his laws. Its repercussions are manifested in many forms of self-alienation and deformed concepts of family and marriage. Loss of the sense of the sacred has precipitated into absence of the fear of the Lord, which Psalm 128 presents as an indispensable element for a happy family.

Family, according to Psalm 128, is where a society is bred and nurtured. Moral values expected in a society should have their origin in family; therefore, the health of a society depends so much on how family is understood and lived. This is clearly highlighted in the two part structure of Psalm 128. The similes of vine and olive predicated of the wife and children of the God-fearer in the first part of the Psalm are symbols of Jerusalem, who is mother, and the people of Israel respectively. The good qualities represented by these symbols are realised in those who have made the fundamental option to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Our families today will be able to regain their lost values and enjoy the blissful state of the God-fearer of Psalm 128 if they retrace their steps back to God. This is an enormous task of evangelization. It has to be able to lead human beings back to God in order to save all from self-destruction prompted by lack of reverential fear of God. The extent human beings have gone in straying away from God demands a renewed and assiduous teach-
ing of the rudiments of faith and ongoing formation of the faithful in both faith and morals.

References


Concrete Thinking

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Abstract

Existence is concrete discerned bodily, thinking considers existents, and so concrete thinking is primal, at the base of logical thinking. Still, concrete actuality is reasonable beyond logical analysis. So, concrete thinking is "illogical" bodily reasonable. Thus this essay explores 1) concrete thinking various and 2) concrete thinking concretely. All this concrete thinking culminates in kids' joys alive.

Keywords

Thinking, Concrete, Body, Logic, Living, Kids, Joy

1. Introduction

Logical analysis may sneer at this incoherent phrase, “concrete thinking”; thinking is not concrete, so “concrete thinking” is “concrete not-concrete”, a contradiction. This essay is written to remind logical thinking that thinking is for the sake of considering things concrete, for things not concrete do not exist and cannot be considered. And thinking that logically considers its own mode and many concepts is to prepare us to consider things concrete. In short, all thinking is concrete thinking.

And so, “concrete thinking” designates all “thinking”; the designation is quite legitimate and self-evident. In fact, one translucent reason why concrete thinking is preferable to logical thinking is that concrete thinking is clear, fresh, and eye-catching, as expressed in “eagle eyes” and “baby fresh”. US commercials are vying for fresh clarity of concrete way of thinking, which is fast spreading worldwide.

Our dear logician would not give up so easily, however. “But how would ‘concrete thinking’ deal with its own contradiction, ‘concrete not-concrete’?” Now this is what this essay will describe concrete thinking to be about; as concrete actuality is reasonable, so concrete thinking is thinking. Concrete actuality is somehow reasonable for us to know, for otherwise our "knowledge" would be pie in the sky. The “concrete” harvests concrecence, a grown-together of many components, indicating the concrete as “reasonable” to enable concrete thinking to operate, whose part natural science (knowledge) is.
Still, “actual reason” is far beyond human logic to analyze, and so we falsely take “thinking as not-concrete”, and thus concrete thinking is “concrete plus thinking”, to wit, “concrete plus not-concrete”. All this while, concrete thinking stays as concrete-as-thinking, thinking-as-concrete, to stay beyond logic, as “illogical”. This essay stresses “concrete thinking illogical” to show how such concrete thinking belongs to concrete actuality illogical and reasonable. In its “illogic”, concrete thinking discerns the concrete as illogical reasonable, beyond straight logical analysis.

This essay thus has three points to describe “concrete thinking”, in contrast to logical analysis, to manifest in body thinking totally concrete. One, concrete thinking considers things concrete by thinking in concrete way. Concrete things dictate our concrete mode of thinking them. This first point is central to concrete thinking. Two, that thinking concretely is not logical analysis is dramatically shown in thinking things concrete. Contrasting with logical analysis manifests how distinctly its own concrete thinking is. Three, concrete thinking is displayed as body thinking. Our primal body human (not “physical corpse” in logic) is essentially concrete thinking undergoing the concrete dailies. Of course we think we see our body, unaware that “we think” is how we body-think and “unaware” is body-unaware. All we do, sense, think, and are aware, are “body thinking” all over always; concrete thinking is “all body 具體” as China means “concrete” to be. The concrete is body-felt, not logic-analyzed.

Now, these three points inter-weave as we concretely think of things concrete. So, this essay has two sections, A. how concrete thinking thinks the concrete and B. how concrete thinking concretely thinks. These points slightly repeat in variations, as repetitions indicate mutual involvement of all these features in concrete thinking, as the “concrete” harvests concrescence, grown-together inter-involved, of its essential components all concrete.

2. Thinking the Concrete

Things concrete are kaleidoscopic; our lifeworld is Alice’s Wonderland random, bewildering, and delightful various. Concrete thinking is simply forced to randomly pick some eight snapshot-vignettes as follows to portray how we think things concrete. Such “random” picking shows and tells with noisy kids the kid-like riches of things concrete so joyously voluptuous and irresistible. We all just follow them, at least in the following seven ways, the concrete as specific, as indescribable, as being, “one and many”, history, what concrete is, heartfelt compassion, and kids frolicking.

2.1. One: The Concrete as Specific

“Anything concrete is specific”. This declaration surprises me, for “anything” is general, but “specific” is not general. I am shocked at this fact not shocking, as things concrete are actually specific, nothing surprising. Still, it is shocking. Look. Face-in-general exists nowhere; we don’t even know what it means. All tree-in-general, all place-in-general, and all home-in-general tell us that “in general” exists nowhere. But, we can think only in general terms. We cannot think a concrete tree here now. “Thinking a tree” thinks of the tree-meaning-tree, which is tree-in-general. Sartre in his novel Nausea was nauseated at a chestnut tree before him, concrete specific, not to think about.

Concrete is specific that exists—these three are intimate, innermost together but not synonymous. They are starkly unapproachable yet starkly confronting us, all-unthinkable all-un-sayable. Only the thinkable can be said; things concrete cannot be said. Luckily, things concrete are specific and can be specifically shouted at; “Doggie!” is shouted at by Tommy, as he was confronted with that monster, concrete specific, that Mom says is “giraffe”, an odd word Tommy cannot even say out.

Naming is how we shout out to a thing concrete specific, then another thing, then another, and then we forget, and name a thing again by a new name, and our naming continues, and we get tired—but children are not tired. Every moment comes fresh to them to name this thing concrete specific. But “every moment” happens only once, then “only once” again, and again. This is why children are never tired of things concrete.

Dotting repeats continuing, and this time-series is also as specific as things concrete in space. Here and there, things are so funny everywhere, so much so that I get dizzy, but kids are not dizzy. They love such a merry-go-round shouting “Doggie!” so happy at the monster giraffe. All this does not smoothly continue but is choppy, quite kid-enjoyable jumping around.

This shouting merry-go-around is kids’ “show and tell”, ever chitchatting with old ladies chatting endlessly. Endlessness rhymes with concrete continuity ever specific ever dotting. O I am dizzy nauseous—here concrete
specific, nothing but things concrete specific exist to nauseate me. I had better stop all this silly pursuit. I cannot be a kid to ride on this merry-go-round lifeworld of specifics. It is so strange that this common concrete world is so uncommon, so specific so dotty yet so continuous unending!

Now I am continually chitchatting again! And now I cannot stop it because my world continues so dotting so specific and so concrete, as I am. I have said that concrete things cannot be said, and I have been saying about concrete things till I dizzy me myself. No wonder, Sartre’s first novel *Nausea* meanders so long so nauseating, without rhyme or reason, simply because things concrete are so simple as to be incapable of making sense, i.e., thinking about. Significantly, Chuang Tzu in ancient China meanders in tall tales, all actual vastly cosmic, to enchant us. There are more river-meanderings under heaven than our philosophy can ever dream of, quite beyond all human essays to explore. We only notice here an important point, that all this is body thinking at work.

Now, I suddenly realize. All this is body thinking, bodily thinking of things so concrete specific as to be unthinkable. Body thinking pulls off this stunt of thinking the unthinkable, yet “concrete” is “body equipped, 具體” (China) to enable body thinking on the concrete. No wonder, body thinking is so concrete a thinking as to be accused of being concrete (body) not concrete (thinking), a straight self-contradiction so delightful.

So, we are led to ask these questions. Does body thinking *itself* make sense? Does body thinking make as much sense as things concrete, i.e., no sense? Is body thinking specific or general? And our questioning goes on. No one can answer such series of strange questions. Is all such stuff, nausea continuous, dotting senseless endless? Nausea, we must remember, comes from the “concrete” as “specific”, and so unthinkable that yet starkly confronts us willy-nilly.

### 2.2. Two: The Concrete as Indescribable (Described)

Things concrete I cannot de-scribe, known well yet so unknown. Things concrete not just surround me, confront me. They enter me to haunt me to tinge me in their hues indescribable. I say that I am on top of things, at their bottom, and on an even keel, but have I really concretely described how I am? I say all this, and do I get understood? I just display all conventional names of things. Our names are our tags, doggie, giraffe, by which to manage things, we think, but don’t we actually manage tags as government offices shuffle documents around, knowing nothing?

We also name our mood our concrete inside. There is no argument on mood inside concrete, as there is no argument about taste on things outside and concrete. We have no argument because we have no thinking about such stuff all too concrete. I am all-helpless as I am confronted with things concrete outside and inside. “Things concrete” means “I am helpless”, for “concrete” is specific and I can only manage generalities, name-tags, and shuffling tag handles nothing actual-concrete.

“How do we tell a tag from the concrete real?” Use a magnifier and watch a tag written. We see nothing there on the page. That is “tag”. And then, watch my palm, and I see more and more, and more. “Concrete” is concreted, the con-cresced riches grown-together, unlimited beyond description, as that holophrastic “Doggie!” that explodes us around Tommy into laughs unlimited. “Doggie!” is a tag beyond all tags.

And then, Scarlatti’s Sonatas float in to pervade everything—simple, concrete, and ineffable intangible. Things concrete, so rich ineffable, then get adjusted and straightened, somehow ineffably intangibly. Names vanish, as Sartre’s *Nausea* ends with soft common music. Walkout unclutters me, too, as I walk right foot and left, in rhythm. I walk my own music; I am music walking out.

And then, I again hear; music throbs to beat my heart, and yours, into time that hums on, not “time in general eternal” but time incurably concrete specific in each of us, flowing day in and day out, as time is my own undergoing. Nothing is more concrete and intimate than me myself undergoing me myself in time. Time flows in three ways at least, going on, renewing on, and repeating on. 

*First*, time keeps flowing on, going on, as Chu 朱自清 laments in his exquisite essay “Hurrying on, Unknown 匆匆” how our days once gone, never come back (Wu, 2010). But then, *secondly*, as we flip over this fact, we see how time keeps flowing to flow us into things spanning new, “day, day, new, again, day new” as the ancient royal bathtub daily washes us anew afresh even today. *Thirdly*, joining flow-going with flow-renewing, time rhythm-flows to rhyme in repetitions of be-ing and living as time-music, to unclutter to cleanse off nausea of concrete things beyond knowing beyond schematizing.

Chu’s lament over days going joins dawning babies shouting “Doggie!” at new monsters, under Mom’s care daily repeating for babies to grow up. As music hums on, time comes alive in my heartbeats, one at a time concrete on and on, going and then coming, in flowing music never boring, as no one minds living more and more
days ahead alive, repeating days on end without ceasing. Time is life concrete specific. Time is the Chinese calligraphy so ancient so vigorous a poetry of living today.

In China, calligraphy always writes poems. These poems mostly paint scenes, and scenes painted paint feeling-milieus. Thus calligraphy is paintings felt alive through millennia. Paintings are then poetry compact, of course. Poetry is time-art. In China, art is time poetry in beautiful-writings (calligraphy, literature), and all paintings are poetic. So should it be worldwide for life’s throbbing joys jumping alive.

“But why do you mention art suddenly out of nowhere?” O, No. On the contrary, art should have come in, as it does here, to clinch our delightful meditations on things concrete. Art is the peak of skill, of feeling, and of thought, all three rolled into one at its highest. Art is thus body thinking at work at its noblest, most concrete, specific, and ubiquitous. “Concrete” is now a straight beauty one by one, on and on, in our understanding felt bodily daily. That is poetry musical. That is “art”, body thinking at its most awesome to dawn the concrete, to describe the concrete indescribable. Now, here are more surprises to things concrete. It is being concrete. Excitement is still ahead!

2.3. Three: Concrete as Being Concrete

Suppose we happen to notice a tiny tender missy trying so hard so clumsily to do something for her Mom she loves so much. What she actually achieves is of course not much, but, O, how hard she tries in total passion deeply touches us. Her whole being shows starkly. Japan would say she is ijirashii, but few other languages could even hint at how touched we are at her very being, shown in such toddling trying, aside from what she tries or achieves. It is such a precious sight to behold and to feel. Here is no error of any sort. She is just herself so “good” pure and total, to move us deeply, to move Jesus watching her loving her.

By the same token, we see the good Pharisees justly proud and the bad tax-collector breast-beating, and Jesus nods deeply at the latter self-aware so painful, “justified” (Luke 18). We see the busy Martha and the do-nothing Mary listening to Jesus, entralled, to win Jesus’ heart as he loves Martha (Luke 10). We see the good loyal elder brother accusing his beloved father of injustice. The father then pleads for the young brother, all good-for-nothing, throwing his whole being begging for his father’s mercy; he is clearly “found” and we must celebrate as a family! (Luke 15).

And the list goes on, all these stories repeating that tiny young missy trying so very hard for Mom, no matter what. The whole Bible tells us, “Bad deeds count less than their soulful confession out of the entire being”. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Simone Weil are such being-people whose lives elucidate “Subjectivity is truth” (Kierkegaard). Subjectivity is being, whole and authentic; being expresses being so real so total. Such subjectivity is truth, whatever it means.

In this manner, my cautious renewed reading of bewildering concrete details in Luke 10, 15, and 18 tells me of this simple point. They propose a value-revolution to our usual view of “good”. It is that what is ultimately important in life is not doing but being. What I am decides my ultimate me. What I am is trained and cultivated by what I do and how I do it, as my doing shows my being. My behaving shows my being to decide me. The whole Bible tells me of this ultimate point.

Ethics to be to inter-be, in this way, expresses ontology. All human intercourses inter-be, in inter-species in our eco-family. The season meets me baby-raw as the roasting heat is cooled by breeze in dry thirst mid-autumn. A dog in the house barks at me walking by. Such common happenings repeat, and the repetition starkly turns the familiar no less fresh than yesterday so vivid now in me. “Boredom” is not in the vocabulary of things common concrete, all too common concrete—and starkly whole staring at me, every time they confront me.

Confronted whole, I cannot help but confront whole, as I am, those things concrete whole. This point surprises me. I thought I must behave. But No, I must be. Look! My parents in love cultivate my being to initiate myself, my whole being, into the world, and my parents are things so concrete in Heaven and Earth. Responding to my parents with the totality of my being is to “honor my parents”, as both China and the Bible urge me on. Who says China has no religion?

Meanwhile, all children nakedly confront me, hitting me brutally with their simple straight beings. That is how they awe me. They see through me; I cannot pretend. “Children” are here and there, everywhere around. What demolished the scholarly “Professor Higgins” is how “deliciously vulgar” that uncouth rural lady simply is. Her simple straight being straightens out the Professor, out of his pretension, and he has to marry her “My Fair Lady”. Marriage is of course inter-being at the base of cosmic family. We inter-be; that is what counts. All Soc-
rates’, Confucius’, Mencius’, and the Taoists’ insistences amount to hitting at me *being* me.

I inter-be with my fellow beings as I deal with them. That is how technology must do, to inter-be, to compose and maintain our eco-family in eco-love. Graphically, China says we manage affairs *做事* to manage humanity 做人, as we walk affairs 行事 to make-and-do human 為人. All this is body thinking busily at work, being in doing, doing as being, as I *am* human; I should not behave as a dog as I should not speak Pidgin English, dog-English. Ha!

“Now, what else is new?” Well, what is new is that this being-realization, this being-praxis, is body thinking at work at the gut-body concrete level. All this is concrete thinking manifesting in living being. Concrete thinking is body-being, no toy ing with concepts and t ying involved with them. There is no argument in being, as there is no argument in the taste of being. We must shout with kids to show and tell, and be, with kids; that is how we taste being us. We must be-come—come by and by to be—kids. Again, nothing is new, except that coming to be me, to being the good *old* me as kid so new, is *new*.

It is “good” to be as I am, as before, since I was born raw naked new. That is old, and that is new, indeed revolutionary new. That is concrete thinking coming body-home to roost, to be. All this is what makes a classic, what makes the Bible, what ultimately makes religion; it is what is concrete thinking body-gutsy being. “What else is new?” Nothing is new as before so concrete, and that is what is new. Music “beings” me here now, it does playing the concrete stark being, to per-form my being with myriad beings.

Wow! It is raining downpours! I am so happy being poured into me so moist. Water just moistens me alive. Even just watching the downpours into the rejoicing trees is more than enough to send me to heaven rejoicing dancing with trees with kids! And now, it stops raining. All is so calm all satisfied all saturated, with moist joy. I am, too. Awesome! Things concrete are so awesome to make me *be* concrete so awesome!

To be is to inter-be; we, things and I, inter-be in the rain in Mother Nature. If to be is to be perceived, then to be me is to be rained on in Mother Nature, not at all perceived, so concrete so natural, with all beings. Inter-be rejoices. Things rejoice me into me with them. Now, don’t ask me why I am so happy, ok? Believe it or not, asking why here cuts down on my joys so simple so powerful so outpouring.

### 2.4. Four: “One and Many”

Meanwhile, we look around at our common daily facts. We will be shocked at how illogical we and our world are, seeing that things concrete are “one and many”. To *begin*, the parent loves each child as if she has no other child. And each child has only one mother, of course. All this while, however, Mom has so many babies of her own. So, the parent-child relation is “one and many”, as love is “one and many”. Love originates all beings. The parent-child relation in love is my origin. So, my origin is “one and many”.

And *then*, I am “I”, only one, for two I’s will be “we”, not “I”. But I say, “I”, you say “I”, and everyone says “I”. Our world is full of so many “I”s now. “I” is “one and many”. *Finally*, “here” is also “one and many”; “now” is also “one and many”. These “here now” so many compose our lifeworld. So, our lifeworld is “one and many”.

Now, let us go a step further. As parent-child love-relation is one and many, so we cherish science, beauty, history, myths, and so on, each “one and many”. The more, the merrier, and yet each is itself, one and itself. This crowded fact yet not at all crowded has an ethical implication quite important.

Jill is Mom’s best child. Jim is Mom’s best child. It is Mom’s joy and pride to love them both, total not partial. I must balance my partiality to music with respect of science that is after all beautiful as well. Today’s society love science, its love should be imbued with reverence of Mother Nature and her stunning beauty. Exclusion must be excluded. Religion is ultimacy in this world. Its shameful bigotry can be cured by imbuing it with love of others and appreciation of beauty all around.

With no if or but, religion simply must continue to live in this “and”-tension of “one and many”, its *unique* ultimacy tensed with “sharing with *many* others”, in concrete mundane actuality. This tensed living is its absolute condition to survive as a decent entity in this world, called “religion”. Now, “one and many” is just one example of how illogical our common daily actuality is, and it already keeps us busy counting such wonders, on and on.

In math, $1 + 1$ must necessarily make 2, not more, not less. In actual investment, $1 + 1$ seldom yields 2 but always more, or less. Events often erupt rhymed with *no* definite cause, as a cause can be caused by its effect. In actual situations, when P implies Q, Q *can* turn around to cause and implicate P, as “weal leans on woe that lurks in weal” (Lao Tzu 58), as political money-rule breeds people-rule that in turn breeds money-rule.

Such is the excitement of actual living and its frustration. We do not know what to do with our daily routines so strange beyond management. In all this, we see and hear “musical reasoning”; music makes sense in harmony
out of dissonance, in an infinite variety of patterns. Sense, harmony, and patterns are all alive-reasonable beyond math, beyond logic, and beyond causality. Now, “one and many” and such examples above make no sense in logic (Yourgrau, 1990). “One and many” spread in time makes “repetition” in musical rhythm that is the vitality of the world, to be considered under “repetition”.

But in actuality, “one and many” is all over to compose our common world so concrete. We concretely under-go the actual world to under-stand it. Understanding is thinking; concrete understanding is body thinking. So, not analytical logic, but bodily concrete thinking understands actual “one and many” that composes our actual world, and we must cherish them one and many, one and all, all so logically tensed as to be senseless.

All this tensed consideration of concrete ethics of “one and many” is body thinking in the concrete, totally beyond logical analysis to make sense, much less to execute. Thus, body thinking about common concrete facts all around, step by step, enables us to realize that our lifeworld is “one and many”， illogical yet inevitable, ordinary and quite concrete. We stretch out eyes toward their horizon, and, lo and behold, we bump into “history” invisible intangible, and all-inclusive all-concrete!

### 2.5. Five: History

“History” is the specific concrete that is all-comprehensive in space and in time, yet amazingly invisible un-touchable. Concrete thinking cannot avoid considering history that is much more than a simple past. What is history? We say, “History is past reconstructed”, and now, things get sticky. The past is gone nowhere. The professional historians laboriously re-construct from pieces of relics, re-enact past experience so rare so precious, and this “re-experiencing drama” is history, says Collingwood (Collingwood, 1946, 1993; Myerhoff, 1959; Tang, 2013; Walsh, 1967). And we think so as well. We all take “history” as helpless relics we barely reconstruct from past dust. We all view history as an object to manipulate to shape up out of nowhere (Collingwood, 1946).

But past-history is alarmingly imminent, never an object but devastatingly inside us; we are helpless, not history. History is not simply “gone, nowhere”; it is gone past that is present as powerful presence alive, without our reconstruction; history reconstructs us. We do not even “experience history” as we experience a ride; our experience is history. History is “we”. In fact, the world has one historic culture, China, what literally lives history, even calling itself the culture of “literature history 文史”. Literature is story-thinking at work in body thinking, and history is concrete body-thinking in concrete time we live through.

By being literary historical, China is the world’s sole culture thriving in history that embodies body thinking, story thinking, and concrete thinking, three in one, quite vigorous alive. These three modes of thinking are the base, matrix, and milieu of thinking logical, analytical, and systematic, popular in the West. Thus it is essential to study body thinking, story thinking, and concrete thinking by studying China in all their historical developments there. It is quite a mammoth task. But before all this, we must still understand what history is.

Two mighty features of history stare at us in the face from inside us. One, our words, wording, thinking-modes, worldview, our shape of the “present”, even our patterns of protest, our renovation, in short, all our life activities are all gifts of history; we live rhyming with our parent-past. Even our revolution makes sense only in the light of what has gone on before. This “in the light of” is our matrix of freedom and novel creation, and “in the light of” is our history. We are not alive and novel unless we have our past. Scientific “repeatability” twists and flattens this awesome historic truth, for past alive rhymes on, not repeat. Two, the past is present here now, not just hid in archeological relic pieces. The past is amply present here now in the classics, amazingly staying on beyond millennia; they are the best sellers in world cultures and the longest sellers ever in world history. History is past impacts on public file; part of it is called “classies”, and we avidly learn. They are vast in number and in variety, increasing each day, so much as to overwhelm us. We yet neglect them at our own peril, as we are composed of history.

Our task is awesome, not to read them to be buried in them. I met a young German lady in USA, who fled from being buried in her “great history”. Being buried in history is not learning from history. We must learn from history to escape being buried in it. We must astutely learn. Socrates and Confucius must be learned, criticized and absorbed on what they mean, to adapt to our today.

Ghastly disasters of Nazis and Japanese aggressions must be probed into their why-happened, how-managed, and constantly watched over on their ominous budding-again today. Sadly, our memory span is short, and we tend to file them away for “news” today. Bypassed, these atrocities are on the rise again today. Again, environmental devastations have been going on for millennia; we have neglected to learn from them, and now we are all
devastated. Without such learning alive from the past alive, we are dead. Past history is so concrete here now. We have history in us as our genetic makeup, and we are given history in front of us. We should learn from history to go beyond it, and, amazingly, “going beyond history” becomes a part of history. Time passes me by; I stay young as I feel young bodily. History keeps making impacts on me in me, concretely thinking in me on and on.

2.6. Six: What Is “Concrete”

“You keep saying ‘concrete’. What is ‘concrete’?” All right, my friend, consider this. Contrary to common impression, cognitive wording is ambiguous (Thomas, 1974); words can mean “this”, and can mean “not this”. So, we vainly pile up intellectual words trying to chase away ambiguity, piling ambiguity against ambiguity, to self-defeat in vicious circle. In contrast, body-insect pins things down precisely. Combining instinct and intellect, “body thinking” hits at the matter precisely concretely. As body thinking is concrete this way hitting at “this” here now, “this” then sparkles to dawn on us, at each moment that comes, willy-nilly, quite concretely.

Again, and again, my writing-music dawns afresh each moment baby-fresh; mere 81 years young now, and I sing on still. Even my new faint wrinkles are faintly chanting in my clumsy hand-writing, daily dawning baby-fresh. The baby shouts whole day not hoarse (Lao Tzu 55); I write all day not frayed. Did I repeat myself? Repetitions make music dawning repeatedly, dawning, baby-dawning without ceasing. Now, if all this is not concrete dawning baby fresh, what else is concrete? Things concrete repeat afresh.

After all, repetition, as our life-pulses so vital, should never be a bore, as we do not mind living as long as possible, for we all want simply to exist—isn’t living on a mystery? We do not mind repeating 365 days year after year, nor do we mind repeating 60 life-pulses moment after moment. In fact, as we all want to live endlessly, so we all enjoy repeating days on end, year in and year out. Repetition ad infinitum here, if possible, is never repetition ad nauseam. We should then be able to extend our enjoyment of day-repetitions to exorcise boredom in repetitions of all sorts, bored at repetitions we enjoy, derived from day-repetitions we love.

Why we cannot do so is a mystery, isn’t it? But boredom still exists all over in every nook and corner of our living world. Boredom is such a sad stubborn fact of life. Since we love longevity, as existing is the basic appetite of existence (Spinoza, Leibniz), repetition and boredom should never exist together, but they actually do. We love long life, and yet we hate boredom in life; it is such a strange oxymoron in our living.

Although Robert Frost did not say he found living-on a bore, he said (in his poem “Away!”) that “I but obey the urge of a song” to be “out walking”, and if he finds “dissatisfied/with what I learn/from having died”, he “may return” (Frost, 1995). Unfortunately, we know he cannot do so. Now why he cannot do so, and why we know he cannot, are a mystery, are they not? We may simply stick to what we first said, to wit, to enjoy day-repetitions to exorcise boredom, if any.

But we must not touch death at all, whether death is a bore or not a bore, for once we try death we cannot undo it. Death is such a bad deal. Many books exist on “near death experience”, but not a single book has been written on coming back alive from death itself. This is why Jesus’ resurrection is such a big stir among us, a far-out myth for our “common sense” stuck in the craw of our usual life experience.

But, in any case, boring experience must differ from exciting one. If exciting repetition jumps on rhyming rhythmic, while boring one drones on, then we must find rhythm to our drones. Musicians as children are experts at finding and creating droning rhythms that excite us all, as Bach, Scarlatti and China’s ancient drones softly chanting stabilizing us. We can stay anywhere, and there is music, new warmth of breathing music, and we smile, droning at ease at home, deep in existing rhythms risking the danger of falling bored familiar. Familiarity can create contempt in boredom, but it never need to at all. Music goes slow, to dig deep to cover far, as I feel on my music-way on and on.

Bach’s ingenuity at creating “Musical Offering” out of an arbitrary concatenation of sounds assures us of the stubborn possibility ever present out of boredom of any sort, arbitrary or repetitive. Music is the savior of us in love with longevity, out of boredom of repetition, back to the pleasure of long drawn-out days of life. Music can even inspire kids complaining “nothing to do” to jump up into dancing the new rhythm of new life-music. Many composers compose for children, and many performers perform for children, as children in turn constantly inspire musicians to make new music. Boredom then vanishes into music alive in children.

Still, repetition can plunge us into a nasty trouble, called “error”. Deleting errors is a paradox, on at least three counts. First, being human and imperfect, we are always error-prone, and yet we try to delete them. Besides, to
decrease errors, we must repeat our operation, and yet our operation itself produces errors. So, we increase errors to decrease errors. Thirdly, we have no error until we are aware of error to hate it to delete it. We hate errors to try against them to create what we hate. Hatred creates enemies, never conquers them. Do we see Hitler here? Errors are odd indeed.

All this oddity comes from us humans being imperfect, of course. But we find us imperfect because we somehow know what perfection is. Where do we imperfect know perfection? Twist and turn as we may, we are caught in a dilemma, caused by repetition of human operation all-imperfect.

Now, however, does this “same” repetition that plunges us into errors help us out of the dilemma of errors? Repetition never replicates identically in our concrete world, and that is our hope. Never the same, repetition announces renewal that differs from what has been repeated. Do we have errors now? We can start again anew! We can repeat it, and errors can vanish in thin air. Repetition originating errors is the arrival of the baby-beginning afresh, out of errors.

“But errors stay, sadly”. O yes, they stay, but not “sadly”. We being human, we live on with errors, to live in errors, even live on errors. And errors do not “stay”. Instead of deleting them, our time of life throbs birthing new errors to blend with old, and the old errors vanish in the new, as we now excitedly manage them to mingle them into new vibrations of new repetitions. Music and baby guide us on into the “beauty” of blending of errors! These new vibes in new verve are the life-pulses of new music, to dawn the birth of the new baby, my new me toddling our here now. Errors mother me forth, afresh, in new errors, in new era. It is my birthday my dawn, now here.

Is Jesus not blending our mortal errors into his Resurrection Dawn, here? It is the Primal Dawn before our fall into many series of errors. All this sounds so far-out as to daunt us. But if (a big “if”) this Jesus-bit is accepted, so many things fall into place, as they do here; “by faith, we know”. Today we say, “Of course, what science says is true”, unaware that “science” is our network woven out, not natural out there. We say, “By science, we know”, exactly as Hebrew 11 says, “By faith, we know”. The crucial difference is that “by science, we know” lacks the “if” of faith; we say instead, “of course”. Our confidence composes human hubris deserving of death penalty! It is so sad, indeed! Birthday proudly shows an error-clean baby. Baby has no error, for only trying makes error, and the baby does not try, but just does anything that takes her fancy. Besides, “error” is a boring adult word; the baby’s world is full of excitements, all spanning new, with things to show and tell unlimited! And it is so easy to be a baby.

2.7. Seven: Heartfelt Com-Passion

Concrete thinking goes human, as we co-suffer with our neighbors in pain. Both Mencius and Jesus stress our com-passion, thinking as human co-pathos. Mencius noticed as very significant how a tyrant released an ox in mortal jitters being dragged to sacrificial slaughter, simply because he could not bear 不忍 the sight. “Not-bearing governance 不忍人之政” must follow invincibly (1A1-7). Its invincibility originates in the matchless power of human compassion to the unbearable degree.

Jesus constantly feels visceral pain while healing and discoursing on mercy; “visceral pain” (splagchnizomai) is the word exclusively used by Jesus alone (Friedrich, 1979; Kohlenberger III, Goodrick, & Swanson, 1997). That word is the be-all and end-all of the Good News. On this pain, Kazoh Kitamori builds his “theology of the pain of God (1946)”. Concrete thinking is unthinkable without being touched heartfelt by human co-pathos. Human compassion is at the heart of concrete thinking quite human.

2.8. Either: Kids Frolicking

Do you want to see a “round square”, my dear logician? Babies will give it to you, and that with extra-gifts of irresistible kid-fragrance and kid-smiles absolutely free! Kids are enchanting King reigning over all, Mr. long-faced logician! These kids are all their Mom’s so precious, tightly hugged and then let go of to play, and play on. We then will follow them and stoop to tie their tiny shoe-laces, wipe their tiny noses, and button up their tiny buttons, and then pat them on their bottoms and let them go! They are smiling shouting, as we smile watching them go, and go play! Wow! What explosions!

We cannot help but follow them, cannot help but shaping up their shoes and dresses, and we cannot help but do all such in all smiles. Our stooping smiles show us into their Wonderland. We stoop into fabulous kid-Wonderland, in caring smiles. All our silly cares and worries then vanish into kid-joys on and on beyond here now,
right here now. Kids are still shouting. We simply must go join them. How could we help it?

And then, among those kids we are surprised to find these “secrets”. Kids have no secret at all; they just love to have “secrets” to show to tell, to share them in whispers that are actually another loud shout, for they do not whisper at all. And all these playing shouting kids are so tiny, so fragile, and so tough, all in shouting joys. Everything, even their “secret”, is fitted into shouting joys full-bodied so plump square-circular shiny! No one can get over such joys on and on unlimited, into the ultimate Kingdom of playing joys they just shouting in.

“Life is too serious to take seriously”, quipped Oscar Wilde. His quip is delightfully substantiated in kids at play frivolous not frivolous at all. Nothing is more significant than that seriousness non-serious of life, as it is fulfilled in irresistible joys of kids at play! Kids take to paradox as fish take to water. Oxymora are the rough streams where kids are excited at swimming in! This is a happy case of filling up an oxymoron with kid-joys of living, a rather rare case so common so concrete, isn’t it?

3. Thinking Concretely

Concrete thinking is not just wallowing in things concrete, but has an important and indispensable function. We are in the world where we cherish logical clarity and get caught in logical troubles, as babies washed too clean get sick. We here see how concrete thinking concretely resolves knotted dilemmas logical analysis kicks up to imprison itself in them. Since our itinerary is a bit involved, this section has two subdivisions, Outline, and then Actual Undergoing.

3.1. ONE: Outline

Concrete thinking thinks concretely to concretely resolve those knotted dilemmas the logical analysts kick up to self-imprison inside them. The resolution goes this way. The liar’s paradox is one most famous logical “nut” impossible to logically “crack”. And this is not an isolated logical dilemma, but a case showing such sort of a basic crack in logical analytical mode of thinking, typical in Western philosophy. Sorensen traces out the history of Western philosophy as history of the “paradox” that he claims is an ingredient composing Western philosophy (Sorensen, 2003).

His claim is graphically shown valid by mathematician Gödel who independently proves that mathematical proof—it is the basis of logical thinking—cannot be independently proved. And thus Gödel himself reenacted the liar’s paradox! Liar’s paradox, Western philosophy, and Gödel are rolled into one basic crack in logical thinking in the entire history of Western philosophy. Such an impressive crack it is in logical thinking whose job it is to fill in logical cracks! Now let us tarry here a while before going further. It is irresistible!

At the very beginning of his book on the history of the paradox, Sorensen drops on us this bombshell. He takes paradoxes as the constitutive “atoms of philosophy” as prime numbers are the atoms of mathematics. On this basis, he surveys the history of Western philosophy as a “history of the paradox”. He did not explain how paradox is the atom of philosophy, only that philosophy handles problems, not solutions, optimistically taking “paradox” as a simple riddle and problem that can eventually be resolved. Made of bits and pieces, this book has no sustained argument. Do these scattered dots tell us of the explosions by paradoxes into bits and pieces?

But actually “paradox” is a serious insoluble dilemma that nails logic to its both horns, to explode logic. Such dilemmas so abound in Western philosophy as to justify writing its history of the paradox, and what an explosive situation this is! Apparently, Sorensen is unaware of handling paradox as a logical explosive landmine that has been exploding Western philosophy throughout its history. Does he not realize that the history of the paradox is the history of bankruptcy of logical thinking?

What sort of thinking does Western philosophy needs, then, to defuse this explosive? Since explosion is concrete and historical, “concrete thinking” must be the thinking that does the job. And it will be quite an unexpected sort of defusing. Interestingly and significantly, in contrast to China that routinely engages in concrete thinking, Western philosophy seems never to have practiced concrete thinking.

Perhaps this is why paradoxes are so prominent in the West, so much so that Sorensen can produce a Western history of the paradox as the history of philosophy. Sadly, Sorensen is totally unaware that he is handling an explosive, unaware even of being exploded himself. Unaware or not, however, Sorensen and Western philosophy do need concrete thinking they are unaware of to defuse the paradoxes their explosives, the landmines they are unaware of.

“How does concrete thinking do the defusing?” Interestingly, concrete thinking sees a delightful way out of
this logical cul-de-sac of dilemmas and paradoxes, as dilemma and paradox describe logical dead-end in different ways. This way out is indicated, of all places, in the master logician Whitehead’s trenchant quip, in the relaxed concrete milieu of “dialogues”, declaring “All truths are half-truths”, and Mrs. Whitehead sees through this saying perceptively.

She says that her husband’s quip tells us of our necessity of looking things in so many various perspectives, looking things over from as many angles as we can (Whitehead, 1954). On our part, we see that such looking-around from various looks-around describes concrete thinking in praxis. The logical objection “Is your quip itself a half-truth?” simply shows how the quip is not logical but in the milieu of concrete thinking.

In concrete thinking, we see through it all. The liar’s paradox is a result of taking a pragmatic half-truth as a whole logical truth. The self-liar is not to be taken as announcing a whole logical proposition but as talking of her concrete practice at the moment, self-confessing to her specific praxis, not asserting a universal logical “whole truth”. So does Gödel, proving his proof on his specific occasion; he did not mean to universalize his conclusion as a universal proposition self-referable. All this amounts to concrete thinking seeing our living as self-referred inconsistency that portrays how the kids grow. Kids growing are kids frolicking. Now we actually undergo this route.

3.2. TWO: Actual Undergoing

Logical thinking is keen at keeping consistency against contradiction. Western philosophy is then centered on the problem of the worst illogic, paradox, i.e., a dilemma where both contrary ways are closed off. Series of struggles in Western philosophy with various paradoxes compose its history, as Sorensen tried (Sorensen, 2003). We now first describe how paradox bankrupts logical thinking, and then see how concrete thinking concretely resolves in delight such logical cul-de-sac. Concrete thinking considers “paradox” in concrete manner to resolve it. Let us begin with the well-known liar’s paradox, “I am a liar” with which we can neither agree nor disagree.

If we take what she says as true, then she says truthfully, and what she says, “I am a liar”, is false, for she is no liar but telling the truth. If we take what she says, “I am a liar”, as false, then she says falsely, and then what she says, “I am a liar”, is true. If her saying is taken as true, it is false; if it is taken as false, it is true. Her saying is senseless, then, and the liar’s paradox destroys the self-liar. Arendt a Jew noted that no single Jew rose up against Nazis (Arendt, 1963); her life (1906-1975) coincides with the Nazi era (1919-1945). Her keen perceptive insight is caught in a messy paradox of self-liar. Sad!

“But she is an actual case of self-liar. Our apodictic certainty of mathematics does not lie, right?” You are all wrong, pal! Such mess of self-liar is at the center of our awesome mathematics. Kurt Gödel proves, alone, that every proof must be proved not alone but by other proof (Dawson Jr., 1997). Now if we take his proving as valid, then his “proof” is invalid, for he proved alone that “proof cannot be proved alone”, which is just proved invalid. But if we take his proving as invalid, then his “proof” is valid, for his proving-alone being invalid has proved that “proof cannot be proved alone”, which is validated.

In short, if his proof is taken as valid, it is invalidated; if it is taken as invalid, it is validated. Gödel is hopelessly caught in a liar’s paradox; his incompleteness theorem demolishes itself. Beautiful precision of mathematics at the base of logical thinking thus calculates precisely into self-futility, but no one has realized that Gödel himself with his proof is bankrupt in the liar’s paradox way (Kline, 1980). Thus the liar’s paradox gnaws at the base of logical thinking to crack it up, to bankrupt it.

This is quite a serious matter for logical thinking. We are at a loss, when we suddenly hear master logician Whitehead’s trenchant quip, “There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is ‘trying to treat them as whole truths’ that plays the devil” (Whitehead, 1954: p. 14). Let us pursue this saying. Master logician Whitehead (1954) starkly says, “All truths are half-truths” (p. 14). Now, I cannot say anything definite and distinct without falling into Whitehead-sort of trouble, “Is your own saying half-truth or not?”

For example, suppose I say with Russell his student, “Be careful with all ‘all-claims’”. Is this claim an all-claim? I need Whitehead-like response, that this saying is not a claim but a practical all-round caution against all-truths of all-claims. It is thus that the dead-end is resolved. This practical caution is part of concrete thinking.

This caution is a way out of logical self-referential inconsistency typified by the liar-paradox. Self-admission of a liar can be an honest confession, not a claim. This is a caution of a prudential angel. Where angels fear to tread, fools rush in. After all, doesn’t self-inconsistency discovered by self-reflection describe kids growing? Doesn’t caution here smile parental caring? “Foolish rushing in” of logic ruins cautious growth. I would then follow angelic fear, staying away from smart-fool’s lack of caution (Sorensen, 2003; Ryle, 1960).
Now, I confess to being cautious when I express all this, and confession mumbles, not claiming. Caution is my way of being, not of my claiming. My way of being myself is being concrete. “Concrete” is odd in three ways at least, specific, indescribable, and at being, as elucidated in the former section as features One, Two, and Three of concrete thinking, do you remember?

“Wait a minute, pal. Whitehead’s saying is a logician saying. How could logical thinking resolve problems created by logical thinking?” Great! I agree. Logical problems must be resolved not logically but otherwise by concrete thinking. In fact, his saying is illogical, logically self-contradictory, as “all are half” is, and must be dealt with otherwise than logically, in line with concrete thinking. Whitehead’s saying here must not be considered logically, then, but be considered concretely in ways of concrete thinking, in somewhat this way.

“Things” are all concrete, or else they do not exist. What is concrete is a specific “here now” as elucidated in previous section under Feature One of concrete thinking; what is true “here now” then cannot be universalized into a “whole truth” applicable everywhere. Truth is concrete specific, situated as “half truth”. “All” in “All truths are half-truths” describes how “this time” when something true comes up, it is true of this situation alone, how the next “this time” when there is another truth, it is true then only, and so all such “this-time’s” bring up “half truths”. The saying “All truths are half-truths” is a situational description, as the self-liar talks about her situation at that time.

Neither did mean what they say to be the “whole truths” self-referable. All truths are thus concrete, and faithful to the respective specific situations, true at the time; on other occasions they are not appropriate to be taken as “true”, and so all truths are half-truths in the concrete. Such is how concrete thinking discerns Whitehead’s logically incoherent saying to mean, quite sensible concrete. Now, this elusive point quite concrete bears repeating in variation.

Thus, truths are ever fresh inexhaustible, “one and many”, one and all. Each moment comes born fragile at dawn, baby-wobbly, only half-shaped. “There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths” concrete alive, all so precious, beginning to begin to yet to begin, at each moment that comes. Things concrete are only half-true, so they are half-false, ever half-born at dawn so shy, half-baked concrete.

Paradox is reason against reason, reason is part of human life, and so paradox is part of human oxymoronic reasoning. Paradoxes are atoms of philosophy to begin philosophy to compose it as it and thinking demolish each other (Sorensen, 2003). Thinking and paradoxes are both indexicals like “here” that changes meaning in the concrete without changing meaning set to declare itself as itself (Gale, 1972; Yourgrau, 1990).

Here all truths are half-true; we are forever wary of their false halves. Whitehead the master logician says, “There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is ‘trying to treat them as whole truths’ that plays the devil” (Whitehead, 1954: p. 14). “What about your own statement? Is it half-true?” He would say, “Your question is also half-true. You see, my statement shows how to see truths, never round itself up as a final whole truth” (Whitehead, 1954: p. 198). His saying is alive, always a half, forwarding toward another half: “Like the half-truths, the absolute truth will have to be made, made as a relation incidental to the growth of verification-experience, to which the half-true ideas are all along contributing their quota” (James, 1981: p. 107). By the same token, all falsities are half-false; we forever explore their true halves. In all this, we have no absolute whole; and this statement itself is not absolute, but is half-true and half-false, ever.

We need many life-spans to unpack these three oxymora, “all and half”, “true and false”, and “absoluteness of an assertion” and “denying its absoluteness”; all these are odd mixtures of consistency with inconsistency, twisty and exciting, concrete and alive as kid’s life itself. Here all truths remain half-false, as all falsities are half-true. Let us unpack these surprising affirmations.

All truths are half-false. For example, our sacrosanct “causality” is half-false, as it is half-useless for prospective prediction, shot through with contingent surprises. We also need solid “evidence” that means differently in our process of exploring what we do not know. Popper’s “falsifiability principle” keeps changing in what “false” means, quite unreliable in our research.

By the same token, all falsities are half-true. Many brutal superstitions are “adopted as sacraments” into all-exclusive Christianity. Offering in fire our precious first-borns to brutal Moloch is adopted by God of love to offer his only Son on the cross to woo us back. Gruesome cannibalism is adopted into the Eucharist offered by Jesus Christ himself to eat and drink him (Swift, 1729). Hitler’s massive atrocities are a massive bed of truths still waiting for us to explore, not just to deplore. Our life is thus made of “many” opposing absolute assertions and absolute negations, affirming cautiously and and negating cautiously, and this “and” composes oxymora our life.

An interesting example of falsehood as just half-false can be seen in careful British empiricism and American pragmatism. Moore (1922) and Ryle (1954) typify British thinkers, both skillful at showing how incoherent a
theme or a view is. Moore revels in showing a theme to consist of “A and not-A”, calling the “and” a fallacy. Ryle stands at the crossroads of “either theoretical A or practical not-A”, to puzzle out its dilemmas into “both A and not-A”. We join them in “reveling” fallacies and dilemmas that yet do not challenge us as “problems” to solve, as Moore and Ryle think, but invite us to live them to revel in them as oxymora our life.

Significantly, both these extremely careful thinkers have blemishes. Moore (pp. vii-viii) unabashedly includes into his collection of essays all “defective mistakes” he explicitly admits (with excuses). Ryle is needlessly convoluted on straight dilemmas, as Moore’s simplicity digs to wander into bewildering complexities to lose the major and broad perspective.

James in America says that truth pays (James, 1902). This is surprising, in need not of proof but of explanation, but James did not do it well. We on our part see its fabulous spinoffs. Truth may not be utility, for claiming their identity confuses categories, and the confusion spreads incompatibilities, as Moore (1922) carefully shows. Sadly, however, Moore fails to see the implications of incompatibilities smiling all over our life. Let me explain.

The value of emotivism’s incredible view that ethics is subjective attitude lies in the good with power to move us. The intention of pragmatism’s entrepreneurial view that truth makes us profit lies in truth as positively impacting us, and truth without impact is truth without itself, a pie in the sky. All things-good move us (emotivism); all things-true are useful to us (pragmatism). James’s example has it impressively that truth is a means to life-satisfaction, with vital impacts on life. Got lost in the woods, starved, if I find a cow-path and follow it to come to see a house, I will save my life. This following a cow-path to a house is truth-process of verification, truth-making to impact life. “All” in truth-as-utility means, not indifferently all at once, but, as each “true” event happens, it positively impacts us to “profit” us by it “working” as we have expected.

Propositional truth could hurt much, and so its straight expression is unethical, evil beyond being false. Let me give a concrete example. My old friend a Confucian scholar is ready to retire. He has been so sad for a year long about his only son’s sex-change, while he is proud that his/her fame as a Goethe scholar is firmly set. Now I could tell him that he would be beating the dead horse if he just describes Japan’s well-known rejection of Confucian advocacy of revolution against the tyrant, unless he probes its cultural significance to China and to Japan—he does not seem to have probed it.

I could also tell him straight in the face how his sole son now his another daughter’s “fame” is actually a mere tolerance in Goethe academia as an odd scholar on the obscure fact of “Goethe in China”, unless he/she specifies the enormous cultural significance of this fact to Germany, to China, and thereby to the world cultures. Has he/she been doing so?

But, even if true (and it would be more devastating if true), my critiques would simply devastate my old retiring friend already so downcast, if I were to straightly give him my stark critiques. I simply must be silent here. Such bodily concrete considerateness is beyond logical analysis to perform. By the same token, pep-talk often false can pull up a person from the deep pit of despair. Thoughtful insight into the situation followed by an apt choice of tactics (including silent heartfelt listening) pull the stunt of pulling up the person, and “pulling up a person” is truth existential beyond propositional truth. In all this, fact (reality) changes and ideas change, as Moore also admits (p. 131). Truth is their correspondence, so truth changes. “So far as reality means experienceable reality, both it and the truths men gain about it are everlasting in process of mutation” (James, 1975: p. 107).

Even though the fact-time connection does not change (Moore, 1922), the impact of this connection changes, and the impact (utility) is part of actual “truth”, so truth changes in the changing impact on actuality. Moore is quoted because he is a staunch advocate of the immutability of truth. He is quoted precisely to show how mutable truth is. All this dialogue with Moore shows how simple and clear Moore is one who yet crawls to bog down in details, unable to jump up to survey the total picture so crucial. The more positive impact exerted by a specific fact-time connection, the more utility this connection has, and so the more truth-value it has.

This is because actual truth must connect to actuality, and impact is one way to connect. Impact is impossible without body-concrete existence in concrete thinking. Truth thus has concrete existence in its concrete impact, realized by concrete thinking. “All this is so spooky abstract. Do you have any concrete cash value to it?” I thought it is concrete enough but, all right, if you will, here is an example quite concrete.

Our fascinating oxymoron in life is play. Play is nothing frivolous because it is totally frivolous, for it is kids who play, and kids are never frivolous (they are our future quite serious) because they are frivolous at play, playing our future. Kids’ secret is joy, full-bodied so frivolous never frivolous. Let us explore this fascinating oxymoron of life, joy, kids, play, frivolous never frivolous, all rolled into one in life oxymora.

We remember that Jesus in kid-joy practices his three typical activities, healing, teaching, and preaching, and
practices them through us, on and on. Healing restores basic vigor to live ourselves, and to help people live. Teaching restores joys of this life daily, no matter what. Preaching restores joys of life beyond here now, here now. These three activities typify continual giving of joy from beyond us, through us to our beloved neighbors on and on. There is invigorating joy in giving life, giving joys of living, thereby to be happy to give rather than to get (Acts 20:35). This is Heaven, isn’t it?

Kids are here ever showing and telling us things new, and sharing them; to them the kingdom of everlasting joys of sharing belongs. They call their activities “playing living together”, the more the merrier. The rougher the life-stream foams on in bumpy precipitancy, the happier the kids turn, excited at frolicking in such hard-core oxymora. They fool around play-driven, joy-driven.

Playing joys and spreading joys are what, how, and why we live vigorous kid-like, and live beyond living now. Ontology of play supports and practices ethics of joys together. Existence as co-existence and inter-existence is thoroughly delightful, kid-displayed here; the joy of inter-existence is absolutely urged on us now, following kids. Playing joys together is our categorical imperative of life-existence.

Nothing is new here, and everything is new and exciting; here tiny Alice in her Wonderland is skipping jumping, playing with those fabulous incredible monsters, frogs, “doggie!” , and all. Those few people are sullen insane who are not lured irresistibly into jumping into this kid-Wonderland! And this Wonderland is never far away from us. It is everywhere whenever kids are seen around.

Now let us sober up into probing how oxymoron, dilemma paradoxical, comes about. Except for math (1 + 1 = 2), causality (events are caused), and logic (if P implies Q, Q cannot imply P), all depictions of actuality in nature, history, beauty, politics, business engagements of commerce, medicine, cooking, and the like, are executed in concrete thinking to make common sense that is concrete sense felt-sense.

Such common sense is so powerful that it often uses math, causality, and logic to perform body concrete thinking that often violates logic in math and causality. Parsing these violations then goes into describing concrete thinking that is bodily in daily living, to yield oxymora paradoxes. This is how oxymora originate in our life. Can you hear kids shouting at the “magic” of things not-fitting? Achilles cannot overtake the turtle in front but he overtakes it! That I freely do this specific thing now is true for ever, and so I am destined ever to do this thing. I am free and fated! Wow! Kids shout at all these in the magic world!

Of course, the logician would still complain, “Half-truth or not, self-contradiction still exists. Nothing is resolved here. Things are crooked; nothing fits”. Concrete thinking would smile and say, “Well, self-contradiction is self-referred inconsistency, right? Doesn’t it describe kids growing?” Nothing fits in this world. Things are ever unsettled. Kids tumble shouting in this world so topsy-turvy! That is how they grow! They are forever awe-struck shouting at the “do not fit” magic of this world! Their awe and their wonder are how they grow!

Look, pal! Kids are correct here! In our daily world, no single day fits in with any other days. Alice lives surprises in her Wonderland, as Huck Finn loves his adventures, or rather, all misadventures, his and all others’ he meets. Kids hate the stodgy days of putting nose to the grindstone. Kids say the darnedest things that rock our common sense, making no sense so cute, as kids are themselves so misshaped, so wobbly, and so irresistible! Thomas Reid champions common sense reasoning that seems concrete thinking (Reid, 1975). We must be cautious here. Common sense reasoning can reason logically under the standard of common sense, and it can also reason in a commonsense way. Reid seems to have gone the former route. Concrete thinking goes the latter.

Concrete thinking alone sees such kid-delight in self-inconsistency, never in logical analysis that complains consistently. And have you noticed this fact so concrete? The resolution if any of logical bankruptcy in paradoxes by concrete thinking is executed in delight, and results in childish joys jumping around in the childish Wonderland! Now who would dare disdain childishness as below respect?

Child-joy here meets the child-joy elucidated and completed in the former section of “Thinking the Concrete”. Concrete thinking in all kid-joys cannot help but overflow life, forever beginning to yet to begin, or else it is nothing! Thus it does the kids’ joys to round up this section to meet kids’ joys that complete the previous section!

4. Conclusion

“Now, please clarify, my friend. At first you claim that logical thinking opposes concrete thinking. And then you insist that all types of thinking are concrete thinking. What is going on here?” Wow, thanks for your sensitivity. I mean the following three points. One, all types of thinking are meant to consider things concrete, for things not concrete do not exist, and thinking cannot deal with no-existence. Two, but concrete existents are full of illogic
I gave many examples), and so logical thinking is unable to deal with things concrete (in fact, logic itself is cracked with liar’s paradox), and so logical thinking is in need of concrete thinking to resolve its own problems. *Three*, still, concrete thinking can use logical thinking to spot illogical places in things concrete as well as things logical, to resolve them (logic is unable to do so).

We now hear a long-faced logician himself wondering aloud as to why concrete thinking can elucidate our living so arbitrary so illogical, *and* why its elucidations always end in kids’ joys absolutely sovereign. A same smiling point answers both queries. It is that concrete thinking is at the child-base of humanity to begin kid-living. Concrete thinking is the almighty initiation of human thinking human kid-living (to sire and to save this logician and all his logic).

And of course initiation dawns the child, and it is sheer joy to welcome each moment dawning kid-afresh, one by one—all so concretely. The child at dawn *is* our joy living. Concrete thinking *is* our child in joy, for the concrete is living actuality ever growing in kid’s joys shouting, ever. Nothing more can be said. It *must* be delightfully lived, in concrete thinking in concrete living, full-bodied fully felt.

My daughter Mary was holding a tiny monkey on top of a high tower. Bill Clinton an earlier president of USA saw the monkey and said, “I want it. How much is it?” As he was saying, the monkey also saw Mr. Clinton, and suddenly wiggled itself out of Mary’s hands and jumped out of the tower. I rushed to where the monkey was coming down, and soon caught it right into my arms. I hugged it as Mr. Clinton came. He gave me $10. I bought crackers and peanuts and gave them with the monkey to Mr. Clinton.

We do hope that Mrs. Clinton would soon campaign for the first lady presidency in the USA, as widely rumored. And then I suddenly woke up. It was dawn. I found myself breathless, still smiling, and quite excited. That monkey is our dear baby in our heart of being. It is the center 中庸 of us daily trudging life’s way 中庸, one day at a time. This monkey is our *(doctrine of)* Daily Mean 中庸, concrete, all too concrete. Such is our “concrete thinking”, day in and day out, all the time.

References


Peter Singer and the Deification of Modern Science: An Ethical Exploration

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that Peter Singer in some of his key works ascribes certain absolute and definitive attributes to modern science, equating them to God. The advancement of modern science particularly in the areas of medical technologies such as human assisted reproduction and genetic engineering, has given science unparalleled powers over nature in general and human nature in particular. Because of this authority, Singer directly and indirectly attributes absolute values to science and the scientific method. He does this by according some supreme attributes (of God) like omniscience, omnipotence and omni-benevolence to science. In this paper we argue, contra Singer, that modern science has got no Godlike knowledge and Godlike powers over nature. Therefore, conferring on science such unqualified status is, firstly, an unwarranted estimation of the powers of modern science, and, secondly, this comes with some moral implications. For example, science may become the measure of all things. It also raises the ethical concern as to whether we can, for example, determine the moral worth of a human being or ascertain metaphysical truths merely by relying on scientific truths. Thirdly, Singer’s perspective exhumes the age-old conflict between science and religion and celebrates the victory of science over religion. We argue for the view that science and religion are two sides of the same coin. In the search for the truth, the two disciplines concentrate on each aspect of reality, and therefore complement each other. Whereas science concentrates on the physical/natural, religion focuses on the spiritual/supernatural. It would therefore be sensible to adopt an approach to knowledge which accommodates and integrates both religion and science as complementary ways of understanding reality.

Keywords

Peter Singer, Deification, Modern Science, Religion, Omnipotent, Omniscience, Omni-Benevolent
1. Introduction

Since its birth in the 17th century, modern Western science, and especially modern medicine, “has been guided by a desire to improve and elevate the human condition” (Kass, 2002: p. 174). Its rigorous study and experimentation on human subjects has resulted in a wealth of knowledge about nature as a whole and the human species in particular. It has provided humankind with knowledge about the functioning of the human body and the capacity to manipulate or alter the way the human body functions. The benefits of modern science to humanity are enormous. Because of the spectacular successes of science, some philosophers and scientists are beginning to equate science to God. Peter Singer is one of such thinkers who glorifies and venerates modern science.

Peter Albert David Singer is an Australian moral and political philosopher. He is one of most iconoclastic and controversial contemporary philosophers. His views concerning the value of science to humanity; the moral status of the human embryo, abortion, infanticide, animal rights, famine and poverty, the physically challenged, the mentally retarded, and life and death, are revolutionary and have not only opened new vistas and expanded our moral and intellectual horizons in thinking about these issues, but have provoked some of the most animated debates in contemporary moral and political philosophy. Singer’s radical views on the above issues have made him not only one of the most famous, but also one of the most hated, philosophers in the world today. In this paper we argue that his unalloyed trust in the powers of modern science has stretched to the point of deification and this is not without moral implications. In some of his key works like Practical Ethics, Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of our Traditional Ethics, and Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of Animal Movement, Singer directly and indirectly attributes certain values to science, which qualify science and the scientific method as absolute. He does this by assigning certain attributes of God to modern science. For example, there are instances where Singer says that modern science is all-knowing (omniscient). This is observed in his arguments about the beginning of human life (Singer, 2009: p. 206), and the non-personhood of the human embryo, where he discards every other source of knowledge about humanity and settles on the evidence provided by modern science, as if to say modern science is all-knowing and is the only discipline that provides knowledge about human nature. Singer equally gives the impression that modern science is omnipotent, particularly with its biomedical project to create and enhance the human species. In some of his works therefore, there is a gradual shift from the Western conception and description of God as omniscient, omnipotent and omni-benevolent to the vesting of science with such attributes. Dan Brown, in his novel Angels and Demons, presents a clear picture of how science and scientific knowledge are considered as absolute. He brings this out in a conversation between two of his characters, Kohler and Langdon, as follows: “The men and women of CERN (Conseil Europeen pour la Recherché Nucleaire), are here to find answers to the same questions man has been asking since the beginning of time. Where did we come from? What are we made of?” Mr. Langdon wonders if the answers to these questions could be obtained from a Physics lab. And this is what Kohler has to say:

Mr. Langdon, all questions were once spiritual. Since the beginning of time, spirituality and religion have been called on to fill in the gaps that science did not understand. The rising and setting of the sun was once attributed to Helios and a flaming chariot. Earthquakes and tidal waves were the wrath of Poseidon. Science has now proven those gods to be false idols. Soon all Gods will be proven to be false idols. Science has now provided answers to almost every question man can ask (Brown, 2000: p. 43).

Most science enthusiasts, like Singer, are driven by the logic that because science has been able to provide answers to some questions which hitherto fell within the field of religion, science has replaced religion-God. However, there is reason to wonder if modern science merits such a status.

This paper aims at exploring the ethical implications of Singer’s deification of modern science. The advancement of modern science, particularly in the areas of medical technologies such as assisted reproduction and genetic engineering, has given science unprecedented powers over nature in general and human nature in particular. As observed in Singer’s works, the progress in science is equally witnessing the decline in religious and Godly authority over nature. Paradoxically, and interestingly, the decline in religious authority and the de-thronement of God comes with the transfer of God’s attributes to science. When God becomes another idol, like the ancient gods “Helios and Poseidon”, as Dan Brown observes, then modern science may become “the measure of all things” (to borrow the phrase of Protagoras). This shift in authority, from God to science, over nature raises a number of moral concerns that need to be critically examined. This paper attempts an answer to the following questions: Is modern science absolute? What are the ethical implications of consecrating modern science as an absolute, dressing it with divine attributes, as Singer does?
This paper is divided into five main sections. In Section 1, we define and clarify the basic terms employed in the paper: Deification and Modern science. Section 2 addresses the key attributes of God, that is, omniscience, omnipotence and omni-benevolence, showing how Singer ascribes these divine attributes to modern science in some of his major works. In Section 4, we examine the ethical implications of ascribing such supreme values to science. Finally, in Section 5, we consider the limits of modern science in relation to nature and the human species in particular.

2. Definition of Key Terms

The term deification is derived from the Latin deus (God). To deify is to give a thing Godly status. Deification, as used in this paper, is the attribution of divine qualities to modern Western science or the elevation of modern science to an absolute.

Modern Science—This is science whose birth can be traced to the 16th and 17th centuries with founding fathers like Galileo, Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon characterized by a scientific attitude, which lay emphasis on rational impartiality or objectivity. The aim of modern science is to understand and explain how the natural/physical world operates. This new science was established with the vision of making human beings “owners and masters of nature”, making them “more wise and more capable than they have been up to now” (Kass, 2003: p. 34). Reasoning from this, one could say that the dream of modern science is to probe into every corner of nature in search of knowledge that would help improve upon the human lot. In Bacon’s New Atlantis, the agenda of this new science is further laid out to be, “the prolongation of life: the restitution of youth in some degree: the retardation of age: the curing of diseases counted incurable: the mitigation of pain: more easy and less loathsome purgings: transformation of bodies into other bodies” (Bacon, 1803). Thus, following from the agenda outlined above, biomedical sciences, like molecular biology, biochemistry, genetic engineering and various forms of biotechnology, fall within the ambient of modern science. In this paper we use the terms modern science and science interchangeably.

3. How Singer Deifies Modern Science

There are three main absolute qualities which Singer attributes to modern Western science. These include the following: Modern science as omniscient, modern science as omnipotent and modern science as omni-benevolent.

3.1. Modern Science as Omniscient

By accusing humans of “speciesism”, that is, the view that human beings are morally special and superior to other species (Singer, 1994: p. 166), Singer employs the evidence from modern science to explain the origin of the human being. He relies on the Darwinian thesis that humans are the product of evolution and from this premise Singer concludes:

Once the weight of scientific evidence in favor of the theory became apparent, practically, every earlier justification of our supreme place in creation... had to be reconsidered. Intellectually the Darwinian revolution was genuinely revolutionary. Human beings now knew that they were not the special creation of God, made in the divine image and set apart from the animals; on the contrary, human beings came to realize that they were animals themselves (Singer, 2009: pp. 205-206).

According to Singer, once science speaks, then the matter is closed. Also, in his consideration of the nature and potentials of the human embryo, Singer looks for scientific evidence to justify the lack of personhood or lack of rationality of the human embryo. He does this by ascertaining scientifically the point at which the human embryo develops a nervous system that makes it susceptible to pain. Based on this, Singer dismisses the metaphysical and religious arguments of the personhood of the human embryo and tags them as “the unscientific Aristotelian embryology of Thomas Aquinas” (Singer, 1994: p. 87). Elsewhere, he is more explicit when he argues to justify abortion as a means to procure happiness and minimize human suffering. He states: “in contrast to the common opinion that the moral question about abortion is a dilemma with no solution, I shall show that, at least within the bounds of non-religious ethics, there is a clear-cut answer and those who take a different view are simply mistaken” (Singer, 1993: p. 137). The problem here is that Singer bases his arguments only on the evidence of science and non-religious ethics to justify the point at which the human embryo starts developing what
he refers to as “morally relevant characteristics”, such as, “rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, autonomy, pleasure and pain” (Singer, 1993: p. 151). The question is: What about religious and other cultural ethical views about this issue? Don’t these have something to offer? Singer seems to dismiss all of these as insufficient and unreliable sources of knowledge about human nature. In doing this, Singer projects modern science as the only genuine and final authoritative knowledge about human origin and other related moral issues, like abortion. He says that modern science is absolute and provides final answers about our human origins and that those who do not see it in this way are “simply mistaken”. And if this proposition is true, then modern science is all-knowing about human nature if one takes seriously Singer’s non-religious or even atheistic ethical stance. It is from this stand point that Tangwa rightly observes that “even though God may be dead in the Western society, his attributes are evidently not dead” (Tangwa, 1999: p. 226). One observes in this a reincarnation of God in modern science.

In line with Singer, James Watson (the biologist and co-discoverer of the helical structure of the human DNA with Francis Crick in 1953), talking about the question of biotechnology and human rights, maintains that there is nothing special about being human. Human beings do not have rights; they only have basic needs—food, education and health. Needs do not change, but what we perceive as human rights vary not only from one region of the world to another, but also in the course of history. Thus, it is important to be very cautious when we refer to human rights and their intangible nature (Kahn, 2000: p. 67). “I think that”, Watson argues, “in the next ten thousand years, the person who will impose himself as the most dominant figure in history will not be Jesus Christ or Mohamed or some great philosopher or mystical figure, but Charles Darwin. One of the consequences of the Darwinian revolution is that if we argue that human beings have inalienable rights, this may also be applied to dogs, rats, and even to mosquitos… where shall we trace the limit?” (Watson, “Biotechnology and Humanism” cited by Kahn, 2000: pp. 67-68).

For Watson, science, and to be more precise, Darwinism may not only become a religion in the near future, but it is going to overturn the authority of religion and the idea of a Christian or Muslim God who is considered to be the creator and sustainer of life in the universe. Here, once again, we see the consecration of science as an absolute and an omnipotent discipline.

3.2. Modern Science as Omnipotent

The agenda of modern science as laid out by its founding fathers, Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon (although these two were very religious philosophers), was to conquer and manipulate nature. From this agenda, science was vested with super powers over nature, to subdue, dominate, exploit and conquer nature. In fact, “a greater part of these dreams have been realized already, even earlier than Bacon and Descartes had envisioned” (Tosam, 2010: p. 10). In this section therefore, we shall consider Singer’s views in terms of the modern scientific agenda as conceived in the scientific projects of Descartes and Bacon, and secondly, his considerations of the biomedical project to create a better human species.

The continuous success of modern science demands a lot of sacrifices or “martyrs for science”, as Hans Jonas argues (Jonas, 1976: p. 212). These martyrs of science are human beings who are exploited, experimented on and even destroyed for its advancement. For Singer, no sacrifice for a scientific cause should be considered as too great or morally illicit, inasmuch as this would enhance happiness for a majority of humans. In this way, modern science is an absolute to which everything and anything about a human being can be sacrificed. For instance, while arguing for the development of in vitro fertilization, Singer maintains:

In 1978 the birth of Louise Brown raised a new issue about the status of early human life, for Louise Brown was the first human to have been born from an embryo that had been fertilized outside a human body. The success of Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe in demonstrating the possibility of in vitro fertilization was based on several years of experimentation on early human embryos—one of which had survived. IVF is now a routine procedure for certain types of infertility, and has given rise to thousands of healthy babies. To reach this point, however, many more embryos had to be destroyed in experiments, and further improvements of IVF techniques will require continued experimentation (Singer, 1993: p. 136).

From this perspective, the results of science have been so “beneficial that… virtually no one questions the benefits of the modern scientific endeavor, especially in medicine…” (Kass, 2002: p. 175). In the case of IVF, the thousands of healthy babies to infertile couples, who a few centuries ago, would never have had children is a great advantage. According to Singer, self-consciousness and the ability to suffer pain is the main condition for
conferring a being moral worth/value. Hence, because human embryos are not yet self-conscience entities, it is not morally bad to destroy them in experiments for “further improvements of the IVF techniques…”

However, it would be inappropriate, in a moral discussion, to detach the end from the means. Singer indicates that “the success of Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe in demonstrating the possibility of in vitro fertilization, or IVF, was based on several years of experimentation on early human embryos—none of which had survived” (Singer, 1993: p. 136). It is worth noting that Singer quantifies the benefits of IVF in “thousands of healthy babies” to infertile couples. But in referring to the price paid for this, Singer prefers to remain silent. He instead talks about “several years of experimenting on early human embryos, none of which had survived”. The question is; how many years and how many human embryos are we talking about here? Singer’s silence might have been a subtle way to avoid shocking his readers on the number of human beings destroyed to produce Louise Brown. The Catholic Church argues on this line when she observes that “given the proportion between the total number of embryos produced and those eventually born, the number of embryos sacrificed is extremely high” (Dignitas Personae, n.14). Without, therefore, undermining the plight of infertile couples, there is need to ask, if these human embryos that are sacrificed are worth the benefits? What could be the implications of such sacrifices to science and to human dignity? The murder of thousands of human embryos in the IVF process may be equal to cutting off a head to cure a headache (Sheen, 1957: p. 62). That is to say what is sacrificed to remedy infertility is too much in comparison with the good.

Elsewhere, Singer justifies the biomedical project to create healthier and happier human beings. He supports pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), and the discarding of human embryos and children with genetic abnormalities. For instance, he argues that through PGD human embryos can be screened for genetic abnormalities and, in his words, “discarded if such abnormalities are found” (Singer, 1993: 136). Because of this, Singer argues that abortion is “morally neutral” if the intention is to “prevent much greater suffering by saving the life of a child suffering from an immune system, or to cure Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease in an older person” (Singer, 1993: p. 166). He is more unequivocal on this issue when he states: “prenatal diagnosis, followed by abortion in selected cases, is common practice in countries with liberal abortion laws and advanced medical techniques. I think this is as it should be” (Singer, 1993: p. 187). Because of these, Singer attempts to re-write the commandments discarding the view that “all human life is of equal worth” (Singer, 1994: p. 190). In his first commandment he states; “recognize that the worth of human life varies” (Singer, 1994: p. 190). To Singer, then, a human being without moral relevant characteristics cannot and should not, according to this new commandment, have the same moral worth with a person. In this category of being, the life of a self-conscious being has more value than that of a conscious being. Based on this, Singer concludes that “modern medical practice has become incompatible with the belief in the equal value of human life” (Singer, 1994: p. 190).

The above views of Singer expose his belief in the omnipotent capacity of modern science, particularly its biomedical project to create a better human species, one that would be without imperfections, disease or blemishes. This agenda is, to J. Habermas, tantamount to being a “partner in evolution” or even “playing God” (Habermas, 2003: p. 21), and we cannot but wonder whether modern science has “God-like knowledge and powers” (Tosam, 2010: p. 248), as Singer accords it. This, of course, indicates that when modern science takes the place of God, if it will ever do so, to create a human being it may equally have to determine the value of human life. That is why modern science, in Singer’s perspective, from the trajectory of medicine does not hold the view that all human life is equal (Singer, 1994: p. 189). It measures the value of human life only “within the parameters of ‘normality’ and physical well-being, thus opening the way for the legitimizing infanticide and euthanasia as well” (Dignitas Personae, n.22). Singer maintains that through PGD, a child with genetic abnormalities should be discarded. Once more, he uses modern science to determine who to be born and who not to be born. In an African world view, as Tangwa observes, such decisions belong only to God, because a child, irrespective of its “physical and mental attributes”, is seen as a gift and handiwork of God, and thus demands an “unconditional acceptance” (Tangwa, 2000: p. 165). In this worldview, therefore, the intention to weed out the undesired from the desired is a violation of the sacredness of human life, which to Singer can only be determined by the evidence of modern science.

Moreover, the replacement of the authority of religion by science can be seen again in the conversation between Kohler and Langdon in Dan Brown’s Angels and Demons:

Faith does not protect you. Medicine and airbags... those are things that protect you. God does not protect you. Intelligence protects you. Enlightenment. Put your faith in something with tangible results. How long has it been since someone walked on water? Modern miracles belong to science... even the divine miracle of creation.

Because the achievements of religion are not palpable or “tangible” as the ubiquitous achievements of techno-science, we need not put our faith in religion. We can put our faith in science because it protects us. Science is the new religion—the new God. Against such tendencies, Joseph Ratzinger cautions: “we encourage scientific research but science is not an absolute, to which everything must be subordinated and eventually sacrificed, including the dignity of man” (Ratzinger, 1987: p. 158).

3.3. Modern Science as Omni-Benevolent

In Enhancing Evolution, John Harris attempts an answer to the following question: What is science for? (Harris, 2007: p. xv). To Harris, and in line with Singer, “if so much amount of public money is devoted to science education and scientific research worldwide, it is because of the good that science does” (Harris, 2007: p. xv). From this position, Singer rightly holds that humanity has a lot of benefits to achieve from science. The birth of the first human being through IVF and the provision of “thousands of babies to infertile couples” through IVF is “a medical miracle” (Singer, 1994: p. 93). In this way, modern science has given hope to millions of infertile couples, through its new reproductive technologies. In Rethinking Life and Death, Singer brings out numerous examples of what he perceives to be “a medical miracle”. He uses the stories of Trisha Marshall and Marion Ploch, (Singer, 1994: pp. 9-16), women who were declared brain dead, after some accidents, but were found to be pregnant. But thanks to modern science a respirator kept them breathing and their hearts beating, their bodies were kept warm and their bodily functioning were continuous. In the case of Marshall, Singer states that “[f]or three and a half months Marshall’s heart continued to beat while the respirator pushed air into her lungs, and nutrients were passed down a tube through her nose and into her stomach... On 3 August, a baby was delivered by a caesarean birth, a little premature but healthy” (Singer, 1994: p. 11). In certain parts of the world and in the past centuries in general, this would not have been possible. Modern science is equally offering prospects, through human embryonic experimentation, to millions of people suffering from genetically related diseases such as Parkinson’s, cancer, diabetes, sickle cell anemia, heart diseases, Alzheimer’s and Huntington disease. The omni-benevolent nature of modern science can thus be summarized in the following phrase: “count the blessings of modern science to humanity, and name them one by one and it will surprise you what modern science has done”. It is because of these numerous benefits of modern science that ethicists like Singer and scientists like Watson seem to put their unconditional trust in science.

However, the absolutization of modern science because of its benefits carries with it some ethical concerns. There is a tendency to misconstrue the issue or to carry out a biased moral appraisal if the means to these benefits are not carefully considered. The unbridled plunder of nature and the destruction of vulnerable human beings to enhance the scientific project needs to be taken seriously. Therefore, the debate on the deification of modern science has to go beyond the benefits of modern science. The great achievements and promises of modern science should not blur our moral visions on the issue of the price of what is being sacrificed or to devalue developing or dependent and vulnerable human beings.

Commenting on the splendor of science, Fulton J. Sheen, in Science, Psychiatry and Religion, wonders why there should not be “a Science Sunday on which there would be a public act of thanksgiving to Almighty God for allowing us to read some of His wisdom in creation?” He further reflects in the following questions: “who has ever thanked God for a telephone, a television set, a radio, nuclear reactors, and dynamos?” This is because these things, as Sheen holds, are invented because “God gave us minds to discover them” (Sheen, 1957: p. 54). These concerns of Sheen, though genuine, may not be relevant to Singer. This is because from our analysis, one observes a certain gradual shift in the conferment of absolute authority from God to modern science. But it must be observed that modern science does not say everything about nature in general and human nature in particular. On this line of thought Sheen further holds that “science is not the author of the book of nature, it is only the proofreader” (Sheen, 1957: p. 53). In this way, it would be fallacious for science and the scientist to claim absolute knowledge over nature and human nature in particular. It may be argued against us that this view may be a dialogue of the deaf because we cannot blame non-believers for the lack of belief. But our position is that no position should be considered as definitive or absolute, be it a scientific, religious or a non-religious position.

4. The Moral Implications of the Absolutization of Modern Science

Singer’s consideration of modern science as an absolute has far-reaching moral implications and consequences.
First, it degrades and undermines the place of epistemological tolerance which is essential in the interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue in the search for a comprehensive truth about human nature in particular and nature in general. Singer reveals this tendency in his argument in support of abortion when he says that only his view about the issue is tenable and that “those who take a different view are simply mistaken” (Singer, 1993: p. 137). This is epistemological arrogance. Universal knowledge about human nature cannot be restricted only to the evidence provided by science. While considering this evidence, we must also accommodate other ideas like the transcendental and immanent nature of human beings, as defined by other disciplines like metaphysics, psychology, theology and even various religious and cultural worldviews. Secondly, the idea of considering modern science as omniscient, directly or indirectly, reveals the Western attitude of always attempting to monopolize and globalize “the Western ways of thinking and acting, Western ways, manners and style of doing things, Western idiosyncrasies and eccentricities” (Tangwa, 1999: p. 224). Such domineering attitude gives a false epistemological impression that only the West can provide authentic answers to any problem, be it academic, moral, religious, political or scientific. Finally, such considerations raise serious moral concerns as to whether the value or dignity of human life can be determined or measured by only relying on scientific evidence, or calculable in utilitarian/consequentialist terms. The consequences of such tendencies would be (has actually resulted in) grave abuses of the right to life of some human beings, particularly vulnerable and defenseless human beings, as seen in Singer’s new commandment about human life: “recognize that the worth of human life varies,” which is a revision of the old commandment which states that, or stated that (as Singer may prefer that we put it) “treat all human life as of equal worth (Singer, 1994: p. 190). For instance, the Western conception of the human person is heavily depended on the modern scientific mechanistic view of nature, which is not only dehumanizing, but also neglects the importance of the subjective element—the metaphysical, spiritual and moral facets of life. Without these important components, a person is incomplete. The subjective element has also played a very key role in human civilization (Tosam, 2010). Regretting the neglect of this vital aspect of humankind by this Western mechanistic/materialistic worldview, Lewis Mumford writes:

If science as it was conceived in the seventeenth century had embraced all the phenomena of nature, including man himself neither the theologian, the mystic, the lover, nor the poet would have been so peremptorily excluded at the beginning; nor would it have seemed possible to suggest, as many besides Herbert Spencer have since done, that science if pursued universally and rigorously would finally eliminate them (Mumford, 1970).

The subjective and objective aspects of reality are two important components which make a complete and holistic human being. Human beings are not merely their bodies, that is, alterable materials; they are also moral, spiritual and subjective beings. The mechanistic view of human nature is reductionist. It is from this standpoint that human beings are not part of the natural mechanism which is determined by causal laws.

Moreover, the attempt to “Godify” science comes with a lot of risks; risks which, as imperfect beings, it may be difficult to foresee and/or overturn. This perspective of human imperfection is best captured in an ancient Indian fable which goes thus:

Four royal sons were questioning what specialty they should master. They said to one another, “let us search the earth and learn a special science”. So they decided, and after they had agreed on a place where they would meet again, the four brothers started off, each in a different direction. Time went by and the brothers met again at the appointed meeting place, and they asked one another what they had learned. “I have mastered a science, said the first, “which makes it possible for me, if I have nothing but a piece of bone of some creature, to create straightaway the flesh that goes with it”. “I”, said the second, “know how to grow that creature’s skin and hair if there is flesh on its bones”. The third said, “I am able to create its limbs if I have the flesh, the skin and the hair”. “And I”, concluded the fourth, “know how to give life to that creature if its form is complete with limbs”.

Thereupon, the four brothers went into the jungle to find a piece of bone so that they could demonstrate their specialties. As fate would have it, the bone they found was a lion’s, but they did not know that and picked up the bone. One added flesh to the bone, the second grew hide and hair, the third completed it with matching the limbs, and the fourth gave the lion life. Shaking its heavy mane, the ferocious beast arose with its menacing mouth, sharp teeth, and merciless claws and jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle (Buitenen, 1961: pp. 50-51).

Sheen expresses similar concerns when he refers to a dinner conversation in 1869, recorded in the Journal of the Goncourt brothers. He writes:

Pierre Bertholet, the famous French scientist who was at the dinner, explained that science had just begun to lisp the alphabet of destruction. He predicted that, in one hundred years, “man would know of what the atom
was constituted and would be able at will to moderate, extinguish, and light up the sun as if it were a gas lamp". The Goncourt brother raised no objection but stated, "we have a feeling that when this time comes to science, God with his white beard will come down to earth, swinging a bunch of keys and will say to humanity the way they say at five o’clock: “Closing time gentlemen” and then we will have to start over again (Sheen, 1957: pp. 59-60).

The above citations emphasize the idea of human limitation in spite of the huge knowledge God/Nature has put to our disposal; knowledge which allows us to penetrate into the deepest recesses of nature in ways that we may be able to alter or modify our God-given nature as we see fit, we are still imperfect and limited beings.

5. The Accusation of Modern Science as an Absolute

Despite the claims of Singer, and some contemporary scientists like Watson, on the absolute nature of modern science, it is important to ask the following questions: What are the limits of science? Nature is made of two important elements/parts; the material/physical and the metaphysical/spiritual, science is limited only to the natural/empirical world. Science cannot tell us anything about metaphysical and moral truths.

While accusing Singer of absolutizing modern science, we are not understimating the contributions of modern science in shading light on human nature and nature as a whole. We argue that it would be an overestimation of the capacities of modern science to give it a final say on human nature and origin, and to dismiss or downplay the contributions of the other disciplines. In the words of Evandro Agazzi, science can tell the truth about humanity, but not all the truth, because science is not an absolute. Agazzi goes further to argue that:

Precisely because truth is always relative in this referential sense, it would be absurd to pretend that any partial image is true also about other domains of reference, and even less about the whole of the thing from which the partial set of attributes has been selected. Coming back to our theme we can say that any of the different sciences (natural and human) that offer scientific images of man tell the truth about man, but do not tell all the truth. One might think that in order to know “all the truth” it would be sufficient to accommodate the partial truths coming from all the single sciences, but this conclusion is untenable. First it alludes to a kind of infinite and indefinite task (not only the present sciences but also future ones should be taken into consideration); second, it is still biased by scientism, because it is said that only the accumulation of scientific images could contribute to the attainment of the complete truth. But this is simply a dogmatic presupposition that excludes the possibility that other kinds of truth could contribute to the attainment of complete truth or, better, of the whole truth, that is, the truth regarding “the whole” in its globality, in which the relations between the different partial images should also be considered (Agazzi, 2011: Rethinking Human Nature, p. 79).

Agazzi is not implying that it is impossible to have complete knowledge about human nature. Neither is he ordaining skepticism. Rather to him, it is impossible and quite implausible for any particular discipline to claim to possess the whole truth about human nature. In this sense, therefore, all the different sciences that offer insights/images of humans tell at least some truth about humans but not the whole truth. What Agazzi is advocating is epistemological dialogue and tolerance. Other disciplines that offer scientific images of mankind could contribute to the attainment of a comprehensive knowledge about the human being and nature in general.

6. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can conclude that in spite the immeasurable achievements of modern science, it is not an absolute as Singer seems to claim in some of his principal works. The decline in the authority of religion, characteristic of the Western world today, is giving way to the veneration of science as if science is the substitute of God. In this regard Tangwa writes:

It could be said that the Western society today is one in which God is, more or less dead, in spite of its monumental churches, cathedrals, mosques, synagogues etc., relics of perhaps, a more genuinely religious epoch, which now serve mainly the function of tourist attractions. But even though God may be dead in Western society, his attributes are evidently not dead (Tangwa, 2000: p. 226).

These supreme attributes (omniscience, omnipotence and omni-benevolence) are being arrogated to modern science. But, as we have argued in this paper, science does not know everything about nature and cannot give us complete and definitive knowledge about human nature and nature in general because it is limited in its scope of investigation. Its field of investigation is limited only to the physical or material world. There are also metaphysical and moral questions which are beyond and above the scope of modern science. Moreover, even within
its scope, not everything can be claimed with absolute certainty because scientific knowledge is based on available knowledge which at times may be false.

Moreover, scientific innovations, as they are instigated by fallible human beings, may result in some unexpected and unpleasant consequences. Reasoning from this, therefore, if science is a “God”, it is a monster-God that, like the lion cited in Buitenen above, may eventually destroy everything, even its maker(s). Human beings who have taken upon themselves the power to create, are neither omnipotent nor omniscient, not even omnibenevolent. Therefore, while acknowledging the grandeur and achievements of science we maintain, contra Singer, that modern science is not an absolute and cannot be considered as such. The attempt to give science the status of God is simply a manifestation of epistemological arrogance and the validation of a new ethic of life, which promotes the culture of death. Given that modern science will continue to be our benefactor in the future, it is important to underscore the fact that modern scientific progress should be accompanied by moral progress. Once the two are divorced, the result may be the creation of a monster-God which may devour everything, including its manufacturer(s), and “vanish into the jungle”.

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References


The Place of Concept in Human Cognitive Process of Perception: Why the Conceptualists Cannot Be Right?

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Abstract

There have been so many controversies in the meaning of concept and particularly its place in the cognitive process of perception. The conceptualists, particularly, John McDowell, D. W. Hamlyn, Bill Brewer and Sonia Sedivy, argue that the content of perceptual experience is always in a kind of relation with propositional attitude such that beliefs, judgments, hopes and aspirations are instantaneously captured in perception. If this is granted, then, it becomes difficult to admit the possibility of non-conceptuality in perception. But, on a critical look at the conceptualists’ arguments and deductions, we discover that the conceptualists conflate sensation with perception and concept formation. In view of this, this paper examines and does a critical analysis of the meaning of concept with the belief that if its place in the cognitive process of perception is determined and ascertained, the long standing problem about the nature and characterization of the content of human perceptual experience will automatically dissolve. Whilst distinguishing and separating sensation from perception, the paper establishes that concept-formation is not generic to perception and that there is a place for non-conceptuality in perception. This paper employs conceptual analytical tools to explain the place of concept, sensation and perceptual experience in the cognitive process of perception and thus establishes the truism of non-conceptuality in perception.

Keywords
Language, Concept, Sensation, Perceptual Experience, Cognition and Knowledge

1. Introduction

John McDowell, D. W. Hamlyn, Bill Brewer and Sonia Sedivy are among the strong conceptualists who claim...
that concept is spontaneously structured on perceiving the world. For them, the content of perceptual experience is always in a kind of relation with propositional attitudes such that beliefs, judgments, hopes and aspirations are implicitly part of it. They contend that concepts are immediately derived in perception and dependent on experience, hence, perceptual experience is concept-bound.

If having concepts means cognizing experience, then, perception would imply a completed process of perception different from mere sensation. The conceptualists argue that not until one is able to form concept about one’s experience, one cannot be said to have truly experienced the world. For them, experience is strictly tied to concept and any experience that is not conceptual is not genuine.

But, looking at this argument critically, one is forced to make distinction among perception, sensation and experience. And the question is asked, is experience the same thing as perception? To experience the world is to sense the world and to perceive it is to conceptualize it. To make clear this distinction some scholars employ “concept” in such a way as to warrant making a distinction between sensation and perception. The two, they claim, are not the same and as such, should not be conflated. Thomas Reid, for instance, says, “sensation has no object other than itself, while perception has physical things as its object and also involves concept and beliefs about them” (Hamlyn, 1994: 147). By this, he means that sensation produces no concept at all but perception necessarily does. One would have expected the conceptualists to adopt this distinction and accept non-conceptuality as something derivable from sensation at least. But, they insist that perception must be related to the external world in some ways, hence, must be conceptual. Since the perceiver must have some kinds of beliefs about his experience no matter what, his experience cannot but be conceptual.

This paper does a critical analysis of the word, “concept” both from the traditional and contemporary perspectives, determines its place in perception and shows how it relates to sensation. Some conceptualists’ arguments on the nature and characterization of the content of perceptual are also examined. The point being made here is that if the place of concept and concept-formation is determined in the process of perception then, ascertaining the possibility of non-conceptual content in perception becomes unproblematic.

2. The Classical Notion of Concept

Philosophers have divergent views on what concept is and possibly its place in perception. The notion, “concept”, and its meaning have been loosely employed in epistemology until the modern period when it has to be explained in relation to perception. The controversy surrounding its meaning explains, in part, the rivalry in epistemology between the rationalists and the empiricists. The concept-rationalists hold that concepts are innate, while the concept-empiricists argue that concepts are derived from experience. Going by the former, concepts are independent of, and are derived prior to, experience. Plato claims that there are certain things we know which we do not necessarily perceive with the senses, such as honour, similarity, goodness, badness and so on. He argues that “Forms or Ideas” are known through dialectical reasoning and not by sense-perception because they are derived prior to experience. For him, the soul was formerly acquainted with ideas/forms of things before it became imprisoned in the body: the soul already possessed the knowledge of concepts of things before its encounter with the phenomena world. It means, therefore, that concepts are innate. This conclusion, however, raises some epistemological questions that needed serious attention.

If concepts are inborn, it would imply, for instance, that a man born blind would have concepts as much as a non-blind man. But can a man born blind possess the concept of redness if he had not initially experienced it? The concept-rationalists claim that some concepts like cause and effect and the idea of God are conceivable outside experience (Hospers, 1956: 102). Even though this argument seems naive in the modern period, our concern is to show that concepts and concept-formation are separable from experience and independent of it so that the notion of non-conceptual content in the cognitive process of perception is established.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the words “idea” and “concept” were used interchangeably, until “idea” became extended in the twentieth century to include feelings and imaginations. For example, the expression, “I have the idea that someone is watching me” simply translates to mean “I have the impression that someone is watching me”. David Hume (1711-1776) was the first to make a clear distinction between “impression” and “idea”. He explains idea as “a weak copy or a shadow of an impression”. By this, he means, impression is what we actually perceive not ideas, He espoused,

*if I have a look at a green tree, what I have is a sense-impression of green but when I close my eyes to imagine something green, all I have is the idea of green (Hospers, 1956: 102).*
Hume relates impression to perception and ideas to imagination. He defines concepts in terms of image formation in the mind, and since no image can be formed in the mind without perceiving, he concludes that one must first have an impression (sensation) before having the idea (concept). So, for Hume, impressions precede ideas, hence, sensation comes before concepts and is separable from it. Therefore in perception, what we first experience is impressions and not ideas. And without impression it means that the process of thought cannot take place because what we see is what we conceptualize. From this line of argument, we observed that Hume indeed conflates impression and experience with sensation.

Hume’s argument is also in consonance with Immanuel Kant’s popular dictum “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (Kant, 1997: A19/B33). Perhaps, the idea that “impression precedes idea” informs Hume’s popular thesis, “No impression, No idea”. He asserts,

*if anyone claims that he has some ideas, we only need to ask him, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it is impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion...* (Hospers, 1956: 113).

The implication of this is that a man who has never experienced pain can never have idea of pain and a man who has never experience fear cannot have the idea of fear, while the lady who has never experience sexual sensations cannot have the idea of sexuality even though she might have observed people having sex.

Locke further distinguishes between simple and complex ideas. For him, simple idea is the simplest unanalyzable fraction of perception such as red, sweet, pain, etc. while formulating the idea of a “golden mountain and black roses” belongs to the category of a complex idea. He claims that the human mind possesses the ability to put together, through the faculty of imagination, the combination of simple ideas that have already been acquired through particular experiences to form new but complex ideas. Therefore, no human mind can create simple ideas without having a particular experience. It therefore means that any one who has never seen the colour red or ever feels pain before can never have the concept. He asserts:

*Nothing... seems more abounded than the thought of man, which not only escapes all human power and authority but is not even restrained within the limits of nature and reality. To form monster, and join incongruous shapes and appearances, costs the imagination no more trouble than to conceive the most natural and familiar objects* (Hospers, 1956: 104).

The creative power of the human mind amount to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting or diminishing the materials furnished it by the senses and experience. So, when we imagine “a golden mountain”, all that we have done is only to join two consistent ideas, “gold” and “mountain”, with which we were formerly acquainted.

Hospers (1956: 108) suggests four ways of characterizing “concepts”. First, if the subject can “apply the word x correctly”. Second, if the subject “is able to define x correctly”. Third, if the subject can “distinguish x from y and z, and indeed, everything that is not an x”. Fourth, if the subject has “some criterion-in-mind… having some kinds of ‘mental content’ independent of words and distinguishable from objects”. The second criterion seems too narrow to be accepted because there are many words we seem to know very well that cannot be defined appropriately. Even, the compilers of dictionaries sometimes have difficulties with words like “red” which are really simple ideas but not definable.

To define concepts in terms of the ability to distinguish between things will amount to claiming that a child who is able to distinguish cats from dogs and pigs and all other things, has the concept of what a cat is even though he cannot analyze what it takes for an animal to be a cat. Would it then mean that a dog which can distinguish a cat from a bird possesses the concept even though it has no word for it? The ability to distinguish between x and y is not enough to ascertain whether one has the concept or not. Defining concepts as having some criterion-in-mind will also amount to suggesting that the mind can have some kinds of “mental content” independent of words distinguishable from objects. For example, one may have a concept of something that is a reptile, larger than an elephant that flies through the air. At least, the fact that such a creature is not in existence does not foreclose one from having such a concept. And to define concepts in terms of correct application of words will amount to reducing it to mere linguistic achievement. Therefore, to have the concept of redness or orange ness will mean the ability to apply the word “red” or “orange” correctly anytime it is used in a language.

However, if having concepts is the function of correct-usage of words in language, then which one comes first, Language or thought? Thought cannot be functional without “sensing”. It only strives midst of language. Can
language ever get started without thought? We know human develop his/her senses early enough before language was developed. Human indeed uses his/her senses (introspection and extrospection) to experience the phenomena world before concepts are ever developed. Locke (1993: 31) argues “the phonemes of our mother’s tongue seem to have a start in utero but sentences emerge only after a year or two of childhood”.

Scientific investigation revealed that by three years, most children “glibly generate sentences, and have the basic grammar right” (Davidson, 1997: 19). Pinker (1995: 18) also posits that “language is not a cultural artifact that we learn the way we learn to tell time… Instead, it is a distinct piece of the biological make-up of our brains”. This is an indication that when we are to comprehend sentences as the stream of words is transparent and we see through to the meaning automatically. On this note, Pinker (1980: 307) calls language a “mental organ” only to show that there is a strong connection between language and thought and to establish the existence of an innate or genetically programmed internal language, called, mentalese *(the language of thought)*. Pinker argues that there is an inner language that emerges as part of our genetic heritage prior any spoken language. He asserts,

mentalese does not depend on the development of language, instead language depends on it. Given the universal grammar that is wired in every human, the connectedness of words… reflects the relatedness of ideas in mentalese. This resolves the problem of taking an interconnected web of thought in the mind and encoding them as a string of words… For the child, the unknown language is English, Japanese or Arabic, the known one is mentalese (Pinker, 1995: 101).

Pinker compares the child to Quine’s radical translator. The only difference in his comparison lies in the fact that the child simply knows automatically what idea is represented to him in mentalese by the words he hears but the radical translator does not. To Pinker, the mentalese has priority over language because it is acquired first. He argues that since we do not think in English or Yoruba, then it becomes necessary for thinking to have some salient medium in the brain such as the language of thought or *mentalese*.

Language is learned and is characteristically dynamic, yet it develops closely with thought: it is quite closely related to, even though different from, thought. In other words, if concept is entailed in language and better understood and expressed in language, then it cannot be innate. Among human developmental stages, thought is primary while language is secondary. So, thought necessarily precedes language.

### 3. The Contemporary Notion of Concept

Concept in the contemporary time is conceived as an abstract idea representing something in a language. Stalnaker (2004: 3) defines concept in terms of:

> an abstract idea or a mental symbol which is typically associated with a corresponding representation in language or symbology that denotes all of the objects in a given category or class of entities, events, phenomena, or relationships between them.

In this sense, conceptis not only an abstract idea representing something in a language but something universal in nature which can be applied to all things in their extension. As words are basic semantic elements to a sentence so are concepts basic elements to proposition (ibid). Concepts are bearers, not agents of meaning. Therefore, a single concept can be expressed in a number of languages. For example, “dog” can be expressed as *dog* in English, *Aja* in Yoruba, *Kare* in Hausa, *chien* in French, or *perro* in Spanish. This fact makes translation possible without alteration in meaning. Translations are based on the kind of concept formed about one’s experience and not particularly on the structure of a language perse. Stalnaker further posits,

> the notion of perceptual content begins with the idea that what is said in a speech act (the proposition expressed), can be abstracted from two different aspects of the way it is said: first, from the means used to express it, and second, from the force with which it is expressed (ibid).

Apart from this, a proposition can be the content of an assertion in one context and of a supposition (a component of a disjunctive assertion) or a request in another. It is possible that the content of what is expressed in a speech act is the same as the content of the mental state of a different kind. Just as what is said can be separated

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1Mentalese is a genetically programmed language of thought. According to this theory, this inner language is not learned but emerges as part of our genetic heritage, and it is prior to any spoken language. The essential feature of mentalese is that it does not depend on the development of language but *vice versa*. See Donald Davidson, “Seeing through Language” Supplement to Philosophy, vol. 42 (1997): 19.
from how it is said, so what is thought is also separable from its mental representation or the kind of mental state (belief, wish, tacit presupposition, hope or fear) the proposition specifies. Just as you and I might say the same thing even though you say yours in French and I say mine in English. It seems prima facie reasonable then to say that when something merely looks to me in a certain way, even though I do not really believe it is truly that way, it does not rule out the fact that I still have some representational content in my perceptual experience. The fact still remains that I am in one perceptual state regardless of whether my belief is correct or not.

Rand (1990: 15-28) explains concept in line with the principle of objectivism where concept is taking as something “derivable from and do refer to the facts of reality”. So, any concept that lacks correspondence with objective facts is not genuine at all. For him, “concepts are formed in the context of knowledge available”. So, a young child who is able to differentiate dogs from cats and chickens, need not explicitly differentiate them from deep-sea tube worms, or from other types of animals not yet known to him, to form the concept of “dog”. He explains consciousness in terms of identification and by this, he means that “reason” is “the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by the senses”2. For the empiricist, the mind at birth is tabula rasa, therefore the senses serves as a pre-condition for conceptualization. It now depends on how sophisticated our conceptual capacity is that it can comprehend and interpret. Anything that falls outside the experience (culture, biological make-up or an already formed belief) engendered by the subject remains non-conceptual for him.

What concept one form can then be narrowed down to one’s ability to organize and interpret the repertoire of information deposited into the mind by the senses. Concepts are mere extrapolations of the vast repertoire of the perceptual fields of the perceiver. The conglomeration of these fields is integrated into a unified mental unit (concept) which is later symbolized in words or statements in a language.

4. The Conceptualist Account of Concept in Perception

What exactly do we mean by “conceptual content”? It is a content of a kind that can be ascribed to judgment and belief. By this, conceptual content can then be understood as that which has identities conforming to Frege’s criterion of identity for sense and reference. Concepts, by this criterion, are constituent of that intentional content that can be the complete, truth-evaluable, component of judgment and belief. The contents of “p” and “q” are distinct if and only if it is possible for someone to rationally judge that “p” without judging that “q”.

The conceptualists argue that no representational content is devoid of recognition or demonstration hence all perceptual contents are necessarily conceptual. John McDowell (1994) sees experience as strictly a conceptual achievement. For him, every experience is subsumable under concept, whether as belief or judgment and any experience that cannot be put under concept should be disregarded as relevant to perception. For him, all forms of experiences are intentionally directed and belief-bound, so, he cannot imagine any experience devoid of belief. He asserts, “nothing can simply be a reason for a belief except another… belief” (McDowell, 1994: 44). Therefore, only beliefs can be reason for other beliefs (ibid: 63). But, if the only rational ground for a belief is other beliefs, then would we not be running the risk of a vicious circle? And perhaps, what would be the role of sensation in perceptual experience? We can implicitly deduced from McDowell’s line of thought the he endorses the fundamental rationalists’ insight which suggests that “to be aware of something in the sense that such awareness can serve as evidence for beliefs amounting to knowledge is to bring it under a concept”. Corroborating this view, Hamlyn (1994: 144) can also be summarized as saying that “concepts are necessarily and instantaneously captured in perception”.

McDowell refused to see any reason why perceptual experience should be divided into non-conceptual and conceptual content since they are of one and the same experience. He argues that the process of judgment does not introduce a new kind of content into one’s perceptual experience; instead, it “simply endorses that conceptual content or some of it that is already possessed by the experience on which it is grounded” (McDowell, 1994: 49). And if this is the case, then McDowell’s argument is self-contradictory and faulty. However, McDowell further vindicates the non-conceptualists’ account accepting that experience is more fine-grained than the concepts, beliefs and judgments we possess because the entire content of our perceptual experience is not always endorsed by our beliefs and judgments (ibid). If the non-conceptualist’s claim is true, then McDowell’s position that the content of perceptual experience is necessarily conceptual would be wrong.

Giving McDowell the second reading will expose us to more inconsistencies in his argument on the status of the content of perceptual experience. Sometimes, he accepts that non-conceptuality is possible but that it is not relevant to perception, and at another time, he gives the impression that non-conceptuality is not possible at all. He admits two kinds of beliefs which are acquired non-inferentially: one, by the exercise of reliable dispositions to respond differently to stimuli or reporting elements of the causal chain which culminates in the report; and two, by mere non-inferential observation. In genuine perception, he argues that the belief is the result of endorsing the content of a perceptual experience but in mere observation, the belief is acquired blindly. He claims that under the right circumstance, one just finds himself with the belief in question. However, this sort of belief formation is not a case of facts becoming visible and generally perceptible to us. Although these beliefs are non-inferentially elicited from the believer by environmental stimuli, the warrant for those beliefs is in an important sense inferential. The believer’s justification for beliefs of this sort depends on drawing conclusions from an antecedent claim of reliability. In this respect, he espoused that the believer himself is in the same situation with the observer.

McDowell does not construe perceptual experience as something involving the sort of endorsement characteristic of judging or believing but of content that is judgeable and believable which means that the content of perceptual experience is itself not judgments or beliefs. So, when a perceiver advances from perceptual experience to judgment or belief, the experience only serves in the capacity of justifying the resulting commitment, no more no less. This signifies McDowell’s endorsement of the Fregean approach, which construes facts as true and judgeable, and yet not endorse by judgment. A picture merely enters perceptual experience and a corresponding hallucination have in common is that their subject cannot separate them apart but that their experience differs.

Traditionally, this argument has been attacked from the perspective of the famous “Argument from Illusion” where the perceiver has perceptual experience and the same content common to both veridical and non-veridical cases\(^1\) (see Argument from illusion). McDowell’s objection to making distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual content is however not epistemological but about semantics. His doctrine of semantic empiricism is only to show that if we can make this a feature of our thought and talk intelligible for perceptual experience, then we can make it intelligible for any claim or belief. For him, the only thing a veridical perceptual experience and a corresponding hallucination have in common is that their subject cannot separate them apart but that their experience differs.

McDowell (1994) declares that perceptual experience is “immediate” in the same sense that the conceptual abilities are required, so, there is no need for making any distinction between them. He claims that concepts are instantaneously acquired in perception and that the conceptual content for making judgment by inference is the same as the perceptual content for observation. The only visible difference lies in the wrong application of concepts when we expressed them in language. In truth, the ways in which concepts are brought into perception sometimes fall short of judgment or belief but the same content is presented to the potential knower for endorsement. An act of judgment is only required to endorse it. So the problems arising from us by the fact are not judgment but only petitions from our judgment. This explanation is necessary because McDowell does not just want to make any distinction in our perceptual experience so as to make intelligible the sense in which we are rationally responsible for our perceptual judgments. Notwithstanding, his argument here seems inadequate because it is difficult to see how contents are judgeable and yet not endorse by judgment. A picture merely entertaining judgeable content, awaiting the exercise of an act-of-will without judgment is here questionable.

Judging knowledge from a dispositional point of view, we can distinguish between animals and humans. A parrot could be taught to respond to red things by uttering the noise “that is red” but it would not be saying or claiming that anything was red. To lay claim on something is to make an assertion about that thing. To make a claim requires commitment to provide evidence for such a claim which no other animal can provide. There is a wide difference between what a reporter can be trained under some circumstances to say or do and what concepts he/she possesses by applying those concepts to responsive dispositions.

Strictly going by McDowell it will mean that to be aware of something is just to apply concepts to it, which is, making a judgment or undertaking a doxastic commitment regarding the awareness. Awareness deserves to be called “immediate” just in case it is not the product of a process of inference. Therefore, beliefs acquired

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non-inferentially, especially through the exercise of reliable dispositions to respond differently to stimuli of a
certain sort, is yet conceptual even though it embodies immediate awareness of the items reported. In McDow-
ell’s view, this is the only sense of “immediate awareness” where we can understand our perceptual knowledge
of the world around us.

A reliable non-inferential response to events does not necessarily mean that one has concepts of such events.
Observational/non-inferential knowledge should be distinguished from cases of genuine perceptual knowledge.
What McDowell often refers to as knowledge derived from perception can be classified under observational
knowledge. But at times, when we see colours or shapes, we have perceptual experiences corresponding to the
judgment from which we can go on to make or form beliefs without having genuine knowledge about them. We
sometimes respond blindly and still trust such blind responses only to discover later the truth about such experi-
ences.

Brewer (2004: xx) claims that “perceptual experiences justify beliefs” and as such “sense experiential states
provide reasons for empirical beliefs”. He, therefore, conceives perceptual experience as that with rational
relations to judgment and beliefs to the extent that its spontaneity is already implied in its reception. This will only
apply if we take experience as having conceptual content in the sense McDowell (1994: 162) conceives it. Sel-
lars (1956: 111) also sees concepts as the sole responsibility of the correct use of words. For her, having concept
involves mastering the use of words. Therefore, if a word is properly used, it is believed that one has the concept.
So, for Sellars, no one can understand the concept “red” unless he knows what it is for things to look “red” and
make an appropriate use of the word.

Davidson (1997: 15-27), in “Seeing through Language”, describes language as a means by which we talk
about the world but not the act of conceptualizing it. If this is the case, then language is a vehicle for conveying
concepts and not their maker. Language may not reproduce for the mind the accurate records of the world; if it
does, how come cases of distortions or illusions? He defines language as,

"a convenient human skill which we use in coping with one another in our common terrestrial setting.
Without it we would not think of things, as we do. But it does not follow, of course, that we never perceive
how the world really is, as Kant thought, or that every view is necessarily distorted, as Bergson and many
other have held (ibid: 15)."

We can then make a deduction from the above quotation that perception is quite separable and independent of
language. The absence of language does not really rule out perception. If we can, at least in principle, isolate
some given aspects of perceptual experience, which cannot be shaped by the mind, how do we then classify such
aspect? Perhaps, it should be best described as non-conceptual.

5. Sensation and Perception

Sensation simply refers to the process of sensing the environment through touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell.
Information gathered from sensation is sent to the brain in raw form where perception comes into play. Perce p-
tion is the way we interpret the signals from sensations and make sense out of them. However, percepts are not
spontaneously interpreted or understood while perceiving the environment, depending on the level of develo p-
dent of the mind and already accrued experience, there are always some left-over (non-conceptual content).
Sensation is a passive process whereby information from the outside (the environment) are brought into the
body and brain: it is a passive process because the subject need not be conscious of the “sensing” process, but
for perception, it is a deliberate and conscious phenomenon. The subject is conscious and actively involved in
the process of perception. Perception is therefore a deliberate attempt by the subject in selecting, organizing, and
interpreting data brought to bear on brain by the senses4.

In human perception, a large number of information is sensed every minutes ranging from room temperature
to the brightness of lights in the room but are all recognized instantly? We sometimes hardly notice radio waves,
x-rays or other microscopic parasites crawling on our body; not all odours or taste do our senses notice because
of the limited pattern of our thresholds. For an absolute threshold, everything becomes noticeable to the senses.
For example, at the softest of sound, one can hear and at the slightest touch, one can feel (some animals are
uniquely gifted in sensing some percepts) but anything less than this goes unnoticeable to the senses.

4See Psychology of Sensation and Perception in www.alleydog.com/101notes/s&p.html. Reading Gestalt psychology will also expose us
much better to how and why we perceive things.
For sensation to occur, sensory organs absorb energy from the physical stimulus in the environment, the receptors then convert this energy into neutral impulses and send them to the brain. But for perception to occur, the brain organizes the raw data collected from sensations and translates them into something meaningful. Meaningful information or concepts derivable in the brain are influenced by psychophysics, that is, the study of how physical stimuli are translated into psychological experience. This majorly comprises selective attention and perceptual expectancy. The former is influenced by what motivated perception while the latter is influenced by our past experience, culture and biological make-up. For example, the subject does not expect a cow to fly or a tree to speak when he perceives them. Better still, the subject may observe a painting and not really understand the intended message of the artist until someone explains to him. There and then, things that were formerly oblivion may become obvious and the intended message unravels.

6. Conclusion

Even though sensation and perception are complementary, they play different roles in cognition. While sensation is the process by which the senses (touch, taste, sight, sound and smell) gather data from the environment and are sent to the brain for interpretation, perception is an already processed data in the brain that represents information about the perceived environment. Perception is simply the way that we interpret sensations and conceptualize it. Kant (1997: A51/B76) corroborating this dichotomy argues that sensibility is independent of understanding. He describes understanding as a logical, discursive and proposition-forming capacity of the mind which produces concepts as output and sensibility as the affective, perceptual and imaginative capacity of the mind that produces intuition as output. If this is granted, then, sensibility and understanding are separable. Therefore, if it is possible to conceive the two separately, then the contention whether non-conceptuality is possible in perception or not, automatically dissolves. At least, what the perceiver forms as concept depends on his past experience, culture and biological make-up, and since not all that are sensed are conceptualizable or immediately conceptualized, there is room for non-conceptuality in perception, hence, the conceptualists cannot be right.

References


The Rectification of (Modern) Names: Jürgen Habermas Meets Confucius—Fixing Our Broken Political Discourse

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Abstract

This paper explores four concepts to point a way out of the political morass in which we find ourselves at the middle of the second decade of the 21st century: 1) The “rectification of names”, a concept of Confucius that should have the highest priority in such a situation as now prevails in the United States; 2) Carl Schmitt’s concept of “the political”; 3) A new reading of James Madison’s Federalist Paper No. 51 that envisions “creating a will in the community independent of the majority, that is of society itself”; 4) And Jürgen Habermas’s “communicative action theory”, which would serve to engender genuinely democratic discourse in our political system, combined with a critique by former US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens of corporate influence in our politics, which together represent a significant step toward finally achieving the Confucian ideal. Finally, this paper offers a mechanism and an institution for realizing the goal that the new Madison reading suggests, something that is consistent with the best values of our nation most grandly conceived, and a social media method—afforded by movements such as the Arab Spring and the Occupy Wall Street Movement—for triggering that mechanism and resulting institution, one that is analogous to the Han dynasty’s development of the Shuo Wen Jiezi, and one that would function in a way similar to that envisioned by Han dynasty thinkers.

Keywords


1. Introduction

Few will argue with the proposition that our political discourse in the United States is at a new low, certainly for recent times. We need only to mention the names of Sarah Palin, the Republican vice-presidential candidate in the 2008 election, and US Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN), a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, who has used violent political rhetoric, e.g., “don’t retreat, reload” and “armed and dangerous” respectively. But they are not alone. Members of the Tea Party rage against the “tyranny” of the federal government. And recently we’ve seen the intransigence of the Republicans, first, in the debate over raising the federal debt ceiling threatening to throw the country into default, with potentially catastrophic consequences, and, second, in their abject refusal to address unemployment in the face of an ongoing national crisis, the obvious aim being to ensure President Barack Obama’s defeat in 2012.

One example of the absurdity of Republican political discourse occurred on April 8, 2011, when US Senator John Kyl (R-AZ), stood on the floor of the Senate and said that abortion was “over 90 percent of what Planned Parenthood does”. Called on the statement, Kyl’s office issued a clarification that “his remark was not intended to be a factual statement” (Seitz-Wald, 2011). The incident received brief media attention and then faded. Both Kyl’s comment and the clarification issued by his office are iconic and all too common in contemporary American political discourse: Not only was the statement “defective” as discourse (in that it didn’t say what was really meant), it was an example of instrumental reason (it intended to achieve a goal, independent of other, possibly contradictory implications), but it was non-democratic (it apparently intended to use Kyl’s authority as a senator to foreclose further debate and discussion). To the extent that this is normal, something is clearly amiss with contemporary American political discourse.

2. Confucius’s “Rectification of Names” and Madison’s “Will of Society”

Is there a way out of the morass threatening to become the political norm in our country? The solution we propose involves synthesizing an idea articulated by James Madison, at least in one logical reading, in Federalist Paper No. 51 (Publius, 1788), with a second idea, this one advocated by the Chinese philosopher Confucius, specifically the “rectification of names”, zhèngmíng—正名 (Chan, 1969: p. 40). The result would be a set of consensus principles and a means of realizing them—a determined center of gravity in the body politic, perhaps drawn together via the powerful forge of social media at an opportune moment afforded by the Occupy Wall Street Movement, itself partially inspired by the Arab Spring. Such principles will be advocated and defended on the basis of a positive interpretation of the “friend-enemy” distinction articulated in 1932 by Carl Schmitt in The Concept of the Political, (Schmitt, 1996, 2007) but with an opposite intent to Schmitt’s; i.e., democratic as opposed to fascist.

We believe that Confucius’s concept of the rectification of names, zhèngmíng—正名, is both a worthy goal and a worthy standard for our political system to strive for, and we propose approaching that ideal through a possible reading of an ambiguous statement in James Madison’s Federalist Paper No. 51. There Madison says that the factions are likely to emerge in the government under the then-proposed Constitution and that as a result there is the need “to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part” and that the solution is to create “a will in the community independent of the majority, that is, of the society itself” (Publius, 1788). In our interpretation, Madison’s recommendation would be read, not as Madison himself said it should be read, as representing the approach made by “governments possessing an hereditary or self-appointed authority”, i.e., a monarchy. Rather, the statement can be read to mean “… by creating a will in the community independent of the majority that is [a will] of the society itself…” We argue that this could be done institutionally by creating a faction, Madison’s ultimate solution in any case (Publius, 1788), within the democratic wing of the Democratic Party, one that would practice a new kind of “rectified” and honest discourse in which, true to the Confucian ideal, names would be rectified, that is, would match their corresponding reality, and all of the subsequent social turmoil Confucius wanted to avoid by this doctrine would indeed be avoided. We further suggest that modern social media could be a technological mechanism for recording and keeping political discourse straight and publically available—a contemporary analog to the Shuo Wen Dictionary conceived by Han dynasty leaders—and that Jürgen Habermas’s approach to the crisis of modern society via his theory of communicative action could help lead our political discourse to a rationality not evident even in recent decades.

3. The World-Historical Dimensions of the Problem

This paper, then, aims at a world-historical solution to problems with our contemporary political discourse, and
particularly the problem of corporate dominance of our legal and political system, which has resulted in overwhelming benefit to the rich and powerful.

3.1. Solon and Thomas More Understand the Historical Problem

To illustrate how long such a problem has been recognized—and the resulting injustices perpetuated—one need only to look at the comments of historian/biographer Plutarch comments on the seventh century BCE Greek lawmaker Solon, who is famously credited with having reformed Athenian law preventing citizens from being sold into slavery for debts. Writing in the late first and early second century CE, Plutarch (c. 46 CE-120 CE) made this point about the operation of vested interests in Solon’s day (and indeed in ours):

The remission of debts was peculiar to Solon; it was his great means for confirming the citizens’ liberty; for a mere law to give all men equal rights is but useless, if the poor must sacrifice those rights to their debts, and, in the very seats and sanctuaries of equality, the courts of justice, the office of state, and the public discussions be more than anywhere at the beck and bidding of the rich (Plutarch, 1952: p. 87).

The emphasized text sounds as valid today as it did in Plutarch’s or Solon’s day. Habermas also found the same problem identified by Thomas More (1478-1535) in his *Utopia*, published in 1516. There he registered an almost identical complaint:

And so, when I examine and consider all the flourishing republics in the world today, believe me, nothing comes to mind except the conspiracy of the rich, who seek their own advantage under the name and title of the republic. They also devise and think up all sorts of ways and means to hold onto their ill-gotten gains with no fear of losing them, and then hire the labor of all the poor at the lowest price and abuse them. When once the rich have decreed that all these devices are to be observed in the public name (in other words, in the name of the poor too), they then become laws (Habermas, 1974: p. 53).

So there is a sense in which problems keep being put off, even as there is economic, technological, cultural, and other development. In the current socioeconomic reality, political maneuvering aims to destroy Medicare and Medicaid while, at the same time—through the so-called “Ryan budget”, for example—extending tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires. But can such problems as identified by Solon and Thomas More—and many others, incidentally—be put off indefinitely?

In their book *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*, Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson trace the origin of today’s political crisis to the 1970s, that being the point when the shift began that produced the politics their book’s subtitle spells out (Hacker & Pierson, 2010). However, we would point out that a high point in this rising tide of out-of-control political rhetoric leading to today’s Tea Party politics is Ronald Reagan’s first inaugural speech. In that Jan. 20, 1981, speech, Reagan said, “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem” (Reagan, 1981). Reagan’s assertion has become a Republican mantra and the extreme right’s ill-conceived agenda, iconically illustrated today by right-wing activist Grover Norquist, whose widely quoted goal is to “to reduce [government] to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub” (Wikipedia, 2014b). Norquist’s notorious pledge has committed the majority of Republicans in Congress never to raise taxes, thus contributing to the lock-step Republican resistance to addressing both the deficit and unemployment problems the nation faces today. But it is Ronald Reagan who must in large measure bear the responsibility for the tone of today’s political rhetoric and for the uncritical acceptance of the right-wing dictate to “get the government off our backs”, blindly shrinking it as if that were an end itself, independent of the positive role government plays in our society. The 2011 debate(s) over raising the federal debt limit illustrates the problem of our political discourse, particularly with the Republicans insisting that the only negotiations possible are those giving them everything they want and budging not an inch on increasing revenues. And it’s not clear the hardliners even recognize the consequences their intransigence potentially entails in global economic terms.

3.2. Orwell States the Communication Dynamics of the Problem

No one has written more insightfully about the problems of language in politics, and vice versa, than George Orwell in his 1946 masterpiece “Politics and the English Language” (Orwell, 1946). His central point is that
corrupt political discourse leads to politicians who do not think when they communicate and audiences who are too easily manipulated. His essay ideally sees “language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought”. Clearly in Orwell’s formulation of the problem of his day—which seems even truer now in ours where electronic communication is pervasive—the easy manipulation of populations is as much a problem as the ignorance, deviance, and even corruption of the politicians themselves. Orwell noted that a “reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favorable to political conformity”. Such a state of consciousness is an irony in a world flooded with communications that should increase consciousness, but too often have the opposite effects of distracting and even numbing consciousness.

Orwell stated the issue well, but he opened up space for a more elaborate discussion of the implications of the problems. The Confucian “rectification of names” gives us an excellent means for furthering the diagnosis. Of course, Americans should not be asked to change their manner of political speech by taking up that of a remote, fifth-century BCE Chinese philosopher, but that does not invalidate this Confucian concept as a heuristic device for contemporary thinkers. The “rectification of names”, one of Confucius’s most profound concepts and one whose implementation has really never been tried in the sense conceived by Confucius, is a sign pointing us to a way out of the mess our political discourse is in today, even a banner under which we can formulate issues in a way that helps envision real solutions to them. Although Confucius never held a major political office, when he was asked what he would do first if he had such an office, he stated that his first priority would be a “rectification of names”. Wing-tsit Chan’s classic translation of the original passage from the Analects explains that Confucius believed that social disorder can stem from the failure to call things by their proper names. The pressing need was thus zhèngmíng—正名—literally “rectification of terms” (Chan, 1969: p. 40). If the names of things are not correct, Confucius then would say that “language will not be in accord with truth. If language is not in accord with truth, then things cannot be accomplished”. The end result, omitting the Chinese cultural elements, is that “people will not know how to move hand or foot”, i.e., chaos and confusion result in society. To use a modern example, the “Clear Skies Act of 2003” is badly misnamed, but any objective view of the act must lead to the recognition that it was not a recipe for “clear skies”, but for a weakening of environmental regulations and, in fact, dirtier skies. The same is true of the “Clean Water Cooperative Federalism Act of 2011” (Kennedy Jr., 2011).

Political discourse today is so riddled with incorrect “names” (i.e., with terms that do not really mean what they seem to say) that it’s a wonder anything gets done, and in fact, in the 111th Congress, the goal of the Republicans was to see that nothing got done—except some emergency measures to prevent a probable global financial collapse. They also watered down the legislation that did pass, and on the eve of 2010 mid-term elections, Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, said, “The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President [Barack] Obama to be a one-term president” (Herszenhorn, 2010). And working against Obama’s every project and every effort, even if these had been Republican projects and goals before, Republicans in the Senate in a recent Congress sponsored an unprecedented number of filibusters to stop Democratic legislation (Packer, 2010: p. 47)—and they continue their obstruction. The most prominent political contribution of the Republican Party during the entire Obama Administration has been obstructionism.

What, in general, would be most subject to a “rectification of names” in a system amenable to such change? For starters, any statement reflecting distortion, hypocrisy, lies, propaganda, ideology, or “political fiction” generally needs “rectifying”. Analysts use such terms to un-do the corrosive effect of concealment, distortion, and intentionally obscurant language. Any critical maneuver that lets us penetrate the fog of ideological distortions, hypocrisy, and lies so that we can clearly see what is both clouding our communications and turning our terms and names for things into unreliable guides to the world—thus creating the chaos and confusion both Confucius and Orwell warned of—would constitute a rectification. Expressions such as “death tax”, “socialism”, “tax and spend”, and “tyranny” are good prospects for “rectification”. (Though such expressions may create “chaos” in the minds of the naïve voters who fall for ideological statements containing them, those same statements help create “order” for the special interests who benefit from the policies such terms justify. Many ordinary people spout Tea Party slogans in demonstrations organized and funded by the brothers David and Charles Koch, whose anti-governmental lobbying efforts directly benefit them. See Jane Mayer’s August 30, 2010, New Yorker article titled “The Billionaire Brothers Who Are Waging a War Against Obama” (Mayer, 2010). Another example is political rallies that pretend to be “grassroots”, but which are in fact underwritten by numerous organizations funded by and serving corporate interests and are more correctly thought of as “astroturf” events, the term originally being coined by US Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, according to an article in Wikipedia (Wikipedia, 2014a)).
We argue that, following Habermasian discourse ethics, we should systematically and fearlessly lay out all our political narratives—both right and left, both ours and theirs—about our government, our economics, and our social system, and all with the Confucian intent, bolstered by the contemporary need, of rectifying the terms in the narratives, eliminating their obfuscating elements and clearly revealing their flaws. It is important to find the weaknesses in our own narratives, as well. Our commitment to “truth” should be the same as Milton’s when he inveighed against licensing in Areopagitica: “And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do ingloriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple: who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter” (Milton, 1644; spelling modernized). In good-faith politics, Milton’s standard should be the touchstone.

4. Carl Schmitt’s Approach Rejected

Before suggesting some issues that are good candidates for such a “rectification”, we should ask what might result from a satisfactory engagement of such a project. The answer to that question will also give us the institutional mechanism for moving forward. We don’t need a “new” political narrative, but a revitalized one that restores our commitment to the best of what this country has evolved as a historical and political project, such narrative becoming the basis for concrete action now and in the future. We use the word “political” not just in terms of party conflict, but in a larger, trans-party sense, related though not identical to Carl Schmitt’s use of the term in his 1932 work The Concept of the Political (Schmitt, 1996, 2007: pp. 26-30). We step back to what he conceptualized as truly political ground and make the friend-enemy distinction once again, but here the distinction is made in light of the greatest political values that have emerged over the trajectory of our history.

Political corruption is one way to articulate political values through action, but such values, along with racism, slavery, and the celebration of secession from the union, self-evidently do not represent the best and greatest political concepts the US political experiment has produced. Rather, what is meant here is the set of values and practices pertaining to freedoms and protections, constitutional and otherwise, particularly in expanding the franchise—now under serious attack in many states (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011), but which are now in danger of being overturned in the confused state of our contemporary political discourse. Just look at the number of states who passed voter repression measures in the wake of the US Supreme Court’s gutting of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in its June 25, 2013, decision in Shelby County v. Holder.

When we refer to Schmitt’s friend-enemy distinction, we are not contemplating Nixon’s “enemies list”, though perhaps we do include the Republican modus operandi today suggested in Alan Wolfe’s essay about Schmitt’s ideas in “A Fascist Philosopher Helps Us Understand Contemporary Politics”—and Republicans do seem to be practicing something very like what Schmitt advocates, as Wolfe suggests (Wolfe, 2004). Actually, Schmitt envisioned a realm above the practice of politics where “the political” referenced the survival of some entity and where friends were those forces supporting it and enemies, those who would destroy it (Schmitt, 1996, 2007: pp. 26-30). In that rarefied, existential sense, above practical politics, but back on the plane of political and existential ideals representing the best our country stands for—as exemplified, say, in Martin Luther King’s “Letter from the Birmingham Jail” and the “I Have a Dream” speech, where he called the nation to account based on the highest values it had articulated for itself—on that plane, we must ask: What forces are “friends” and what forces are “enemies”? The friends being whatever advances the country’s best interests grandly conceived (civil rights, voting rights, social security, etc.; the enemies, whatever corrodes those rights (the tyranny of kings, priests, special interests that capture the mechanisms of government). In addition to Martin Luther King’s statements, of course, are numerous other statements of our historical ideals as they have evolved historically since our system emerged in the constitutional form it took in 1789 following the chaos created by the Articles of Confederation.

Once those “friends” and “enemies” have been articulated, we can then set about politics in the practical, everyday sense of the term, based on a platform of such rectified terms. What is needed, though, is a vehicle for the realization and implementation of our set of restored, revitalized, clarified political ideals. One reading of James Madison’s Federalist Paper No. 51, offers us exactly the vehicle we need, particularly the passage that Madison offered as the means “to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part”.

5. James Madison’s Federalist Paper No. 51

Madison’s oft quoted passage reads as follows:
There are but two methods of providing against this evil: the one by creating a will in the community independent of the majority that is, of the society itself; the other, by comprehending in the society so many separate descriptions of citizens as will render an unjust combination of a majority of the whole very improbable, if not impracticable. The first method prevails in all governments possessing a hereditary or self-appointed authority (Publius, 1788; emphasis added).

The italicized portion of the quote above is the passage of interest. It can be read in two ways:

**Reading A:** “… by creating a will in the community independent of the majority that is [independent] of the society itself…”

**Reading B:** “… by creating a will in the community independent of the majority that is [a will] of the society itself…”

There is no linguistic imperative to make the meaning of the key passage in Federalist No. 51 agree with Reading A. In fact, Reading B opens up Federalist No. 51 to another vision entirely, one that is much needed and one that is more appropriate now than it would have been in the era when the fight over adopting the Constitution occurred. (The thinking then, clearly, was that the Congress and other governmental institutions would in fact work to ensure that the will of society itself was captured and implemented. And for purposes of argument, we will give them credit for actually believing that. It did not turn out that way, as even a casual understanding of corporate influence in our political and governmental system reveals.) The vision that Reading B opens up to us now—and that reading itself—is more appropriate than Reading A because of our contemporary political realities.

The vision offered by Reading B is appropriate, first, because there is no political force that represents the “will in the community… [the will] of society itself”. While Congress should represent society as a whole, it manifestly does not, and the real constituents that most members of congress represent (Republican and Democratic, House and Senate, at both federal and state levels) are those interests whose money guarantees access. This notion is usually trivialized with the word “only” inserted as if to be a substantial reassurance: “political contributions only buy access”—and, therefore, do not constitute bribes. But that access is real and powerful, and the money comes with strings. Legislators then try to rewrite the redistricting rules, not to guarantee free, open, and fair elections, but the opposite: to perpetuate themselves in power free of future political challenges. They pass laws ostensibly to “protect” the system from the over-hyped and under-proven bogeyman of the political system—voter fraud—with the real intent being to disenfranchise voters who line up on the opposite (i.e., Democratic) side. These powerful interests both prompted and supported the legislation that produced the Citizens United decision by the US Supreme Court that guaranteed unlimited political contributions to politicians who protect corporate interests. And the examples are legion of how corporate interests get protection, from the gutting of financial reform following the 2008 financial meltdown that triggered the worldwide economic catastrophe to continued corporate welfare.

There is no institution representing, standing for, looking out for, “the will of the society itself”—particularly that will expressed in the historical evolution of our system which has, painfully and slowly at times, protected civil rights, extended the franchise to women, and protected the weak in our society. But there has recently been a stirring in the body politic—caused by a pent-up resentment against injustices—manifesting itself in the Occupy Wall Street Movement, itself inspired by the so-called “Arab Spring” and inspiring comparable movements across the globe. Aided by social media, which was seminal in facilitating and energizing the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street Movement often finds its voice beneath placards denouncing “corporate greed”. This somewhat inchoate and amorphous movement, brimming as it is with energy, is the natural vehicle to take up the idea being presented here.

Initially the authors of this article envisioned the potentially resulting institution as arising as a “faction” (with appropriate irony) in one of the main political parties, probably the Democratic one. But clearly the Occupy Wall Street Movement has the potential to facilitate what is being called for here—the emergence of an institution that can answer and resist the dominant factions now in control of our governmental and political institutions. This new movement can, operating entirely within our best political traditions and within the law, seize democratic control of those institutions as an expression of the “will of society itself” and return the country to a political, economic, and governmental course consistent with and appropriate to our best political values most grandly conceived.
Moreover while Madison was confident that the unwashed majority could not threaten the rights and properties of the individuals and minorities, what he failed to realize was that the combinations that did seize control of our political system would threaten to supplant “the will of society itself”. What Madison and the other founders, fearing “democracy”—primarily for what democracies in the states could do to wealthy minorities (Wood, 2009: p. 31)—did not conceive of was that any faction could put the entire society at danger, a situation we arguably have today. Nor did he apparently conceive of the kind of faction that we are calling for here using an interpretation of his words, a faction that could represent society as a whole, i.e., the faction with society’s best interests at heart, much like a legislative body can sit as a “committee of the whole”—and independent of the narrower interests of any majority he could conceive of. Such a “faction of the whole” would aim to protect society’s interests as a whole—at least in the reading proposed in this paper. That could even be its sole function. Under this reading, the “will in the community” would be “of society itself”, and it would be “independent of the majority”.

If we were to create a will in the community... [a will] of the society itself, lodging it in an institution independent of the majority, one that would hold even the strongest political party to account, it could result in the development of a broad base of the population acting as “friends” of the terms (or names) “rectified” to eliminate the confusions that Confucius (and Orwell) identified. This new entity embodying the will of society itself is the mechanism for redressing the perversions which special interests have initiated or capitalized on, *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, which granted corporations the rights of persons under the “equal protection clause” of the Fourteenth Amendment, being Exhibit No. 1 in this regard.

5.1. Originating a New Statement of the “Will of Society”

Such an independent political institution as is being called for here could originate in the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and could even designate itself as a third party, but it should be committed to a restored, revitalized set of political ideals—the rectified political lexicon—and that institution, that faction, augmented by those of good will from other parties, would best represent “the will of society itself” and could wrest control of the government from the corporate hands it is largely now in.

Many of the terms which should be considered from the vantage point of undistorted meaning relate to elitism, populism, freedom, trickle-down economics, and socialism, but others as well, such as whether government ought to be “run like a business”. In short, the major issues confronting our society today should through democratic discourse be analyzed for the distortions in the terms in which they are couched. There have been many attempts to come to grips with this problem of words corresponding in meaning to an acceptable standard, from the early Greeks through the Founding Fathers, and today with contemporary thinkers, from Jacques Derrida’s indeterminacy of meaning to Jürgen Habermas’s quest for an ideal speech situation. The deconstructive method might have use in identifying ideological distortion and/or misinterpretation, but would be of little help in determining a rational standard. Habermas’s approach, however, relies upon rational self-interest by the participants leading to agreed-upon meanings. In a pluralistic situation with more than a few most charitably described as reactionary and ill-informed, one must be careful about expecting this ever to occur automatically. Even the brief references to this problem in the *Federalist* papers showed the writers’ inability to imagine today’s world where political parties dominate, with voting along strict party lines, and “talking points” provided by think tanks dedicated to winning above all or by ideologically controlled media. Clearly, what is needed for rational decision making is an independent, objective fact-checking “agency”—operating on Habermasian discourse ethics (see below)—and one that maps perfectly over the “faction” representing society as a whole and, therefore, the will of society expressed through historical development—and not a majority captured, say, by the Tea Party, which claims to revere the Constitution and is often both ahistorical and inaccurate in its claims, leading Garrett Epps, a professor of law at the University of Baltimore, in an article titled “Stealing the Constitution” to urge citizens to actually know the content of our founding documents and stating that the stakes are all too clear: “Read the Constitution and measure it against the absurd claims we hear every day”; Epps argues, “This is a matter of life and death for our Republic” (Epps, 2011).

The Platonic/idealistic formalism of our heritage sought to affix correct and appropriate definitions to political terms, leading to misguided attempts to construct what was imagined to be the “original intent” of the founders, i.e., something “fixed” or “immutable”. US Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia claims to base his decisions upon a strict interpretation of the clear meanings of the Founding Fathers. But Confucius, as presented by David
Hall and Roger Ames in their important work, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Hall & Ames, 1987), sought to convince listeners of an understanding of received values that did not depend upon a fixed reality, but rather an appropriate one with reference to the classical approaches—in an “American” and contemporary context, our best values most grandly conceived. By making an “appropriate” reading of Madison, one that fits and answers the contemporary political need for creating will in the community, (a will) of the society itself, one that is related to and anchored in our original values as they have historically evolved, our system would enhance its ability to survive under many different circumstances—and remain true to those values.

5.2. Resonance with American Enlightenment Values

This approach should have resonance for an America committed to the Constitution, however drastically changed the circumstances of our situation or the situation of any future society dedicated to those values. Unlike the originary situation, women and property-less non-white men can now vote, and in many ways our society differs from the one set up and countenanced by those Founding Fathers—yet it implements their best values. When Thomas Jefferson penned the words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident”, it did not seem self-evident that slaves, women, and Native Americans should be considered as having been “created equal” or having “certain inalienable rights”. In spite of the vicissitudes of history—and many wrong turns, including those leading to the Civil War—we have largely corrected these inequities, but we are curiously in danger of implementing other inequities because the mechanisms of power, the institutions of government, are not in the hands of a segment of the population expressing the will of the society itself. In fact, the forces dominating our political system clearly represent their own narrow, primarily economic and power interests. Hence we are at risk of losing the very values the founders intended to institutionalize.

6. Failing Institutions

It is clear that our institutions are failing us.

Confucius’s problem was that of convincing a small cadre in leadership capacity at court. In today’s pluralistic society, the populace at large must be convinced in a world full of dirty tricks and falsehoods. The leaders of the Latter Han dynasty (206 CE-220 CE) attempted their rectification of names—as an entry in Wikipedia tantalizingly suggests—by means of the celebrated *Shuo Wen Jiezi*, a dictionary created by XuShen (Wikipedia, 2011). If the Chinese could attempt a rectification of names by means of a dictionary, thus allowing scholars at court to manipulate the world based on their Confucian values, surely we can find a mechanism to modify our institutions in such a way that would let us institutionalize a will in the community, a will of society itself. A repository not unlike Wikipedia perhaps, but organized around the most pressing issues of a society at any moment, would be a start, and the power which social media has manifested in the so-called “Arab Spring” provides a model. And given our existing institutional base supplemented by the World Wide Web and by bending social media into service as the means of accessing—and asserting—society’s will, we have far more powerful tools at hand than the Han dynasty’s *Shuo Wen Jiezi*, and we have the potential of actually achieving the Confucian dream of bringing about a genuine “rectification of names”—based on Habermas’s program of discourse ethics and Communicative Action Theory.

Most Americans apprised of the issues in clear and distinct terms could easily see, for example, that

- Oil companies, among the most powerful and successful economic entities in history, no longer need subsidizing by the American people.
- Raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans is preferable to cancelling valuable and viable social programs.
- Destroying our resources in the name of short-term corporate profits made with an eye blinded to social costs of environmental destruction is poor stewardship of the Earth.
- … and so forth to the \( n \)th issue.

The \( n \)th issue being that discrete last one with the power to negate the will in the community. It would not be hard to fill in the list of issues and start the discussion in a democratic public forum that would almost inexorably lead to a consensus, hence rectifying our political discourse and setting the stage for corrective, rectifying action that would logically follow. Populating a list of issues should be the first step in the new discourse. To ideas suggested above, we could add whether politics is inherently bad, as suggested by the oft-lodged charge of “playing politics”; whether “welfare” in its corporate form should be seen for what it appears to be; whether
corporations should in fact be considered persons; whether “government take-over” is a legitimate characterization of the valid exercise of federal and state authority in matters of public interest; whether “letting the market do it” is a viable solution to social problems; and so forth. The list goes on. However, it is not difficult to imagine a point at which society, once truthfully apprised of the issues in clear and non-obscurant terms, expresses its will and moves to action in its own interest—as opposed to special interests.

7. Enter Jürgen Habermas and Communicative Action Theory

We argue here that a comparable faction to the Tea Party, one organized on the left and based on rational and democratic political discourse advocated by Habermas, can gain the support of a majority of citizens of this nation and set the political agenda for this country, not only in the short run, but indefinitely, once Habermas’s principles become known, correcting the disastrous tendency of our political discourse and the dangerous tendency of our non-democratic, corporate-dominated politics and economics.

Although Habermas is largely unknown in the United States, he is widely considered the most important sociologist and philosopher at work in the world today (Bohman & Rehg, 2011). Habermas’s communicative action theory, with its accompanying discourse ethics, not only offers a healthier political discourse than we now have, but one that it both democratic and strives to curb instrumental reason, which skews our entire political system to the service of corporate interests. The rest of this paper will elucidate these claims.

Born in 1929, Habermas grew up in Nazi Germany, with the Nuremberg trials and the soul-searching of German society over its nightmare adventure with the Third Reich forming the backdrop of his entry into adulthood. When he was 24, Habermas wrote a paper calling out the philosopher Martin Heidegger for his support of the Nazis while the rector at the University of Freiburg (Bohman & Rehg, 2011). When Heidegger not only ignored the young intellectual but published a book with an “Introduction” alluding to the “inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism, Habermas is said to have turned his back on German philosophy, and began to explore the positive aspects of constitutional democracies (Bohman & Rehg, 2011). In fact, a commitment to democracy has long been a hallmark of Habermas’s approach to philosophy and to sociology. It is embedded in the “principle of discourse” (D) that bolsters his theory of communicative action. The expression (D) holds that “the normative validity [in communicative action] is dependent upon agreement of all as participants in a practical (in other words moral) discourse, which is to say that only agreement that is based on truly open and rational debate counts. To spell out the nature of discourse a little more precisely, this entails that all competent speakers and actors are allowed to take part; everyone can question anything that is said, and may introduce new assertions (including assertions of their attitudes, desires, and needs) as they see fit, and no speaker may be coerced into withholding or withdrawing their participation” (Edgar, 2006: 45-46).

And in his recent work related to the role of law in a just society, democracy is also at work in the formulation of laws: “A law can only be considered to be legitimate if the sovereign who debates and offers justification for the law is at one and the same time the citizen who will be subject to that law. This entails that any just society must secure certain rights for its citizens that guarantee their participation in the discursive process that leads to good law” (Edgar, 2006: p. 84).

8. Habermas’s “Lifeworld” and “System”

8.1. The “Lifeworld”

Two core concepts in Habermas’s analysis of society are “lifeworld” and “system”, and as social realities they are in tension and in conflict. The notion of lifeworld is taken from Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who developed phenomenology to combat the prevalence of scientific and technological abstraction, which he saw as concealing the more significant aspects of human existence. Such abstractions constitute the “instrumental reason”, which is at the heart of the other key component of society, “system”. The latter is the realm of goal-oriented activity of organizations such as government, corporations, political parties, labor unions, advocacy groups, trade groups, etc. They have only their short term interests at heart, and this constitutes their danger.

But according to James Gordon Finlayson’s Habermas: A Very Short Introduction, “The problem is that although the system is embedded in and depends on the lifeworld, the former tends to encroach upon, to displace and even destroy, the latter” (Finlayson, 2005: p. 56). The colorful term that Habermas has for this is “colonization”.

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The system is blind to any goals other than its own and tries to take over, or “colonize” lifeworld resources. Says Finlayson,

As the domain of the lifeworld shrinks, a whole gamut of what Habermas calls “social pathologies” arise, which include, but are not limited to, the negative effects of markets on the nonmarket domains they colonize (Finlayson, 2005: p. 56).

But before exploring the problems of system, let us be clear about the importance and the potential of the lifeworld—and what is at stake. We might state it thus: Lifeworld is not just a philosophical abstraction. It represents the complete array of creative, intellectual, cultural, sociological, physical, sexual, psychological, artistic, scientific, mathematical, and philosophical possibilities of human existence, present, past, and future. The existential ground of all human life conceived in its vastest potentiality is at stake with the colonization of lifeworld: the finest human thinking, doing, creating, performing, acting in an almost infinite number of cultural dimensions. It is all of the potentialities of human existence, realized and unrealized, even those beyond our ability to imagine now. It is the uncarved block of Taoism, the “all things luxuriantly present” of Buddhism as Chinese Neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yang-ming (1471-1529) conceived it (Wang, 1963).

That survey of social pathologies Finlayson refers to builds on the work of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, both of whom saw increasing problems as societies became more complex, respectively through a division of labor and rationalization of society, and includes anomie, disintegration, alienation, demoralization, and social instability (Finlayson, 2005: p. 57). But colonization is what Habermas’s communicative action theory aims to combat.

8.2. The “System”

There is no shortage of advocates for the system. The leaders of the array of organizations and institutions listed above are by definition system advocates. Society’s most pressing contemporary need is to curb system incursions into lifeworld. In her book Habermas: Rescuing the Public Sphere, Pauline Johnson frames the problem this way:

Modernization processes have systematized and rendered explicit certain distinct modes of rationalization, but a pathological modern development threatens to engulf our capacity to rationalize our actions with respect to the goal of critical self-reflection by a one-sided focus on a world rationalized in accordance with technical interests (Johnson, 2011: p. 41).

And because lifeworld problems are not like system problems, the kind of reason needed to solve them is different. Johnson describes the lifeworld, really the world of culture, this way:

Cultural differentiation offers a place for a new kind of rationality that also shapes a modern experience. This is a world in which all assertions, descriptions, claims, and propositions are contentious, open to criticism and review on the basis of their conformity to idealized and differentiated descriptions of their validity” (Johnson, 2011: p. 48).

The problem, however, is that somehow, over our history, the institutions of the Constitution, the Congress especially, but at times also the Supreme Court and even the Presidency, are captured by powerful system elements, historically corporations, and the actors (congressmen, senator, judges, presidents) who should be protecting the lifeworld, are in fact often doing corporate bidding. Associate US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, who wrote a powerful dissent in the Citizens United case over political campaign contributions, scored the majority of the court for having supported corporate interests over the people of the United States. He said:

It might also be added that corporations have no consciences, no beliefs, no feelings, no thoughts, no desires. Corporations help structure and facilitate the activities of human beings, to be sure, and their “personhood” often serves as a useful legal fiction. But they are not themselves members of “We the People” by whom and for whom our Constitution was established (Stevens, 2010).

Stevens’ critique is in fact a blueprint for how to attack the overweening role that corporations have assumed in our society. He further wrote in his dissent:

Although they make enormous contributions to our society, corporations are not actually members of it. They cannot vote or run for office. Because they may be managed and controlled by nonresidents, their interests
may conflict in fundamental respects with the interests of eligible voters. The financial resources, legal structure, and instrumental orientation of corporations raise legitimate concerns about their role in the electoral process. Our lawmakers have a compelling constitutional basis, if not also a democratic duty, to take measures designed to guard against the potentially deleterious effects of corporate spending in local and national races (Stevens, 2010).

The key problem with unlimited corporate participation in the election process, of course, is corruption coming from private interests interfering with and even coopting the government for their own ends. This is a concern going back to the framers of the Constitution. “Thomas Jefferson famously fretted that corporations would subvert the Republic”, Stevens wrote, footnoting the statement with a quote from a letter Jefferson wrote in 1816: “I hope we shall… crush in [its] birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country”.

Toward the end of his dissent, in a section titled “Antidistortion” (meaning the court’s and the government’s previous position that it wanted to prevent corporations from distorting our governmental system), Stevens pulls out all the stops and lays out explicitly and at length the dangers corporations pose to the republic, taking a swipe at the court majority in the process: “The fact that corporations are different from human beings might seem to need no elaboration, except that the majority opinion almost completely elides it”. He goes on thus:

Unlike natural persons, corporations have “limited liability” for their owners and managers, “perpetual life”, separation of ownership and control, “and favorable treatment of the accumulation and distribution of assets… that enhance their ability to attract capital and to deploy their resources in ways that maximize the return on their shareholders’ investments” [...]. Unlike voters in U.S. elections, corporations may be foreign controlled. Unlike other interest groups, business corporations have been “effectively delegated responsibility for ensuring society’s economic welfare”; they inescapably structure the life of every citizen. “[T]he resources in the treasury of a business corporation”, “furthermore, “are not an indication of popular support for the corporation’s political ideas” [...] “They reflect instead the economically motivated decisions of investors and customers. The availability of these resources may make a corporation a formidable political presence, even though the power of the corporation may be no reflection of the power of its ideas” (Stevens 2010; footnotes and case-law citations omitted.)

8.3. Habermas’s Deep Commitment to Rationality

Habermas’s communicative action theory is a deep commitment to rationality, which he maintains, contrary to postmodernism, is built into human communication a priori. Communicative action theory involves what Habermas calls a “linguistic turn” from subject-centered philosophy of Kant and modern Western philosophy to the speech act theory of J. L. Austin. This commitment to rationality is also a commitment to Enlightenment reason. In an essay titled “Modernity: An Unfinished Project”, based on his 1980 acceptance of the Adorno prize, Habermas claims that, contrary to the holding of postmodernism, both modernism and the Enlightenment have yet to run their course (Habermas, 1997: p. 38). In fact, since the founding documents of the political system established in the United States, particularly the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, are direct products of the Enlightenment, Habermas’s Enlightenment approach to politics and society should be welcomed here.

Habermas says rationality is inherent in communication, particularly as the function of communication is to help people reach understanding. Finlayson quotes an early translation of The Theory of Communicative Action, in which Habermas writes: “reaching understanding inhabits human speech as its telos” (Finalyson, 2005: p. 34). Habermas seeks to establish the rationality of the communicative process by what he calls “universal pragmatics”, which argues that even before the content of any proposition is reached, there are always already separate rational commitments at work establishing social relationships. When we communicate, we implicitly make four validity claims: to the truth of a proposition, to rightness, to truthfulness, and to meaning, “and in speaking I am at least implicitly promising to be able to justify what I say and do, if challenged, on any of these four schemes” (Edgar, 2006: p. 165). A crucial feature of communicative action theory is the inter-subjectivity by which an actor recognizes in “the other” a being such as himself in a similar situation, making human interaction truly social.

8.4. Rationality’s Place in the Contemporary World

Our contemporary world is ripe with rationality, particularly in science and technology, where is should be op-
erative. And it thrives and flourishes in the realm Habermas terms the “system”, where it is also not inappropriate for it to thrive. The problem, however, in Habermasian analysis, is that the realm of the lifeworld has been and is being rationalized by instrumental reason, which is not appropriate to lifeworld problems. In the lifeworld, instrumental reason is inappropriate, because as Pauline Johnson described it above, it’s “a world in which all assertions, descriptions, claims, and propositions are contentious, open to criticism and review on the basis of their conformity to idealized and differentiated descriptions of their validity”. In this world, according to Habermas, what is needed is discourse in which members of society come together communicatively to try to establish the norms by which they can pursue not the projects of goal-oriented organizations but the larger existential goals of a good life and the rules that govern it.

According to Habermas, communication in the service of these goals proceeds assuming that everyone is working in good faith and is knowledgeable about what is being discussed. When it turns out that those assumptions are counterfactual, communication stops and turns into “discourse”, which operates on the basis of “discourse ethics” described above. In the Kyl example, when it turns out the Senator is communicating in bad faith, he is called on it, and discourse ensues. Kyl issued a clarification that at least showed he was distorting the truth. The goal of discourse is to re-establish the consensus, the agreement about norms, which allows communicative work to resume. Genuine communication was not pursued with Kyl, but one can imagine that in a society with a population trained in discourse and discourse ethics, the outcome might have been different from what it was in our society, where communication is marked by the instrumental uses of media, featuring public relations and the thirty-second sound bites, which too often dominate public communication. In a population sufficiently trained in such discourse, the Kyl statement on the Senate floor could well have been a career-ending scandal instead of the tiny blip it made in the news when it occurred before it was virtually forgotten. In a democracy, the education of the populace is what makes the system work, and for Habermas, education in how society actually works is the education that counts. No monarch, as Madison thought, would be needed to keep the system on track; an educated population would fulfill that function, and could well have ended Kyl’s career.

9. Conclusion: Rational National Political Discourse Is Possible

This paper argues that it should be possible to consciously inaugurate a national discourse based on Habermas’s ideas, that the best place to do that is in the Democratic Party (or in the opening created by movements such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street) augmented by social media and the World Wide Web, and that the proposed “faction” can model the Habermasian system in such a way that it will in fact do what Madison spoke of (at least in our misprision of) Federalist Paper No. 51: create “a will in the community independent of the majority that is [a will] of the society itself…” While such discourse obviously cannot start as “a will of the society itself”, it can, through the functioning of discourse itself (through Habermas’s discourse ethics), move in the direction of the ideals established by the best description of the lifeworld that our society has yet devised, beginning with the “Preamble” to the US Constitution, the Constitution itself, the Declaration of Independence, and continuing with the way that that project has been historically articulated into “our best values most grandly conceived”, particularly in terms of civil rights, voting rights, and social security. There is much at stake, particularly as the “colonization” of the lifeworld by system forces proceeds unabated and there are few out-and-out advocates for the lifeworld. Habermas can teach us a lot more about democracy—and about how to practice it—than what we have already known. Confucius has given us a standard for our discourse.

References


Music Education and Youth Empowerment: A Conceptual Clarification

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Abstract
This paper is a conceptual clarification of the nexus between music education and youth empowerment. It is also an exposition of how music education can be utilized for the empowerment of the Nigerian youths with a brief incursion into the meaning of education and its need for national development. The paper considers music education as a performance art which involves unique educational activities designed to enable the youths to achieve self-realization and life adjustment in the society. The conceptual clarifications touch upon some philosophical principles which guide music education in its application as a tool of empowerment of youths and how Nigerian government can borrow a leaf from some of the African countries who partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Music Crossroad International (MCI) organization to empower their youths and communities. Through the creation of such musical opportunities through partnerships by such countries, implications for Nigeria are drawn with recommendations and conclusions.

Keywords
Conceptual Clarifications, Music Education, Performance Art, Philosophical Principles, Educational Activities, Youths Empowerment, Self-Realization, Musical Opportunities and Life Adjustment in the Society

1. Introduction
The conceptual essence of education has made nations to accept in principle and practice its importance as a vehicle for youth empowerment and national development. Education is the bedrock for the development of a nation. Thus, the efficacy of sound and quality education in the development of an individual’s innate talents and
in the discovery of natural endowment can never be over-emphasized. In keeping with the policy position of the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004: 4) education was officially adopted as an instrument “par excellence” for achieving national development. In the plethora of educational empowerment definitions, Oluwaseyi (2009) stated that E. B. Castle defined education as what happens to the individual from the day one is born to the day one dies. Arguably, this definition is too general in scope, for it permits all experiences that happen to an individual from birth to death to be called education.

The necessity to improve on definitions such as the one above informed the idea of Balogun (2008) that education is an act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character and physical ability of the individual. If education is an act or experience, it is a process of the activity to preserve, develop and transmit the culture of a people from one generation to another. In other words, education responds to the cultural, linguistic, and environmental needs of the people.

In the same development, music is a common language that reaches across boundaries to bring cultures together and it creates a global understanding. It is determined, interpreted and dressed or colored by culture, and cultural environment of a people. Since music is part of human culture, which should be imbibed, projected, and perfectly transmitted, it ought to have a recognized process by which it could be acquired. In the light of the above, Okafor (2007) highlighted that such recognized process of transmission of globalized understanding should be framed conceptually within the educational policy and musical education curriculum respectively of a state. As music is a type of language, it has to be learnt through educational process. The critical need for music education in the society has in the past constituted the subject matter of philosophical speculation by some philosophers. Even when the clarification is not substantially philosophical, let us highlight one philosophical note from the past.

For instance, Plato (427-347 B.C.) as portrayed in Grube and Reeve (1992) placed it on record that music has the power of producing certain positive effects on the moral character of the human soul. This explains why music education of the youths was not treated with levity of mind in Plato’s ideal Republic. On the part of Shakespeare (1564-1616) as attested in Wood and Wood (1901), any man who has no music in himself and cannot be moved with concord of sweet sounds, is dangerous and commit treason. To this effect, the envisioned purpose of this paper is to advocate for a policy position that to the effect that Nigerian youths should be empowered through the agency of music education. Music is to be learnt and lived out as a performance art used for the inculcation of good citizenship and employable values and skills.

1.1. Teaching and Learning of Music Education as a Performance Art

Music education is a field of study associated with the teaching and learning of music. It touches on all domains of learning, including the psychomotor domain (the development of skills), the cognitive domain (the acquisition of knowledge), and in significant ways the affective domain, which includes music appreciation and sensitivity. From the perspective of Nwökenna (2008), the term music education includes all deliberate efforts to educate people in music as a specialization regardless of the area of emphasis. Recognizing the importance of music education in national development, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education listed music as one of the courses to be studied at all levels of education.

Music education in the view of Reimer (1989) is construed as a form of aesthetic education. This position of Reimer has been questioned because, the use of music education as aesthetic educational movement in 1960s and early 1970s was made by some education teachers to emphasize the teaching of music as part of a humanities course curriculum rather than as a performance art. In contrast to Reimer’s position, music education can be considered as a performance art since one thinks about it, applies it and performs it with one’s students. Music education is therefore praxal as it cultivates music performance and improvisation as its central activities. Supporting the above, Gardiner (2003) observed that music education is an extremely rich kind of experience in the sense that it requires cognition, emotion and aesthetics. It develops performance skills and individual capabilities. These qualities have to be developed, synchronized and integrated to enable the learner in music education to discover the interrelatedness between music and history, music and mathematics, music and social studies, music and political science; music and languages, as well as music and philosophy.

On the part of Pythagoras (c. 600 B.C.), Plato (428-370 B.C.) and Confucius (551-479 B.C.) they concurred in Benton (1974) that music is a performance art. They argued that performance arts are not just affective and expressive, but deeply cognitive. The arts develop in the learner the means of correct thinking which among
other things include: careful observation of the world, mental representation of what is observed or conceptualized, abstraction from complexity, pattern recognition and development, symbolic and metaphoric representation, and qualitative judgment.

Inferring from the above, music education as art refers to a kind of educational activities designed to enable the youth interested in music to live and adjust their lives in the society. This implies that music education is an educational activity which has a definite purpose, and must therefore be guided by well articulated conceptual, philosophical and practical principles. What then are the philosophical principles that can guide music education?

1.2. Music Education and Its Philosophical Principles

Philosophy is an activity of logical reasoning. It is the rational exploration of those aspects of the problems which are theoretical, and capable of being resolved or at least elucidated by rational dialogue. Philosophy according to Burtt (2008), begins with the explication of the language of discourse on a particular topic on the premise that if there is no agreement on the meaning of words being used there will be no meaningful discourse or dialogue. Hence the clarification of language and analysis of assumptions in music as well constituted the pre-eminent task of philosophy. The employment of philosophy is to act as a tool for conceptual clarification to make a case for the role of music education in both youth and national development.

Since every discipline has its language peculiarities in terms of the technical use of words, concepts and terminologies, music education cannot be different in its own discipline. As an emerging field of study and even an institutional practice it has developed a set of language expressions whose philosophy and technical interpretative meaning are peculiar to its field. For instance, music language expressions inter alia include: phonological organization; fundamental assumptions, logical rationalization and computation. These expressions as Reimer (1989) and Okafor (2007) highlighted, convey deeper meaning to scholars and practitioners in the discipline of music than they do to the layman on the street of music. Most probably, some clarifications of these music-language expressions may, to an extent, bring out the philosophical aspects of the principles that guide music education.

1.3. Conceptual Clarification of Music Language Expressions

1.3.1. Phonological Organization in Music Education

Phonology according to Marius (1991) means the study of the distribution and patterning of speech sounds used in a language. It as well concerns the tacit rules governing pronunciation. In music education it is the organization of the words which define the language of the music. It refers to the structuring and restructuring of the words to be used in music. In the analysis of Benton (1974) a song or music consists of three elements: the words or lyrics, the mode and the rhythm. The mode and the rhythm must suitably conform to the words. Here the philosophical aspect of the principle that guides music education lies in the lyrics. The lyrics can be used to prepare an European child in the manner of European music. In the same development for the African who uses sounds in his/her daily labour, musical lyrics can be used to prepare the African child on how to participate in all areas of adult activity such as hunting, fishing, funeral and dancing.

1.3.2. Fundamental Assumptions in Music Education

There are certain philosophical assumptions which underlie the practices of professional musicians and their scholars. For example, the ideas by which the musician is guided, lead to a greater attainment of the result which is always sought in the aesthetic enterprise. The musician must be a master of the techniques of his art. Regarding the issue of fundamental assumptions in music education, Elliot (1995) posed the fundamental question: Who could become a great musician if such a person does not understand the structure of sound in its modes of pitch, timbre and intensity, and the characteristic feelings with the main variations by which they are bound up? The assumption here is that the musician must have a great idea to express. It must be an idea that can symbolize in a unique form, a universal human emotion, or vividly summarizes a deep and growing tendency of the age, to increase individual’s sensitivity to beauty.

1.3.3. Logical Rationalization and Computation in Music Education

Music as a human product has method and logic peculiar to its nature. Unlike most other human productions, the
learner starts his music by constructing and combining lines as well as objects or instruments of musical sounds. Here, the musician uses an inherent musical logic which dictates how the musical lines being constructed or combined should be continued to formulate the form of the music. A line of music as Byrne and Sheridan (2008) pointed out begins with a complete musical statement known as a theme or idea. This theme which could be of long or short span has a complete “life” of its own, that is, a beginning and a restful end. It becomes the point of reference for the purpose of distinguishing one item of music event from another, in the repertory of music group or musical culture. This method of musical lines computation involves mental rationalization and calculation which are often philosophically derived. It embraces humanistic values as they relate to contemporary musical-educational life, while respecting the musical traditions of the past. Arguably, since music education is purely a field of human activity guided by some philosophical principles, how can it serve as a means of empowering Nigerian youths?

2. Music Education for Nigerian Youth Empowerment: A Situational Analysis and Advocacy

The country Nigeria in the analysis of Somefun (2013) seems to be in a state of anomy. The foundational problems plaguing the country affect the society in quantum, and particularly youths who are the leaders of tomorrow. The nation-state sinks in the sand of egoistical causes. The youth’s search for a sense of belonging to social change, according to Ndibe (2013), yielded little or no result. What is more, the youths themselves contributed to the outcome of anarchic tension, which brands the ugly state of the Nigeria as a nation today. To avert the impending socio-economic crisis of hunger, poverty, and unemployment, the Nigerian government has tried to initiate some empowerment programs for the youths.

The empowerment programs are the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1984; the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which is part of the Government’s efforts to achieve the goals of the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2001. At the local level some other empowerment programs were also implemented. From the point of view of Emielu (2005) and Egbunefu (2012), the empowerment programs organized by the government, seem not to have made much significant impact on the youth populace.

Thus, for effective empowerment of the youths with music education, the Nigerian government should collaborate with some philanthropists and other humanitarian organizations to raise a crop of professional musicians. Their assignment will among other things be to offer free music lessons, workshops, master classes, and performance opportunities to economically disadvantaged Nigerian youths. The program of such organization should aim to uplift underprivileged Nigerian youths academically, culturally and spiritually, while promoting self-expression and community awareness through music education. With such program, Nigerian youths can foster a deep connection between music and other inter-related creative employment activities to sustain themselves. The youths will, as well, gain the skills and talents that would enable them express their culture, struggles, and triumphs through music to sustain them in life.

Apparently, music education is a strategy for achieving much public good, and through direct programs and advocacy, institutions can promote music as an intervention to improve youth’s successful employment outcomes and strengthen self development of communities. This appeals for the support of governmental and non-governmental organizations that will contribute towards the mission of enriching the lives of the Nigerian youths and their communities with music. For instance by giving music scholarship, music lessons, and musical instruments to youths who would not otherwise have access, and of course teaching the youths how to use these instruments. With his, the government will create a sense of human fulfillment for the jobless youths. The youths could be thought how to become singers, stage designers, song-writers, producers of original songs, and learn how to produce and shoot music videos and documentaries.

In support of the above advocacy outcomes, the Nigerian government may take a cue from Music Crossroads International (MCI), which is an international non-governmental organization that empowers youths through music programs in partnership with African state Governments. It provides the young people between ages of 15 and 25 in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia, with musical opportunities and exposure, in addition to training in music and life skills. The program, as Lasisi (2011) attested, has grown to reach some 5000 musicians and a combined audience of over 300,000 per annum spread across the five countries. Such program impact in youth enlightenment has been achieved through over 40 annual festivals, performance training
and international band tours, as well as workshops focused on music right awareness, social interaction, gender issues and HIV/AIDS prevention, organized by the 5 National Music Crossroads NGOs.

Corroboratively learning music and how to use musical instruments, as pointed out by Ifenkwe (2012) adulated, is a unique way of exposing the youths to beauty and interest that nurture excellence and creativity. Structured musical activities for youths during the non-school hours are means of preventing violence and drug abuse. Music is an instrument of peace, it provides an emotional release in a time of social conflict and stress. It can as well be used to enable restive Nigerian youths to develop tolerance, collaboration, talents and essential life skills, academic success, and support services and community building.

**Conceptual and Moral Implications of the Discussion**

Based on the foregoing discussion on music education as a means of youth empowerment in Nigeria, the following implications are drawn.

In the first place, music is not only a mirror of its time and place but also a world of windows, opening up many possibilities and alternatives for learners in life. By implication, the youths who are able to acquire marketable music skills will be inspired to understand personal potential, think boldly on how to bring about positive changes, and adjust to serve humanity with music knowledge and skills.

Secondly, music education is a means of character formation, the creation of aesthetic sensitivity which helps music education to sustain its major role of shaping, reflecting and radiating the cultural differences of the peoples and nation.

Thirdly, music as a spiritual socio-cultural artifact with a lot of intrinsic functional values, imparts the norms, values, duties, and traditions of the society to students and learners. All of the above demonstrate the fact that the roles of the musician are contributory as well as complementary to youth empowerment and national development. In other words the musician is not only knowledgeable in but also responsible for maintaining civil, moral, and congenial order of the society.

**3. Recommendations**

From the paper’s discussion based on the implications drawn, the following recommendations are proffered:

Nigerian government and well meaning people of the country should not think twice to invest on music education enterprise. The rationale behind this is that since music is a common language that reaches across boundaries to bring cultures together and to create a global understanding, it is a better option for the restive and militant Nigerian youths.

For the fact that music education is a performance art or experience which has a formative effect on the mind, life, and physical ability of the learner, government at all levels should embark on providing professionals to teach and direct music education at all school levels. This will enable Nigerian youths discover their talents and other natural endowments.

**4. Conclusion**

This paper has striven to demonstrate the enormous potential of music educative enterprise. It highlights that music is a performance art of language which has to be learnt through educational process. The paper affirms that from time and date, philosophers and poets have attested that music has the power of producing certain formative effects on the mind, character and physical ability of the learner. To this end the paper contends to maintain that since music education is capable of inculcating the skills of innovation and creativity for self and national development in the learner, it is a tool for youth empowerment.

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From Kantian-Reinen Vernunft to the Real Dark Energy Density of the Cosmos via the Measure Concentration of Convex Geometry in Quasi Banach Spacetime

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Abstract

The paper argues strongly in favour of the opinion that Kantian pure reason could be implemented via pure mathematics to reveal a true deep aspect of the fundamental monads of the real physics of the cosmos. Thus using a remarkable pure mathematical-geometrical result stating that under certain conditions a manifold will have 96 percent of its volume concentrated near to its surface, we conclude that the 96 percent dark energy causing the edge of our universe to expand is a direct consequence of this pure geometrical result. From this viewpoint we could generalize our finding to mean that scientific philosophy is not only an important ingredient of human cultural existence but a real immensely important tool in analyzing the reality of the cosmos at the quantum level as well as its large scale structure.

Keywords

Kant Critique of Pure Reason, Measure Concentration, Convex Geometry, Dvoretzky’s Theorem, Very High Space Dimensionality, Banach Spaces, E-Infinity Spectra, Dark Energy, $E$ Equals $mc^2$ Divided by 22, Scientific Philosophy, Pure Mathematics in Physics, Einstein Relativity, Quantum Gravity

1. Introduction

The present work is devoted mainly to clarifying problems connected to Einstein’s relativity (Rindler, 2004; Okun, 2009; Helal et al., 2013; He & Marek-Crnjac, 2013; Helal, Marek-Crnjac, & He, 2013.; Auffray, 2014; El...
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Naschie, 2011, 2013a-k, 2014a-m) and the missing dark energy of the cosmos (Auffray, 2014; El Naschie, 2011, 2012a-2, 20131-k, 2014a-m; He, 2013a; He & Marek-Crnjac, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac, 2013a; Marek-Crnjac & El Naschie, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac & He, 2013c; Marek-Crnjac, El Naschie, & He, 2013d; Tang et al., 2014) as well as quantum gravity and high energy physics (El Naschie, 2011-2014; Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Guedon, 2013; He & El Naschie, 2012; He 2013a; He & Marek-Crnjac, 2013b; He, 2014; Connes, 1994; Krantz & Parks, 2008) using pure mathematics (Kant, 1974; Baumgartner, 1988; Sartre, 2004, 2012; Reichenbach, 1951; Ayer, 1954; El Naschie, 1994). Taking a bird’s eye view of things it is reasonably safe, even for a theoretical physicist and engineering scientist like the present author, to state that almost the entire modern philosophical framework of our present society is shaped by and stands on Kant’s critique of pure reason as well as his critique of practical reason (Kant, 1974; Baumgartner, 1988). From there German idealism invaded the intellectual foundations of not only European civilization but the entire world which culminated in the work of F. Hegel giving rise to Marxism and existentialism. In fact the hero of the present author in his youth and early life was J. P. Sartre (Sartre, 2004, 2012). In particular Sartre’s critique of the dialectic reason and in no minor measure his main monumental work, being and nothingness influenced the writer to discover the zero set as the quantum particle and the empty set as the quantum wave, and introduced Mandelbrot’s notion of the degrees of emptiness of an empty set to the transfinite set theory used by him and the $E$-infinity school of high energy physics (El Naschie 1994, 2014a-m; He & El Naschie, 2012). Looking back without any Osbornian anger, it is clear to the author that he believed rather strongly that philosophy has a real, indispensable role in exact science, a belief many disputed in physics but is held highly by many pure mathematicians, notably G. Cantor and in modern times, also by leading mathematicians working also in physics such as Field Medalist (A. Connes, 1994). This was all fine and good and things remained as they are until the present ideas constituting the main body of the present work dawned on the author. A seemingly harmless theorem in the mathematics of convex geometry in very high dimensions related to Banach spaces states that for manifolds of this mould, 96 percent of the measure volume will be concentrated near to the surface of the manifold (Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Guedon, 2013). Suddenly a mental analogue of atomic chain reaction was triggered in the mind of the author and it became evident for him that this theorem is the counterpart of Kant’s pure reason applied to the “experimentally” discovered mystery of the “missing” dark energy of the universe (El Naschie, 2012a-c, 20131-k, 2014a-m; He 2013a; He & Marek-Crnjac, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac, 2013a; Marek-Crnjac & El Naschie, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac & He, 2013c; Marek-Crnjac et al., 2013d). This would, and the present author believe it is a clear cut generic and fundamental example for the power of scientific philosophical thinking in reaching in a direct way a resolution for fundamental problems in quantum physics and cosmology. To try to persuade the reader that this is the case requires some knowledge of math and physics but none of it is so hard or extremely specialized that the non-specialist cannot follow as we hope to show next.

2. General Background Information

Einstein’s most famous formula states the equivalence of matter and energy and relates them via the constant speed of light in the jewel of special relativity $E = mc^2$ where $E$ is the energy, $m$ is the mass and $c$ is the speed of light (Rindler, 2004; Okun, 2009; Helal et al., 2013). Intensive effort motivated by the unexpected discovery of the accelerated expansion of the cosmos and the related problem of the dark matter and dark energy 95% density deficit revealed that Einstein’s energy “density” equation is the sum of two parts (Auffray, 2014). The first is a measurable ordinary energy $E(O) = mc^2/22$ and the second which cannot be measured in any conventional way is the dark energy density $E(D) = mc^2(21/22)$ so that at the end $E = E(O) + E(D) = (mc^2/22) + mc^2(21/22) = mc^2$. To arrive at this result two main groups of methods were employed (Helal et al., 2013; Auffray, 2014; El Naschie, 2011, 2012a-c, 2013a-k, 2014a-m; He, 2013a; He & Marek-Crnjac, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac, 2013a; Marek-Crnjac & El Naschie, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac & He, 2013c; Marek-Crnjac et al., 2013d; Tang et al., 2014). The first may be loosely described as mainly physical based on the structure of the standard model of elementary high energy particles while the second may be equally loosely described as largely mathematical starting from Cantor transfinite set theory.

In the present paper by contrast we tackle the problem afresh using a purely topological-geometrical methodology based on some remarkable mathematical results from the modern theory of high dimensional convex geometry and the associated phenomenon of concentration of measure studied initially in Banach spaces and then lead to Dvoretzky’s theorem and the subsequent relevant research (Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Gue-
We stress again that the final result is a complete confirmation of the dissection of \( E = mc^2 \) into \( E(O) \) of the quantum particle and \( E(D) \) of the quantum wave in addition to being a deep insight into the relation between physics, geometry and algebra as well as the unity of classical and quantum mechanics (Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Guedon, 2013; Connes, 1994; Krantz & Parks, 2008). Our main message in this paper is that real fundamental, physical and cosmological facts could be found using pure reason (Kant, 1974; Baumgartner, 1988; Sartre, 2004, 2012; Reichenbach, 1951; Ayer, 1954; El Naschie, 1994).

3. Further Background Information and Preliminary Considerations

Cantorian spacetime is a monadic space (He, 2012) in a sense akin to that of \( K \)-theory, \( E \)-infinity rings and \( n \)-category theory. The building blocks of this space are zero sets of a Hausdorff dimension \( \phi \) embedded into empty sets of a Hausdorff \( \phi^2 \) which are distributed in a uniform randomness to form via an infinite number of unions and intersections a hierarchical-infinite dimensional Cantor set. This Suslin-like operation (Krantz & Parks, 2008) entails few fundamental equations which determine all what is required to deduce various vital invariant properties of this space which we use to mimic our own physical macro and micro quantum spacetime. Based on the above we were able to show in the last four years beyond reasonable doubt that the jewel of special relativity, i.e. \( E = mc^2 \) is in fact the sum of two partial equations. As mentioned earlier on in the introduction, the first part \( E(O) = mc^2 \sqrt{2} \) gives us the real measurable energy density which is due to the particle side of quantum mechanics as modelled by the zero set in Kaluza-Klein five dimensional spacetime. The second part on the other hand is the dark energy which cannot be measured in the ordinary way \( E(D) = mc^2 \frac{21}{22} \) and which is due to the wave nature of the quantum particle-wave duality as modelled by the empty set in the same K-K spacetime. A trivial computation shows then that \( 1/22 = 4.5\% \) and \( 21/22 = 95.5\% \) of Einstein’s total energy density in complete agreement with all modern cosmological measurements. Again in the last four years numerous derivations of the preceding dissection of Einstein’s basic energy-mass relation was given by the author and his collaborators using a variety of physical and algebraic derivation and all leading to the same fundamental conclusion.

The present work is not intended to review or discuss in details past derivations but is mainly concerned with giving a new purely geometrical derivation showing that the so called missing 95.5\% dark energy is a well established geometrical phenomena completely understood since many years in the mathematical literature without drawing or suspecting any physical conclusion or relation to high energy quantum physics or cosmology (Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Guedon, 2013). We are talking here about the phenomenon of measure concentration of convex geometry with high dimensionality which is an off spring of research works on Banach spaces (El Naschie, 2012a-c). The next section is mainly concerned with outlining and explaining this fascinating new connection between pure geometry, quantum physics and cosmology as well as how classical mechanics arise from the deeper mechanics of the quantum and the even deeper mathematics of transfinite set theory and infinite dimensional Banach spaces.

4. Cantorian Spacetime as a Convex Geometry in Very High Dimensions

4.1. Short Review of the Relevant Results in Convex Geometry

The aim of this minimalistic section is to show the failure of our low dimensionality intuition when dealing with geometrical objects of higher dimensionality which start in earnest with \( n \geq 4 \) (El Naschie, 1997, 1999). Similar ideas were discussed by the present author many years ago while attempting to connect string theory and the geometry of spacetime with sphere backing and chess board tiling. The present fundamental example goes in the same main direction and even beyond to the degree that it becomes of fundamental importance in the cosmology of dark energy. To start let us calculate the \( n-1 \) dimensional slice of a unit ball. The relatively elementary consideration involving the use of the stirling formula leads to an accurate approximation of the volume of the smaller slice (Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Guedon, 2013)

\[
\text{Vol}(n) = \left( \sqrt{n} \right) \left( e^{-n/2} \right),
\]

where \( \left\{ x \in \mathbb{R}^n : \frac{1}{2} \leq x_i \leq \frac{1}{2} \right\} \) fixes the width of parallel slices. That way we can conclude that the volume “mass”
volume “mass” distribution is Gaussian and for a fixed slab width almost 95.5% of the mass lies in this slice (Ball, 1991). Now as hinted at earlier, our intuition could lead us to wrongly think that this 95.5% measure concentration is located in dimension \( n - 1 \) at the centre of the \( n \)-dimensional space. The mathematical-geometrical truth however is exactly the opposite and careful consideration reveals that for large \( n \) the measure concentration is asymptotically near to the surface (Ball, 1991). For \( n = \infty \) the 95.5% is for all practical reasons the surface itself. The mathematical literature is in the meantime abounds with various extensions of this remarkable result which is based on A. Dvoretzky’s theorem and the work of V. Milman and its mathematical-geometrical ramifications (Ball, 1991; Pisier, 1989; Kasin, 1977; Guedon, 2013). In the present work however our evident interest is clearly in the obvious relevance of the above conclusion to dark energy cosmology. We start by showing the almost one to one correspondence of the above with the Cantorian-fractal holographic boundary of \( E\)-infinity spacetime and its dark energy content.

4.2. The Measure Concentration of \( E\)-Infinity Spacetime as an Explanation for Dark Energy

As mentioned earlier on in the introduction, the building blocks of \( E\)-infinity Cantorian spacetime are zero sets embedded into an empty set as their surface or cobordism. Since the zero set \((n = 0)\) has a Hausdorff dimension \( \phi \) and the empty set \((n = -1)\) has a Hausdorff dimension \( \phi^2 \) then in \( D - 5 \) Kaluza-Klein spacetime the unit volumetric measure would be the average of intersectional \( D - 5 \) zero set volume \( \phi^2 \) and the additive \( 5 - D \) empty set volume \( 5\phi \). Here we interpreted \( \phi \) and \( \phi^2 \) as a Hausdorff volume or topological probability as an extension of the classical notion of geometrical probability (Helal et al., 2013; Marek-Crnjac, 2013a; Marek-Crnjac & El Naschie, 2013b; Marek-Crnjac & He, 2013c; Marek-Crnjac et al., 2013d; Auffray, 2014; El Naschie, 2004, 2009). Consequently the average volume is simply (Connes, 1994)

\[
\langle V \rangle = \left( \phi^2/2 \right) + \left( 5\phi^2/2 \right).
\]

The corresponding average energy is therefore nothing else but Einstein’s celebrated formula [28]

\[
E = \left( \phi^2/2 \right) mc^2 + \left( 5\phi^2/2 \right) mc^2 = \left( \left( \phi^2/2 \right) + \left( 5\phi^2/2 \right) \right) mc^2 = (1)(mc^2) = mc^2.
\]

From [28]

\[
\left( \phi^2/2 \right) = 1/(22+k) = 1/(22.18033979) = 1/22,
\]

and

\[
5\phi^2/2 = (21+k)/(22+k) = (21.18033989)/(22.18033979) \approx 21/22.
\]

where \( k = \phi^2 \left(1 - \phi^3 \right) \) is the topological mass of ‘tHooft’s renormalon which could be thought of as made of two entangleon \( \phi^2 \) particles because \( k = 2\phi \), our main result follows, namely that

\[
E = E(O) + E(D) = mc^2/22 + mc^2 \left(21/22\right) = mc^2 = E \left(\text{Einstein}\right).
\]

So far we have looked at a single monadic building block of our space (He, 2012). However due to self similarity we expect the above relation to hold true on all scales. To show that this expectation is correct and leads to our fundamental conclusion about the measure concentration, we reason as follows:

Our \( E\)-infinity space is infinite dimensional \( n = \infty \), however it has a finite expectation value of \( \langle n \rangle = 4 + \phi^3 \) and \( \langle d_z \rangle = 4 + \phi^3 \) for its topological and Hausdorff dimension apart of the Menger-Urysohn topological dimension of exactly 4 (El Naschie, 2004, 2009). Thus although infinite dimensional, because of its hierarchal geometry reflected in its Suslin expansion (Krantz & Parks, 2008)

\[
\dim E - \infty = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left( \phi^2 \right) (n) = (1 + \phi)(1 - \phi) = 4 + \phi^3.
\]

it is still compact with a boundary at infinity. This shows up clearly in the hyperbolic projection of \( E\)-infinity space which manifests itself as a modular fractal space of the Klein-Penrose type as explained in great detail in previous older and more recent publications. Now our result follows because in the Poincare-Beltrami projection we have at the center about 336 degrees of freedom corresponding to the internal dimension of the original Klein modular space.
\[ \Gamma(7) = |SL(2, 7)| = 7(7^2 - 1) = 336. \]  

This represents the holographic boundary without the “compactified” edge. At this edge however, which is located at infinity, we have infinitely more degrees of freedom. Thus although the edge seems to us from the middle to be infinitely think it is really where the bulk of absolute measure is located, namely the 95.5%. For us low dimensional creatures, the situation may strike us as paradoxical especially when we are making measurements of the total energy density of the cosmos. In this sense the COBE, WMAP and Planck measurement makes absolute sense when we realize that this 95.5% is related to the quantum wave of the universe which collapses on measurement and cannot be detected but can be indirectly inferred from cosmological observations extended to the edge of the universe.

5. Discussion

The quantum wave and wave collapse may be a familiar face of the quantum world but this does not change its deep status as the greatest puzzle in physics. How could something which has no energy, no matter and no momentum have such a crucial effect on the motion of quantum objects. Suddenly however cosmology started becoming equally puzzling, if not more puzzling, with the discovery of a type of energy which may be the possible cause behind the accelerated cosmic expansion of the universe although it is de facto not there because it cannot be measured and if we try very hard, we find only 4.5% ordinary energy and ordinary matter leaving the 95.5% shrouded in mystery. These things which are there but are really not there remind anyone working in deterministic chaos, nonlinear dynamics and fractals with the paradoxical nature of a Cantor set (El Naschie, 2004, 2009).

These transfinite sets possess no measure, being of measure zero which means no length at all and consequently “physically” not there. However they do have a substantial Hausdorff dimension, namely \( \frac{\ln \phi}{\ln n} = 0.63 \) for the original Cantor set and \( \phi = 0.618033989 \) for a uniformly random Mauldin-Williams Cantor set. Now we ask ourselves how did we succeed in applying an Occam razon magnum to these three paradoxical factors? The short answer is by reducing dark energy to the non-ordinary energy of the quantum wave and the quantum wave to an empty set dimension \( \phi^2 \) which happens to be the surface of the zero set quantum particle with a Hausdorff dimension \( \phi \). That way we seem to have eliminated the problem by illuminating it via the light of fractal Cantorian geometry and transfinite set theory as well as the associated \( E \)-infinity algebra of the highly structured golden mean ring which can deal with the most complex computation with unheard of simplicity. Thus the present work shows a clear and profound example of how pure reason and pure mathematics guided by scientific philosophy and accurate measurements and observations can lead in a simple way to profound information about the real world.

6. Conclusion

The present work demonstrates that at the most fundamental quantum level the universe is best studied by pure reason and pure mathematics. We cannot experimentally probe either zero and nothingness or the uncountably infinite. However the present work clearly shows that the dissection of Einstein’s energy density into two parts is a completely natural consequence of a very high dimensional geometry and its associated measure concentration which results in almost 96% of the volume being located near to the surface of the concerned manifold (Ball, 1991; Guedon, 2013) as well as modelling the quantum particle with a five dimensional zero set and modelling the quantum wave with a five dimensional empty set (El Naschie, 2013a-k). Applied to our cosmos as modelled by \( E \)-infinity Cantorian spacetime manifold, the missing dark energy becomes a natural consequence of the geometry and topology of \( E \)-infinity. Together with our anticlastic, anti-curvature and antigravity explanation of real material-like spacetime (El Naschie, 2014a-m), dark energy and accelerated cosmic expansion find in the above a rational mathematical-geometrical and consequently physical explanation.

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