

THREE THREATS TO PHAVISMINDA

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From assiduously assisting at the proceedings of THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE VISAYAS AND MINDANAO (PHAVISMINDA), from its toddling steps to its tenth year, three stumbling blocks to its smooth and progressive advancement obtruded on my awareness.

The first barrier stems from that supposedly Filipino sociological value, tagged HIYA in Tagalog and SHAME in English. After the presentation of the cherished topic in Scholastic Philosophy, the lecturer was stumped several times, during the question-and-answer period that followed. The territory he covered was a familiar hunting ground for most of his audience. A delegate objected to the barrage of objections posed, contending that the speaker should not be subjected to such a treatment, which was causing his SHAME. I responded by pointing out that we were engaged in an epistemological dialectic concerned with issues, and not in a psychological encounter geared to making friends and influencing people. Otherwise, our entire enterprise of wresting truth from the fiery clash of contending perceptions would be completely stifled. After the session, the speaker disclosed to me his endorsement of my reaction. He courageously admitted that, like every participant, he deliberately expended much effort, time and money to pursue this ideal of sharing insights with his peers, for the precise purpose of improving his mastery of philosophy.

The second barrier to the organization's betterment is the dread of tackling topics in philosophy beyond the accustomed mental horizon of its registrants. As the conventions continued, I was thrilled when speakers expatiated on the subject matter of their masteral theses, whose novelty stimulated the audience. On one occasion, however, the lecturer on the Oriental philosophy notion of KARMA as a critical constituent of man's personality could not get the dialoguing going. He was persuaded that the doctrine was untranslatable into Occidental wisdom's personality, in which his audience was *au courant*. Someone suggested that total unintelligibility is difficult to accept and that analogies, if not perfect clones, would be sufficiently serviceable. In turn, I pointed out that human personality as presented by him could accommodately be defined in terms found with several giants of Western Speculation as: "A bundle of thoughts." The speaker was completely taken aback by these recommendations but, more importantly, the group realized that the dread of profound philosophical matters has no place in our initiative.

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As time went on, participants from disciplines other than strict philosophy brought in the seduction of using up the entire convention time for questions useful for the nitty-gritty of daily living. Everybody is convinced that lovers of wisdom have the obligation of handing down the fruits of their contemplation to others. But the blatant trap for PHAVISMINDA consists in squandering its efforts and time on issues other than serious answers to the foundational questions: "Why is there being instead of nothing?" Once the persevering discipline presupposed by such a quest is lost, PHAVISMINDA falls ignominiously from the rarefied atmosphere of wholehearted philosophical scholarship into the gloom of the CAVE, as described by Plato in his REPUBLIC, BOOK SEVEN.