

OPENING ADDRESS¹
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Eager lovers of wisdom gathered here today to share insights into what and why there is being instead of non-being:

Today, permit me to share with you topics from philosophical systems of the world's greatest thinkers, which gave me enduring pleasure through years of extensive and intensive reading activity.

First, Plato's theory of true reality envisions the existence of objective universals, independent of the human mind and of the world we live in. The pyramidal structure of this "*topos noetos*" ends in the last two visible ideas with a gap suggesting a mysterious summit. Plato determined this highest tip to be "*to hen, t'agathon* and *to kalon*." This appears conformable to mystic theological stand that the Godhead is clothed in total obscurity and to Augustine's surmise that this "*topos noetus*" is find in the mind of God.

Second, Aristotle apparently did not reach the concept of God even in his Idea of friends contemplating the ultimate elements of reality. For him, true reality consists of the existing world of singular things without beginning and without end. Hence, all his major writings are mere catalogues of the apparatus found in different categories; the mind in his logic, the common ideas in his metaphysics, the physical world in his *Physics* and statecraft in his *Politics*.

Third, Descartes may not have really leapt out of this world to answer the question: What is being, if non-being is nothing? His criterion of truth-clear and distinct idea-is an umbilical cord that he may not have succeeded in cutting, when he swerved upward by means of his hyperbolic doubt.

Fourth, was Spinoza an atheist or a God-intoxicated visionary as seen in his seeming pantheistical system of reality expertly described in detail in his *Ethics Demonstrated by Mathematical Order*?

¹ A transcription of the recorded message conveyed on the occasion of the PHAVISMINDA's 25th Anniversary.

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Fifth, was "duty" and not the categorical imperatives Kant's deepest the insight found in his *Critique of Practical Reason*? This second critique is viewed as his most important contribution to philosophy.

Sixth, Hegel's masterful analysis of the relation of Master and Slave in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit* must, by all means, be studied by serious seekers of wisdom. The master enjoys life through the work of the slave. But the latter gains freedom and independence if he manages to inject substantial quality to his labor beyond its humdrum everyday regularity. This is an inspiration which our Filipino overseas contract workers should inject into their otherwise drab existence.

Seventh, Husserl's unchanging phenomenon amid its ever-changing surrounding circumstances must be fathomed as equivalent to Plato's idea. Thus equipped, one can decipher why Heidegger I could not finish his theory that being is time. Heidegger II instead busied himself with *aletheia* and insisted that it is the darkness of the forest that is true reality as proven by the existence of the clearing which is our world.

Eighth, Heidegger is an "*existenz*" philosopher who explained things by "existential" and not by essential constituents. This *weltanschauung* is worlds apart from that existentialism represented by Kierkegaard and Sartre, who were preoccupied with psychological consolations from the devastations of World Wars I and II and not philosophical speculation of total being.

Finally, Levinas seems to me not to have been doing philosophy but busying himself with Midrashic commentaries. His fundamental doctrine that when one sees the face of a man, it is God confronting him to decide which relationship one must have with his fellow man.

The thrust of my sharing these topics with you is invite and challenge you to immerse yourselves in the thought of the greatest philosophers of all time. Only thus, I believe, one can truly enjoy doing philosophy as I have been blessed with its deep pleasure for half a century of hard mental labor.