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28TH PHAVISMINDA CONFERENCE: A SYNTHESIS

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Theme: Philosophy in the Contemporary Times

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*I*n his Keynote Address, Mr. Tom Palmeri of Family2family.org guided the conference by situating philosophy in the present. Beginning with the usual definition of philosophy as the “Love of Wisdom,” he then elaborated on “wisdom” or the yearning for it. Palmeri’s focus was very intentional. For, without even analyzing, people credulously accept whatever definitions the various social institutions will concoct through the tri-media. In other words, they readily “march along the beat of the drum.”

The present task of philosophy, however, is to encourage us to “think outside the box.” By thinking outside the box, our thoughts become free and independent. This exhortation is very relevant inasmuch as technology inadvertently defines our activities. Wherever we look, technology’s imprint abounds. In this 28th Conference, I gather the general theme that philosophy seeks to combat the onslaught of technology.

There are two aspects of technology. On the one hand, the positive aspect facilitates work. On the other hand, the negative aspect supplants or controls human beings.

What is the relevance of technology to the present discussion? According to Eddie Babor, technology serves as a means to the understanding of *Dasein* and a good venue for exerting to the fullest *Dasein*’s creative power. However, man’s creative passion within the sphere of technology can devastate humanity dastardly. In Heidegger’s opinion, “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological,” Babor quotes. In other words, technology’s

driving force is neither in the machines themselves nor in various human activities associated with modern modes of production. But, in using technology human activities are reduced to calculative thinking, a way of thinking through which humans are supplanted or controlled by technology.

What then is the way out? Only through meditative thinking. Here, technology aptly becomes a facilitator of work. Through this, man does not become a defenseless and a perplexed victim at the mercy of the irresistible superior power of technology; meditative thinking leads man to contemplate the meaning which reigns in everything that is.

Technology, like the television, affects discourse. Studying the discourse of television advertisements, Orlando Ali Mandane Jr. claims that their discourse revolves around sex. Even love is shown as reduced to sex; and TV advertisements are pregnant with these insinuations. Mandane asserts that TV advertisements are produced through a disciplined and careful research of consumer behavior. Moreover, they are culturally related. With this view in mind, I ask: On what particular cultural behaviors are the advertisers are trying to capture in the advertisement, *Nakatikim ka naba ng kinse anyos?* What about the advertisement for Colgate Fresh Confidence? Producers may deny it but their TV advertisements project sexual innuendos. They do not realize that their advertisements either reinforce the said behavior or give the impression that they are true, thus creating a bandwagon effect. "By persistently repeating the TV Ad, it forces the mind to accept it as true." Moreover, inasmuch as "TV Ad discourses are polysemic in character, they are beyond our reach and we no longer have power over them. And they cause us to shudder, to tremble."

Thus, a message that sexual satisfaction assures the beloved is in the making. To guarantee satisfaction, different techniques are used. However, Erich Fromm, as quoted by Joseph Abraham Bibal, said: "Love is not the result of adequate sexual satisfaction, but sexual happiness." On the contrary, knowledge of the so-called sexual techniques is the result of love and not the other way around. According to most studies, sexual problems are not due to the ignorance of the right technique but due to the inhibitions which



make loving impossible. Thus, the meaning and purpose of love have to be revisited.

Human love is the desire for union with a beautiful object in order to avail of eternity in mortal life. Love is not enhanced by technology but by simply realizing the meaningful presence of the beloved. The failure to realize its meaning and purpose makes man forget that the sexual union in love bears fruit. This forgetfulness likely leads to man's failure to be responsible over its fruit.

The failure to take responsibility over the fruits of love, the children, leads to marginalization. Due to their parents' irresponsibility, some children are left in the streets making them an eyesore or disturbance. Eventually, they suffer from the society's brutish treatment; it seems oblivious to their true presence. Ryan Maboloc narrates that if he compares all the giant edifices all over the metropolis, the gadgets he use and discard in order to be trendy, and the way he spent the days of his life in cinemas, malls, and parties, the sight of the innocent street children would be no less than a statement of his irresponsibility. To cope with this irresponsibility, he seeks refuge from Levinas because the latter said that the original encounter with the face is that of an infinite responsibility. There is an obligation or a demand to act. In the refusal to see, a recognition of the other is already presupposed although the initial effect is that of rejection and of allergy.

Face to face with Levinas, Maboloc realized that he is confronted with two options. Either he rejects the other or presents his very being to the other. The said responsibility can only be concrete because the other, the face of the street children, is a concrete existing reality; the plea of the other is to make his being present to the other.