CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE OF POSTMODERNITY

Eddie R. Babor, Ph.D., LL.B.
Holy Name University
Tagbilaran City

There is no Christian Philosophy. There are only Christian philosophers. Proof is, anybody can hardly remember of having enrolled in a philosophy subject whose descriptive title is Christian Philosophy. For a philosophy to be a philosophy, it should be based on reason and sustained by critical awareness or critical thinking. Philosophy has no place for God; it cannot accommodate faith. The moment faith is given a room to act as a binary of reason, reason would collapse to the recesses of faith. Philosophy cannot trust faith because philosophy is sustained by reason and others. This explains why there are various philosophical schools or philosophical methods. But just the same all these bank on reason as the primary basis of a philosophical undertaking. As secondary bases, philosophy takes experience (empiricism), intuition (positivism), meditation (Zen-Buddhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, among others), imagination (Levinas, Derrida, among others), speculation, reflection, interpretation (hermeneutics), and deconstruction. Only after harnessing reason may one engage in critical thinking where one is called to raise philosophical questions—not all questions, obviously, are philosophical—then analyze, criticize, synthesize, evaluate, and judge the validity and truth of a given phenomenon.

There is nothing wrong if reason shall be paired with faith. But this is not philosophy anymore. This is, rather, theology. Hence, when I say "God has no place in philosophy," I am not bluntly professing that there is no God. There is God. We come to know God through Jesus Christ. But we need to believe in Him, especially in His Divinity, Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection, which are lumped in the dogma of the Church called Paschal Mystery. One's failure to believe in these articles of faith in the Catholic Church may make one appreciate the
apocryphal claims of Dan Brown in his controversial novel the *Da Vinci Code*. In this vein, God is the reason why we are here today. Without God, there can be no thinking. Without God, there can be no reflection. Without God, nothing will flow spontaneously. Without God there is only nothing. But shall we refuse in knowing nothing about nothing? “Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?” Heidegger remarks. That’s it. Everything is in a flux. Nothing stays forever. Everything will be “nothinged.” Everything will eventually become no-longer-what-it-is for it to yield to the bosom of no-longer-being-able-to-be.

Christian Philosophy, indubitably, speaks of permanence, substance, essence, and Being, rather than nothing. But sadly, this branch of philosophy is not only anchored in reason, but also in faith. **What is Christian Philosophy?** It is a movement orchestrated by the Scholastics, who are obviously the founders of Scholasticism. As a method of doing philosophy, it is a school of thought securely moored in the holy labyrinth of Christian philosophers who, without any twinge of conscience, borrowed the pagan philosophies of the ancient Greeks, specifically that of Plato’s and Aristotle’s.² To the Scholastics, reason is not antithetical to faith. They can be fused together so that Christian Philosophy shall be given birth. Thus, if one insists on a Christian Philosophy, just like Hindu Philosophy, Buddhist Philosophy, Taoist Philosophy, and others, then such philosophy is Scholasticism itself. In this regard, Scholasticism and Christian Philosophy are arguably synonymous. Thus, to help Christian Philosophy find its place in an intellectual enterprise called philosophy, then call it Scholasticism.

Scholasticism is ever alive in the academic programs of prominent, and perhaps less prominent, universities and colleges throughout the Philippines. Needless to say, Scholasticism enjoys so much prominence in UST (University of Santo Tomas), DLSU (De La Salle), ADMU (Ateneo de Manila University), USC (University of San Carlos), and of course, in HNU (Holy Name University). But I doubt if such dogmatic philosophy finds a solid claim in UP (University of the Philosophy), much less perhaps, in UB (University of Bohol), BIT (Bohol Institute of Technology), or LA (Loboc Academy).

In this paper, I have to rouse a defense for Scholasticism to show a bitter contrast between the so-called classic or orthodox philosophy and postmodern philosophy. Undeniably, Scholastic Ethics (simply taken as Christian Ethics which is per se misleading since Christian Ethics does not fall under the domain of philosophy but of theology) is one kind of Ethics that is well-structured, well-knitted, neatly-composed, and above all, well-justified or call it, well-reasoned. This is why
Scholastic ethics is accused of being too rationalistic, rather than humanistic.

Indeed, Scholastic ethics is so rigid. It does not provide amiable lines that could turn an ugly or monstrous act to an angelic, beautiful, and acceptable one. In Scholastic ethics, a wrong and bad act is always wrong and bad; a right and good act is always right and good. However, a wrong act is not always bad, just as a right act is not always good. One may be wrong, but it does not necessarily follow that one is bad inasmuch as one may be right but he is bad, just as one may be wrong but one is good. This means that in Scholastic ethics there are categorically only two acts: good and bad. The other which is ostensibly construed as an indifferent act called is only an act in theory not in the realm of praxis, because the moment such an act is eventually executed that act consequently becomes either good or bad.

Probably, because Scholastic ethics is bereft of humanitarian underpinnings, Nietzsche cannot stop himself but declare that Scholastic or Christian ethics is anti-life or anti-human. This has caused Nietzsche to advertise his ideas that for one to be truly human, one must transcend the shackles of good and evil. In his Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche admonishes everybody to be an immoralist, that is, to live a kind of life where one is honestly loaded with a personal understanding and conviction why good is good; why bad is bad; or what makes bad, bad and good, good. The trouble is our notion of good and evil is a mere product of lazy stereotyping and traditional copying. We prefer respecting tradition rather than creatively and critically inquiring why an act is deemed bad or good, or why it is considered right.

Perhaps, we are too lazy or too dumb to inquire what are actions for. Conveniently, we become stooges of tradition. We are not like the madman of Nietzsche who dares to light a lamp in broad daylight in a thickly populated marketplace and declare something that transcends tradition. Yes, Darwin is right: we are apes. This is why we are fond of aping each other. Thus, the cliche: “What monkey sees, monkey does.” So, when one monkey does one monkey business, another monkey will monkey what it had monkeyed. Hence, the classical fallacy called Tu Quoque that runs: “Two wrongs mean right.” But, is it really right?

As a well-structured school of morality, Scholastic ethics hardly receives any unsavory remarks. It has a comprehensive layout from the meaning, elements, classifications, voluntariness, modifiers, and norms of human acts to some reliable explanations of laws, conscience, and norms and determinants of morality. In addition, Scholastic ethics offers some well-explained principles that deal with rights, duties, justice, etc. In view of this, only in Scholastic ethics where we are given well-defended assurance that surrogate motherhood, drug addiction, suicide,
murder, euthanasia, capital punishment, abortion, mutilation, homosexuality, masturbation, bestiality, rape, incest, divorce, adultery, concubinage, pre-marital sex, fornication, artificial birth control, and others are wrong.

But Scholasticism is not a serious philosophy. It rather wantonly uses philosophy in order to hide its true identity. Scholastic philosophy is, borrowing the words of Martin Heidegger, a theology in the guise of philosophy—and we are not supposed to blame why it is so. Historians of philosophy could soften the blow through their unchallenged contention that there are only three objects of philosophical inquiry: (in chronological order) World, God, and Man. The world is the point of interest among ancient philosophers. Thus, ancient philosophy is primarily cosmological. God is the main philosophical investigation of the medieval period—the time when Scholasticism got its birth. This has made Theodicy—which is actually a theology—pride itself of being a philosophical discipline that studies about God, His Nature, Attributes, Existence, and Acts and Wills. But can we really know God? Meister Eckhart prefers to call God Divine Nothingness. “Echart insist[s] that God is far beyond our conceptual categories which are appropriate only for understanding creatures. Instead of speaking of God in positive terms, it is better to speak of Divine Nothingness.” Any attribute one ascribes to God is an assault against God. In simple terms, ones’ descriptions of God limit God. Finally, the modern and the postmodern periods find their respective seats in philosophy, and both put man in the pedestal as their subject of interest.

So, does ethics change? Is it an invention of man, or does man discover it? Where does man’s sense of goodness come from? Is it our cherished conviction that we always feel good after doing something bad? Does it feel so good to be so bad? Is morality a mere cerebral affair? Is it solely based on concepts? Simply stated: is morality real enough? Perhaps, the seemingly best answer to all these questions is: Morality is real enough; it is life itself. As our experience tells us, we have to do what is proper in order for us to safeguard our humankind. The Romans, indeed, introduce the term virtue, which is vir in Roman and means man in English. Hence, virtus means that which is proper to man.

But what does “proper to man” mean? When do we know what is proper to man? In Ethics, who says what is proper and not proper to man? Who do we trust? Nobody else except ourselves. Reason helps us gain a conviction that this act is good or bad. It is the human person himself who is in contact with morality. Morality is so real to us when we encounter a moral experience, which poses a moral problem. How do we know that our problem is moral? We know it when it singles us out to face a moral obligation. This moral obligation, however, cannot
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE...

accommodate the rigors of “should” and “must” but only the “ought.” In this light, morality dispels moral questions like “What should I do?” or “What must I do?” All these are unfit and are solemnly rejected by morality, because they do not promise the agent any speck of freedom, i.e., freedom from what to do with the moral obligation. Morality can only answer the moral question “What ought I do?” Thus, a more reliable moral principle should be expressed: Do what is proper.

The proper act that one should do is one that is based on freedom. Is this still Scholasticism? No, it is no longer Scholasticism, for it will grossly collapse right before its sight of freedom. Freedom is too big a phenomenon for Scholasticism. Indeed, Scholasticism teaches freedom, but such is limited in the province of the good. Needless to say, Scholasticism’s view of true freedom is limited to the choice of the good. True freedom is based on human nature. If human nature is good then humans do only what is good. This is the logic adopted by the Scholastics, specifically St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, and Suarez.

The problem is: is human nature really good? What can one say about fathers knifing to death their own children or fathers raping their own daughters or sons killing their own fathers? What about cold-blooded murderers, thieves, and robbers? What have other humans done to the survivors of the Asian tsunami? According to Philippine Daily Inquirer (January 05, 2005, As) “Tsunami tragedy also brings out the worst of human nature.” In Sri Lanka, survivors are the ones who were gang-raped, molested, and robbed of their belongings even when they were already housed in refugee shelters. In Hong Kong, there have been hoax tsunami warnings, and there are fake rescue workers who loot bodies or who sexually and financially exploit other survivors. Also, a peep through the occupants of various penitentiary quarters will surely lead one to a conclusion that man is the most dangerous animal who has ever-lived on earth. If freedom is the faculty of man to choose between good and evil, then why single out freedom only in the quarters of good?

To Jean-Paul Sartre, it is not important if one does good or evil. What is important is one has decided to do good or evil. Sartre sees decision as more important than choice. Now, let us ask ourselves: Are our acts a product of choice or fear? Are we the ones who decide to perform the act? Or are we simply afraid of what others might say to us? The trouble with us Catholics is that we are the most pampered believers. It is easy for us to steal heaven. We simply slip inside a confession box, which we call a brand of “fire exit.” After the confession, we feel relieved of our spiritual turmoil because we are given the assurance that God has forgiven our sins through the cleric. No wonder nobody has dared to stop Soren Kierkegaard when he exclaims that no one is a Christian unless one has accepted that one is a sinner.
Many of us do not even know what we do. We simply are pampered believers. This is why we ought not to go to heaven. We take advantage of God’s Words to His disciples: “All the sins that you have forgiven, I will forgive them, while those that you do not shall not be forgiven then.”

Other people who have had no direct and a personal encounter with God are humanistically far better than us. Confucius says: “Do not do unto others what you do not want others do unto you,” and to Lao Tzu who argues to the effect that those who know what is good do not talk about it; they just do it. But Jesus Christ reminds us of the same concern when he remarked to the so-called good men not to let their right hand know of the good deed their left hand does. One of Jesus’s most vital moral dosages is contained in his dictum: “Love others as you love yourself.” But the problem is: many people do not care to love themselves. Consequently, many become their victims.

Joseph Fletcher follows suit when he founded a school of morality he called Situation Ethics. Here, Fletcher brushes aside law and opts for love as the fundamental basis of morality. But just the same, many people do not know how to love themselves. That is why they cannot afford to love others. Also, love is primordially personal and subjective. This is why the object of one’s love may be an object of distaste or hatred by others. It is hard to universalize love as a moral mandate. But still earlier than Christ, Socrates is the one who trumpeted his moral caveat to the effect that he requires all people to do what they know to be good. Thus, to him, one is deeply ignorant of good if one fails to do the good he knows. In this case, morality cannot be dictated by mere rational principles. Morality is human life itself. In this regard, there is a need to revise Scholastic moral injunctions and correlate them with the growing and advancing human concerns.

The Challenge of Postmodernity

The world before is no longer the same today. A lot of new things claim their existence under the sun. Moral problems have continued to rise. But we approach them with the same provincial, traditional, and orthodox ways. What should classic morality say about the following: same sex marriages, legalized prostitution and gambling, intellectual piracy, genocide brought about by religious fanaticism, sygphol or pre-birth gender selection, electronic masturbation, phone sex, surgical virginity, vaginal repair, sex reassignment, female circumcision specifically to African women, human spare parts, electronic arms race, and so on, and so forth? If we continue to cling to traditional standards of right and wrong, then it is easy to point out that this act is right or wrong. But it is sad to note that the moral phenomenon cannot just be
simply reckoned with through these traditional moral arguments and justifications.

Are the Scholastic arguments moral and real enough? To the pioneers of postmodernity, namely, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger, there is nothing real enough before our eyes. Nothing is real. Reality is a product of what our senses have fed us. In the words of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, all reality is virtual and in a constant flux. Nothing stays the same. Everything is fluctuating.

As Sartre hurls invectives against the Scholastics' contention of a biased choice in the purview of freedom, Jacques Derrida crafts his own philosophy in the arena of deconstruction. Being a devout student (of Martin Heidegger) whose stroke of deconstruction was based on the following pattern: reduction, construction, and destruction (in German "unbuild"), Derrida maintains that there are four basic steps for one to successfully come to terms with deconstruction: (1) Reversal; (2) Displacement; (3) Un-closure; and (4) Re-deconstruction. Derrida, indeed, successfully departs from the theory of his mentor. In reversal, one destroys the binary oppositions, which are so abundant in our language, namely, right and wrong, good and bad, heaven and hell, and others. In displacement, one avoids going back or returning to use the destroyed binary oppositions or the commonly called hierarchy of values. In un-closure, there is no movement from beginning to end. To Derrida, every point is beginning and end. Finally in deconstruction, one embraces what he (Derrida) calls difference. Derrida vividly cautions that difference is duly contained in two concepts: difference and deference. The former (difference) means a separation of identity - in Aristotelian parlance, it refers to the essence of a substance - while the latter (deference) means a separation in time. In applying this to morality, Derrida seeks the locus of origin of man's moral consciousness. In simple terms, he is trying to lock up the origin of moral truth. This is what he calls the inaugural fact. Thus: When did man first get the awareness of his desire to be good? When did morality start to permeate in man's consciousness? When did man start to be consumed by the fires of morality?

Difference as difference, therefore, means difference as spacing, while difference as deference means difference as temporization. What now is the service of difference to morality? To Derrida, the terms in our moral linguistics are so unstable. They are not really permanent terms that could fully evoke, much more express, the moral content and truth of our acts. In this case, Derrida invites us to defer our interpretation of any act executed by any moral agent. It means that nobody has the right to interpret that this or that act is wrong, right, good, or bad. It is the other
way of saying that our picture of an act as good or bad, right or wrong, is always a scenario or a reality that we aggressively invent as our own. This makes George Edward Moore’s remark on the good as indefinable relevant. Thus, he remarks: “Any attempt to define good is a callous offence that makes one guilty of committing Naturalistic Fallacy.”

It must be borne in mind, however, that one can never appreciate postmodernity if one has not yet fully appreciated, understood, and lived the world of modernity. The prefix “post” in postmodernity strongly suggests that one must have been “modern” first before one can be postmodern. The advancement of science and technology is the proper locus where one can assess modernity. Modernity is grossly characterized by massive and hi-tech industry. Its pace is fast because its industrial wings propel it, while science and technology keep it aloft. We are familiar with high-sounding terms such as test-tube babies, wombs-for-rent, genetic engineering, cloning, among others. We are also captivated by the amazing power of computers, the Internet, and a wide array of cellular phones. True enough, technology has succeeded in reducing the world to a mere backyard. Everything has improved a lot, from transportation, communication, to healthcare, and the other major concerns and agencies of human affairs. In this picture, how can we stand upright with our moral principles rooted in the rather non-arcane and not-so-cryptic school of thought called Scholasticism? Can Scholasticism face the challenge of postmodernity and the manifold contemporary moral problems?

As a movement, which is also found in dance, music, architecture, graphic arts, and literary theories, postmodernism equips itself with the following general characteristics: (1) It challenges convention; (2) It upholds mixing of styles; (3) It shows high tolerance of ambiguity; (4) It emphasizes diversity; (5) It eagerly accepts change, innovation, or creativity; and (6) It emphasizes that man is the inventor or creator of reality. Thus, it espouses reality. Further, as a movement in philosophy, it utilizes the following approaches: Deconstruction, post-structuralism, neo-pragmatism, and a bit of existentialism.

In his campaign to attack convention, Jean-Francois Lyotard introduces his concept of paralogy and brushes aside the theory of consensus as espoused by Jurgen Habermas. To Lyotard, moral consensus is always tainted with bias, oppression, and discrimination. The truth is: morality varies according to the social and economic status of people. Even Plato himself argues that the ethics of the rich is different from the ethics of the poor. The ethics of politicians is different from the ethics of the clerics. The ethics of the elite is different from that of the hoi polloi. The ethics of the intellectuals is different from the ethics of the ignoramus. In order to efface consensus, Lyotard offers his
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE...

...paralogy, which is a stimulating conversation that generates but without necessarily resulting to consensus. As far as Lyotard is concerned, there is no legitimate metalanguage that succeeds in providing and organizing a sense of totality in any human undertaking. There is no absolute principle that could fully explain our moral lives. Lyotard reinforces paralogy quickly with his concept of differend. Differend is a mode of setting disputes whose solutions are not pre-established. In simple terms, differend means to judge without any criteria. But the problem is: whenever we are exposed to a moral problem we immediately resolve this problem with our ready-made answers. This is truly a blatant irony. Because of our adherence to a biased and a traditional structure of morality, we irrationally load ourselves with answers even when there are no questions yet. In his differend, Lyotard invites us to treat each moral issue or problem as a unique and different. Derrida, in his theory of un-closure, asserts that every point is beginning and end. Thus, Derrida agrees with Lyotard in considering every human act as unique and different. This view categorically smashes one of our favorite mortal sins, i.e., stereotyping peoples’ behaviors and events.

In postmodernity knowledge assumes a new face. To Lyotard, it is no longer subject-object or knower-known construct. Knowledge can only be had through a discourse. It is no longer a power that is graciously attained through metanarratives, which are the overarching, grand metaphysical explanations and teleologies that graphically serve as embodiments of the history of mankind. According to Lyotard, postmodernity, in its own grandeur, has murdered all kinds of metanarratives. Thus: “All metanarratives have lost their credibility, regardless of what mode of unification they use.” There are no longer grand stories to be told, because there are no metalanguages that embrace and ground all of the different types of statements and phrases. Applied in ethics, it means that there are no absolute moral laws that have the legitimate power to ascertain the morality of human acts.

The postmodern philosophers, it must be understood, do not invent their respective world. They critically describe what our contemporary society is, and how it operates. Other than Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard is another great mind of postmodernity. Baudrillard maintains that there is no reality, only hyperreality. Baudrillard notes that hyperreality can be better understood through simulacrum and simulation. Simulacrum, on the one hand, means something that replaces reality with its representation, e.g., Christmas tree, pictures, paintings, Disney Land, and the like. Simulacrum, however, never conceals the truth. Rather, it is the truth which conceals that there is no truth—truth of reality. Simulation, on the other hand, pertains to that which is not territorial, or a referential being
or substance. It rather refers to that generation by models of a real without origin or reality. Simulation is hyperreality. Simulation is not an imitation or duplication, or a parody. In itself, it substitutes the real for reality. This leads Baudrillard to infer that there is hyperreality rather than reality per se.

The postmodern philosophers are out there to shake the ground beneath our feet. There is no truth, much less moral truths. There is no reality. Over and above Being there is Nothing. Nothing is synonymous with Being says Heidegger. Being moral or being not, there is no difference. Like the celebrated philosophers of suspicion, namely, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud, the postmodern philosophers are one in saying that we really do not know anything certain. So, what are our reasons for arrogance? Man is a rational animal? Man is the image and likeness of God? There is heaven? There is hell? There is purgatory? Telling lies is immoral? Murder, suicide, euthanasia, abortion, homosexuality, masturbation, rape, incest, divorce, adultery, concubinage, premarital sex, polygamy, seduction, and the like are immoral? How sure are we?

CONCLUSION

Nothing is final. Man is not a finished product. It is not enough that man is born human. He must humanize himself. In their ardent efforts to humanize man, the Scholastic philosophers—or call them Catholic Christian Philosophers—set up permanent moral laws which they claim to have emanated from God. Thomas Aquinas, in fact, is so sharp with his distinctions among Eternal law, Natural Law, and Natural Moral Law. To Aquinas, it is in Natural Moral Law where Eternal Law finds dominion in human actions. Arguing from the premise that Eternal Law is promulgated by God, and that God is Absolute and Perfect, Aquinas concludes that Natural Moral Law is absolute and perfect as well. Consequently, the moral law applies to all members of the human species. It cuts across race, culture, religion, and civilization, or in philosophical parlance, it cuts across time and space—the spatio-temporal deacula of human finitude.

Unfortunately, the postmodern philosophers have challenged this thinking. Worst, they attack not only the Scholastic framework but also all kinds of systems and structures; and they claim that there is nothing to be sure of, because there is no reality. To the postmodern philosophers, we are all wrong in our convictions about finitude and totality. To them, there is utter temporariness.

Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Lacan, and the rest in the postmodern collaboration are one in challenging our orthodox and illegitimated assumptions of the morality
of human acts. To be fair to them, postmodernism is not a mode of doing philosophy that wants us to be ruffians, rascals, monsters, and demons. It is rather a blessing in itself to all of us since it unrelentingly and unmitigatingly deals a rebellious blow against a structure whose main line of command is to believe in a centralized power of administration, management, and monopoly of knowledge. Excellence and success is not exclusive to a certain few. The centralized power of our contemporary society should yield to the diversity of power, talent, and capabilities. Hence, who are we to say that these particular group of people or individuals are immoral, corrupt, liars, and so on and so forth? We have to suspend or defer our judgments.

Like Lyotard, we are called to engage in paralogy and differend. We have to appreciate each other’s uniqueness and variety of cultures and traditions. “Let things be” as Heidegger humbly declares. Only by “letting things be” can we truly respect the unfathomable will, love, and mercy of God to us.

Where we are, whatever we do, is hyperreality. We really are finite and so imperfect. We don’t have access to really know who God is. That is why we believe in God—the very essence of faith, anyway, is to believe in something we are not sure of. The act of Scholastics are encroachment in the holy quarters of the divinity of God. Augustine and Aquinas are more of theologians than of being true-blooded philosophers. So, how should we ground ourselves to have a temporary assurance of the morality of our actions? Perhaps, to supplement Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality, we import the term mystery from the province of theology to somehow justify that we cannot really understand everything. There is not much thing to be understood; there is no reality. If there is reality, such is our own invention. Postmodernists want us to realize that reality is more complex than we have believed and imagined. Objectively, reality does not exist “out there” in order for it to be reflected or mirrored by our minds. To this extent, we create reality based on our interests, needs, biases, prejudices, and somehow, cultural traditions.

Generally, man’s creation of reality can be explained in two ways: (1) In terms of language and (2) In terms of culture. Ludwig Wittgenstein and his collaborators in Analytic Philosophy or Logical Positivism such as G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Gottlob Frege, Alexius Meinong, Charles Sanders Pierce, Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Alfred Jules Ayer, Carl Hempel, Charles Stevenson, and others are one in saying that it is through our language that we invent or setup reality. We form concepts that represent reality, and they are intrinsically conditioned by our experience. Consequently, reality relatively becomes a product of our experience. In order to avert, if not soften, the drastic
blow of language against reality, Jacques Lacan speaks of The Real. 24 To Lacan, it was when we were neo-natal babies that we truly enjoyed the fullness of life — a life that was not as yet contaminated by language. The Real is Lacan’s way of saying that bliss is reserved only for creatures whose lives are governed by need and satisfaction without the intervention of language.

From the standpoint of culture, reality is a victim of mutation. As culture changes over time so does reality. Inasmuch as there are varied cultures, there are also varied realities. Reality is different from community to community. In the last analysis, knowledge is neither eternal nor universal. There are no absolute ideas just as there are no absolute moral laws.

So how can we justify or prove our moral convictions? There is no other way but to go back to ourselves. Let us use the moral arguments of Confucius, Immanuel Levinas, Thomas Nagel, Immanuel Kant, Martin Buber, and others. Let us use Kong Zi’s Golden Rule, Levinas’s alterity, Nagel’s altruism, Kant’s Categorical Imperative, and Buber’s I-Thou relationship. All these theories are humanistic enough that they give us ample room for reflection relative to the validity of our moral convictions.

In sum, the scent of Christian philosophy can hardly be savor. Scholasticism has been gradually decomposing. It has to. It has been undergoing a critical rupture. Hail to the new method. Hail to the thinkers who have dared to think without fear despite the medieval mandate of the Church which has the power to control her faithful what to think, what to feel, and what to do. Christian Philosophy or Scholasticism can only stand lamely right before the face of contemporary moral problems and postmodernity.

Notes


18 See Docherty, "Postmodern Theory," 479


BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Articles**


**Electronic Sources**


Postmodern Philosophy." Encyclopedia online. Available from http://www.fact-