

PHAVISMINDA: Its Moved Mover

PHAVISMINDA Journal
Volume 9 (May 2010): 91-95.

Amosa Velez
University of San Carlos
Cebu City

Introduction

Three decades and a month ago, a star was born; no, the stars welcomed the birth of a philosophical community which is destined to connect islands in central and southern Philippines. Yes, to the point that no counterforce can resist such a philosophical connection. Thanks to the initiative of a passionate lover of wisdom.

This article intends to put on record the beginnings of this organization by tracing it to its root – its founder. This essay will thus tell about a person, a teacher, a philosopher all in one and a founder of an association.

The Person-Teacher-Philosopher

Fresh from the Catholic University of America with his degree Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy, Fr. Quintin Terrenal came to the University of San Carlos (USC) in 1975 re-enforcing dynamic philosophizing in its department of philosophy. This degree represents the summit of his philosophical formation. Before this was attained, however, he “walked” through several stages in the life of a budding young man.

Quintin C. Terrenal is a priest of the Societas Verbi Divini (SVD). He was born in 1921 in Tayum, Abra Diocese of Nueva Segovia and, ordained in Manila in 1946 by Apostolic Delegate Bishop Guglielmo Piani. His formation for the priesthood and his ministerial assignments took him to many places in the Philippines such as Ilocos Sur (Vigan), Cagayan (Claveria), Quezon City, New Manila, Oriental Mindoro (Pinamalayan), Leyte (Palo), Cebu (Cebu City), Albay (Legazpi City). His trans-oceanic “journey-for-the-Divine Word” took him to Italy (Rome) where he did his postgraduate study at the Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, which at the conclusion of his study, declared his being Doctor in Sacra Theologia (Dogmatics) in July 1964; and to the United States of America (Washington D.C.) to pursue his philosophical study at the Catholic University of America where he was conferred the degree Doctor of Philosophy (in Philosophy) in February 1975.

Although his administrative assignments at USC (he served as Chair of its department of philosophy and later as Vice President for Academic Affairs)

kept his hands full, his love for philosophy never waned. In the classroom, he shared philosophy with fervour and commitment difficult to equal but for some students he was a “terror” because of his demand for quality performance. Moreover, his “infectious” philosophical enthusiasm inspired his graduate students with his challenging them to have publication in mind whenever they wrote their required research papers; and at times by making them realize the relevance of contextualizing their thesis/dissertation within the Filipino situation.

Fr. Terrenal’s care for the Philosophy Department of the University of San Carlos overflowed into his obtaining for it a Graduate Philosophy Trust Fund to subsidize philosophical research, graduate philosophy studies of the department’s full-time faculty members and, the concerns of PHAVISMINDA. In honor of Fr. Terrenal, the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy with Br. Romualdo Abulad, SVD, PhD, the present Chair, renamed the Fund as Fr. Quintin Terrenal Philosophy Trust Fund.

Fr. Quintin C. Terrenal, SVD, PhD, STD is a quiet personality but with quite loquacious thoughts. His reflective reticence overflows into his writings, some of which are printed as books and as articles in philosophy journals. These publications are:

A. Books – *The Modern Negative Definition of the Supernatural* (Manila, Philippines: Divine Word Publications, 1964); *CAUSA SUI and the Object of Intuition in Spinoza* (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, 1976); Jose Rizal, *Lover of Truth and Justice* (Manila: National Book Store, 1984) (out of print); *Santo Nino of Cebu’s Envoy Extraordinary* (Manila: Divine Word (LOGOS) Publications, 1991); *Erotic Doctrine and Behavior of Socrates in Plato* (Seoul, S. Korea: Sampaguita Circle, 1994) (out of print); and *Blessed Arnold Janssen’s Devotion to the Blessed Trinity is a Mystic Gem* (Manila: Divine Word (LOGOS) Publications, 2002).

B. Articles –1. In *KARUNUNGAN* (Annual Official Organ of the Philosophical Academy of Philosophical Research (PAPR), (Manila, Philippines: Department of Philosophy De La Salle University):

“Kantian Duty and ‘Utang-na-Loob,’” (1984); “The Center Piece of the Philippine Lowland Poblacion” (1985); “Labaw Donggon and Philippine Folk Catholicism” (1986); “The Mightiest Impact of Proclamation No. 3 (The EDSA Miracle)” (1987), “The EDSA Era: End of Filipino Cowedness” (1988).

2. In *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* (Cebu City, Philippines: University of San Carlos):

“Maria Clara and the Three Men in Her Life. An Interpretation of Jose Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*” (March 1976);

“Numbers Hypotheses in Plato’s Republic, Books VI – VII” (June 1976)

3. In *University Journal* (Official publication of the Graduate School of the University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines):
 "Why Is Pinoy Pinoy?" (September 1993); "The Divine Word According to Edward Gibbon, the Eminent Historian" (March 1996); "Blessed Arnold Janssen's Favorite Ikon: Over Sacred Heart" (February 1997); "The Mystique of Mayon" (February-March 1998).
4. In *PHAVISMINDA Journal* (Official publication of the Philosophical Association of the Visayas and Mindanao c/o Philosophy Department, USC):
 "The Sage of Epicurus" (May 1996); "Three Threats to PHAVISMINDA" (May 1996); "Spinoza's Conception of Bliss" (May 2001).
5. In *The OAR Quarterly* (University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City, Philippines):
 "Rizal, the Malolos Constitution and the Spirit of the Filipino People" (March-June 1977).
6. In *DIWA Studies in Philosophy and Theology* (Divine Word Seminary, Tagaytay City, Philippines):
 "The Hegelian Dialectic of Multinational Corporations and Less Developed Nations" (October 1984); "Jubilant Jottings: Biographical Nuggets of Golden Jubilarian Fr. Constante Floresca" (May 1992).
7. In *SOPHIA* (Department of Philosophy, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines):
 "An Introduction to Hans-Georg Gadamer's Theory of Interpretation" (June-September 1975); "An Introduction to Heidegger's Conception of Truth-as-Aletheia" (June-November 1979).
8. In *Handiong* (Weekly paper, Naga City), article serialised in 9 instalments:
 "Why was the 'Ibalon Epic' Lost?" (June 19-August 21, 1986); "Handiong and Oriol" (August 28-September 11, 1986).
9. In *Visayan Herald* (a daily paper, Cebu City, serialised daily):
 "'CARP'" (August 24-31, 1988).
10. Unpublished Manuscripts

After Fr. Terrenal obtained a Graduate Philosophy Trust Fund for the USC Department of Philosophy in the late seventies, he received a grant for an article every semester until the second semester of school-year 1988-1989. Copies of these articles are stored in the Department of Philosophy in the University of San Carlos (Cebu City, Philippines).

The aforementioned writings and researches point to the inevitable truth that Fr. Terrenal magnificently combines in his person the teacher and philosopher without mentioning the theologian in him. Indeed he is loquacious and yet reticent. His quietness results from his favourite quote "*O si tacuisses*

philosophus mansisses." Nonetheless, outside the classroom his "forbidding" personality hides a meek and approachable individual with a fine sense of humor who is a friend to many.

Besides the philosopher in Fr. Terrenal, he is also an artist. In fact his flair for music finds expression in his organizing a group of USC alumni teaching them to sing A Capella. The group's effort did not go in vain for they proved themselves capable as they sang for the Philosophy alumni who attended the celebration of the silver jubilee of the USC philosophy department.

The Founder

While busy doing philosophy at the University of San Carlos (USC), Fr. Terrenal's restless philosophical spirit kept nagging him to ensure that the flame of love for wisdom endures beyond the classroom. This led him to constitute the group that is now the Philosophical Association of the Visayas and Mindanao (acronymed originally as PAVM and later as PHAVISMINDA). This momentous event took place on May 27, 1979 with the organizational meeting held at the University of San Carlos attended by philosophy representatives from the Ateneo de Davao University, Mindanao State University, MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, Colegio de San Jose-Recoletos (University of San Jose-Recoletos), Cebu Central Colleges (University of Cebu) and philosophy faculty and some alumni of USC.

But why PHAVISMINDA? It is because Fr. Terrenal was moved by the thought that if going to Manila to attend philosophy conferences (as organized, for instance, by the Philosophical Association of the Philippines [PAP]) can prove expensive and time-consuming, then, bring philosophy to the "doorsteps" of home in Central and Southern Philippines. So doing, PHAVISMINDA annual conferences will ensure the continuing philosophical development and revitalization of philosophy alumni of USC and other schools in the Visayas and Mindanao as well as philosophy mentors. Moreover, Fr. Terrenal envisions PHAVISMINDA as an apt venue for the publication of philosophical articles in the *PHAVISMINDA Journal*.

When Fr. Terrenal retired from USC and assumed another assignment at the Divine Word College in Legazpi City, he kept his connection with USC philosophy faculty and friends with his motto "letter received letter answered." Now that he has taken permanent residence at the Villa Cristo Rey in the Divine Word (Christ the King) Mission Seminary, he continues being in touch, watching PHAVISMINDA's whereabouts from a not-so-distant vantage point.

Conclusion

In an article about Fr. Terrenal on the occasion of his sacerdotal golden jubilee in 1996, A. Gabriel (representing the "Philippine SVD"), quotes Fr.

Φ

Terrenal describing himself as “Fr. Terrible.” There might be some grain of truth in his being a “terror” (as averred to above) to some undergraduate and graduate students because of his demand for excellence, yet this demand is the very gesture that endears him to many persons who appreciate excellence.

It is not presumptuous to say that Fr. Quintin C. Terrenal, SVD, PHD, STD spent the best years of his philosophical career in the Philosophy Department of the University of San Carlos. Indeed, it can be said of him that “he came, he saw, he conquered.” He came to USC, saw the need for a philosophical association and conquered intellectual sloth by preserving love for wisdom through a philosophical community. “Suddenly there was you (at USC). And because of you PHAVISMINDA is.”