

Pre-Modern Thoughts and Philosophy

From Mexican, Peruvian, and Japanese Perspective

HIROTAKE NAKANO (ed.)

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Introduction.

Hiroataka Nakano

In this book¹, we explore the possibility of creating philosophical perspectives outside of Western countries together with philosophers from Peru, Mexico, and Japan. Why compare these three places? Allow me to elaborate using a metaphor: Peruvian, Mexican, and Japanese philosophies can be good fellow travelers, so to speak, encountering each other on their respective journeys to their own philosophies and traveling together for some time because of their shared orientation at this moment.

Peru, Mexico, and Japan developed as modern nations in the nineteenth century. Since then, they each have imported Western philosophy as one of the disciplines for modern university education. For a long time they have been accustomed to seeking teachers from Europe, focusing on learning from them as students. Thus far, Peruvian, Mexican, and Japanese philosophy have had no need to interact with each other because their relationship was not that of teacher and student.

However, some have always claimed that merely importing Western philosophy was insufficient for developing one's own philosophy. Recently, non-Western regions are trying to discover and create their own philosophy as one of the World Philosophies. In this phase, interaction among Peruvian, Mexican, and Japanese philosophies can benefit each other, not because one teaches the others but rather because they can be good "travel companions." Perhaps their exact destinations are different; however, at the moment, they are struggling to create their individual philosophies based on their historical context.

When we reflect on the meaning of creating one's own philosophy outside the Western world, it is crucial to consider the significance of each region's pre-modern intellectual heritage. Mexico, Peru, and Japan show interesting contrasts in this regard.

Before the Spanish and Portuguese arrived, there were great civilizations in the region now known as Latin America and Far East. They were all unique and different from modern nation-states. Mexico was not just one country, but was governed by strong empires such as the Aztec, Tarasco, Maya, with each ruling over diverse ethnic groups in different time periods. Furthermore, what is now Peru was covered by the territory of the Inca Empire, with its official language being Quechua. There were several diverse ethnic groups dominated by this empire. There were several intellectual traditions and activities followed by people from Mexico and Peru. After the Spanish conquered these regions, Mexico and Peru became Spanish colonies. During this period, universities were constructed where scholastic philosophy was taught primarily. Conversely, the Japanese government blocked European influence until the 19th century. During this period, original intellectual traditions developed.

From the second half of the 19th century, the aforementioned three countries have been integrated

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into the globalized, Westernized, and imperialistic world order, and have been students of European philosophy. Thus, after a century and a half of learning philosophy, they have struggled to create their own philosophies based on their own historical contexts. Hence, it is important for each of them to ask how they can connect philosophy with their pre-modern traditions. Each region will have a unique answer to this question, not only because of the contents of their pre-modern heritages but also because access to their contents differs.

The language and writing system is an important concern when approaching a pre-modern tradition. Starting in the 7th century, Japan developed a system of writing based on Chinese characters. A substantial part of its pre-modern thought is thus accessible through written texts, which are deeply influenced by Chinese concepts. Therefore, the influence of the Chinese worldview is considerable. Additionally, it is difficult, if not impossible to distinguish the prior oral tradition from textual form. In contrast, written texts in Mexico and Peru are very limited. Admittedly, this does not necessarily mean that there was no writing system. The Maya language, for example, had a kind of ideogram that was decoded. However, these cultures did not develop the custom of expressing complex thoughts in literature. Instead, people transferred their thoughts through oral tradition. Therefore, it is difficult to express their pre-modern thought, unlike Japan. Therefore, each region must explore different methods to relate their pre-modern traditions to philosophy.

The author of chapter 1, Mario Mejia Huaman, is a philosopher from Peru whose native language is Quechua. He has published several books in which he provides a worldview of that language in philosophical terms. His work can be interpreted as an attempt to create an Andean philosophy connected to the resources transmitted through Quechua oral tradition. He avoids simply identifying the pre-Hispanic intellectual tradition with “philosophy,” but refuses to forget his own tradition. His attempt is similar to Japanese philosophers who interpret Japanese pre-modern thought from a modern point of view. However, while studies of Japanese thought are usually realized by reading past texts, the ground for Andes philosophy must be living language as well as folklore, architectural ruins, archeological remains, documents written by the Spanish etc.

Chapter 2 is written by Adalberto de Hoyos from Mexico, who is interested in studying interculturalism, specifically through science and technology. Here, he investigates the worldview and thought of indigenous Zapotec communities and their medical practices in southern Mexico. The framework for his research is the recent multicultural trend in Mexican philosophy. Mexico is a country where culturally and linguistically diverse communities coexist. As a result, it is a challenge to maintain the uniqueness of each community while trying to unify the nation. Discussions on multiculturalism in Mexico offer many perspectives on cultural diversity, not just in terms of individual rights but also in terms of the preservation of local communities.

Chapter 3 discusses the possibility of sustaining the concept of “Japanese-ness” without either arbitrary or politically motivated self-identifications. The author, Yosuke Bando, is one of the talented

young researchers of pre-modern Japanese thought, specializing in Confucianism and Kokugaku. He reflects on the dangers of idealizing the national essence or fixed national character, which have been constantly criticized in the modern times. However, he explores ways to find the significance of “Japanese-ness” and suggests a certain continuity of pre-philosophical Japanese ways of being on which philosophers reflect through their different intellectual activities.

Chapter 4 focuses on aspects of one of the greatest pre-modern Kokugaku scholar, Motoori Norinaga’s criticism of Karagokoro. It is useful to consider Norinaga in the comparison between Latin American and Japanese philosophies. Although a pre-modern scholar from our Westernized 21st century worldview, Norinaga’s work can be compared with contemporary Latin American philosophers’ struggles to approach their origins in oral traditions. He reappropriates the basic form of the Japanese worldview, prior to the arrival of Chinese characters, Confucianism, Buddhism, and so on by analyzing classic Japanese texts and the structure of their language to bring the basic form of its way of thinking and being to elucidate and incorporate it into those of his own age. I introduce his position in the context of contemporary multiculturalism under the name of a “situated universalism” as an alternative to both standard universalism and relativism.

Chapter 5 is a contribution from Kasumi Ichinose, a young Japanese researcher of Latin American philosophy. She offers a comparative study on the concept of “the Other” from Emanuel Lévinas’s philosophy and Enrique Dussel’s liberation philosophy. Dussel is one of the most famous Latin American philosophers, especially outside Latin America, and many may associate him with the phrase, “Latin American philosophy as World Philosophy.” Although no pre-modern tradition is explicitly discussed in this chapter, Dussel’s approach is deeply rooted in the circumstance in which it is historically formed.

The search for a connection between philosophy and pre-modern intellectual heritages outside Europe has just begun. Therefore, this book does not offer a complete investigation of it. There are several issues that have not been discussed in any chapters, such as the problem of the modern nation-state. We are accustomed to talking about French, German, or Anglo-Saxon philosophy, but several problems must be taken into consideration when using expressions from Peruvian, Mexican, Latin American, or Japanese philosophies. Andean (Quechua or Aymara) philosophy, Nahuatl philosophy, or Zapotec philosophy may be less problematic because each would at least correspond to a unity of language. However, it is not completely futile to discuss, for example, Mexican philosophy because the development of multiculturalism is clearly a product of Mexico’s modern circumstance. However, this problem, equally to many other problems, remains to be discussed in the future.

This book calls for solidarity among peoples born and educated in cultures different from the modern European one, but who have learned Western philosophy to understand their own realities. Western philosophy is a part of those realities, but not its whole. In countries like Peru, Mexico, and Japan, it is essential to integrate their pre-modern intellectual heritages into the modern knowledge of

Western philosophy. Philosophers in these regions are now learning from each other to find their own ways of settling philosophy on the soil of their own traditions.

Premodern Intellectual Tradition.

Influence to Be Taken in The Current Peruvian Philosophy

Mario Mejía Huamán

1. Introduction

Peruvian or Andean philosophy has been, up until the sixties, an echo of foreign philosophical traditions, as stated by Mariátegui (*Ob. Cit.*, p. 25), or, as Enrique Dussel claims, up until today at the beginning of the twenty first century. In this sense, Latin American philosophers have been reduced to commentators or broadcasters of foreign ideas (2022): if they do not philosophize from Latin America, Abya Yala or The Andes, they are merely colonized minds with ideas created to solve far-off problems. However, in the last 50 years Latin America and Peru have had intellectuals who have opened and signaled a path to philosophical reflection, such as: Enrique Dussel, David Sobrevilla. As Francisco Miró Quesada and Mario Bunge envision, philosophy must be capable of presenting solutions to our practical and theoretical problems.

Consequently, we will give information regarding the conception of the premodern Andean world.

2. Data of the Peruvian Andean Reality

Peru is not a nation, but a State, a State formed by more than ninety different ethnicities, each with a different language, history, religion, and geographical space. The main languages of the Peruvian mountain ranges, or Sierra, are Aimara and Quechua, the latter having more than half a dozen of variants —the main one being Quechua Inca, which was the logos employed by the Incas that took the Andes to its maximum cultural and social development. Among other Quechua variants are the Quechua from *wamanka* (Ayacucho), Quechua *chanka* (Apurímac), Quechua *wanka* (from the central Sierra of Peru), and Quechua from the Ancash department which constitute more than six variants, etcetera.

The other speakers of native languages are found in the Peruvian Amazon. The Quechua Inca speakers are more numerous, followed by the Aimara and the *Wamanka*, *Chanka*, *Wanka*, and the Huánuco and Ancash variants. The Andes reached its highest development with Incan rulers, which were great statisticians and whose construction work has been greatly admired in places such as *Machupikchui*, *Saqsaywaman*, *P'isaq*, *Choqek'iraw*, *Ollantaytambo*, *Chincheros*, *Wilkaswaman*. A strong social and political organization can be perceived behind these architectural creations, as well as the practical application of advanced mathematics, even though the theoretical component remains inaccessible in present-day as no documents or treaties have been obtained.

At the Inca State, people were organized by families of ten, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, etc. The State was cast by four regions, reason why it was known as the *Tawantinsuyo* (meaning four regions). The Inca was considered as The Sun's son, it is speculated that their form of government can be compared with the Asian Mode of Production (Chesnaux, 1975). Some specialists have mentioned a different mode of production, titled as *Andean Mode of Production* (Espinoza, 1981), the main characteristic being that there was no knowledge of slavery, and that the Incan ruler was considered as a fatherly figure, benefactor of the poor and advocate of the common good.

Furthermore, it is imperative to clarify that in the Inca State there was no notion of poor, such as is commonly understood today, this meaning, "poor", as deprived of estate or wealth. Incan poverty entails having no family, being an orphan, deprived of friends, or being a parvenue.

3. Cultural elements common to the people of the *Tawantinsuyo*

The people of *Tawantinsuyo* have in common:

1. The worship of Pachamama (mother nature). As per our knowledge, this goddess had no physical or visual representation, it could be stated that it was an ideal goddess residing on earth. We think that it is the labor of men that transformed her into "mother", this, in regard that undomesticated land was not generous. Additionally, *pacha* in Quechua Inca stands for space, time, nature, and world.
2. The worship to the Sun (*Tayta Inti*) Father Sun. Also named as "*p'unchaw*" or "*p'unchay*", since it was the bringer of light and water for the rains, as well as bearer of heat for the crop's maturation. This god had a great temple at Cusco; the *Qorikancha* (yard of gold) was an Incan pantheon of the Andean gods. Other gods from defeated cultures were taken there, while maintaining their corresponding worship. The Sun was represented by a circular effigy made of gold, embedded in a wall inside the temple, the same that was forcefully taken and fractured with a chisel to be divided between the conquerors.
3. Similarly, The Moon (*mama Killa*) and the stars, among them the planet Venus (*Qoyllur*), received worship in its respective temple. The stars were considered as daughters of the Sun and Moon.

4. Above the minor gods was the God *Pachakamaq*, this means, the God creator of space, time, nature, and the world. Its main temple (templo mayor) can be found on the Lurín district in the Lima province.

5. Socially, people were divided in *ayllus* and *suyus*. In the Quechua Inca, there is no term for city, however there is a concept named *llaqta*, similar to the Latin terms “*civis y civitas*” (Blanquez Fraile, 1954, p. 234). This refers to the population that inhabits a territory, same as “*urbs*”, term which also refers to the population (Ibídem, p. 1240). The conquerors were the ones that founded the cities, with a designated space named “plaza de armas” (main square), where the major buildings were found, including those related to religion (such as the cathedral or catholic temple and the presbytery), and public institutions, like the mayor's office, governor's office, and the judicial palace. Immediately after, people settled at the surroundings, similar to roman cities, or “solars”, according to the Spanish, where they settled in order of importance, where the native population remained last.

6. The premodern Indigenous families, before the Spanish invasion, lived far away from others, each one in the space of their own crop field or *chakra*. This was not appreciated by the priests, nor the Spanish conquerors, mostly because the former had to invest plenty of time to catechize the native people, since they had to travel with difficulty and at night. For convenience, they thought it would be useful to group the native families into populated city centers, particularly, to have in hand immediate labor for the mines and the new estates or “Haciendas”. The Indigenous people who resisted the relocation to those new cities were forcibly removed. The priests had orders from the Spanish monarchy and the Pope to catechize the natives, at first, they opted to teach them Latin to avoid the multilingual barrier within the population. However, the results were far from those expected, so they started teaching in Spanish. Nonetheless, the experiment failed yet again, hence, the ecclesiastical authorities forced those studying to be ordained to learn in-depth Quechua Inca or the general tongue of Peru, as to indoctrinate and confess the natives. Before the deacons were ordained, they were thoroughly and personally investigated by the bishops. Despite this, it is important to disclose that at the beginning of the indoctrination process, the clergy visited the families at their *chakras* and resided with them. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, in his work *La Nueva Crónica de Buen Gobierno*, unveils that the priests visited the huts where the daughters of the Indigenous slept alone, at night and with the pretense of catechizing them, they stared at their privates, or, as it is said in Spanish, “*les miraban sus vergüenzas*”. (Guamán Poma de Ayala, 1966. p. 100)

7. Other elements. In the Premodern Andes money was unconventional. Commerce was made through barter or exchange (*chalay o rantiy*) and *qhatuy*, which means to offer in exchange. Regarding this, it is important to note that the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was mistaken when affirming the existence of prostitution in the Tawantinsuyo. In reality, this practice emerged in The Andes with the arrival of the Spanish invaders and the appearance of money; it was not an Indigenous or Andean practice. Even if we were to assume that it existed, ¿how would the services be paid? With a cargo of potatoes or a load of maize. At the end of the service, ¿who would carry the load of potatoes or maize, being that money was nonexistent? In time of the Incas, as well as the semitic culture, it was normal for all men and women to marry, moreover, the care provided by the State was organized in families (*ayllu*), husband, wife, and children, where families were grouped by the tens, hundreds, or thousands.

8. Working ways. Firstly, work was considered as a festive activity; Andeans had no idea of the Edenic origin, much less of the concepts of sin and salvation. The Quechua term meaning lack or absence, took a religious shift to mean “sin”. Unquestionably, the practice of repentance and confessions of sins, as well as the communion, was unheard-of.

Among the more common modes of work were:

 - a. *Ayni*: work accomplished with the help of other people, by solidarity or reciprocity. It entails that the one who received help must assist the helper in an equivalent way.
 - b. *Mink'a*: work done through invitation, where the guest is not required to reinstate or reciprocate the activity.
 - c. *Wayka*: work done by several people in favor of widows, orphans, or regarding activities that pertain or affect the whole village and must be solved urgently. Examples of this are the restoration of irrigation water pipes, bridges, or paths, etc.
 - d. *Waki*: where owners who are incapable of cultivating their land, seek a young person and head of family, to cultivate and tend the land. Commonly, the essential elements, such as seeds, were provided by the owner. When reaping the harvest, “in situ”, the goods were distributed in equal parts between the worker and the owner of the land.

9. The *hamawt'as*. The Quechua term *hamawt'a* means teacher; it is likely that they exercised their magisterium in the “*yachaywasi*”: houses of knowledge or colleges. *Hamawt'as* were also known as the wise, we believe that they were instructors on the way of life, not focused on philosophical or theoretical reflection. We are unable to know the level Quechua people reached in the field of knowledge and understanding, however, there are references to writing, like *kipu*, a probable glyph system, and *qelqa*, a knotted string system, which have not been fully decoded at present day. Gary Urton in *Quipus de Pachacamac (kipus de Pachakamaq)*, presents an interesting

interpretation of the countable and numeric content, however, the relations between the facts and the data are unknown. Meaning that the *numerical* part has been solved, but not the *alfa* one: entailing that within such children, alphanumeric information was contained (Urton, 2014, p. 24-38). Similar to Pedro Cieza de León, who recounts his experience living in Jauja where *kipukamayoc*, an Incan accountant or scribe, decodes a *kipu* to satisfy the aforementioned chronicler's curiosity (Cieza de León, 1977, pág. 46-47).

The British engineer (Burns Glynn, 1990), deciphered the symbols weaved into the sashes of the Inca around the nineties, in the past century, all of them illustrated in the “*Nueva Crónica de Buen Gobierno*” by Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala. However, it must be highlighted that this discovery functions only for the Quechua *wamanguino*, and not for the Quechua Inca, which has more consonants and vocals than the *wamanguino*. We consider that writing and its democratization played a crucial role in the invention and development of philosophy, mainly because philosophy is a critical and theoretical knowledge. In general, we consider that in theocratic cultures, such as the Inca, critical reflection could not be established, nor the questioning of the mandates, practices and habits, or religion, among other cultural elements. In this form of government, the king's word, or Incan, were irrefutable.

Nonetheless, we can sustain that the Inca arrived at pre-philosophical knowledge when dealing with the concepts and names of *Wiraqocha* or *Pachakamaq*, as well as in the quest for justice and pursuit of the common good. We believe that they were far from reflecting about philosophical categories as they did not reach philosophy.

4. Did philosophy exist in the Premodern Andes?

Regarding this question, some Peruvian philosophers uphold the existence of a premodern philosophy while others deny it. However, there are other intellectuals and reflection devotees that do not discuss the Incan logos, but advocate that there was an Incan philosophy before the arrival of the Spanish.

- Among the philosophers that deny the existence of a premodern Incan philosophy or *tawantinsuyana*, are Augusto Salazar Bondy, David Sobrevilla Alcázar, Mario Mejía Huamán.
- Among the philosophers that defend the existence of philosophy in The Andes, we can mention María Luisa Rivara de Tuesta, Antero Peralta Vásquez, Víctor Mazzi Huaycucho, Zenón de Paz.
- A third group of Latin American philosophers that indirectly support the existence of modern or current Latin American reflection, but do not endorse specifically premodern philosophy, are Enrique Dussel, Raúl Fornet Betancourt, Juan Adolfo Vásquez, Rodolfo Kusch, Juan Scannone.

As is general knowledge, there are also Peruvian and Latin American philosophers that do not affirm or deny the existence of premodern philosophy in The Andes, for they only consider philosophy that which was cultivated in classical Greek culture or in modern France, England, Spain, or United States.

For example, Augusto Salazar Bondy asserts that our continent has no proper philosophy, maintaining that reflection is made with theoretical frameworks previously made and shaped by Western and European thought, only importing ideological currents, schools, and systems already defined. Furthermore, he states that indigenous, or popular, thought was not incorporated in the process of Latin American philosophy (*Salazar Bondy, ¿Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?, 1968. p. 39*).

Moreover, the expression of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who, in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, states that philosophy is its own time apprehended in thoughts a great link in the chain of evolution, and that it only gives satisfaction to the interests of its own time (*Hegel, 1945, p. 48*).

As well as Peruvian philosopher David Sobrevilla Alcázar (1938-2014), who in *Repensar la tradición occidental* proposes that it is crucial to reframe philosophical problems and build philosophical thought, from our particular situation and regarding our specific needs (Sobrevilla, 1988, p. XII).

Among other questions are: what would happen if today were proven that the Inca cultivated philosophy? Would something in our present or past change? Our presumption is that if the invaders had taken more decades to arrive at the new world, maybe we would have taken another path to reach philosophy, differently than the one taken in the Greek colonies, first we would have cultivated science, then philosophy.

5. Philosophy or yachay-wayllukuy

The term *yachay-wayllukuy* meaning philosophy was coined by Mario Mejía, in the eighties and nineties of the past century when he was an editor of a bilingual site Quechua-Spanish, in the Sunday column of the Diary *El Comercio de Lima*. Fernando Manrique Enríquez (Manrique Enriquez, 2002), another scholar coined the term *pacha-sofía* in the sixties to indicate philosophy, however, the Incan meaning of *pachasofía* would be “nature’s wisdom” or “philosophy of nature” and not philosophy in the contemporary sense, hence, we believe that professor Manrique had little knowledge of Incan language. In an analogous way, the term *Runa-sofía* was conceived to indicate philosophical anthropology, in this case, the Quechua term was appropriate. At this time, some of these concepts have been retaken by Josef Estermann (Estermann, 2006).

6. Synthesis of the Andean conception of the world

The Andean conception of the world, which is still alive, consists of:

- i. An animist vision of the world.
- ii. A collectivist conception of the human being.
- iii. Polytheistic religiousness. The acceptance of major and minor gods, and the worship of nature.
- iv. An aesthetic vision of the world, where the world is beautiful and there is no concept of sin or evil.
- v. A festive vision of work.
- vi. Collectivist morality.
- vii. Knowledge comes from practice or experience.
- viii. The difference between know-how and knowing. Know-how (“saber”) is information that arises from lived experience, meanwhile, knowing (“conocer”) regards information that originates from theoretical reflection.

7. Differences between thinking and philosophy

We consider that *philosophy* is a type of theoretical, rational, and critical knowledge, which seeks to explain the causes, as well as the sense and final destiny of the cosmos, men, society, and their thought. This type of knowledge is capable of directing its own theoretical instrumentation to self-criticize (Pablo Guadarrama, 2019).

Instead, we call thinking (“pensamiento”), the different non-critical approaches that men have pursued in regard to the world, nature, society, humankind, and God. While the first is theoretical, critical, and logical reason, the second one has other forms of sustained rationality in heterodox logics and lacks self-criticism (Miró Quesada, 1978, p. 21).

8. What cultural elements could be taken from Premodern Andean Thought

The cultural elements that must be considered for a Peruvian Andean philosophy are:

- The acceptance of our national Latin American identity, Andean multicultural and plurilingual. This means to renounce our mental *coloniality* which we undergo conscious or unconsciously. We should free ourselves as much as possible of foreign imposed thought by the official system which is part of the superstructure of domination and alienation. This encompasses the idea that foreign is better; white race is superior and cultured; members of a church are highly spiritual and, therefore, superior to ours; a florid and highly logic language; and a tall stature and white skin, or a name and surname that denote lineage; as well as to stop educating our children under alienating molds.
- To admit the collectivist conception of the Andean man, sustained in the concept of “man’s social being”, considered, as (people). Against the individualistic tendencies that have been scattered by Western culture. In the Andean world a person feels and lives good, as long as the community which

it belongs to prospers, where common good is not reduced to material goods but to spiritual wellness (“*bien-estar*”).

- Admitting that work is a festive activity and not a pitiful one, as it is mentioned in the Genesis. Which, because of collective work (*llank'ay*), is considered a party, that was able to change the evil nature of the Goddess (*Pachamama*).
- Not losing the aesthetic vision of the world even though men suffer in a society that is divided by class.
- That for the Andean men religiousness is not “the opium”. Life of the Indigenous elapses in the presence of major and minor gods. We take “*Pachamama*”, in the sense that nature is a well-being giver if it is labored, worshiped, and taken care of. Currently the celebrations, mainly the religious ones and the villages anniversaries, are occasions to renew cultural roots. An example of this can be found in Frederico Westphalen, Rio Grande del Sur, Brasil, where children and youth dress as their ancestors and dance at the rhythm of their traditional music. Similar events can be found in different provinces of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Panamá, México, as well as the Peruvian Sierra. We think that catholic religion has been incorporated to native festivities, even if official and religious authorities of invaders deployed repressive and extermination machinery with the intent of expatriating them.
- The Andean ethics must be sustained in principles, such as “man’s social being”, and values that arise from the real and fraternal relation among men. Ethics must explain why in the Inca language there is no word for “bad”, but the “no good”, and how this absence transforms the immoral into “ugly”.
- Strengthen the sense of solidarity in which everyone belongs to the same State.
- Create our own political parties, capable of solving our real national problems.
- Andean philosophy must reflect about the meaning of Being: *Kay*, in the sense of to be and have. From the term “*munay*” which means at the same time, will, desirable and beauty, it is possible to infer that the beautiful and wonderful are desirable. From the term “*yuyay*”, which can be translated to memory, understanding, reason, will, intention; as well as “*yachay*”: knowledge of life; and “*reqsiy*”, rational knowledge (Mejía-Huamán, 2011). That “*chani*” means value, price, and esteem, referring not only to the economic value, but to value in general. That “*qhapaq*” in politics means the capacity to organize and administrate.
- That in The Andes, sexuality is not taboo, however, one cannot abuse of its naturality.
- That, as mentioned by Gamaliel Churata (Arturo Peralta), the Greek myth is the soul of the Western world, the *inkásico* myth should be of a South America with ego (Peralta, 1957, p. 33).

9. Conclusion

We believe that Peruvian or Andean Philosophy is in current creation and is a personal stamp of the positive of our Andean conception of the world, its categories being expressed mainly in Quechua Inca and in full validity. This philosophy should be capable of giving a rational explanation to the origin of our problems and must be able to offer solutions, specially since our problems are different than the rest of the Western world. Western philosophies have been created to solve problems of those *pachas* (worlds). We do wrong when we repeat, disseminate, or impose such philosophies into a different *pacha*, such as Peru or The Andes. We must be philosophers and not broadcasters or repeaters of ideas created for other spaces, times, and worlds (*pachas*).

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Interculturalism in philosophy:

A contemporary Mexican non-linear configuration of its study

Adalberto de Hoyos Bermea

Philosophy as an activity can be hard to describe concerning the subjects that includes, the topics and its function in society. However, we will try to address the question on the relevance of the premodern traditions in Mexico's current philosophical thought. To try and answer this question I will first review the philosophical thought in Mexico's indigenous cultures, in trying to review how the historical sources point to a strong philosophical thought. But also, briefly we will revisit the medieval tradition in the New Spain, and the peculiar steps of independent Mexico into modernity. In a second moment, I will argue for an epistemological pluralism that will set itself against a single philosophical perspective, into what is philosophy and its goals. Hence, I will be able to move on how even today there are important contributions to philosophy from a perspective that recovers the rich history, forms of life and politics of Mexico's original cultures.

In Mexico there are 11 linguistic families, which make around 68 linguistic groups that make up more than 100 languages. Speakers of an indigenous language are around 6.2% of Mexico's population. However there are States where they represent more than double of this figure out of the population. These communities are the heirs to the great cultural traditions which are continuous all the way to prehispanic times. One of the larger groups is the nahuas, out of which the Mexicas are one of the most well know, it is so that they lend their name to the country. But in the great and vast empire that Cortés and the Spanish encountered in 1519, there were clear signs and plenty of sources to their philosophical conceptions.

Many of these sources were collected by the great nahua philologist Miguel León Portilla (2006), who renders a complete outlook into Nahuatl philosophy, where metaphysical reflections on the dual principle of universe, time and deities is found. Of course, theological thought is also a considerable part of this philosophy, where knowledge of life and death is a recurring theme. However, human beings as such are also an important part of Nahua philosophy, problems such as free will, and the ethical problems that derive from it were present and had ramifications into politics and law. It is also worthy of mention how close were epistemological reflections to art, where truth is a complicated matter to obtain. However, it shows itself from time to time in flowers and songs (León-Portilla, 2006). The formation of a person, their education was also a matter that was found in the ancient sources. What were the principles on which a person should be raised to follow and how to decide on what to do was also a theme much discussed. And there is constant reference to the wisemen, who would reflect on such matters and teach them to others, in the Nahua tradition they were called the

Tlamatimine. Hence at least in the case of the Nahuas it is relatively easy to find elements of a complete philosophical conception of reality and humans' place in it.

The sources on which we can rely to study this philosophy are in the prehispanic Codices and also the ones that were commissioned by the Spanish friars such as Bernardino de Sahagún, to the old Nahuas with whom they came in contact in the XVI century. But not all the friars were so preoccupied with keeping the culture alive and recording their art, philosophy and history. In the case of the Mayas in México's Southeast Fray Diego de Landa, instructed the destruction of all Codices that they could get their hands on. The great symbolism of the serpent in Mesoamerican cultures was equated by the Christian friars to worship of the devil and was considered heretic. And through such a destruction, the Mayan communities lost their reading and writing for centuries. And a great deal of their wisdom had to be kept in oral tradition, but anyway the loss must have been enormous.

During World War II, Knórozov a Russian linguist, enlisted as a soldier, brought back from Berlin two books, A roster of the things of Yucatán by Diego de Landa and several Mayan codices. With these books at hand and his prior knowledge of Hindu and Chinese, he broke the code of Mayan writing. It was a great finding that would allow, after 5 centuries to read the remaining codices, books, but also the glyphs in the ancient cities and buildings. Hence ancient sources of Mayan philosophy are not complete, but still in an oral fashion many of their cultural and philosophical conceptions are preserved to this day. Likewise, many of the peoples of the north of Mexico, who ruled over great extensions of land, and often did not have a written language, but their culture and conceptions have been also preserved in oral tradition.

In considering, colonial philosophy in Mexico, from the XVI-XVIII centuries it can also be considered somehow a premodern philosophy. The great influence that the church had in the life of the New Spain, and its institutions, a still scholastic philosophy was taught at the universities and seminars of the main cities of México. We should point out two of the most important universities that were created in that period and still exist to this day: The Royal University of Mexico (founded in 1553), is in some ways continuous with UNAM (The National Autonomous University of Mexico) and in 1540 The College of Saint Nicolás Bishop was founded, which is also continuous with the Michoacán's University of Saint Nicolás. Both institutions had important philosophy schools in which scholastic philosophy was taught, but also towards the XVIII Century we find interesting discussions by philosophers such as Mariano Coriche with the ongoing modern epistemological conceptions of philosophers such as Rousseau. Likewise, Juan Benito Díaz de Gamarra studied the logical and rhetorical considerations of Pascal and Descartes' work (Beuchot, 1996). Francisco Javier Clavijero in his 'Ancient History of Mexico', deals with some of the philosophical problems of the people of America, on their specificity and commonalities to the rest of the human gender (Villoro 2014). It is worth mentioning that México's independence revolution in the XIX century are often considered to be inspired by the French Enlightenment and its philosophers. However, this would not be accurate

since the beginning of the Mexican Independence demanded the reinstatement of Fernando VIII and revoking the liberal constitution of Cadiz (Villoro 1977). It was only until latter in this century that liberal political ideas became relevant and configured Juárez and posterior governments.

It was until the XX century, where in accordance with nationalistic governments in México an also nationalistic inspired philosophy was set out to find a way in which philosophy could be made from the specific Latin-American circumstance. Philosophers such as José Vasconcelos, Antonio Caso and Samuel Ramos were among the first to set out in this quest. Nobel Prize winner and México's ambassador to Japan, Octavio Paz can also be considered as part of this movement, which allowed us to see how a specific circumstance and intellectual as well as political tradition gave rise to some interesting philosophical problems to reflect upon.

On a philosophical tradition in Mexico

In this section I will try to argue that the strong philosophical underpinning of prehispanic philosophy, as well as the specific social and intellectual tradition that was developed in the American continent can be thought as a philosophical tradition that has vastly changed over the years, but is fruitful in its dialogue with contemporary philosophical enterprises, as well as with other philosophical traditions in the world.

I will try to frame this discussion on two related subjects, one epistemological on the possibility of different conceptual schemes and the other, sociological on the specific functions of philosophy in different societies. If it is possible that different languages create different conceptual schemes, that have different beliefs, rules of inference, methodological norms, considered in them (Olivé 1999). For example, in a language such as Yucatan's Mayan, it would be rather difficult to express a concept such as truth in an epistemological sense. Furthermore, the Tojolabal (one of the Mayan languages) would have a hard time expressing concepts such as "my hand", since everyone has one of these, the basic form of expressing this would be "our hand" (Lenkersdorf 2005). Think of the implications that this language structure has for action and political thought, which from this conceptual scheme leads to a communitarian structure of ethics and politics.

And, if different philosophical ideas are possible and rational from different conceptual and linguistic schemes this allows for different traditions to have important and relevant contributions to philosophy. However, this could be viewed as a relativist stance in philosophy, I wish to take a step away from such direction, because not every belief is relevant inside a conceptual and cultural scheme. There would be norms and rules to the acceptance of those beliefs that are considered legitimate in a scheme. Furthermore, a scheme should be ready to revise any belief and its corollary consequences, if it comes in conflict with new beliefs and turns out to be of high relevance to a community. Each community needs to have rules to pick between these conflicting beliefs. Hence, not proposing a relativism, since not all beliefs can be considered valid, and they can be revised (Olivé 1999).

Moreover, values and beliefs can be revised also in view of conflict with other cultural and conceptual schemes. Even if there are topic incommensurabilities between two conceptual schemes, their values or rules, these are not absolute nor prevailing. There is room for dialogue and agreement on those subjects where from different perspectives could conflict.

Getting into a conceptual scheme is the regular work of the translator for example; but philosophers can also approach concepts from other philosophical traditions and get around these incommensurabilities, by way of getting to know the complete conceptual scheme. Much in a way of how we translate or learn a language, it is possible to discuss with other traditions, and in this sense an intercultural philosophy, would be one where not one tradition prevails over the others. Instead a dialogical way of doing philosophy that allows for different problems, preoccupations and valuations of the tasks of philosophy to take part.

That is to say that there is not one single philosophical pathway, that the European modernity, its subject and project would not by any chance be monolithic. On the contrary the European tradition has had a non-linear development into what we may call contemporary philosophy. The modern subject has gone through different conceptions, rationalists, empiricists, for example, in contrast with the Hegelian and Romantic reaction. These two perspectives into the modern subject have different points of view but share in large some of the interests in the research and the understanding of the philosophical problem. So, there is not a problem in principle to accept that further away traditions may take other stances in this problem.

In fact, it is also true that the task of philosophers (or sages) in a society is different and their interests may also differ sometimes with strictly academic projects of philosophy. But this should not be a challenge to the status of philosophical knowledge.

Applied philosophy from cultural interchange

Science and philosophy in recent years have been rethinking their role in society. The conception of the scientist up on a glass tower, away from the community which sustains his or her activities is changing more and more. And the same can also be true for the philosophical community, that even when dealing with highly abstract topics it is not necessary that they remain removed from the society in which they live and dwell. It is also evermore often that the research projects in many topics must be multidisciplinary gathering the points of view of many experts on different subjects.

Challenges such as global warming are not going to be solved with the involvement of only chemists, there have to be also participants from other areas of thought such as sociologists to find how different solutions would play out in the different communities. In these tasks, philosophers have also been called to participate to come up with ethical principles and to analyze the moral dilemmas that arise when facing such challenges.

But also, the layperson and stake holders are called to participate in these interdisciplinary solutions,

since they are the ones that will suffer the changes in policies and their consequences, so their point of view is vital in this sense. And such way of working can be considered natural in democratic societies that use knowledge to solve their problems, coined also as knowledge societies.

It is in this setting, that I would like to frame the participation of the philosopher in a democratic society that would allow for different forms of life and cultures to live and develop in a harmonious fashion. In this case, the subject of study can be considered one of clinical ethics, where attention to the indigenous people was found to be discriminatory. The public health services in Mexico don't have the capacity to offer care in a way that is respectful of the forms of life of many of the indigenous peoples. It is in the law that a person has the right to receive health services in his mother tongue, as it is vital to the clear communication between patient and doctor, but except for a few intercultural hospitals dispersed all along Mexico this is not the case.

We set out to do research on the palliative care offered to the Zapotec people in Southeastern state of Oaxaca, specifically in the Central Valleys. To this day, the Zapotec are one of the most important indigenous groups of Mexico. Their classical period was 600-800 of our era, and had a notable culture in prehispanic times, well known is the city of Monte Alban that ruled over the Valley. But as a living and dynamic people, there is a great need of study the traditional medicine in these specific communities, since the health-illness process is quite different and in the community traditional medics are often considered wisemen and women and the holders of knowledge on the person and their health. Hence traditional doctors are one of the principal sources of this research and their point of view was relevant. And in this case, we find that this is to an extent philosophical knowledge that is valuable to get to know and dialogue with academic philosophy.

The conceptions of life and death are drastically different from the non-indigenous population, many of the fiestas that you may have heard from Mexico's day of the death, celebrated on November 2nd, are fiestas and rituals from the Zapotec. At first, we inquired on how these conceptions could be respected when they sought medical help in the hospitals of the Oaxaca's capital city. For example, often when a person died the family, would take down the body from the bed on to the floor, for him or her, to gather soil. We come from that earth and when we die, we need to be in contact with it. This practice was harshly reprehended by the hospital personnel. Being sure that some accommodations may be done to respect and honor a deceased person, and his or her form of life and death. Furthermore, the rituals of a person's death and mourning are long and complex according to the Zapotec traditions. All the community participates in the funeral, they all make donations called tequio, to help the family who will host 9 days of mourning and prayer.

But such a study was not only on how to improve state provided medical services, but it is an important point of discussion on clinical ethics on a whole. Our very large medical system, clinical ethics has somehow followed the lead of important American Universities, when teaching medical students. Principlism of Beauchamp & Childress (2009), which holds autonomy, justice, beneficence

and non-harm as the principles to be held. In the case of Zapotec communities and their doctors, autonomy as a liberal principle is not a principle that can be considered mainly in the treatment, giving a more communitarian sense to the decision to be made, being the family central in the decision making (De Hoyos 2015).

The humanization of the clinical practice, the accompaniment of the patient and in the case of the palliative care, their spiritual comforting of the patient are practices that can nurture our conceptions on this ethical relationship and a preparation for death that is not given only at the moment of severe illness but throughout life, by making children participate in the remembrance of the death and its perennial presence in life. All of these are solid contributions that the Zapotec and their culture have to offer to the discussion and development of a field such as clinical ethics.

To end my participation, I would like to briefly offer another example of contributions of the indigenous people have made that can even transcend the philosophical stage of Latin America. The example comes from Luis Villoro, who was very interested in the political thought of the Zapatista movement, an insurgent military uprising in 1994 that was mostly integrated by indigenous Mayan peasants of Chiapas. The resistance and counterpower that Zapatistas posed to the Mexican government was a political movement unlike others, they proposed a fight not to take power, only to oppose it by standing there and seek justice. Villoro argues that even if there is no universal applicable definition of Justice, different political traditions that would have a hard time concurring on what is fair; the dialogue between cultures can open a way for others to recognize the injustice that others are suffering from injustice and help them to oppose it (Villoro 2007).

This kind of reflection would enable a project of intercultural philosophy that feeds from different traditions within Mexico but allows them easily to dialogue with the rest of Latin America, and further away with other intellectual traditions that would be interested to open dialogue.

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“Japanese-ness” in Philosophy?

Yosuke Bando

Introduction

In recent days, when referring “Japanese Philosophy” or “Japanese-ness” in philosophy, we are more and more urged to add a question mark after these problematic words. That is because an increasing number of scholars, regardless of domestic or foreign, put more effort on questioning the very existence of Japanese-ness or Japanese philosophy than on examining their contents. As we will see later, it is true that such change of the research trend has enough legitimacy. Nonetheless, do we have no choice but abandon these problematic concepts thoroughly or devote ourselves into the endless deconstruction of Japanese-ness? In this article, focusing on the traditional attitude for Buddhist or Confucianist scriptures, I will attempt to extract another fruitful, at least promising, possibility of Japanese-ness.

1. Philosophical Heritage in the Modern Period

As is often the case with discussing any non-Western intellectual traditions, it is necessary also in Japan to once examine the gap and continuity between pre-modern intellectual heritage and westernized philosophical discourses in modernity, before dealing with the Japanese-ness which is deemed to run through the pre-modern and modern periods. In other words, before going further, here we have to briefly overview how, and to what extent, these Japanese intellectual heritage has determined the modern philosophy of Japan.

As to this issue, two aspects are frequently pointed out; the positive adoption of Eastern philosophy to overcome Western philosophy, and the continuation of the tradition of seminars.

First, let us consider the former aspect. The modern philosophy of Japan was led by two parallel agendas. One is the careful, or faithful, translation and transplantation of modern Western philosophy, such as that of Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer. The other agenda is various attempts to overcome “Western dualism,” especially invoking or recalling “Eastern philosophy.” Inoue Tetsujirō (1856–1944), the first Japanese chief professor of the department of philosophy in the Tokyo Imperial University, embodied both agendas. On one hand, he introduced German idealism to Japanese academic study. On the other hand, he reconstructed Mahayana Buddhism as an “Eastern Philosophy” and aimed to overcome the Western philosophy of his time. Modern Japanese, including Inoue, tended to understand Western philosophy as dualism, —that of subject/object, human/nature, individuality/society, mind/body, and so on. By contrast, Eastern premodern thoughts, such as Confucianism and Buddhism, were thought to integrate or unite such mutually opposing elements. Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), the most influential modern Japanese philosopher, was not an exception

of this tendency. He shared these attitudes with Inoue and other modern Japanese².

The latter, another heritage of premodern intellectual tradition, is that of seminars, or *kai-doku* in Japanese. Maeda Tsutomu, a researcher of Japanese early-modern thought, once pointed out in his influential book, *Seminars in the Edo Period* (2012), that the early modern intellectual sphere of Japan had a tradition of the precise reading of Confucian scriptures and free arguments about them where the social positions of their participants are purposely neglected and thus equality is guaranteed in their space of speech, especially in the *samurai* schools³. According to him, such seminars didn't disappear at all even in the modern period. Rather, it served modern Japanese as an attitude of open discussion, which was absolutely necessary for the modernization. In response to Maeda's assertion, Nakano Hiroataka goes further to point out that this tradition was taken over by the seminars in the department of philosophy in modern universities⁴; it may be possible to say that modern Japanese are reading *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant just in the same way as their ancestors read *Analects of Confucius*.

2. Empire of Canons: Intellectual Tradition of Premodern Japan

It is not only the modernization of Japanese intellectual world but also its premodern tradition itself that has numerous twists and turns in its progress. That is mostly because, just as almost all East Asian cultures, it had not developed by itself but had been deeply influenced by China. In this regard, Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), the most representative *kokugaku*⁵ scholar, accurately expresses the disposition of Japanese thought. He laments that “generally speaking, from long ago, when the Japanese say only ‘learning’, it means Chinese learning.”⁶ Chinese learning had monopolized the intellectual market of Norinaga's time and thus “learning” exclusively meant Chinese one, since his contemporary intellectuals concentrated their scholarly efforts on Chinese texts rather than Japanese ones. It may be the case even now, because, when we Japanese refer to “philosophy”, we normally and exclusively mean Western philosophy. Such euro-centric or self-colonized attitude may seem

² Cf. Watanabe Kiyoshi, “The Truth of ‘Nishida Philosophy’”[‘Nishida Tetsugaku’ no Shinkei], *Philosophy of Japan*[*Nihon no Tetsugaku*] Vol. 8, 2007, and Inoue Katsuhito, *Nishida Kitarō and the Spirit of Meiji* [*Nishida Kitarō to Meiji no Seishin*], Ōsaka: Kansai University Press, 2011.

³ Maeda Tsutomu, *Seminars in the Edo period: a History of Kaidoku* [*Edo no Dokushokai: Kaidoku no Shisō-shi*], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, Heibon-sha, 2012.

⁴ Nakano Hiroataka, “Toward a Redefinition of Japanese Philosophy”, *Tetsugaku* Vol. 3, 2019, p. 60.

⁵ This Japanese word is usually translated as “nativism” or “national learning.” This school tried to discover Japanese “indigenous” philosophical, religious, and ethical thought in ancient myths, poetry, and ritual texts, as opposed to Japan's long-lasting tradition of intellectual dependence on China. Needless to say, we can ask whether it is possible to distinguish such Japanese “indigenous” aspects, that is, “Japanese-ness,” from this country's culture that has been deeply influenced by the neighbor continent.

⁶ *Uiyamabumi* [*First Step into Mountains*], *Collected Works of Motoori Norinaga* [*Motoori Norinaga Zenshū*], Vol. 1, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1968. p.7.

somewhat odd for some foreigners⁷. Regardless of whether we share Norinaga's nationalistic lament or not, it is true that the Japanese intellectual history mainly consists of Buddhism and Confucianism imported from China via Korea. Therefore, most scholarly works by Japanese have been faithful interpretations and commentaries on Buddhist and Confucian canons written in Chinese characters. Japanese indigenous texts, such as myths, narratives, and poems, typically ranked lower in the Japanese hierarchy of scholarship. It may be no exaggeration to say that, from the distant past and even to the present, we Japanese have been living in an empire of imported canons.

Here one possible question will arise: Can we trace "indigenous" oral traditions and philosophical thoughts that can be clearly distinguished from Chinese thoughts? This is the very question that led to *kokugaku* in the 18th century. *Kokugaku* scholars, such as

Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) and the aforementioned Motoori Norinaga, eagerly searched for such Japanese-ness, especially in the ancient myths, which were collected in *Kojiki* [*the Ancient Record*] (712) and *Nihon-shoki* [*the Chronicle of Japan*](720), two dynastic chronicles written in the 8th century. Katada Takeshi compares them to the Grimm brothers in Germany, who tried to discover *das Germanische*, or "German-ness", in German oral traditions⁸. It may have some legitimacy that *kokugaku* in the 18th-century Japan can be compared, to an extent, to *Germanistik* in the 19th-century Germany.

3. Does "Japanese-ness" Really Exist?

However, can such Japanese-ness be found? Today, most researchers would say no. This is mainly because ancient myths and *Shinto*, the Japanese "native" religion based on these myths, may be influenced by Chinese thought so fundamentally that we are not able to extract the "pure" Japanese-ness from them. At least one of the primary sources of ancient myth, *Nihon-shoki*, obviously adopted the Ying-Yang theory in its essential structure⁹ and even borrowed some expressions from imported Buddhist scriptures¹⁰. As a matter of fact, the *kokugaku* scholars were not able to logically illustrate such Japanese-ness; instead, they claimed that Japanese-ness exists customarily and not literally.

Then, we would naturally arrive at one radical, or critical, question: should that premodern heritage be regarded as *Japanese* one? Maruyama Masao (1914-1996), one of the most influential post-war scholars, once noted "the absence of the reference axis of thought"¹¹ in Japanese intellectual history,

⁷ Cf. B. T. Davis, "What is Japanese Philosophy", *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Philosophy*, Oxford UP, 2021, pp. 10-12, and H. G. Blocker and Ch. L. Starling, *Japanese Philosophy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 3.

⁸ Katada Takeshi, "Motoori Norinaga and Jakob Grimm", *The Bulletin of the Society of Meiji Japan* [*Meiji Seitoku Kinen Gakkai Kiyō*]49, 2012.

⁹ Kōnoshi Takamitsu, *The World View of Kojiki* [*Kojiki no Sekai-kan*], Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2008, pp. 34-37.

¹⁰ Kojima Noriyuki, *Japanese Ancient Literature and Chinese Literature* [*Jōdai Nihon Bungaku to Chūgoku Bungaku*] Vol. 1, Tokyo: Hanawa Shobo, 1962, pp. 368-374.

¹¹ "Thought of Japan [Nihon no Shisō]", *Selected Works of Maruyama Masao* [*Maruyama Masao*

when compared with obvious axes in other cultures, such as Christianity in Europe and Confucianism in China.

Therefore, an extremist would be able to insist as follows: Japanese premodern intellectual history should be “cut into round slices”—to put it another way, it should be divided into separate peripheral developments of Confucianism and Buddhism. Thus we should not try to find a specific feature common to such various intellectual trends. Why do we try to find a single and perpetual Japanese-ness between a 12th-century zen priest and a 18th-century Confucian philologist, just in the same way as trying to find one Turkish-ness shared by both Thales of Miletus and Atatürk?

If that were the case, Japanese-ness would have become a useless and inherently leer concept and thus we could deal with the intellectual heritage of this archipelago without this troublesome concept. Indeed, most recent researchers, especially those in the younger generations, whether domestic or foreign, come to share this attitude toward Japanese-ness.

4. Japanese-ness is not Innocent

Why are recent researchers so resistant, or cold-hearted to this Japanese-ness? This is partly because Japanese-ness is not innocent at all. Especially during the militaristic era of World War II, many Japanese promoted such Japanese-ness, most of which was filled with the egoless loyalty to the emperor and the empire. It was all the easier for them to forge Japanese-ness arbitrarily and politically because, as we have already seen, the originality of Japanese thought is quite difficult to detect amid the vast quantity of Chinese-influenced intellectual teachings. Maruyama himself tried to discover “basso ostinato”, or obstinate bass of Japanese intellectual tradition into the ancient myths again in the post-war period¹² and was severely criticized by his contemporaries for reviving wartime ideology¹³, although his intention was to thoroughly deconstruct such Japanese-ness.

5. Against Philosophicalization: Ogyū Sorai

Then, should we abandon this problematic concept? Most would agree that we should. Nonetheless, there may be room for being able to find Japanese-ness from an angle completely different than ever.

From my point of view, there is a tradition of “anti-philosophical” tendencies in premodern Japan. One of its representatives is Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), the most famous and influential Confucian of the 18th century. He insists, “The investigation of principle inevitably results in the abolition of the Sages.”¹⁴ The investigation of principle (kyū-ri) is the slogan of the Zhu Xi school of neo-

Shū] Vol. 7, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996, p. 193.

¹² “Rekishī Ishiki no Koso [the Old Layer of Historical Consciousness]”, *Selected Works of Maruyama Masao* [*Maruyama Masao Shū*], Vol. 10, 1996, p. 7.

¹³ See Yoshida Kazutoshi, *Maruyama Masao and the Postwar Thought* [*Maruyama Masao to Sengo Shisō*], Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 2013, pp. 195-197.

¹⁴ *Ogyū Sorai (A collection of philosophical thoughts in Japan* [*Nihon Shisō Taikei*] 36), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973, p. 152.

Confucianism, which was the most powerful Confucian sect about from the 14th to 19th century in the whole Eastern Asia, including China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. In the late 19th century, faced with Western modernity, many Asian intellectuals regarded this school as nearest to Western modern philosophy among all the Eastern intellectual teachings, since this school shows little tendency toward religious beliefs and attempts to find a universal principle of the world, based on each person's innate reason. Nonetheless, Sorai criticized this "philosophical" attitude for the abolition of the Sages. Sorai, the representative intellectual of the 18th-century Japan, clearly opposed the philosophicalization of Confucianism.

6. "Anti-philosophical" Tendency in Japan

Generally speaking, it can be said that long-lasting religions or intellectual teachings tend to develop as follows: At their forming period of church and dogmas, their originators, such as Christ, Buddha, and the Confucian Sages, are religiously worshipped as absolute Others who have little in common with us ordinary people. At the same time, the records of their direct narratives are collected and respected as canons. However, as time passes by and the interpretation of such canons becomes more precise, these ancient beliefs are philosophicalized. One universal principle which runs through the originators, canons, and us is discovered in the development of theology. This discovery inevitably nullifies the authority of the originators, because the same principle is now shared by both sages and us. Such a process is shared not only by Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologies, but also by Eastern Asian Buddhism and Confucianism.

Needless to say, Japan has also experienced such philosophicalization of Buddhism and Confucianism. Not only does the Zhu Xi school illustrate its good example, but buddhas and Shinto deities had been deemed to exist within our hearts, or moreover, considered identical with our hearts also in the developments of their theologies. However, we can witness a large number of claims against such "philosophical" tendencies in Japanese intellectual history. There is little space for naming all of them, but at the very least, the aforementioned Ogyū Sorai and Motoori Norinaga both showed this "anti-philosophical" tendency, especially opposing to the Zhu Xi school. Moreover, two representatives of medieval Buddhism, Dōgen and Shinran, both attempted to overcome their contemporary philosophical Buddhist trends, using their respective strategies: Dōgen severely criticized his contemporary Buddhist trend which deemed the individual's heart as an absolute entity¹⁵, whereas Shinran summarized the numerous teachings of Mahayana Buddhism as a quite simple motif of "the power of the Other" [*tarikī*]. It is possible to regard these anti-philosophical trend as a feature of Japanese intellectual tradition. In addition, I cannot find any meaningful reason for hesitating to

¹⁵ *Shōbō Genzō* [*The True Dharma-Eye of Treasury*], the Volume of *Busshō* [The Buddha Nature], *Dōgen* (A collection of philosophical thoughts in Japan [*Nihon Shisō Taikei*] 12) Vol. 1, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970, p. 46.

name it as “Japanese-ness”. In other words, it can be said that the Japanese tend to deny the philosophicalization of any religion or teachings.

Conclusion

As we have overviewed, though our research was forced to remain quite rough, it is right to say that there is plenty of difficulty in asserting the pure, single, and historically unchanging Japanese-ness nowadays. There is, however, some room for re-imaging Japanese-ness in a way quite different than ever: we can witness a peculiar tendency of Japanese to put emphasis on the otherness and thus to show some hesitation, if not a total denial, against philosophicalization of any intellectual discourses. Indeed, we can point out that the learning of ancient documents of the Qing dynasty shared the same hesitation or denial, but comparative studies may be the task of another article.

Philosophical Position of

Motoori Norinaga's Criticism against *Karagokoro*

Hiroataka Nakano

In the context of reconsidering the philosophical significance of Japan's premodern intellectual heritage, Motoori Norinaga is one of the most important figures to reflect on today. He was himself a scholar in the premodern era (1730–1801) before Japan opened up to foreign countries and started to rebuild itself as a modern nation-state. As was usual for Japanese scholars at that time, he did not know much about European, American, or African civilization. This was typical because the Japanese government strictly limited communication with foreign countries until the middle of the nineteenth century. It permitted only communication or an exchange with China, Korea, Ryukyu (Okinawa), and the Netherlands under the control of the government. Due to such a lack of information, Japanese scholars at that time could not revise their worldview to be more current and thus they still retained a perspective in which China was considered central in a geopolitical sense, while Japan, Korea, and other peoples were marginal. In addition, the majority of scholars principally studied Confucianism. They were intellectually formed by reading classics that were written in ancient China and consulting Chinese commentaries from the Cheng-Zhu school of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This tendency was not limited to the eighteenth century. The normative status of Chinese civilization, including literature and science, is deeply rooted in Japanese traditions since ancient times. Norinaga was the most influential premodern scholar who attempted to systematically set aside the dominance of the Chinese way of thinking (*karagokoro*) to reappropriate the original Japanese spirit (*yamatodamashii*). In this way, he brought into perfection *kokugaku*, that is, the study of Japanese classics and exploration of the indigenous Japanese culture.

However, Norinaga's criticism against *karagokoro* has had a bad reputation among Japanese modern, that is, Westernized scholars. One reason is that Norinaga does not make any effort to justify his position on affirming the superiority of the Japanese spirit. An example is *Naobinomitama*, which constitutes an essential part of the preface to his masterpiece *Kojikiden*, that is a detailed philological commentary on *Kojiki*, the earliest Japanese history of mythology.¹⁶ In *Naobinomitama*, Norinaga dogmatically affirms the truth of Japanese mythology as a matter of historical fact and entirely rejects its indebtedness to Chinese civilization. Such an attitude on the part of Norinaga has given modern scholars a strange impression, because he is in general a quite reasonable and scientific writer. In effect,

¹⁶ For a general description of Motoori Norinaga and *Kojikiden*, see: <https://www.norinagakinenkan.com/english/kojikiden.html> (checked on may 5, 2022).

following *Naobinomitama*, which provides the context for *Kojikiden*, Norinaga meticulously examines each letter and word of the mythological text, consulting different versions and different secondary sources to draw a conclusion based on solid ground or refraining from doing so if such ground is insufficient. He is often so scientifically open-minded as to call upon others and the next generations to revise and correct his possible mistakes or unclear understanding. His scientific and impartial attitude in this respect is surprising when we take into account that no Japanese scholar at that time was familiar with European scientific methodology. It is natural to consider him as a Japanese counterpart to European philosophers of hermeneutics, which was even prior to Friedrich Schleiermacher and August Boeckh.¹⁷ In contrast to the main text of *Kojikiden*, *Naobinomitama* displays an explicit dogmatism and even chauvinism without explanation. It is natural for modern Japanese scholars to separate these two aspects of Norinaga and interpret them as incoherent or incompatible.

Only relatively recently has scholar Koyasu Nobukuni (1933–) attempted to reveal the internal connection between these two aspects and critically form a total understanding of Norinaga. According to Koyasu, Norinaga’s lasting academic achievement in *kokugaku* is not incoherent in relation to, but rather is supported by a dogmatic ideology supporting imperial Japan that is accompanied by denial of the other, in particular China. Therefore, it is understandable that modern Japanese scholars have repeatedly recalled his thinking to secure self-referentially the Japanese identity. Norinaga has passed for an icon among nationalists. Koyasu coins the term the “Norinaga Problem,” which is the entire problematic comprising Norinaga’s achievement and chauvinism that inspired Japanese modern nationalism and its fate, including militarism, foreign invasion, and World War II.

Recognizing the validity of his problematization of Norinaga and the reference to him by Japanese modern scholars, I nevertheless try to find the philosophical significance of Norinaga’s criticism against *karagokoro*. In my view, Norinaga’s struggle cannot only be understood in the context of the dominance or presence of Chinese culture for premodern Japan. Rather, from the standpoint of the globalized twenty-first century, some of his arguments can be related to different discourses raised in various regions in relation to the presence of European or Anglo–American influence. I propose to place his thought into the context of today’s postcolonial situation and interpret them as a type of consistent answer given by a thinker who belongs to a marginal culture. Then, Norinaga can be considered as someone who brought up a problem related to belonging to a particular culture through his examination of subjects anxious about the influence of a dominant, supposedly universal civilization.

For comparison, let us recall Frantz Fanon’s description of the “inferiority complex”¹⁸ of the black Antillean, which concerns the fact that the black people lived under colonization, in which the French

¹⁷ Muraoka, Noritsugu, *Motoori Norinaga* 2, 14.

¹⁸ Fanon, Franz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2.

government determined the educational system and social institutions. As a result, the colonized nation unavoidably believed in the superiority of the French. Under the presence of the French, black Antilleans became ashamed of themselves in terms not only of the color of their skin but also their intelligence and, generally, their entire culture. Black children educated in the French system eventually identified with a white explorer, an adventurer, and a missionary “who is in danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes.”¹⁹ When they became adults and visited Europe, however, they confronted the fact that they were Negroes and then suffered an internal conflict.

Fanon points out that such an observation can be generalized for all colonized peoples.²⁰ We can still apply it to all culturally peripheral regions independently of whether they are or were politically colonized or not. This can be valid, for example, for Japan in the Shino-centralized East Asia until the nineteenth century, and for African and Latin American countries and Japan in a Euro-centralized world from the mid-nineteenth century. To be sure, Japan has not suffered political colonization or occupation by a foreign country except during a short period following World War II. Rather, Japan is one of the imperialistic countries that colonized other Asian countries and violently forced its own culture on other people. In this sense, it is definitively responsible for causing the inferiority complex of others. Nevertheless, in another respect, Japan was in the past more or less culturally dependent on foreign civilizations. As a consequence, Japanese thinkers have experienced an inferiority complex similar to that which the black Antillean felt under the French, but in the case of Japan it is in relation to China in the premodern era, and to Europe and Anglo–America in modern times. Admittedly, Japan is not so explicitly aware of, nor its inferiority complex so thematized as could be seen in a politically colonized region. However, plenty of discourses still exist that take the attitudes of Western people as normative, and Japanese understand and evaluate themselves through the criteria of the external norm. Here, I propose to contemplate these phenomena not in the limited context of Japan or the French Antilles, but to interpret them as specific cases of a global problematic common to culturally marginal people in, for example, Latin America and Africa. Reflecting on Norinaga from this perspective, we can discern the philosophical significance of his criticism of *karagokoro*.

1. A Situated Universalism

Norinaga’s criticism of *karagokoro* is, as Koyasu points out, not a thesis to be justified but a prescientific ideology to be dogmatically posited through a tautological affirmation.²¹ It is therefore natural that it can work as a highly disputing gesture in controversies with his contemporary thinkers.

In particular, *Ashikariyoshi*, a record of the controversies with author Ueda Akinari (1734–1809), demonstrates that Norinaga’s dogmatic attitude, in contrast to Akinari’s impartial thought which is

¹⁹ Ibid., 125.

²⁰ Ibid., 9.

²¹ Koyasu, Nobukuni, What is ‘Norinaga-Problem’?, 75.

much closer to our common sense in the twenty-first century. A typical case concerns the identity of Amaterasu, a principal female god as founder of the royal family according to Japanese mythology, with the sun in the physical world. Akinari recognizes the Japanese territory is small in size in the most recent world map that had been imported from the Netherlands, and doubts that a Japanese god could be identified with the physical sun, which must be the same for all countries. Therefore, nobody would take Norinaga's assertion seriously, according to which, because this tiny country was the origin of all others where the sun and the moon appeared for the first time, all other countries should pay tribute to Japan. When other people asked for the reason behind Norinaga's claim, it could not be justified because each of other countries has its own mythology. There were no grounds to affirm the truth and the superiority of Japanese mythology in comparison with all other different views. In this way, Akinari's attitude is relativistic and much more comprehensible for us in today's globalized age.

Norinaga, however, definitely rejects it as "common and ordinary Karagokoro" (8, 404). He adopts a kind of universalistic view according to which, though each country has its own mythological history, all histories can be reduced to one. *Kuzubana*, a controversial manuscript directed against a contemporary Confucian, also admits that different mythologies usually have common or similar episodes because they all express the same event that happened on earth. According to Norinaga, however, only the Japanese Shintoistic version transmits the truth without divergence from or embellishment of the historical fact.

Some modern scholars interpret Norinaga's dogmatic attitude as a type of religious "belief."²² It is known that, in his ordinary daily life, Norinaga usually followed the Jodo Shinshu of Buddhism, which supports the suggestion that he had a religious inclination. In addition, he actually declares to Akinari: "If you believe me, it results that I am right. If you do not believe me, it does not matter at all for me" (8, 412). These words seem to suggest that Norinaga argues for a belief that can be affirmed or denied according to each individual's personal decision.

Regarding this point, it is interesting to compare Norinaga to native intellectuals in colonized regions. Fanon testifies that their "stated belief in a national culture" "sometimes takes on the aspect of a cult or of a religion."²³ The native intellectuals may perceive a threat that their own culture is going extinct under the overwhelming influence of the metropolitan culture, which may push them to react in a way that seems to others to be based on irrational religious belief.

It is important that Fanon himself does not qualify these individuals as irrational or religious, but rather finds an element of truth in the motivation that urges them to move toward their precolonial culture. As he states: "this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that

²² Muraoka, op.cit., 130, 145.

²³ Fanon, Franz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 175.

Western culture in which they all risk being swamped.”²⁴ It is necessary that a native “tears himself away from the swamp that may suck him down.”²⁵ “If it is not accomplished there will be serious psycho-affective injuries and the result will be individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels.”²⁶

Returning to Norinaga, it is not important whether his stubborn attitude was supported by a kind of religious belief. We must rather examine whether it suggests an element of truth, and if so, what kind. Here, the matter principally concerns whether one can have an impartial bird’s-eye view of different mythological histories, one of which is one’s own. In this respect, it is useful to consider a debate between Norinaga and a Shino centrist, Tou Teikan (1732–1797), as well as between Norinaga and Akinari.

Teikan, as a Shino centrist, believes that the chronology in ancient Japanese mythology should be revealed as false and revised in reference to historical accounts of the ancient Chinese dynasties. However, according to him, to be able to do so, a scholar “must read books from a higher view point” (8, 300). Norinaga polemicizes this expression and demands that he “see from an even higher standpoint.” Then, Norinaga affirms, he will notice that it was a Japanese god, Sukunabikona, who established India, China, Korea, and other countries all over the world.

As always, Akinari observes such dogmatism on the part of Norinaga as unjustified. Akinari applies to Norinaga his own caricature of superstitious people with an illustration of climbers of Mount Fuji worshipping the sunrise as appearance of Amitabha Tathagata on the top. In other words, for Akinari, Norinaga’s belief in Japanese mythology is no different from the superstitions of ordinary people. Now, Akinari demands that Norinaga “see from an even higher stand point,” and then, Akinari assures him, Norinaga will notice that his belief is a kind of egocentric behavior of ordinary people who prefer themselves over others (8, 410). Also, as always, Akinari has a relativistic perspective that allows him to evaluate the Chinese and the Indian mythological world on an equal basis with that of the Japanese. His perspective is much more familiar to us in the globalized twenty-first century. In contrast, this time, Norinaga’s answer is not strong. He explains that he cannot help believing as he does based on his philological point of view. At the same time, he concedes that he is not insisting on his view as an objective or definitive truth (8, 412). Here, he seems to confess that his belief in Japanese mythology is only a methodological supposition rather than a devoted, firm confidence.

His words testify that he does not argue that Japanese mythology is an objective truth. Rather, he presents it as a matter that is dependent on a point of view. It is possible to understand it as a matter of “belief.” However, a fundamentalist believer, for example, a person who refuses to teach evolutionary theory in schools, would not admit that his/her own beliefs depend on a point of view. In

²⁴ Ibid., 168.

²⁵ Ibid., 175.

²⁶ Ibid.

contrast, Norinaga is clearly aware that his argument hangs on a point of view, and in this sense, his belief is already relativized. Therefore, even if we can qualify his attitude as a kind of belief, we should notice that his belief is not fundamental but relativized. His intention is to demand his contemporary Japanese scholars be rooted in the perspective of Japanese mythology, while recognizing at the same time the possibility of adopting a higher perspective to pretend to compare Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and other cultures from an impartial perspective.

To investigate the grounds for Norinaga's insistence on the point of view of Japanese mythology, it is worth paying attention to the fact that the intensity of his criticism in his controversial documents reflects different levels based on whom it is directed toward. It is true that he blames all people, including foreigners, who do not recognize the centrality and superiority of Japan. On this point, he behaves as if this were a universal and objective truth. However, we must take into consideration that at that time, Japanese scholars who wrote in Japanese did not usually presume that any foreigner might read their texts. There are only a few exceptions in which texts written by Japanese scholars in the Chinese language were brought to China and read there. For example, Ogyu Sorai (1666–1728), a great philological Confucian who belonged to an earlier generation than that of Norinaga, used to write in Chinese and his texts were also read there. Norinaga only occasionally wrote in Chinese, and usually in Japanese, so his arguments were hardly directed to foreigners. Rather, he wrote taking almost exclusively the domestic market into consideration. In this sense, even when he speaks ill of China or other nations, his intention must be distinguished from that of purveyors of hate who attack weak minorities through aggressive words and attitudes.

Moreover, Norinaga's words reveal that he does not take seriously the possibility that Indian, Chinese, and other people believe in the central and superior status of Japan of identifying Amaterasu with the sun in the sky. He confesses that it is understandable that foreigners do not know the original true history, records of which have been preserved intact only in Japanese history books and that do not exist in other countries (8, 266; 8, 312). In addition, the tone of his criticism is, relatively speaking, not harsh or intense toward Japanese Confucians. He admits that it is rather reasonable that a devoted Japanese scholar of Chinese studies does not believe in Japanese classics (8, 266). From Norinaga's point of view, the worst and most intolerable are scholars of Kokugaku, who study the Japanese classics, and who pretend to respect Japanese tradition but actually do not believe the contents of the classical texts and instead interpret and evaluate them in conformity with a Chinese worldview (8, 266-7; 9, 52).

In other words, Norinaga's criticism is not directed uniformly at all people who do not believe the worldview of Japanese mythology. Among the targets of his disapproval, he is angrier with the Japanese than with foreigners, and among the former, angrier with Kokugaku scholars than Confucians. This is because, according to him, it "conforms [more] to reason and order [順道]" to adopt the worldview of one's own country than to follow another country's perspective, even if the latter seems

better (8, 312). He argues, if Japanese oral tradition were not superior or inferior to another country's myths, it would "conform to reason and order" that each person in the world believes and keeps his/her own traditions. In reality, however, Japanese tradition is superior to that of every other country. Then, it would be "a spirit extremely against order" for a Japanese scholar to follow another country's way of thought and to doubt his/her own traditions (8, 132). We should read between the lines here and understand that Norinaga does not believe in the truth of the Japanese mythological worldview and in the falseness of the Confucian view in the same way as a religious fundamentalist or a scientist. His question consists in whether each scholar's standpoint conforms to or flouts reason and order with regard to the worldview of one's own culture.

If these observations are correct, it follows that Norinaga's criticism against *karagokoro* is not directed toward those who choose the Confucian view in a context in which they can impartially compare it with the Japanese mythological view. Rather, it is directed toward those who, born and educated in Japanese society and culture, admire however the Confucian way of thinking and depreciate the mythology that constitutes the foundation of Japanese culture. Norinaga demands that they restore a normative attitude which conforms to reason and order.

This interpretation is supported by a preface written by Watanabe Shigena to *Gyojugaigen*, Norinaga's version of Japanese history of external relations that contains much chauvinistic discourse. Watanabe testifies that his teacher Norinaga, is angry about behavior "against reason and order," parallel to that of those who serve another's master or parents without taking care of their own (8, 22). We cannot arbitrarily choose a master or our parents among different options. Rather, our parents and master, at least in feudal society, are given to us independently of whether we like them or not. The same is true with respect to culture and mythology as an expression of the worldview of a civilization. Norinaga blames those who reject their own culture and mythological worldview based on a foreign value system. Even though one's own tradition may appear false after receiving an education, it is wrong to abandon it, in his view.

At this point, it seems possible to answer Koyasu's recent criticism against Norinaga, which is that Norinaga's chauvinism presupposes "the self," which is only determined negatively; in other words, it lacks a firm foundation. Koyasu claims that Japan, with which Norinaga identifies, does not have any positive substance; it is only a product of denial of the other, which is frequently identified with China.²⁷ What Norinaga calls the "spirit of the divine country Japan" is nothing other than a negative idea of "something which is not the Chinese spirit."²⁸ In the same manner, Koyasu rejects Norinaga's famous thesis that ancient Japan did not have an explicit word for "the Way [道] [i.e., reason and order]" with a strong normative connotation as an ideal, precisely because people at that time did not diverge from the ideal way of life and did not need a word for reflecting on it. For Koyasu, such a

²⁷ Koyasu, *Norinaga Problem*, 63.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 65.

thesis is merely a negative discourse. That is to say, because Norinaga's criticism of *karagokoro* and his claim of Japanese superiority do not have positive grounds, his nationalism and chauvinism do not contain anything that should be taken seriously.

It would be reasonable to require Norinaga to base his claim on a positive foundation if it is a matter of objective knowledge. In reality, however, he does not evaluate Japanese and Chinese civilization from an impartial point of view. Rather, he points out that the value of one's own culture cannot be measured in such a way because it concerns self-constitution. Regarding the self, it is impossible to arbitrarily choose one after examining several options, each of which is positively determined. Norinaga does not base his assumption of Japanese superiority, for example, on the premise that while Chinese culture is theoretical, Japanese culture is emotional, and emotional is better. Rather, he draws attention to the fact that the way of thinking of those who have been educated in Japanese culture is unavoidably grounded in Japanese ways whether those individuals like it or not. Such a self-constitution cannot be reduced to objective description. Although it is possible to consider it as containing something positive, this positivity cannot be understood through an impartial perspective but rather only from a first-person perspective. Even though the contents may appear scarce and poor from a third person perspective, they can be very rich in content for the very person who experiences them.²⁹

Norinaga insists that the purpose of studying is to gain a rich sense of the ancient mythological world in which the ancestors lived pre-reflectively. To realize this task, we must keep an attitude that adheres to reason and order. In his essay *Tamakatsuma*, he writes:

If you would like to master the Way [i.e., reason and order] through learning, you must first of all cleanse yourself from *karagokoro*. Otherwise, you cannot master the meaning of the ancient thought, however you read and contemplate the ancient books. If you do not master that meaning, you can hardly master the Way. Originally, the Way was not something to be known through learning, but rather it was *magokoro* [truthful mind]. *Magokoro* is the very natural being of the people's spirit. However, later, people accepted and got focused on *karagokoro*, so that *magokoro* was lost. Therefore, today, it is impossible to master the Way without learning. (1, 47)

Norinaga opposes the widely accepted understanding of learning according to which learning is a determination of an object from an impartial perspective of a third person. He asserts that originally, the Way was not an object of learning but instead the way of being of the mind and the world, which

²⁹ Kanno Kakumyo describes the same thing when he stresses the richness of first-order articulation of meaning through perceptual experience in comparison to second-order articulation through theoretical observation: Kanno, Motoori Norinaga, 229–30.

ancient people pre-reflexively experienced from a first-person perspective. If we set this as an object of observation, analyze it, and determine its contents through positive propositions, then we miss its rich meaning. To master the Way, we must try to adopt or imitate the first-person perspective to capture the view that ancient people would have had. Of course, this is extremely difficult because we are not ancient people anymore, but is not impossible either, insofar as the ancient spirit is not yet completely dead. However, Norinaga observes that his contemporary scholars are so deeply influenced by Confucian studies as to consistently analyze, determine, and evaluate the ancient Japanese way of life and thinking on the basis of Chinese theory. Therefore, he demands a fundamental change in their spirituality.

In short, we can denominate Norinaga's philosophical position "situated universalism." On the one hand, it protests against relativism, which equally values both one's own culture and that of others. According to him, we cannot trust a Japanese who affirms that, just as Japanese people have the right to believe in Japanese legends, so too do people in other countries have an equal right to believe in traditions there. Such a relativistic attitude makes all belief empty. Granted, the principle that affirms equal inherent value in every culture may seem familiar to us in this globalized twenty-first century. However, Norinaga observes that such a principle presupposes a perspective that can impartially compare one's own culture and that of others. For Norinaga, such a presupposition of a kind of birds-eye view cannot be trusted. In reality, we are born and educated within a particular community and culture, so it is not possible to observe our own background at an equal distance to other ones. If it is possible to describe our context from a third person perspective, such a description may miss the rich meaning in which we pre-reflexively live. Therefore, Norinaga opposes to this relativism a kind of universalism that affirms without limitation the absolute value of the culture to which one belongs.

On the other hand, this universalism does not conceal but rather explicitly affirms the fact that it is rooted in a geographically and historically specific place. This attitude reminds us of the simplest version of ethnocentrism. It is difficult to deny that Norinaga is a kind of ethnocentrist. However, his point consists in that his position is more trustworthy than both a relativism and a universalism which ignore their own belonging or rootedness. The latter two positions behave as if they did not belong to any particular community, as if they could avoid presupposing a culturally restricted perspective. Against them, Norinaga observes that a Confucian who pretends to teach a natural order which is independent from any particular perspective tends to simply express *karagokoro* (1, 48). A universalism is only possible on the basis of a particular point of view, that is, the point of view of the culture in which one is born and educated. He affirms that the cosmos is unique. There is not a different cosmos for the Japanese, for the Chinese, or for the Indians; therefore, the origin of the cosmos is the same for all people (1, 547). From here, he advances to the conclusion that the description of this origin in Japanese mythology is common to all people. Obviously, Norinaga takes it for granted that we must choose one among several other versions. According to him, the most reliable approach is to

choose the Japanese version. This is valid especially for Japanese people, but even though he does not take seriously the possibility that a Chinese or an Indian might choose the Japanese version, he insists that for them, too, the correct choice is the Japanese one. He takes this view because he denies the possibility of both a completely impartial comparison of different versions of mythologies, and a completely universal view independent from any particular place. Now, given that he is a Japanese scholar, his conclusion cannot be other than that the correct outlook is to choose the Japanese mythology. This is the only possible option for him that allows him to maintain an approach that conforms to reason and order. Therefore, although his conclusion seems the same as the simplest version of ethnocentrism, this is a deliberated conclusion based on rejecting relativism and universalism, which ignores its own limitations of perspective.

To sum up, we can interpret Norinaga's criticism of *karagokoro* as a polemical performance aimed at protesting against a typical attitude of Japanese scholars who analyze, understand, and evaluate their own tradition in line with the perspective of a dominant foreign culture. It is not a simple confession of his belief but rather a deliberate performance on a specific stage or context. In effect, beyond the stage, that is, in his daily life, Norinaga does not strictly insist on his theses but rather follows flexibly the custom of the time which he views as deeply influenced by *karagokoro*. Sagara Toru finds here duplicate thinking in which Norinaga accepts the reality of a time without directly intervening to change it, while he prepares for a better future through his investigation of the ideal ancient Way.³⁰ In other words, Norinaga deliberately performs the desirable way of learning on a stage relatively independent from daily life and before a relatively limited audience constituted of those scholars of the time who learned the Way.

2. Learning in One's Native Language

In this Section, I discuss the importance of language in Norinaga's undertaking of establishing *kokugaku*, that is, *learning of Japanese classical texts*.

Koyasu observes an important difference between Norinaga and his most famous follower Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843), both of whom focused on oral tradition in search of Japanese identity. Atsutane considers *Norito* a divine text. *Norito* comprises ritual prayers read for Shinto gods in shrines, and they are conserved in ancient written texts. Atsutane thought these texts show the undistorted original shape of the oral tradition in relation to the Japanese gods in ancient times.³¹ Put differently, Koyasu asserts that Atsutane intended to capture the transparent presence of the gods through the prayer *Norito*. However, according to Koyasu, Norinaga also concentrated on the oral tradition, but not because he sought the transparent presence of the ancient gods. Rather, the oral tradition that Norinaga considers can be approached through the language expressed in the text *Kojiki*, which was written in the

³⁰ Sagara Toru, *Motoori Norinaga*, 245.

³¹ Koyasu, 'What is 'Norinaga Problem'?', 79.

beginning of the eighth century. In other words, Norinaga does not seek to deal with the transparent presence of the gods, but is engaged in analyzing the fixed language in this text from ancient times. He idealizes this language as revealing the spirit of the ancient native Japanese who had not yet been influenced by Chinese culture or by Chinese characters, meaning they did not use any characters.³² *Kojiki* was aimed at creating a writing system for oral language by using the latest imported Chinese characters. That is why Koyasu describes the text as “oral scripture.” Although Norinaga idealizes the language of this text, it is nevertheless one among many different particular languages of a geographically and historically specific people. Norinaga calls this idealized ancient language *yamatokotoba*, suggesting it is the original normative language for all Japanese people.³³ Koyasu detects here a dangerous and ungrounded affirmation, according to which this specific language is exclusively beautiful, correct, and superior to the others. He criticizes Norinaga for seeking to justify this affirmation through the historical fact that in the late seventh century, Emperor Tenmu, who himself read versions of *Kojiki* from oral tradition, ordered Hieda no Are to memorize them, and after that, in the beginning of the eighth century, Ono Yasumaro finally wrote down the oral history of Hieda no Are using Chinese characters. This is only a historical fact, which is not sufficient grounds for claiming the superiority of this language.

Koyasu is right in that Norinaga does not have any objective justification for asserting that the ancient Japanese language is superior over others. However, this is because, as we saw in Section 1, Norinaga does not intend at all to objectively prove its beauty and correctness but instead to give it a concrete content, taking its beauty and correctness for granted.

The problem facing Koyasu is that it is not clear at what point he specifically criticizes Norinaga’s discourses. Sometimes Koyasu seems to accuse Norinaga of presuming the existence of an oral tradition without written texts in Japan, before the arrival of Chinese characters. However, it is a historical fact that people who lived in Japan before this moment were illiterate; therefore, there was only an oral tradition. Other times, he appears to attack Norinaga for seeking to learn the worldview of ancient people through reading the text *Kojiki* and trying to reappropriate the ancient oral language. However, this is not necessarily something to be criticized. If Norinaga aimed at recuperating in his time the ancient oral language in its completely original form before the influence of Chinese characters, then his effort would certainly be an anachronism. However, as Koyasu himself observes, Norinaga does not intend to return to the pure original world of spoken language that lacked knowledge of Chinese characters.³⁴ He deeply recognizes the reality that the text *Kojiki* and the Japanese language in general are penetrated and determined by Chinese characters. In his essay *Tamakatsuma*, he even affirms that it is difficult to learn Japanese classics without knowing the Chinese way of

³² Ibid., 85-7.

³³ Ibid., 94.

³⁴ Ibid., 112.

writing because they are all written using the Chinese writing system (7, 47). In effect, the text of the first part of *Kojiki*, which Norinaga offered under the title “Correct Reading of the Time of Gods,” comprises a mixture of Chinese characters (*Kanji*) and Japanese characters (*Kana*) that had been created by deforming the Chinese ones.

Another possibility is that Koyasu accuses Norinaga of offering his personal opinion about the reading of the text *Kojiki* as the correct and beautiful normative language. However, this is not the case with Norinaga. It is true that he starts his study of *Kojiki* from the assertion that the text expresses the idealized ancient language; however, he does not confuse it with his personal opinion about how to read it. On this point, his attitude is highly academic. Even when he is confident of his interpretation, he distinguishes between the status of his commentary or interpretation, on the one hand, and that of the normative language itself in the idealized ancient time, on the other hand. As we have seen above, he keenly recognizes the possibility that his interpretation of the text cannot be free from the possibility of error, and therefore, he explicitly welcomes different opinions that explain it.

Or is it plausible that Koyasu wishes to argue that Norinaga is wrong in conceding normativity to *Kojiki*, which is the object of his studies, and trying to explain its contents in his own language; or, in considering *Kojiki* as the most important classic text in Japanese culture and giving it immortal normativity? This is not necessarily a failure, however. As Kanno Kakumyo observes, in studying Japanese grammar, the ancient social structure, or the mentality of ancient people, Norinaga distinguishes the normal and the original state, on the one hand, and various temporal divergences, on the other hand. Norinaga tries to learn the forms and contents of the ancient language, which is accessible through the text *Kojiki*, so as to reestablish continuity with the ancient world and spirit. As Kanno affirms, Norinaga thinks that the language of *Kojiki* is pure Japanese in itself, which is the embodiment of the manner in which people made their first contact with the world. That is to say, for Norinaga, *Kojiki* does not express a reflective comprehension of the world through understanding and reason, but embodies the form in which people lived in the world in the most primitive and original layer of experience prior to reflection.³⁵ Norinaga recognizes that he has not completely lost continuity with this original form of life; therefore, he tries to reappropriate it in his time.

We can find a universal significance in Norinaga’s academic enterprise in this intention to reappropriate the ancient worldview through learning the grammatical rules of language prior to the arrival of a writing system and the meaning of words, which constitute the text of mythology. The intention of recuperating continuity with an oral tradition prior to the emergence of a writing system is important for people who experience the overwhelming influence of a dominant foreign culture. Admittedly, today, it is almost impossible in every region of the world to speak or to think without a writing system. Nevertheless, those regions with ancestors who had an oral tradition and lacked a writing system may not stop to trace back to the origin of this tradition until the moment when the

³⁵ Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, 331.

continuity with the ancestral culture would be entirely extinct. “If it is not accomplished there will be serious psycho-affective injuries and the result will be individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels.”³⁶ The search for continuity with the premodern oral tradition is essential for the self-constitution of those who suffer the overwhelming influence of a dominant foreign culture that possesses a writing system.

Currently, there are still alive 68 languages from 11 language families in Mexico, and 47 languages from 19 language families in Peru. Some of them are stable, but some are in danger of extinction. In any case, they all exist under the overwhelming influence of the Spanish language and the alphabetical writing system that arrived starting at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The majority of them were for a long time solely oral language without letters, with some exceptions like Mayan pictograms and Quechuan *kipus*. After the Spanish arrival, the indigenous people of these languages were called “analphabetic.” They were not treated as subjects capable of speaking, thinking, or governing themselves, but exclusively as objects of education, a supposedly necessary condition for becoming such subjects.³⁷ As a result of receiving education, they not only learned Spanish and an alphabet but also felt shame for their own traditions, so that they prohibited their children from speaking their own languages. After a long period of such humiliation, however, now in the beginning of the twenty-first century, they seem to have begun to express their ancestral oral tradition using the alphabet as a tool. Latin American literature and philosophy have almost always been occupied by people whose first language is Spanish, but now the voices of indigenous people are starting to be listened to in their native languages.

Norinaga’s endeavor seems to suggest a possible solidarity with indigenous people in Mexico, Peru, and other countries who are now struggling to express their thoughts in their own language, borrowing a foreign writing system. Neither Norinaga nor indigenous people ignore the overwhelming influence of a foreign central language system, which for Norinaga is Chinese characters, while for Mexican or Peruvian indigenous people it is alphabetical Spanish. Nor do they intend to restore the original form of the ancient oral tradition, which would be an expression of nostalgia and an anachronism. However, they refuse to forget the past and to pretend as if the ancestral oral tradition never existed. Here, refusing to do this is not an act of nostalgia but necessary for constructing their own language and mind today and in the future because this type of construction must be always based on the past. Where all connection to the past is totally severed, no positive construction is possible. Of course, the past is not an unchanging form but rather a whole, constantly changing through the continual addition of new elements. However, some elements that once existed cannot be eliminated from the whole. Norinaga proposes to construct the future on the basis of the whole past, instead of by eliminating the core part of the whole in favor of the present dominant force that exerts influence. Applying Norinaga’s proposal

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Martiarena, Óscar, “El indio como objeto de conocimiento”, in: *Diánoia* 44, 1998, 195-218.

to the situation of the present indigenous people in Latin America, this would mean an endeavor to explore the past oral tradition in its most original form and give it an expression through media that are available now. As Norinaga studied the text *Kojiki* and wrote a detailed commentary to it, in Peru, Mejía Huaman Mario, a Peruvian indigenous philosopher whose first language is Quechua, tries to give Quechuan basic concepts a bilingual expression through Quechua and Spanish.³⁸ Another case is that, even though he is not of the indigenous origin, De Hoyos Adalberto enters a community to listen to the worldview of the Zapotecan people.³⁹ Such efforts would never be made where people concentrate on relativizing or deconstructing their own tradition ignoring the continuity with the oral language.

Yet there seems to be a significant difference between Norinaga and the majority of Latin American indigenous communities. When Norinaga started his academic career, there had already been different versions of the text *Kojiki*, which he considered transmitted the ancient oral language, though the text was, from the beginning, written with Chinese characters because ancient Japanese did not have a writing system. In any case, Norinaga had a written text to read, analyze, and comment on. In contrast, many Latin American indigenous communities seem to lack such written texts that can be considered to reveal the pre-Hispanic worldview.

Regarding this point, it is interesting that Norinaga does not always insist on the existence of written texts as primary sources for his studies. As Sagara Toru highlights, Norinaga is intensely interested in contemporary rural popular customs and folkways such as weddings and funerals. His interest in these matters undeniably testifies that he is one of the precursors of the modern folklorist and anthropologist.⁴⁰ Kumano Sumihiko also affirms that Norinaga understands deeply that customs and traditions in rural areas can be sometimes treated as primary resources for his studies of the ancient Japanese spirit. Thus, Norinaga does not believe that there is no way to approach the original or primitive layer of our experience where classical texts were not written down in that past time. Even in the present time, approaches to it are available in such forms as the customs or oral traditions of rural people. That is why he loved to travel to rural areas and have conversations with native people there.

Such folkloric insight was supported by his evaluation of the value of language that lacked a written system, as may be found in one of his polemical texts, titled *Kuzubana*. According to Norinaga, it is not possible to determine which is superior between oral and written communication. It is true that letters or characters enable us to transmit certain contents to others beyond spatial and temporal

³⁸ Mejía Huamán, Mario, Teqse. *La cosmovisión andina y las categorías quechuas como fundamentos para una filosofía peruana y de américa andina*, Lima: Universidad Ricardo Palma, 2011; Mejía Huamán, Mario, *Anti Yachay Wayllukuy. Filosofía andina*, Editorial Académica Española, 2019.

³⁹ See his contribution to this E-Book.

⁴⁰ Sagara Toru, Motoori Norinaga, 195, 204.

distance without any divergence. However, he argues against his Confucian opponent who insists on the superiority of a writing system over oral language, citing a Chinese proverb: “letters do not tell all that is meant” (8, 124). He points out that, as Chinese people admit, we can orally explain in detail those contents that cannot be conveyed through writing. He even adds that if letters had not existed and we had had only an oral tradition, then we would know the more detailed and nuanced meaning of the ancient tradition. This is because each generation would have made a greater effort to explain the tradition in a more complete way. In reality, since the eighth century, Japan has produced various written classical texts that have long been misunderstood because of *karagokoro*, that is, a belief in the superiority of Chinese civilization. Norinaga warns that it is a mere prejudice on the part of those who are accustomed to a writing system, to imagine that it would be highly inconvenient not to have characters. He affirms that, in civilizations without characters, people have a different mode of thinking and living; therefore, oral communication works differently without any inconvenience. Similarly, in the present day, those who use letters may frequently depend on them and lose their ability to hold something in their memories, while those who do not depend on them can retain details much better than those who rely on a writing system. Along the same lines as Norinaga, we can affirm that people whose language is based on oral tradition, which lacks a writing system, can find a certain access to the original oral tradition. Each culture has its own way of exploring this tradition. It may be by recollecting oral tradition and folklore, or by analyzing the grammatical structure of the language and the meaning of some central vocabulary, or by investigating manuscripts written by foreign observers that describe the natives. In any case, the important lesson presented by Norinaga is not to abandon the exploration of tracing a continuity with the world of oral tradition that constitutes at least a part of various cultures even to the present day.

3. Philosophical Significance of Norinaga’s Criticism against *Karagokoro*

Norinaga’s attitude and arguments in his criticism against *karagokoro* are, as we have seen, highly controversial. Many modern scholars have completely rejected him in this respect, while they have praised him, for example, for his great achievements of providing commentaries to Japanese classical texts, for his scientific methodology of investigation, or for his deep insight into Japanese grammar. In contrast, we have seen that his chauvinistic discourse is part of a performance for his contemporary Japanese audience to urge them toward a way of thinking that “conforms to reason and order.” Some aspects of his performance seem to be applicable to those people whose culture is in danger of succumbing to the overwhelming influence of a dominant foreign culture. In other words, his criticism of *karagokoro* can be interpreted as a kind of reaction of intellectuals motivated by a sense of crisis concerning their own culture. It is an exploration of the possibility of independent or autonomous thinking by scholars in culturally marginal regions that have been subject to foreign cultural dominance. In short, Norinaga can be considered a precursor of those thinkers who have struggled to

“decolonize the mind.”⁴¹ It is not necessary to accept or reject all of Norinaga’s criticism against *karagokoro*. The important thing is to distinguish different points, to learn something applicable to the present globalized world. Below I tentatively differentiate his defensible points, not defensible but comprehensible points, and indefensible points that should be rejected.

First, today, some aspects of Norinaga’s criticism against *karagokoro* can teach important things not only for Japan but also for culturally marginal areas under the dominant influence of foreign cultures. Against the present major liberal stream of thought, Norinaga recommends that people explore the proper form to express their own thinking, starting from an absolute affirmation of the fundamental value of their own culture. Norinaga’s deep insight into the richness of oral traditions also instructs us to reconsider the richness and complexity of the pre-reflexive form of life even in the contemporary world, which is almost universally covered over by alphabetic systems. It is true that Norinaga is dedicated to investigating this richness principally through the reading of books. But he suggests the possibility of other methodologies such as collecting folklore or pursuing studies of grammatical form and the meanings of central vocabularies of one’s own language.

Equally, we can learn a lot from Norinaga in definitively refusing to accept a foreign theory as a universal criterion for understanding and evaluating our own reality. This does not mean that he demands that we quit learning about thought and knowledge produced or discovered by foreigners. Rather, he requires us to stop unconditionally adopting a foreign perspective as universally valid to objectivize the reality in which we live. This aspect concerns a practice not only of Japan but also of many countries in Latin America where the intellectuals tend to devote themselves to applying foreign thinking to the reality of their own society. In these aspects, Norinaga’s arguments can be applied to cases in which inhabitants of culturally marginal countries resist the threat of extinction of their own culture by overwhelming foreign influence in order to express themselves through their own language.

Second, it is not necessary nor desirable for us to follow Norinaga in those chauvinistic attitudes that have provoked repugnance against him. For example, *Gyojugaigen*, his description of the Japanese history of foreign affairs, contains many expressions that are extremely arrogant, without the least respect for other countries. This attitude is no longer acceptable. However, it may be comprehensible if we recall that his criticism of *karagokoro* is a kind of performance for his contemporary Japanese audience. His intention is not to humiliate foreigners nor to violate foreign culture but to warn the Japanese against their distorted attitude. In fact, many Japanese scholars in his time looked down on the Japanese traditional worldview, instead seeing Chinese civilization as superior. Through a provocative style of performance, Norinaga tried to urge them to return to an attitude which “conforms to reason and order.” Moreover, as Muraoka notes, we must take into consideration the historical backdrop against which, at that time in the late eighteenth century, Japanese intellectuals were beginning to perceive the real foreign presence of Russia or other Western

⁴¹ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, James Currey Ltd, 1986

nations in East Asia. Some Japanese scholars, including Norinaga, were starting to be motivated by a premodern form of nationalism.⁴²

To understand Norinaga's intention behind his performance, let us imagine a diplomatic negotiation between two countries in dispute with each other over a territorial issue. Two diplomats represent the national interests of each one's own country and, therefore, defend its official logic. In such negotiations, the two diplomats must set aside their personal opinion about the reality. A diplomat may sometimes insist on the official logic of his/her own country even if it seems absurd to him/her, or even if the logic of the opponent country seems right. If he/she admitted that the opponent's position seemed more reasonable, then he/she would lose sight of the interests of his/her own country. Or, if a diplomat behaved like a relativist affirming that both the logic of the opponent country and of his/her own country had an advantage, he/she would extremely weaken the position of his/her own country in a negotiation. Norinaga would connect such an attitude to Akinari's relativistic one, while an attitude that based on reason and order corresponds to being able to represent the interests of one's own community.

Finally, in which aspects is Norinaga's criticism against *karagokoro* wrong? We can answer this question in short by saying that Norinaga is not totally true to his own thinking. Put differently, he is not totally consistent with his own thought when he ignores the possibility of constructing a respectful relationship with foreign thinkers.

In Section 1, we described Norinaga's position under the term "situated universalism" contrasting it both with Confucian universalism, on the one hand, and with Akinari's relativism, on the other. Norinaga claims that Confucian scholars pretend to contemplate the world from a universal perspective without being situated at a specific point, but they in actuality simply understand and evaluate the Japanese reality based on the criteria from a dominant Chinese worldview. At the same time, he blames Akinari's relativism for making every belief empty. Akinari affirms that every mythology is true for the people who belong to the culture that has produced it; Japanese mythology is true for Japanese, while the Chinese one is true for Chinese, and the Indian one for Indians. From Norinaga's perspective, this affirmation makes every belief empty. If a Japanese says that he/she believes the Japanese mythological worldview while affirming that the Chinese view is true for Chinese, and the Indian view is so for Indian people, this proves that he/she does not believe the Japanese view as universally true. This means that this view is not valid in China and India. For Norinaga, such restricted belief spoils exactly what he intends to reestablish through learning Japanese classical texts, that is, the truthful spirit of the ancient Japanese, who simply lived according to the Japanese mythological worldview. That is why he determined to reject the relativistic higher perspective and fix his sights on Japanese soil. This position is comprehensible even today.

However, it does not mean that Norinaga's position is completely consistent. As just stated, he has

⁴² Muraoka, Motoori Norinaga 2, 133-6.

deep insight into the weak points both of Confucian universalism and Akinari's relativism; thus, he understands very well not only what a universalistic view means but also a relativistic view. As discussed in Section 1, in the controversies with his contemporary scholars, he understood well what a higher viewpoint means, that is, a viewpoint that allowed him to impartially observe his own culture and other cultures. In fact, it cannot easily be presumed that he did not have enough intelligence to surmise what a bird's-eye view would be. On the contrary, he was so intelligent as to conclude that the pretense of taking a bird's-eye view contained a deception in that it ignored our situatedness in a particular place, as a result of which we cannot be totally impartial to the culture to which we belong. Norinaga's problem consists precisely in this moment. He commits the error of disguising himself as if he had no understanding of this relativistic viewpoint to which he is actually open. In other words, he does not integrate into his doctrine the fact that he is actually willing to consider a broader perspective in spite of rejecting it. We do not claim that he should be a relativist like Akinari, but he should not completely dismiss this relativistic viewpoint. In other words, he should have explored a way in which to integrate the higher, relativistic perspective into his situated universalism, or at least to make these two standpoints compatible. Let us explain what this means.

In his essay titled "Karagokoro" in *Tamakatsuma*, Norinaga recognizes that the original condition of the human truthful spirit, before it was contaminated by *karagokoro*, was the same in every country. In other words, he acknowledges that, whether in Japan, in China, or in India, all people were originally and naturally truthful. In addition, he admits that every country has its own version of mythology about the origin and the development of the world. His situated universalism ascertains without justification that the true history of the world's origin has been conserved intact only in Japan (8, 309). Now, we claim that his failure does not consist in this dogmatic assertion but in *a priori* excluding of all the possibilities of producing thoughts conformable to reason and order in other countries. He writes:

We should recognize that in other countries, [...] people only tell lies and talk vanities. [...] it is shameful that until today, people in foreign countries always say absurd things. It is clearly because they do not have correct version of history of gods. (8, 311)

He denies any possibility that a foreigner can develop a faithful or truthful teaching on the grounds of the mythology or basic worldview of the culture in his/her own country. His assumption that foreign people only tell lies, vanities, or absurdities is insufficient based on his own premises. If the original condition of the human spirit is everywhere healthy, and if each community has its own version of mythology, even though it is untrue from Norinaga's perspective, then he should admit the possibility that someone in a foreign country may produce thoughts which are rooted in the soil of the culture there. It is true that Norinaga, rejecting all types of relativism, does not admit the truth of any doctrine produced on the basis of a foreign mythology. Nevertheless, this does not mean that every notion

produced by a foreign culture is a lie, vanity, or an absurdity. A foreign thinker could produce thoughts in a way that is truthful to his own culture. Such thoughts would, in Norinaga's terms, conform to reason and order (順道), if not true. In other words, far from being lies, vanities, or absurdities, such thoughts are worth respecting even from Norinaga's perspective. Norinaga does not recognize this possibility, however, and simply dismisses all foreign thoughts as lies, vanities, and absurdities. This is simply an arrogant and unjustifiable chauvinism.

We can learn from here that a situated universalism can avoid chauvinism and an exclusive attitude toward other cultures. In this respect, a situated universalist can be compared to a diplomat who can respect his/her counterpart from a country in conflict with his/her own as long as his/her counterpart behaves in a truthful way toward this counterpart's own country. If each diplomat represents his/her own country, neither one admits the truth in the claim of the counterpart. If this diplomat confessed that the claim made by his/her own country seems weaker than that of the country with which the diplomat's own country is in conflict, then he/she would neglect his/her duty as a diplomat. Equally, if the diplomat behaved like a relativist, saying that each claim were true for each country, this affirmation would make his/her country's claim in a negotiation empty. These are not attitudes that garner respect. A diplomat can distinguish whether his/her counterpart speaks in a way worthy of respect or an untruthful way toward the country that he/she represents. In the former case, the diplomat and his/her counterpart can respect mutually independently from whether or not they share the same recognition, so that the negotiation reaches an agreement and their countries are reconciled. In this way, the relationship between two situated universalists is not always hostile antagonism. Each of them claims his/her own truths, which are not compatible. Neither of them compromises. Nevertheless, as long as they are truthful to their own position, one can respect the other. There can be a kind of solidarity between people with incompatible claims and beliefs.

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A Study of the Attempt to Develop Latin American Philosophy: With a Focus on Enrique Dussel's Theory of the Other

Kasumi Ichinose

Introduction

The word “philosophy” is often referred to thinking systems born in ancient Greece and that flourished in Europe. However, recently, a relationship between philosophy and locality is gaining attention. The questions are: Is there philosophy outside of the occidental world? If there is, how? Does it have the same theoretical strictness as in the occidental world?

Among non-Western regions, especially in Latin America, such discussions have occurred actively since the early 20th century.⁴³ In this article, a movement called “Philosophy of Liberation” is introduced as an example of an attempt to develop the “Latin American philosophy.”

“Philosophy of Liberation” is a movement that occurred in Latin America during the ‘70s. This philosophical movement was influenced by the “Theology of Liberation,” which arose in the late ‘60s⁴⁴. “Philosophy of Liberation” focuses on the dependency theory and the liberation from it; however, each thinker has different disputed points. One of the most notable thinkers of this movement is Enrique Dussel.

Dussel was born in Argentine in 1934 and exiled to Mexico in 1975 being persecuted by the military regime. Dussel’s main work titled *Filosofía de la liberación* shares the same name as the movement. *Filosofía de la liberación* was published in Spanish in 1977, and the latest version was reprinted as the 5th edition in 1996. In this article, the 5th edition is used as the quoted source.

In this book, Dussel understands the world as divided into “center” and “periphery” based on geopolitical factors. In this present world, the so-called occidental world, such as Europe and the United States, is considered the “center,” while other areas like Latin America, Africa, and Asia are regarded as the “periphery.”⁴⁵ He explains this geopolitical classification using Levinas’ concepts, such as “totality” and “the Other.” Dussel rephrases “totality” as “center,” “imperial,” and “oppressors,” while “the Other” is reworded as “periphery,” “exteriority,” “the poor,” and “the oppressed,” etc.

His *Filosofía de la liberación* greatly influenced the intelligentsia in Latin America and has been discussed in and outside this region. However, evaluations and opinions on the work are poles apart.

⁴³ For example, for previous works, we can see: Zea, 1945; Frondizi, 1949; Salazar Bondy, 2006[1968]; Miro Quesada, 1974; Argote 1993; Nucchietelli, 2002 and 2010; Nakano, 2017.

⁴⁴ Regarding “Theology of Liberation,” some of the main works are Gutierrez, 1971, and Boff and Boff, 1987. Regarding “Philosophy of Liberation,” there are several general surveys, including Cerutti, 2006[1983]; Scannone, 2009; Dussel, 1995[1977].

⁴⁵ In fact, Japan is placed as a “center” country. Dussel, 1996[1977], p.14.

For example, American philosopher Ofelia Schutte severely criticizes Dussel and calls this book a self-contradictory ideology. Finnish theologian Elina Vuola also criticizes him from a feminist standpoint. Argentine philosopher Horacio Cerutti Guldberg, who is known as one of the key figures of the Philosophy of Liberation, views Dussel's theory negatively observing that Dussel pretends his own position to be exempted from criticism. Meanwhile, American philosopher Michael Barber believes that Dussel's philosophy applies Emmanuel Levinas' ethics in a practical dimension and puts a high value on it. Argentine philosopher Walter D. Mignoro positively views Dussel's text, reading it as a weapon for social transformation.⁴⁶

In this article, to clarify the structure and motivation of Dussel's theory of the Other in *Filosofía de la liberación*, two of the most conflicting texts are investigated: Schutte's "The Philosophy of Liberation in Critical Perspective" in *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*, which criticizes Dussel, and Barber's *Ethical Hermeneutics*, which defends him.

Section 1. Two interpretations of Dussel's theory of the Other

In this section, an overview of Schutte's point of view is presented, and the focus of her criticism is clarified. Then, Barber's argument against Schutte's criticism is examined.

Schutte points out that the theory of the Other in Dussel's *Filosofía de la liberación* falls into a self-contradiction, and the cognitive scheme he embraces in this book has the same structure as the fanatic ideology that he originally tried to criticize. Schutte understands Dussel's "the Other" as follows:

In religion, this refers to God as the absolute Other, from which all moral commands emanate. In Philosophy, it is the Other as oppressed, who nevertheless is the earthly revelation of the absolute Other. From this standpoint, the earthly Other's demands signify the absolute Other's commands. The supreme law of Dussel's ethical system is "service to the Other," a maxim that may include the duty to lay down one's life for the Other. But "the Other" is only a metaphysical term which, like its ethical counterpart "alterity," serves as a placeholder for a vast number of metonymic replacements. (...) Through the strategic placement and development of the formula "the Other demands justice," it is possible to move from a religious context to a political, social, economic, or metaphysical context without engaging in a detailed elaboration of arguments in support of particular claims.⁴⁷

"To say 'yes-to-the-Other,' to the political Other," Dussel concludes, "is the *absolute*

⁴⁶ Schutte, 1993. Vuola, 2000. Cerutti, 2006[1983]. Barber, 1998. Mignoro, 2000.

⁴⁷ Schutte, 1993, p.186

criterion of a political ethics [*eticidad política*].”⁴⁸

According to Schutte, Dussel replaces the meaning of the absolute Other—which is God in religion, from which all moral commands arise—with the earthly oppressed through the substitution of terminology and its context. That is, moral values, such as justice and goodness, are associated with the acts of the Other, or of the earthly oppressed. Therefore, Schutte accuses that Dussel’s theory of the Other falls into religious absolutism in a political context. Indeed, the following lines from his text help understand Schutte’s argument:

In this way, the liberating act or act of gratuitous kindness, inasmuch as it is beyond the intrasystematic interest, is and cannot not be illegal, against current laws, which, being those of an old just but now oppressive order, are unjust. The subversive illegality is the inevitable position of liberation.⁴⁹

Here, Dussel argues that the liberating act, which is considered an act of gratuitous kindness, is inevitably illegal and subversive under current laws. Schutte believes that Dussel justifies this illegal and subversive liberating act through religion for the absolute Other. So, what kind of conclusion does Schutte think will be brought by this absolutism of liberating act for the Other?

The prolific use of “metonymic reasoning” is most disturbing insofar as whatever is associated with “totality” becomes a candidate for destruction, while anything associated with “alterity” is thought to carry an absolute mandate for justice on its behalf. When used in conjunction with certain intransigent political positions -how else would an absolutist ethics function in society?- the practical results of “the philosophy of liberation” as elaborated by Dussel and other exponents of this type of analectical reasoning appear truly frightening.⁵⁰

Schutte is of the opinion that endowing the Other with an absolute value and regarding the liberating act for the Other as having an absolute moral value lead to fascism or fetishism⁵¹ that Dussel wanted to avoid, making it theoretically self-contradictive. Thus, she concludes that Dussel’s *Filosofía de la*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.187 the Italic and the brackets are by Schutte.

⁴⁹ Dussel,1996, p.85. Hereinafter, Dussel’s quotations are translated by the author from the Spanish version.

⁵⁰ Schutte, 1993, p.190

⁵¹ In Dussel’s text, the word “fetishism” is always used as the worship of “totality.” “Totality,” mentioned later in this article, is a word adopted from Levinas, and Dussel expands the meaning from a merely metaphysical term to a social, non-abstract term.

liberación is merely an ideology justifying the claims of National-Popular Liberation⁵², which Dussel supports.

We have seen that the focus of Schutte's criticism is on the absolutism and deification of the Other, which signifies the earthly oppressed.

Next, we discuss how Barber objects to Schutte's criticisms in *Ethical Hermeneutics*. In the preface to this work, Barber defends Dussel by observing that "the substance of Dussel's philosophy can be grasped through the idea of an "ethical hermeneutics" that seeks to interpret reality from the viewpoint of the "Other," as philosopher Emmanuel Levinas presents him or her"⁵³ and claims that his philosophy is not "indulging in irrationalism"⁵⁴ as claimed by Schutte.

Barber examines⁵⁵ Dussel's rationality based on the rationality of Levinas' theory. According to Barber, in Levinas' theory of the Other, the foundation of rationality is self-critique, which is an essence of the Other. This self-critique is regarded as a spirit of phenomenology, and he presumes that this concept originates in phenomenology. Phenomenology in this context is thought of as a study that constructs rational thinking by doubting any prior opinion, which is assumed to be natural and revealing hidden horizons. Barber says, "Not only is the rationality of Levinas's position shown in the fact that he uncovers the forgotten Other, but this very Other itself also augments rationality by initiating self-criticism."⁵⁶ The Other questions the I from the outside about what I assure or what I am content with. A human can put a question to oneself, but in the theory of Levinas, as Barber interprets, a spontaneous self-critique can never be truly thorough. "To locate the origin of reflective self-criticism here would leave my spontaneity both unchallenged at its root and intact. Rather, self-critique is born in the Other, who calls my spontaneity itself into question."⁵⁷ Only when the Other appears in front of me, the real self-critique that doubts even my spontaneity will be achieved. Barber identifies this self-criticism by referring to Levinas' words as follows: "The essence of reason consists not in securing for man a foundation and powers, but in calling him into question and in inviting him to justice."⁵⁸

Based on Barber's understanding, the structure itself that the Other puts in question to the I makes Levinas' theory of the Other more rational. He also believes that because this structure is inherited in Dussel's theory of the Other, Dussel's theory cannot be irrational as Schutte interprets it.

So far, we have seen how Schutte criticizes Dussel's theory and how Barber offers a counterargument. But are Schutte's criticisms appropriate? And, does Barber's counterargument really succeed? To examine these two points, first, we must analyze the concepts of Dussel's theory. Then,

⁵² Schutte, 1993, p.178

⁵³ Barber, 1998, preface ix

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xi

⁵⁵ The explanation in this paragraph is based on Barber, pp. 2-8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6

to see whether Barber's counterargument works well, we must inspect whether Levinas' and Dussel's theories of the Other have the same structure because this is the premise that Barber adopts here. In the next section, we investigate some of the core concepts of Dussel's theory of the Other and explore how these concepts relate to each other and whether the structure of the relationship is the same as that of Levinas'.

Section 2. Analysis of the concepts in Dussel's theory of the Other

First, some of the core concepts of the theory of the Other and their relationship in *Filosofía de la liberación* are examined. We take "totality"⁵⁹ and "the Other"⁶⁰ as the fundamental concepts. We analyze how these two concepts are employed in this text and how related core concepts, such as "ethics," "justice," and "responsibility," are used.

"Totality" and "the Other" are counter-concepts, so it is difficult to investigate them separately. Nevertheless, here we start from "totality" as it is the starting point of thought for both Levinas and Dussel.

In *Filosofía de la liberación*, the concept of totality starts from a metaphysical description in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*.⁶¹ Totality is a world that surrounds the "I," a subject of thinking. This world means one's daily horizon, which is captured as a totality with temporality and spatiality. Dussel points out that Western philosophy so far has exclusively given preponderance to temporality neglecting spatial totality. "The where-I-was-born is the predetermination of all other determinations. (...) to be born in another world, to be born especially in a world that predetermines as the past, and therefore determines, never absolutely but sufficiently and radically, the implementation of the future *proyecto*."⁶² ⁶³ That is to say, depending on the place where the spatial totality is located, which forms the world of the I, my future will differ. Therefore, Dussel believes that spatiality is a more fundamental determination than temporality.

Also, in this spatial and temporal totality, I am surrounded by "being (el ser)," which is given a meaning by the I. Per Levinas' definition, totality is where I can have power, and I can dominate all beings through possession or cognition. In other words, all beings in totality are exerted power by the I and are turned into objects that are possessed or known, that is, dominated. However, when these objects speak, they appear as the Other. Like in the case of Levinas', the Other appears from the exterior to the totality, the exterior where I cannot possess. This exteriority is "the ambit from where

⁵⁹ The expression "the same" is a synonym of "totality."

⁶⁰ "Alterity" is also used as a synonym of "the Other."

⁶¹ The explanation in this paragraph is based on Dussel 1996, pp.36-40.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.39

⁶³ Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky, translators of *Filosofía de la liberación* from Spanish to English, made a note that the word "proyecto" is a translation from Heidegger's "Entwurf," though Dussel himself does not mention it in his original text. A.Martinez and C. Morkovsky, 1985[1977], p.24

other persons, as free and not conditioned by my system and not as part of my world, reveals himself.”⁶⁴ Exteriority means places that are outside of the totality, that is, where I cannot exert my power nor dominate.

So far, Dussel’s descriptions of totality and the Other are in the same metaphysical dimension as Levinas’. Totality means the world that the I occupies at the center and is surrounded by beings on which I can exert power. The Other refers to an existence that appears from the exterior to the totality, and I cannot dominate.

Nonetheless, Dussel gradually and intentionally expands the meaning of totality and the Other. The concept of totality does not only designate a world of an I but also has a political connotation. It means a collective conception, and the spatial aspect of it is emphasized. For Dussel, this spatial aspect, as mentioned already, is a more fundamental concept than temporality. Therefore, a totality that is thought of as a collective conception with emphasized spatiality embraces a non-abstract facet. Particularly, Dussel describes the totality in the current world using concrete names of the developed-capitalist countries.⁶⁵ At the same time, the concept of the Other is also modified as a collective conception—which means the earthly oppressed people in developing countries—that is placed exterior to this expanded conception of totality.⁶⁶

For Dussel, the usage of totality and the Other is not completely in the metaphysical dimension like that of Levinas’ but is in a collective meaning that includes a non-abstract dimension. Furthermore, Dussel adopts a concept that Levinas invented, which is the concept of “ethics” representing the moment to establish a relationship with the Other as oppressed by discourse. This concept of ethics is also fundamental for Levinas.

We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. Metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge.⁶⁷

Calling the I into question by the Other, which is never reduced to the totality of the I, is what is called ethics. Accordingly, this questioning is never complete within oneself. Dussel adopts this idea, and he names the questioning by the Other as “ethical conscience,” whereas the questioning that occurs within oneself is named as “moral conscience.”

⁶⁴ Dussel, 1996, p.57

⁶⁵ See part 3.1.3.3 in Dussel, p.90

⁶⁶ See part 2.5.4.3 in Dussel, p.69

⁶⁷ Levinas, 1969, p.43

I call ethical conscience the capacity that one has to listen to the voice of the other, which is transontological words that burst into from beyond the current system. The just protest of the other can put questions to the moral principles of the system. Only those who have ethical conscience can accept this questioning starts from the absolute criterion: the other as other in justice.⁶⁸

For Dussel, ethics is employed based on the usage by Levinas. For Levinas as well as for Dussel, the I can establish an ethical relationship with the Other through discourse. However, for Dussel, this discourse is realized as the liberation of the Other. The ethical conscience, as shown in the previous citation, is necessary for accepting that the questioning starts from the absolute criterion, which means, the Other as other in justice. This means ethics needs the Other to be in justice. As already seen, Schutte regards Dussel's concept of justice as the central concept that demonstrates his theory as irrational, which is the absolutism for the Other, but let us check how this concept is used in his text.

The practical affirmation of atheism is the struggle for justice. It means, those who fight for the liberation of the poor affirm practically that the system is unjust, that is, not divine. (...) Thus, to discover and take a risk for the poor is to know the non-divinity of the oppressive totality (because the divinity, the absolute Other, is goodness itself, justice).⁶⁹

As we have seen, indeed, we can recognize that the Other, which is described as the poor, and justice are closely tied. However, it is important to pay attention to the term "the system." The system is a term that paraphrases totality in the social dimension and represents injustice that one has to struggle against. So, in what sense is this system, that is the totality, unjust?

The hunger of the oppressed, of the poor is a harvest of an unjust system. As such, it does not have place in the system. (...) to satiate structurally the hunger of the oppressed is to change radically the system.⁷⁰

Domination is the act by which the other is coerced to participate in the system that alienates him. He is forced to perform actions contrary to his nature, contrary to his historical essence. Domination is an act of pressure, of force. The servant obeys out of fear, out of habit.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Dussel, 1996, p.77

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.121-122

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.72

The above citations show that the system produces the hunger of the oppressed and the poor as its harvest. In addition, the act of bringing the Other into the system that alienates him/her is called domination. Hence, the system is a place where there are oppressors as well as oppressed. Dussel calls the system unjust, and by “unjust,” he refers to a state where there is an oppressor-oppressed relationship. If we think in this term, what he calls justice, which is the opposite of the concept of unjust, is a state where this relationship does not exist, so it is not the absolutism for the Other as Schutte conceives.

Schutte’s interpretation of the concept of justice is inconsistent with some of Dussel’s texts. If justice was thought to be the absolutism for the Other, oppression by totality has to be a necessary evil, because, for this justice, there has to be the Other who is oppressed. Schutte herself mentioned that Dussel’s theory of the Other has a structure in which the Other is ethically privileged as long as being oppressed.

The argument that exteriority is always logically privileged rests on an artificial premise, namely, the ability to set up a certain logical space (the position of the Other), which by definition is external to a given “totality,” or system of domination. Thus, according to analectical logic, the oppressed must always speak “from the exteriority of the established system.” To do so, they must be represented as morally privileged prior to entering into “the system.”⁷²

If Schutte’s interpretations are correct, when the liberation for the Other would be realized, there would be no Other and there would be no justice. However, in Dussel’s text, he explains that “political systems or social formations can go through four structural moments”⁷³: 1. The period of liberation, 2. The period of reconstruction, 3. The period of stabilization, 4. The period of decadence. Through liberation, a classic order is destructed, and then a new order is constructed. This order stays stable for a moment, and after a while, it becomes corrupt. Dussel describes the second, the period of reconstruction, as the time for justice.⁷⁴ This point shows that Schutte’s interpretation is at variance with Dussel’s text. We can read it consistently when the concept of justice signifies the state when the oppressor-oppressed relationship does not exist. This comprehension of the concept of justice and social formation also explains that for Dussel the practice of liberation does not have a straight structure but a dynamic and circular structure that repeats creation and destruction. Dussel modifies Levinas’ structure into a social dimension, that is, through discourse the Other and the I form a

⁷² Schutte, 1993, p.189

⁷³ Dussel, 1996, p.98

⁷⁴ “The second period is of the organization of a new mode of production and the state. It is the time of Lenin, of Lincoln, of Borge. It is time of justice. There is room for everyone.” *Ibid.*, p.98

relationship. As the liberation of the Other is based on a dynamic structure, we can understand that Dussel does not seem to presume a concept of justice as the absolutism for the Other. Dussel's liberation aims to serve the Other, who is variable in the cycle of social formation, so the concept of justice for Dussel cannot be something that aims at the absolutism for specific Others, and therefore, it is not fanatical as Schutte thinks.

For Levinas, ethics is a concept in which the Other calls the I into question, and this calling into question is a relationship based on discourse. But in this discourse, what the Other speaks is never perfectly comprehended by the I.

Whoever speaks attends his manifestation, is non-adequate to the meaning that the hearer would like to retain of it as a result acquired outside of the very relationship of discourse, as though this presence in speech were reducible to the *Sinngebung* of him who listens. Language is the incessant surpassing of the *Sinngebung* by the signification.⁷⁵

Even if I give a meaning to the speech of the Other and reckon that I understand his/her words, the words of the Other are never reduced to an understanding of the I. I never really know in what sense the Other speaks, nor what the meaning of the Other's words really is, because the Other is always outside of the totality of the I and never settles in my understanding.⁷⁶ Hence, a discourse between the Other and the I is undone at the moment of receiving the speech and slips off my understanding. That is why the speaker and the receiver have to try to make a discourse repeatedly. A discourse is not composed of straight movements but of dynamic and circular movements that repeat creation and destruction.

Dussel adopts this structure of discourse and replaces it in a social context, which is called liberation. Practicing liberation for the sake of realizing justice for the Other and creating a new order might be merely actions I reckon that benefit the Other, and it can differ from what the Other really demands. Therefore, it is required to destruct what was once constructed and reconstruct a new one. Yet, liberation can never be fully accomplished, for I cannot fully understand the Other. Based on this impossibility, repeating an effort for liberation is needed.

Supposedly, by liberation, Dussel wants to aim at constructing an ethical relationship with the Other using the structure of Levinas' discourse. Explaining the creation of an ethical relationship in the real society using this structure seems to work well as a non-abstract application of the theory of Levinas.

⁷⁵ Levinas, 1969, p.296

⁷⁶ In fact, Dussel uses a method called "analéctica," which is used particularly by some thinkers of Philosophy of Liberation. Dussel says that by using this method, one can translate words from the Other, though it is not fully understood. Barber praises him saying that Dussel overcomes Levinas' defect (see Barber pp.50-57), but this point needs further examination. According to Cerutti, this term is invented by Juan Carlos Scannone (see Cerutti, p.372).

Section 3. Structural differences between the two theories of the Other

The previous section investigates the relationship between the Other and the I that Dussel tries to establish by liberation, including central conceptions of Dussel's theory of the Other. Certainly, the practice of liberation, which is composed of dynamic and circular movements, has the same structure as the structure of discourse, which Levinas considers as the ethical relationship between the Other and the I. However, can we really say that Dussel's and Levinas' theories of the Other have the same structure, or to put it another way, is *Filosofía de la liberación* comprehensible using the framework of Levinas' theory of the Other as Barber argues? Here, we examine the structural difference between Dussel's and Levinas' theories of the Other and why this difference occurs.

For Levinas as well as for Dussel, what is called ethics is to put the I into question by the Other. For Levinas, the I is posited as responsible by the Other's resistance against the I's possession or domination, that is, by the Other's calling the I into question. By being called into question, I am imposed responsibility and I cannot avoid it.

(...) in discourse, I expose myself to the questioning of the Other, and this urgency of the response -acuteness of the present- engenders me for responsibility; as responsible I am brought to my final reality.⁷⁷

Thus, I cannot evade by silence the discourse which the epiphany that occurs as a face opens, (...) it is irrecusable. The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no "interiority" permits avoiding.⁷⁸

When the Other calls me into question, the I cannot refuse nor ignore it by silence. It is because silence itself is already one type of response. In other words, this shows that I am responsible. Therefore, I cannot evade this responsibility. Moreover, this responsibility is "an infinite responsibility"⁷⁹ and "increasing in the measure that it is assumed,"⁸⁰ so I can never say that a certain level is enough. Then, why do I have to assume such responsibility? According to Levinas, responsibility is required because the fact that I cannot evade this responsibility nor transfer it to other people establishes the unicity of the I.⁸¹ However, Levinas adds that even though the responsibility is

⁷⁷ Levinas, 1969, p.178

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.201

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.244

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.244 the Italic is by Levinas

⁸¹ "To utter "I" to affirm the irreducible singularity in which the apology is pursued, means to possess a privileged place with regard to responsibilities for which no one can replace me and from which no one can release me. To be unable to shirk: this is the I." *Ibid.*, p.245. The singularity here means "the unicity of subjectivity" *Ibid.*, p.246.

not something I can evade, it is possible not to assume it. Not assuming the responsibility means that I do not accept resistance or call into question the Other, and this connotes that the I negates the Other or kills the Other. Yet, killing the Other is not the same as establishing a relationship with the Other. At the same time, if I do not assume this responsibility, my unicity will never be guaranteed. Without unicity, I am no more I, and I am reduced to a mere impersonal thing.⁸² This concept of responsibility shows that it is essentially unavoidable to assume responsibility by being called into question, that is, to establish a relationship with the Other by discourse.

Also, “an I that has arisen in enjoyment as separated, but whose separation would itself be necessary for infinity *to be* -for its infinitude is accomplished as the ‘facing.’”⁸³ For Levinas, infinity denotes the Other or something exterior to totality, and infinitude means the alterity of the Other. Separation signifies letting the I stand as an existence that has unicity, and the alterity of the Other is accomplished by the facing, that is, the face of the Other appears in front of me and calls me into question. Paradoxically, for the existence of this Other, the existence of the I, who has unicity, is needed because I cannot establish a relationship with the Other until I make myself the starting point beforehand. That is to say, for the responsibility that the Other imposes on me, I can be myself, and also, I am needed for the existence of the Other. As we see here, for Levinas, to be imposed an unavoidable responsibility by the Other is an important factor for making the I exist as well as the Other. Since this responsibility is unavoidable, I cannot help being passive against it.

The concept of responsibility in Dussel’s text is portrayed significantly differently, though Dussel uses the same word. Responsibility for Dussel is not an unavoidable compulsion but something that requires an active attitude toward the Other. For responding to the Other, that is, to be responsible to the Other, some conditions are needed. Those conditions are “Firstly, to be able to listen to the voice of the Other, it is necessary to be atheistic to the system or to discover its fetishism. Secondly, it is necessary to respect the Other as other.”⁸⁴ A system is, as mentioned previously, an expression of a totality where the Other is oppressed in a social dimension. Fetishism to the system is an attitude that deifies the totality not to be modified or destructed, though it is created by humans.⁸⁵ To respect the Other as other is considered as accepting the alterity of the Other. In sum, to question the deification of an existing system and to accept the alterity of the Other are the conditions for assuming responsibility. Unless a person who owes the responsibility meets those conditions, he/she cannot listen to the voice of the Other.

The contrast between Levinas’ and Dussel’s concept of responsibility is due to a fundamental

⁸² In the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas declares that “This book then does present itself as a defense of subjectivity” (p.26). From this excerpt, we can understand that establishing the unicity of the I is also an important point in Levinas.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp.208-209 the Italic is by Levinas

⁸⁴ Dussel, 1996, p.78

⁸⁵ About “fetishism,” see note 9 of this article.

difference in their theories of the Other. Though for Levinas, responsibility is a concept that one cannot avoid assuming, for Dussel, it is a concept that needs some conditions to assume. So, in Dussel's text, this results in the existence of the I whose unicity is not ensured.

This point shows that for Dussel the subject who assumes responsibility differs from the subject in Levinas', and Dussel does not take account of the problem of the unicity of the subject. In *Filosofía de la liberación*, some historical figures are called as "hero(es) of liberation": for example, Simon Bolívar, Fidel Castro, San Martín, etc.⁸⁶ On the other hand, "antiheroes" are expressed as "heroes of the system," and "dominating heroes": for example, Julius Caesar, Hernán Cortés, Napoléon, etc.⁸⁷ This distinction between "hero" and "antihero" seems obviously based on the distinction established by Dussel between the dominant and the dominated group at that time. These "heroes of liberation" are described as people who practice liberation for the oppressed Other, questioning a fetishism of the system and respecting the Other, that is to say, who respond to the Other and who assume responsibility. All of them are people who emerge from the dominated group. From this description, we can understand that for Dussel the subject who assumes the responsibility of the Other is on the dominated side or the side of the Other.

So, for Dussel, totality or the I, that is the subject in the metaphysical dimension, changes into an oppressive system in a social dimension, and it loses its property as a subject. Instead, this property is given to the Other, and it causes a paradox that I, who assume the responsibility, am the Other. To put the I in the place of the Other can have the same meaning as saying "I am the Other," but this is thought to be logically inconsistent⁸⁸. Moreover, this way of modification by Dussel results in diminishing the significance of the theory of the Other for Levinas. For Levinas, it is not possible to think of "if I were the Other." The I cannot understand or translate, and it is "the radical impossibility of seeing oneself from the outside and of speaking in the same sense of oneself and of the others."⁸⁹ So for Levinas, the very facts that I can never place myself in the Other's position and I cannot speak for the Other are necessary for constructing an ethical relationship with the Other. However, for Dussel, because this replacement of the I in the place of the Other is possible, it loses the original ethical significance of the theory of the Other.⁹⁰ This indicates that Dussel's theory of the Other is not comprehensible by

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.98

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.97

⁸⁸ Elina Vuola criticizes Dussel's positioning of the Other and the I from another point of view. She argues from a feminist perspective and points out that Dussel's usage of "the Other" is based on a man's viewpoint, and that for women, a woman is not "the Other" but "the I." "Many feminist theorists take a critical distance to Dussel's kind of use of the term "Otherness," or "alterity."...woman as the absolute Other is a male projection. In this situation, the man in fact does not encounter the woman. Woman's alterity is not equivalent to woman's being for herself." Vuola, p.154.

⁸⁹ Levinas, 1969, p.53

⁹⁰ Cerutti rejects Dussel's attempt to represent the words of the Other and says that this is also a repression. Cerutti indicates that the role of a philosopher for Dussel is "master" or "prophet" who "teach to think" "the Other (disciple, poor, people, etc.) who lacks the capacity for thinking." Therefore, it falls into salvationism. Cerutti, 2006, pp.414-417.

the framework of Levinas' theory of the Other.

However, it is too early to conclude that Dussel's theory does not have any significance. We have to consider why Dussel had to make this modification. This question is related to why a liberating subject should be responsible to the Other and also to why liberation should be practiced. The answer to this question is that the most fundamental belief in building his theory is that in society, there should not be a relation of oppression. The desire for a state where there is no oppressor-oppressed relation, in other words, a just state, is the foundation of the theory and is also what liberation aims for. That is to say, the idea of a relationship between totality and the Other rests upon the belief in justice.

What will be the consequence of his concept of justice being more fundamental than the relationship with the Other? When the concept of totality transforms into a collective conception in a social dimension it becomes oppressive, and simultaneously, the concept of the Other transforms into oppressed people. While for Levinas the theory of the Other aims to establish an ethical relationship between totality and the Other, for Dussel, the objective of liberation is to realize justice, so to repeat discourse is an interim process that aims at a justice in which there is no oppressor-oppressed relationship. However, as mentioned above, society has four structural moments.⁹¹ Though once justice is realized, this state will no longer be stable and will inevitably collapse, and a new liberation will be needed. The important difference is that for Levinas, it does not make sense to question the purpose of repeating discourse, whereas, for Dussel, it does make sense. For Dussel, there is a purpose of repeating liberation in the social dimension, i.e., realizing a just state.

For Levinas, totality is a concept that intends to possess or dominate the Other or other beings, but totality itself is not evil. This concept is necessary as a starting point for establishing a relationship with the Other, and through this relationship, totality becomes an ethical being. However, for Dussel, insofar as totality is totality, it is always a being that oppresses the Other, and insofar as the Other is the Other, it is the oppressed. We can understand from here that Dussel's theory of the Other aims to achieve a state in which the framework of the totality and the Other is destructed. When this framework is destroyed and there is no totality nor the Other, it is then that justice is achieved. Aiming for this justice is the objective of his *Filosofía de la liberación*.

Dussel's theory of the Other does not have the same structure as that of Levinas' because in his theory it is possible to put the I in the place of the Other, and thus the subject assuming responsibility is different. The ultimate aim of the theory is to destruct the framework of the theory itself. Therefore, we conclude that Barber's contention that the structure of the theory of the Other in *Filosofía de la liberación* is inherited from Levinas' theory is not persuasive. If Levinas' theory had the same structure as that of Dussel's, as Barber insists, the criticisms by Schutte would be appropriate because, for Levinas, the Other is situated at such a height to which the I can never reach, which is not the same dimension as where I am. Furthermore, it imposes an unavoidable responsibility, so the Other is an

⁹¹ See p.7 of this article.

existence that should receive absolute worship. In other words, the totality in Dussel's context, which is Europe, North America, etc., would be forced to obey the Other, which is Latin America, Africa, Asia, etc. Therefore, this is the very structure that Schutte points out as a "truly frightening" ideology. In this case, it would lead to a self-contradiction in which *Filosofía de la liberación* falls into a fetish ideology that Dussel himself tries to avoid.

The reason why Dussel's theory of the Other differs fundamentally from Levinas' theory, though he adopts many of Levinas' terminologies, is his motivation to solve the problems that Latin America faced. He tried to create a theory to criticize countries with political and economical power at that time, such as the United States and West Europe, and to defend regions that he thought were persecuted by the strong, such as Latin America and Africa. For him, establishing a theory that creates a truly even relationship among components with overwhelming power differences is the most fundamental challenge.

As he emphasizes spatiality, in the real world, it is certain that the where-I-was-born has significant importance on the social gap. It is not possible to choose to be born in a wealthy family in a developed country or a poor family in Latin America. Also, it is difficult to overturn this social gap, which Dussel thinks of as oppression by individual effort alone. To think that it is unjust to be forced into being under oppression by something that is not one's responsibility and that therefore such a system should be overturned is neither a fanatic ideology nor irrational. Such a concept of justice underlies Dussel's theory.

Conclusion

In this article, we examine Dussel's theory of the Other by considering the interpretations of Schutte and Barber. Schutte considers that Dussel's theory is based on a self-contradictive ideology, whereas Barber defends Dussel saying that the essence of his theory is based on Levinas' theory of the Other. Furthermore, we inspect some core concepts of Dussel's theory and clarify its structure and objective. We further show that it is incorrect to say that the essence of Dussel's theory is the same as that of Levinas', as thought by Barber.

Though the counterargument by Barber against Schutte is not persuasive, Schutte's interpretation is neither plausible. Schutte regards Dussel's justice as a concept that aims at absolutism for the Other, when in fact it is a concept that aims at a state where there is no oppressor-oppressed relationship. Also, this just state is not fixed and has a dynamic structure that repeats creation and destruction by liberation. This structure of creation and destruction is what Dussel tries to explain as modifying the concept of discourse from a metaphysical dimension to a social dimension. Therefore, we cannot view Dussel's theory as a fanatic ideology as Schutte implies.

As we have seen, his *Filosofía de la liberación* has a theoretical problem in which there is a logical inconsistency where the I and the Other reverse. However, it must be appreciated as practical thinking,

which is based on the problems that Latin American society suffers from.

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