

From the Editor

The authors of this issue of MST Review have crafted articles that deployed philosophical, sociological, and theological key concepts and themes. Their scholarly works should generate insights for the growth of faith understanding and for the benefit of missionary or pastoral work.

The first study, “Caring through Mothering and Working: Grounding and Verifying *Amoris Laetitia*’s Concern for Families,” by Ferdinand D. Dagmang and Mary Elaine D. Casama, is a contribution to “working mothers” literature as well as an instance of *grounding-verifying Amoris Laetitia*’s “working mother” data. A field research was conducted and this showed that mothering and working behavior are both imbued with Care. The discussion is also meant to provide aid toward the formulation of pastoral programmes mandated by *Amoris Laetitia*. It thus pays special attention to Pope Francis’ call for solidarity with troubled families today.

Thomas Mooren’s “Monotheism Revisited: Islamic Monotheism in Dialogue with Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135-1204)” enters into a dialogue with Maimonides in order to discuss the issues of God’s oneness and of God’s involvement in creation—Divinity’s *being* and *doing*. It also hopes to shed light on the key issues of Divine unity, binity, and trinity—issues that have occupied a lot of theologians from the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Ferdinand D. Dagmang’s “Mga Kuwento at Salaysay ng Pag-asa: Buháy na Mensahe ng mga Propeta at Makabayang Awit-Protesta,” (“Stories and Narratives of Hope: Living Message of Prophets and Patriotic Protest Songs”) features a continuing flow of

history of protest and hope as it attempts to bring together the patriotic messages of Filipino composers/singers and the messages of the prophets of the Jewish Bible. By laying the patriotic songs beside the stories and narratives of Biblical prophets, it unites kindred messages and faces of protest and hope.

Helen C. Romero makes use of the key ideas of René Girard and Walter Wink in crafting “Doing Political Theology in the Time of Violence: Unmasking Violence with René Girard and Walter Wink.” It examines René Girard’s mimetic theory and uses it to surface the nonviolent resistance offered by Jesus. It also brings into service Walter Wink’s approach of ‘engaging powers’ through nonviolent resistance.

Ferdinand D. Dagmang

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Caring through Mothering and Working: Grounding and Verifying *Amoris Laetitia*'s Concern for Families

Ferdinand D. Dagmang* and Mary Elaine D. Casama*

Abstract: This article is a contribution to “working mothers” literature as well as an instance of grounding-verifying *Amoris Laetitia*’s “working mother” data. Two separate semi-structured interviews were conducted with two Filipino working mothers-respondents who expressed caring behavior through mothering and working. The common thread of Care runs through the four salient themes: (1) *care for the family as priority*; (2) *coping with stressors and frustrations*; (3) *practical attitudes toward work*; and (4) *being a working mother as tough yet rewarding*. Discussion around these thematic areas hopes to provide some help in formulating pastoral programmes mandated by *Amoris Laetitia*. It thus pays special attention to Pope Francis’ call for solidarity with troubled families today.

Keywords: *Amoris Laetitia*, family, working mother, mothering, gender and work, solidarity, Pope Francis

Introduction

Pope Francis’ account of “The Experiences and Challenges of Families,” in *Amoris Laetitia*¹ (*AL*,

♦ Dr. Ferdinand D. Dagmang is a Professorial Lecturer at Ateneo de Manila University and Maryhill School of Theology. His current researches deal with Basic Ecclesial Communities, popular religion, ethics, sexuality, and the effects of structures/systems on theories and practices. His book/final report on *Basic Ecclesial Communities: An Evaluation of the Implementation of PCP II in Ten Parishes*, was released in 2015.

❖ Mary Elaine D. Casama earned her degree in AB Psychology from Ateneo de Manila University last May 2017. She is currently employed in a company as a Human Resources associate.

¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family (Vatican: Vatican Press, 2016).

chapter 2) cannot possibly include all experiences or challenges that families would encounter today. Pope Francis is, of course, aware of this when he states: “I will not attempt here to present all that might be said about the family today. Nonetheless, because the Synod Fathers examined the situation of families worldwide, I consider it fitting to take up some of their pastoral insights, along with concerns derived from my own experience.” (*AL* 31) He thus offers some general observations about the many sides of family experiences and challenges. It may be important to mention that, for Pope Francis, it is not divorce that primarily rocks the stability of marriage and family life but those social forces that convey risks and bring about stress, loneliness, suffering, division, separation, abandonment, and other kinds of threats to individuals, family members, and society at large, like extreme individualism, fast pace of life, a cultural decline that fails to promote love or self-giving, narcissism, consumerism, poverty, unemployment, war, terrorism, organized crime, migration, human trafficking, ill-treatment of women, domestic violence, and various forms of discrimination. In this regard, Pope Francis puts emphasis on the need for the presence of pastors (through pastoral plans and interventions) especially where families are extremely troubled by life’s hazards. This is a call toward solidarity with those who are facing various forms of risks and troubles (*AL* 38, 46).

One of those threats to the stability of family life is poverty, with the consequent troubles caused by lack or deprivation of resources. Pope Francis states:

Here I would also like to mention the situation of families living in dire poverty and great limitations. The problems faced by poor households are often all the more trying. For example, if a single mother has to raise a child

by herself and needs to leave the child alone at home while she goes to work, the child can grow up exposed to all kind of risks and obstacles to personal growth. In such difficult situations of need, the Church must be particularly concerned to offer understanding, comfort and acceptance, rather than imposing straightaway a set of rules that only lead people to feel judged and abandoned by the very Mother called to show them God's mercy. Rather than offering the healing power of grace and the light of the Gospel message, some would "indoctrinate" that message, turning it into "dead stones to be hurled at others". (AL 49)

The present study joins Pope Francis in his concern for families, specifically for women who are commonly referred to as "working mothers" or "working moms". It will provide two concrete examples of what he describes as "trying" problems (AL 49) that confront working mothers. The complex nature of the "trying problems" can neither be fully grounded² nor completely verified,³

² In a sense, the present study contributes to giving groundedness to AL's general remarks. In grounded theory, methodic gathering and analysis of data precede explanation and generalizations. Since Pope Francis has not done the methodical process to ground his 'trying problems' category, this article may serve to compensate for that lack. It should be mentioned that an exhortation like AL is not required to be like academic journal articles which are expected to follow rigorous research methods. See, Antony Bryant, *Grounded Theory and Grounded Theorizing: Pragmatism in Research Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006).

³ Verification in social science is a process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain about data to ensure that these represent reality or what actually occurred on the ground or are

but this article may be an attempt in concretizing and serving *AL*'s local pastoral concern. The study, in effect, direct its attention to *Amoris Laetitia*'s pastoral call as it deals with real life working mothers. It thus links arms with people who pay attention to the call of Pope Francis and get involved in the problems confronting "working moms."

Mothering and Working

A mother's role is customarily tied to household concerns. This role, being embedded in and reinforced by cultural institutions, define, to a great extent, a woman's identity—something that is difficult to detach from the outside-the-household opportunities or activities. Nevertheless, as mothers participate in work-employment settings, women's identity tends to expand and this would eventually serve to question and challenge role stereotypes. This would also mean that the idea and practices of working mothers emerged not without criticism especially coming from among those who invoke traditional prescriptions about motherhood: child-rearing and housekeeping/homemaking.

Indeed, for nine months, it is the mother who carries and nurtures the child in her womb. This nurturing role would be extended outside the womb as mothers are expected to be the main care providers for their children as well as for the other household members. However, in modern societies, females join the workforce and are no longer strictly restricted to home chores. As a consequence, a mother's responsibilities in the workplace have developed on top of household concerns (including the "night shift" with the husband). This

clearly derived from the analysis. See Claire Ballinger, "Verification," in Lisa M. Given, ed., *Qualitative Research Methods*, Volumes 1 & 2 (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 913-914.

extension of the mother's reach toward the workplace did not put an end to the mother's connection to care. Rather than obliterate care, the workplace has gradually accommodated it into its broader arena, a factor formerly regulated and tagged by traditional cultures as a principle that belongs primarily to domestic life.

Thus, the term "working mother" has also literally shaped the emerging modern aspects of motherhood care: As "working," the mother may extend her expression of care through the task of providing for the family—the provider role will slowly shed off its exclusively male character as it appears that the role is no longer solely imposed on the father. As "mothering," the mother bears the pre-established expectations set upon her in terms of child-rearing and home-making. Taking care of children and housekeeping remain to be *primarily* associated with the mother or the female.

In the Philippines, traditional socio-cultural definitions of motherhood still prevail. This assumption is taken for granted as this study looks into the mothering aspects of non-traditional work of mothers in the workplace.

What the Available Literature Shows

The desire and pursuit of financial stability for one's family or personal career advancement, alongside the emergence of women empowerment and work opportunities, may have contributed to the rising number of working mothers. In many countries, amidst economic opportunities open to women,⁴ female

⁴ The World Bank, "World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development," (World Bank 2012); <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4391>, accessed 31 October 2016.

employment has been increasing albeit at a slow to moderate rate.⁵ Some may attribute this to the shift toward a more service-oriented economy,⁶ where work appears as characteristically “more feminine.” Female employment status implies that females involve themselves in varying types of occupations depending on different factors and circumstances.⁷ Some may be working part-time or at home to ensure time for the family, while others may choose to work full-time for higher income or to gain better job positions.

However, a section of İnce Yenilmez’s research,⁸ explained how labor, though categorized by class, remains to be characterized by gender division. The study discussed the economic and social changes that have accompanied the rise of capitalism alongside the enlightenment’s focus on reason and individualism; particularly when it comes to gender disparities and limited opportunities for women. Findings suggest the enforcement of gender distinctions (primarily based on the binary male/female and public/private oppositions) both economically and socially, therefore implying the need for policies that ensure equal opportunities for both men and women and an additional challenge for working moms. The following may supplement Yenimez’s study:

⁵ The World’s Women 2015. Chapter 4: Work (2015); <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter4/chapter4.html>, accessed 6 November 2016.

⁶ Meltem İnce Yenilmez, “Female employment and gender inequality: Challenges and opportunities in Turkey,” *Hacettepe University Journal of Economics & Administrative Sciences/Hacettepe Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26, 1 (2015): 131-147.

⁷ D.L. Rodin, K. McNeill, N. Vite-León, & J. Heymann, “Determinants of informal employment among working mothers in Mexico,” *Community, Work & Family*, 15, 1 (2012): 85-99.

⁸ İnce Yenilmez, “Female employment and gender inequality.”

While mothers and would-be mothers have been forced to concentrate on tasks at home and nearby, fathers and would-be fathers have been impelled to go hunting, exploring, and mastering lands and colonizing other humans. Hundred-thousands of years of skills-development to ensure victories in conquests (and defenses) have insidiously imprinted in the male brain the more rational and less affectional dispositions – a disposition to be identified by later generations as “natural” to males and dictating some norms or standards of behaviour.⁹

In today’s context, working conditions do not favor working women in many countries. In small businesses, women are not given the ample opportunity to balance out their lives at the workplace and at home. Some of these working conditions include irregular working hours, overtime work, and, in some cases, frequent business trips.¹⁰ Moreover, there is also a so-called “motherhood wage gap,” where non-mothers earn higher and fathers earn far higher than mothers in the workplace because working mothers incur wage penalties for the times they have to attend to their family responsibilities.¹¹

In the Philippines, additional stress is put on women since amidst the drive and sometimes the need to aid in

⁹ Ferdinand D. Dagmang, “Impingements in Capitalist Economy: Decoding an Obscure Factor in Ethical Analysis,” *Journal of Dharma* 38, 2 (April-June 2013), 206 (195-210).

¹⁰ E. Zdravomyslova, “Working mothers and nannies: Commercialization of childcare and modifications in the gender contract (a sociological essay),” *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 28, 2 (2010): 200-225.

¹¹ International Labor Organization. “Women at Work Trends 2016”; http://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS_457317/lang-en/index.htm, accessed 6 November 2016.

the financial expenses of their families, there is also pressure coming from particular gender expectations. The participation of women in the labor market remains to be lower than that of men because of insufficient decent work opportunities as well as constraints coming from perceived social norms.¹² It was said that the persisting cultural expectations about the domestic responsibilities of women interfere with their participation in the labor market and may hinder them from seeking or maintaining employment. The mere fact the maternity leaves are more dominant in the labor market than are paternity leaves implies the reinforcement of traditional gender roles as this reflects the burden of balancing work life and personal/home life primarily resting on females.¹³ This again further suggests that child-rearing especially after the birth of a child is *primarily* associated with the mother more than the father, instead of it being a shared responsibility.

Female participation in the labor force often depends on the expectations set upon them, since women tend to still be the ones to provide care for their children as well as other family members. Data from a research on working mothers in Mexico¹⁴ showed that although it was of great importance for the participants to earn to support their family, they were still the primary subjects of domestic demands. This consequently created a strain on how women would view their employers; they are said to begin seeing their job as constraints, preventing them from fulfilling domestic

¹² Asian Development Bank, "Gender Equality in the Labor Market in the Philippines," (2013), <https://think-asia.org/handle/11540/796>, accessed 31 October 2016.

¹³ J. Smithson & E. H. Stokoe, "Discourses of work-life balance: Negotiating 'genderblind' terms in organizations," *Gender, Work, and Organization*, 12,2 (2005): 147-167.

¹⁴ Rodin, et al., "Determinants of informal employment among working mothers in Mexico."

duties when they are restricted from attending to the needs of their children.

Women try to create time for care—for their children, their families, and also for their relatives while trying to manage their responsibilities at work.¹⁵ Although working mothers' contribution to the household benefit their children,¹⁶ obtaining working ranks entails more responsibilities and consequently more time allotted for work. Thus, if working mothers want to continue making a significant contribution to their families' finances and perhaps at the same time want to advance in their careers, it may become next to impossible to have a perfect balance between their various roles; and therefore become difficult for women to be career-oriented and family care-oriented at the same time.¹⁷ This may be especially difficult when a mother seeking for career advancement feel unsatisfied in a workplace that prevents her from properly fulfilling her domestic roles. In this connection, many journalists from across the globe continue to popularize and publicize the argument about the difficulty to reconcile the “mother” with the “worker,” which in turn also reinforces the “distressed mother theme.”¹⁸ The media tends to paint a picture of what a good mother entails, often at the expense of working mothers who are indicated as ‘bad’ moms or moms who are not as good as stay-at-home moms.¹⁹

With the many issues linked to the idea of working

¹⁵ Zdravomyslova, “Working mothers and nannies.”

¹⁶ The World's Women 2015. Chapter 4: Work.

¹⁷ Zdravomyslova, “Working mothers and nannies.”

¹⁸ J. Motro & J. Vanneman, “The 1990s shift in the media portrayal of working mothers,” *Sociological Forum*, 30,4 (2015): 1017–1037.

¹⁹ L. Hadfield, N. Rudoe, & J. Sanderson-Mann, “Motherhood, choice and the British media: A time to reflect,” *Gender and Education*, 19, 2 (2007): 255-263; doi: 10.1080/09540250601166100.

mothers, the phenomenon obviously did not emerge without prejudice attached to it. Arguments critical to the idea and prospects of working mothers have been increasing. There have been many qualms about whether or not working mothers can balance work life and home life;²⁰ there have similarly been concerns as to whether a mother's reduced time at home due to work has negative effects on the development of children.²¹ Some, however, reinforced the argument that a mother's employment status does not have a negative effect on her children so long as there remains enough quality time spent with them.²² Youngberg's research further argues that effects of employment will ultimately depend on what will work for a family, in turn providing

²⁰ H. Eija, U. Satu, & M. Kaarina, "See-sawing between work and home: Shift-working mothers' perceptions on work/family balance," *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 1,2 (2012): 31-42. doi: 10.5861/ijrse.2012.v1i2.67.

²¹ J. E. Brown, D. H. Brom, J. M. Nicholson, & M. Bittman, "Do working mothers raise couch potato kids? Maternal employment and children's lifestyle behaviours and weight in early childhood," *Social Science & Medicine*, 70 (2010): 1816-1824. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.01.040; M. S. Morrill, "The effects of maternal employment on the health of school-age children," *Journal of Health Economics*, 30 (2011): 240-257; doi: 10.1016/j.jhealeco.2011.01.001; C. J. Ruhm, "Maternal employment and adolescent development," *Labour Economics*, 15 (2007): 958-983; doi: 10.1016/j.labeco.2007.07.008; J.B. Wills & J. R. Brauer, "Have children adapted to their mothers working, or was adaptation unnecessary? Cohort effects and the relationship between maternal employment and child well-being," *Social Science Research*, 41 (2011): 425-443; doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.10.004; R. L. Sherlock, A. R. Synnes, & M. Koehoorn, "Working mothers and early childhood outcomes: Lessons from the Canadian National Longitudinal study on children and youth," *Early Human Development*, 84 (2007): 237-242; doi: 10.1016/j.earlhumdev.2007.06.003; Zdravomyslova, "Working mothers and nannies."

²² E. Youngberg, "Working mothers: Work-life balance and relative cognitive effects on children," *Business Studies Journal*, 3, 1 (2011): 95-108.

evidence against those who criticize the idea of working mothers.

Society, on the other hand, has no uniform response toward the recent surge of the presence of women in the workplace and how this impacts on their roles at home.²³ The way media has been portraying working mothers has also been creating clashing opinions about working mothers.²⁴

A couple of studies, for example, have theorized that adults and youth from the U.S. might actually have been less supportive of the working mother during the late 1990s²⁵ and that Millennials (or those born from 1982 to 1999) prefer the typical and prevalent patriarchal form of society.²⁶ Donnelly, et al., suggest that there are multiple varying explanations as to why this is so. One such explanation proposes that Millennials could have experienced the negative aspects of having a working mother such as the inability of the mother to balance work life and family-care life. Another explanation might be that Millennials' view marriage as a tradition and thus prefer the traditional idea of a wife and mother.

An earlier study associated this change in

²³ K. Donnelly, J. M. Twenge, M. A. Clark, S. K. Shaikh, A. Beiler-May, & N. T. Carter, "Attitudes towards women's work and family roles in the United States, 1976-2013," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40, 1 (2016): 41-54; doi: 10.1177/0361684315590774; A. Slaughter, "Why women still can't have it all," *The Atlantic*, 310 (2012): 84-102.

²⁴ J. Page, "Will the 'good' [working] mother please stand up? Professional and maternal concerns about education, care, and love," *Gender and Education*, 25, 5 (2013): 548-563; doi: 10.1080/09540253.2013.797069.

²⁵ D. Cotter, J. M. Hermsen, & R. Vanneman, "The end of the gender revolution? Gender role attitudes from 1977 to 2008," *American Journal of Sociology*, 117 (2011): 259-289.

²⁶ Donnelly, et al., "Attitudes towards women's work and family roles in the United States, 1976-2013."

perceptions of motherhood with the concept of intensive mothering.²⁷ Intensive mothering is a gendered parenting model that urges mothers to spend a lot of their resources—time, money, and energy—on their children, further suggesting that parents should be informed of and try to achieve what experts deem a proper child development.²⁸ Each decision of the mother therefore becomes associated with parenting and is transformed into a moral dilemma—one reflecting tensions created by traditional socio-cultural norms, on the one hand, and modern family/personal values and pursuits, on the other hand.²⁹

Intensive mothering, alongside “egalitarian essentialism,”³⁰ a concept which puts together the conflicting views in feminism and traditional ideals of the family, consequently supported a return to a more traditional take on gender roles.³¹ By 2012, however, it was observed that majority of U.S. adults and high school students’ egalitarian views and attitudes toward women and gender roles have generally become more prevalent and steady therefore indicating the acceptance of the idea of working mothers,³² and

²⁷ Cotter, et al., “The end of the gender revolution? Gender role attitudes from 1977 to 2008.”

²⁸ Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), cited in L. Steiner & E. Lachover, “The mommy wars: on the home front and waged abroad,” *Feminist Media Studies*, 16,5 (2016): 869-885; doi: 10.1080/14680777.2015.1137337.

²⁹ Miriam Peskowitz, *The Truth Behind the Mommy Wars: Who Decides What Makes a Good Mother?* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2005), cited in Steiner & Lachover, 2016.

³⁰ Maria Charles and David B. Grusky, *Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), cited in Cotter, et al, 2011.

³¹ Cotter, et al., “The end of the gender revolution? Gender role attitudes from 1977 to 2008.”

³² Donnelly, et al., “Attitudes towards women’s work and family

subsequently contradicted earlier findings.

In addition, working mothers are also immensely affected by society's change in ideology that subsequently affects the formulation and implementation of policies. In Israel, for example, a study³³ showed that women could previously be able to carry both parenting duties and work responsibilities simultaneously; but as Israel adopted a more Western neoliberalism which consequently advised mothers to be more involved with the lives of their children, policies were eventually modified and became less beneficial for mothers.³⁴ Furthermore, the Israeli labor market reinforced the ideal of a male worker disconnected and free from domestic duties.³⁵

In line with this, there have also been many researches concerning the effects of balancing roles on the working mother herself. In Pakistan, for example, data indicated that working mothers' personal reasons for burnout include not having enough time to relax and socialize, demanding expectations, taking on numerous responsibilities without enough assistance from others, and lack of sleep and intimate, supportive relationships.³⁶

Another study also found that although the difference in anxiety levels between working and non-

roles in the United States, 1976-2013."

³³ Steiner & Lachover, "The mommy wars: on the home front and waged abroad."

³⁴ E. Lavee & E. Benjamin, "Working-class mothers' school involvement: A class-specific maternal ideal?," *The Sociological Review*, 63, 3 (2015): 608–625.

³⁵ Steiner & Lachover, "The mommy wars: on the home front and waged abroad."

³⁶ S. Gardazi, N. Mobeen, & S. Ali Gardazi, "Causes of stress and burnout among working mothers in Pakistan," *The Qualitative Report*, 21, 5 (2016): 916-932.

working mothers did not prove significant,³⁷ it remained worthy to note that the anxiety of working mothers mainly come from excessive stress from professional life and personal life. Working mothers struggle more than working fathers because they have to deal with both family care/housework and career-work,³⁸ aside from the “night shift” for the husbands. In addition to that, data shows that women actually work longer hours than men when unpaid domestic work is accounted for.³⁹

Though beliefs about motherhood are constantly changing through time, and recent studies show that society has been more or less accepting of working mothers, the struggles of working mothers persist. The contradicting expectations and unreasonable demands of modern motherhood contribute to social discomfort when women achieve economic independence and reduced emphasis on domestic life and responsibilities.⁴⁰

The stress and tension that working mothers feel from mothering and working responsibilities are corroborated by data from the available literature. Existing studies have examined the differences between working and non-working mothers; the relationship of a mother’s employment with one’s health, relationships, and the development of one’s child; as well as the cultural expectations set upon women and the changes that have occurred through the years. There are, however, very few that focus on narratives, especially in relation to the mother’s family background and the

³⁷ S. Panda & T. M. Chettri, “A comparative study of anxiety level of working and non-working mothers,” *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 6, 12 (2015): 1199-1202.

³⁸ Panda & Chettri, “A comparative study of anxiety level of working and non-working mothers.”

³⁹ The World’s Women 2015. Chapter 4: Work.

⁴⁰ Steiner & Lachover, “The mommy wars: on the home front and waged abroad.”

current situation. In the Philippine setting, where the trend of working mothers seems to be prevalent, there is not much field research done on the experiences of working moms.

What follows is the field work component that aims therefore not only to provide concrete faces to *Amoris Laetitia*'s concerns but also to offer some data to the existing gap in the "working mothers" literature.

The Field Research

The present study gathered and analyzed data from two (2) middle-aged working mothers, currently employed in two separate private companies. Participants were recruited via purposive and convenience sampling. The researcher got in touch with a working mother she knows as well as with another individual who referred her to another working mother.

The study made use of a consent form informing the respondents of their rights as participants as well as what their participation entails. An interview guide was utilized to ensure that all necessary questions will be asked and that relevant information will be gathered. A smartphone was also used as a recording device.

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted. Before the interview started, the participants were first informed about their rights as respondents. The consent form was given to them and they were given time to read it. They were then asked to sign it upon agreeing to participate in the research. Once the consent form has been signed, participants were informed that recording will begin. During the interview, the researcher asked pertinent questions and followed the interview guide while taking note of important input from the participant. After the interview, participants were given tokens of appreciation.

Information collected from the two one-on-one interviews followed a format similar to those of case studies as the participants' family background and past experiences were deemed significant to this research. Data gathered were then analyzed using thematic analysis. A table summarized the themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Recurring themes across interviews and related sub-themes were defined. Extracts which best depict the said themes as well as those which were relevant to the discussion of each case were chosen from the two transcripts.

Andrea's Story

Andrea is the ninth of ten children. She finished a two-year course and later on earned her bachelor's degree. She is currently working in a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), and is the breadwinner of her family. She is married with two sons, one in high school and another in grade school.

Andrea experienced many great difficulties when she was younger and said that her childhood was, "*masalimuot*," the Filipino term for 'complicated and stressful'. Her stories reflected this word and suggested a not-normal childhood. What seemed to remain very clear in Andrea's memory was how she experienced various financial crises, had to learn to get along with relatives at a young age, and work hard in order to meet her needs and wants. Andrea narrated her school-related experiences below,

Sa elementary, naranasan kong maglakad ng one hour para lang makapasok ng school. Tapos sa hapon, lakad uli ng one hour para makauwi ng bahay. Tapos kung di naman ganun, pwede rin naman— Nakitira din ako sa mga lolo, lola, tiyo, tiya na kailangan makisama. Sobrang hirap.

Kailangan mag-igib ng tubig para panligo, panlaba. 'Yun. Sa awa ng Diyos, nakaraos din; hanggang hayskul ganun ang sitwasyon. (Q: Ah 'pag ano, nakikitira pa rin, ganun?) M-mm, nakikitira. Hanggang mag-college nakikitira. [...] Kung hindi dahil sa kapatid na nagmagandang-loob, hindi makakapagtapos ng college.

As the above extract shows, Andrea needed resilience and determination at an early age. To be able to attend school, she needed to go through the struggles commonly experienced by a low-income family in the rural area—walking long distances to school, having to live with relatives, and relying on the help of others to pay for expenses. This went on until she studied college in Manila and experienced staying in the homes of her siblings and in boarding houses.

After graduating from her two-year course, Andrea worked in an electronics company for a year before taking the board exams. She passed the board but was unable to find a job related to her expertise. This forced her to return to the province and worked in a store owned by her aunt.

Throughout her school life, Andrea's siblings and relatives were the ones who paid for her schooling as well as for her boarding needs. When she finally discovered what she wanted to do next, one of her first thoughts was to try to be more self-sufficient. Here she narrated how she wanted to work in Hong Kong with her sister so she could study again:

Si Ate S1 no'n, nasa Hong Kong. Sabi ko, 'Te, gusto kong pumunta diyan. Saan ang agency mo?' Tapos sabi ng ate, 'Bakit ba gusto mo mag-abroad, mahirap dito?' Sabi ko, 'Eh mahirap dito, ang hirap ng trabaho. At least diyan,' ka ko, 'siguradong may trabaho.' Ta's sabi ng ate, [...]

bakit ko daw kailangan mag-abroad. Sabi ko, 'Gusto ko mag-ipon, mag-aaral ako; ngayon alam ko na kung anong gusto ko—gusto kong mag-aral kaya tulungan mo akong makapunta diyan,' sabi ko sa kanya. Sabi niya, 'Kung 'yun lang pala ang gusto mo, huwag ka nang mag-abroad, tutulungan na lang kita sa tuition fee mo.

With the help of her sister, Andrea was able to study again without needing to work abroad. She was generally doing well in school, and this was especially so during her second year. She claims that she was “inspired” then. Upon noticing her good performance, Andrea’s brother told her, “*Baka kaya mo mag-dean’s list.*” Rather than being motivated, she felt pressured by this; something she did not appreciate.

Because of the desire to avoid the pressure of getting into the dean’s list, Andrea decided to work part-time near her boarding house. Later on, she became a full-time employee. After graduating, she claimed that there was no progress with her situation. Andrea narrated how difficult it was to be jobless back then. She looked for a job and was already employed in the HMO where she worked while taking the board exams which she failed to pass. She self-reviewed afterwards to prepare for the re-take. It was not clear whether or not she passed the second attempt.

Although Andrea mainly talked about her past experiences as a student and jobseeker, she shared some things about her previous family situation and how she is at present. She talked about how difficult it was to be a daughter of a farmer and a housewife back then, and mentioned their experience of only having salt and water with rice for a meal. In relation to this, one of the many things worth noting, as mentioned earlier, was the amount of help Andrea received from her siblings.

At present, Andrea lives with her eldest son while her husband remains in the province with their youngest. Asked about how she is doing now, she admits that she finds it difficult to be away from her husband and youngest son. Although she is able to talk things through with her husband and communicate with him and their youngest on a regular basis, she feels that her children were not guided well. She believes that it is sometimes difficult to handle her children because she was not the one who raised them. The concern for the welfare of her children is clear.

On the other hand, Andrea enjoys her current accounting job. She does not feel too frantic in the workplace and neither is she too relaxed—“*tama lang sa pakiramdam*” as she would say. This is contrary to her previous job in the same company, from where she asked to be transferred, and where she experienced a lot of pressure, lack of time to rest, and stress caused by a fast-paced environment. However, amidst what others would assume as a working woman’s needs, Andrea does not consider herself as someone who likes to go out. She would only go out with friends “*para makisama*” and this is primarily because of budget constraints. As the breadwinner of the family, her priority is to have sufficient allowance for her family. Although she finds joy in gatherings with her friends, she would simply not be the type to initiate.

Throughout the interview, it appeared that Andrea repeatedly sought means to avoid pressure or to distract herself from being pressured into achieving certain things. For example, it was mentioned earlier that she decided to look for a job when her brother brought up the possibility of being in the Dean’s List. Amidst the desire to veer away from pressure, however, is a great effort on Andrea’s part to make sure that she can stand on her own, and even as a working mother.

Andrea admitted that there are pressures from her role as a working mother. Contrary to the kind of pressure mentioned above, the pressure she encounters from being a working mother appears to be rather unavoidable. There are times when her children need her presence and support in school activities but she cannot make it because of constraints from the workplace. The opposite also happens; there are times when she decides that she really needs to skip work. There then appears to be tension between her responsibilities at work and at home, which she consistently tries to resolve and which also tends to require having to choose one over the other.

From Andrea's story, it is apparent how the many struggles she has experienced during her childhood has somehow influenced the way she dealt with many stresses, particularly those which come with being a working mother. First of all, learning how to get along with people at such an early age may have made it a bit easier for her to adjust to changing and challenging circumstances, like living in different places, having to work part-time, and managing from a distance her family relationships.

It was also evident in the interview that Andrea no longer found time management as an issue in being a working mother. When she was asked about the difference between her situation before and now as a working mother, she explained:

Parang ano eh... wala masyado. Kasi nung nagtatrabaho ako, nag-aaral ako. Kaya 'yung gastos— [...] [Q: In terms of time management pareho lang halos?] Parehas lang. [Q: Pero 'yung stress magkaiba ba or?] Siyempre mas stressful 'yung ano... may anak ka na kasi hindi lang 'yung stress mo iniisip mo, pati 'yung para sa

mga anak mo.

The working mother is here clearly in a high-context mode of thinking/behaving,⁴¹ as she shows anxious care for her family while still in the context of work.

Aside from being more financially independent, she considered it a major change when her children became her top priority and that this entailed additional stress because of the additional role of working on top of mothering. Andrea states:

Mas priority mo na sila [mga anak]. ‘Yung sa sarili mo, pang-ano na lang ‘yun, kung meron na lang matitira. More on nasa anak na lahat.

Andrea’s past experiences also shed light on her ways of raising her children. She narrates how, back then, being vocal about expressing love for family was unusual. They deemed it as “*nakakahiya*,” or shameful. Birthdays and other more intimate celebrations would come and go like they were nothing. Because of this, Andrea has tried to raise her kids to be vocal about their feelings and to be more open to verbalizing statements like “I love you.” She explains here:

In a sense... Siguro ang pagkakaiba, no’n kasi talagang parang wala lang. Birthday... Oo, naalala nila ‘yung birthday pero ipagpapatay ka ng manok ganun, pero hindi ‘yung vocal na

⁴¹ In a communication process, conversation partners are said to be in a high-context communication if they share information about culture and geography, a sharing that could bring about better understanding. One who displays a low-context thinking is suffering from a tunnel vision, focusing exclusively on a limited goal. Thus, a high-context thinking allows broad or multiple contexts to influence her behavior. See Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977), p. 91.

'Happy birthday! I love you!' Wala 'yung mga ganyan, unlike 'yung ngayon na— Ako kasi, tine-train ko 'yung mga bata na mag-yun, magsabi sila ng 'I love you' ganyan, naggu-goodnight 'pag gabi. Kasi dati talagang hindi naman uso 'yun. Nakakahiya kaya.

Overall, when asked how being a working mother is like, Andrea's first answer was simple: "*mahirap pero rewarding.*" She explained that as a mom she would want to be able to take care of her child and be able to guide them but given their family set-up, she could not fully accomplish such responsibilities. On the other hand, seeing her children at the end of the day is what relieves her from all of her stress. She continues to maintain a good relationship with her husband, although she admitted to not having time alone with him anymore because of her preoccupation with work. This is further supported by the fact that she spends most of her time (eight hours a day) in the office, and is only able to relax when she has extra time. Her phone has been a means to entertain herself every once in a while. She also spends a decent amount of time (three to five hours) for her eldest child and for household chores.

Sofia's Story

Sofia is a middle-aged woman who has been working in a private corporation for 30 years. She has two daughters, one of whom is still in college while the other, in her early 20s, is already working. Sofia's case is quite different as the whole interview was angled toward a tough past experience—her husband's death when the kids were still young. Sofia was also able to share about her childhood experiences and family background.

When she was younger, Sofia lived in the province

with her family. She described her childhood as “*masarap pero mahirap*.” She noticed that even if they did not have much material resources, their home was still where their relatives and friends would congregate and bond in. She would play with her cousins and siblings, sometimes secretly going to the beach to swim.

The closeness their family had and continues to have was attributed by Sofia to a disinterest in the pursuit of material things. She thinks that money is one reason for family fallouts and that having healthy family relationships has a lot to do with one’s values more than anything. Sofia grew up keeping in mind that there are people willing to help should anyone be in need, and that there will never be anything wrong with sharing. She tells a story about her father exemplifying this:

Siguro ganun talaga, Elaine, ‘pag mahirap ang buhay para talagang close close kayo, maski na— Basta alam ko sa mga ate ko nagagaya ‘yun eh. [...] Halimbawa sa Papang ko. Si Papang bibigyan mo ng-- Nakikita ko kasi binibigyan ng ate ko ng— si Papang ng bagong damit, bagong ano— ‘Pag binisita ko naman si Papang sa probinsya, wala na. Pinamigay niya na ‘yun lahat.

In relation to this, Sofia was aware of her relatives’ generosity, and throughout the first part of the interview, she also narrated how her aunts shared resources with their family and provided them with help when necessary. Every school year, she and her siblings would be one of the few to have new school supplies like notebooks and pens. Their mother would keep mum about these, but Sofia knew that these were from their relatives, particularly her aunts. She mentioned that their house was near her school and was therefore a lot

more convenient. It was also customary for children in their province to finish grade school and high school there. However, a college degree was traditionally pursued in Manila. She, however, admitted to not knowing who paid for her tuition and other expenses.

Later on, her older sister offered to help her with her college education. She then moved to where her sister and brother-in-law were staying and there obtained a college degree. Her experience, however, was not that simple. Sofia became a working student in the school she was studying in, and shared her experience in this extract:

Nag-apply ako na working student, natanggap naman ako. [...] For example, nung work, pupunta ka dun sa [...] 'yung isang walang asawang matanda na teacher ko. Ako magse-secretary sa room niya, sa office niya. [...] Tapos nalipat ako sa English department. Taga-- Di na uso siguro ngayon 'yung exam eh ipapa-ano talaga sa printer, ay 'yung sa ano... malaking machine... [...] Basta talagang ano makikita mo 'yung print niya dadaan sa malaking machine, parang alam mo 'yung sa newspaper [...] Ganun kaluma 'yung technology noon. [...] Basta ako magta-type nun. 'Yung pinagta-type-an ko, ano 'yun, 'yung parang may carbon paper sa loob. [...] Tapos, pagkatapos mong i-type 'yun, pupunta ko dun sa isang print shop [...] Tapos 'yun, magta-type ng exam sa English department, mas madali 'yun kasi malapit lang sa bahay [Q: Ah, kumpara po dun sa pagse-secretary?]. Oo, ang layo noon.

Sofia did not recall much about her childhood except for those already mentioned above, and she stated that it is mainly because most things seemed like play to her back then. However, when she started working she was

able to apply what she learned from the challenges she faced and realized how different she was from her peers. According to Sofia, she was not the type to experiment a lot and go out. She would usually be alone and found their school ministry as helpful. Because of this, she claims, she was like a “*manang*” or an old maid upon arriving in Manila. More importantly, however, her experiences taught her how to stand alone, persevere, and to have a “I can do this” attitude.

Furthermore, comparing her past to her present, Sofia noticed that aside from being more financially able, the family closeness she experienced when she was younger continued to exist and even extended toward her siblings’ children. It seemed that the kind of family relationships she had before is still being fostered through and lived by their family’s succeeding generations. Sofia continues to be constantly concerned about her siblings’ lives, shares that she would surprise her sister every once in a while, and seems to take pride in seeing her daughters having close relationships with their cousins. Sofia’s close ties with her family always translated into family solidarity.

Although it appears that Sofia generally had a relatively pleasant past, things were not always this way. She admits that sometimes she does not like it when they are too happy. As she puts it:

Okay na ‘tong ganito [close family ties]. Ayoko ng masyadong... Minsan nagpe-pray ako. Ayoko ng masyadong masaya. Natatakot ako. Ayoko ng ano, sabi ko, minsan masyadong masasarap ang pagkain. Sabi ko, ‘Okay na po ‘to, Lord,’ [Nag-]thank you na ‘ko. Ganun. ‘Okay na ho ito, di na ako naghahanap ng iba.’ Basta palagi ‘yung sa... mga kasama ko [...] family, lakas ng katawan.

Because of how the rest of the interview went, one can draw out that the belief suggested in this quote may have something to do with the experience of losing her husband to illness. Even though this could also be attributed to strong spirituality and contentment with one's life, it remains evident that the death of her husband really affected the way she viewed and dealt with certain things. Sofia believes that things get more complicated when one is already married and this is another reason why close family ties greatly matter.

Sofia and her husband were both working back then, so they needed nannies to take care of their children while they were away. Though this was not always the case since the ones they hired did not stay long. This is why she would sometimes ask her mother-in-law or her sister to take care of her daughters while they work. When her husband passed away, things became a lot more difficult for Sofia and her children.

Sofia expressed that she was like a robot when she lost her husband; she became apathetic and insensitive, later on saying "*Parang naging bato ako.*" She also explained how it was difficult to not have a man in the family, let alone lose a husband. She admitted that she feels like she has to hide what she truly feels. She said more about this in this extract:

Iba... Iba din kasi, Elaine, 'pag wala 'yung daddy, 'pag wala 'yung asawa— Halimbawa 'yung ako, 'yung [wala 'yung] lalaki sa family, parang iba din talaga. Parang mahirap. 'Yung parang hindi ka nag-aano ng totoo na 'yun 'yung feeling mo. Parang haaay. Dapat tutulog ka na lang, siya na lang mag-aantay sa mga anak mo. Hindi eh. Wala kang mapagsabihan—totoo 'yun—wala kang mapagsabihan ng kung ano talagang nasa feeling mo. Hindi mo pwedeng i-

share sa iba, lalo na may mga asawa naman silang iba. Hindi ka nila 'yung totally na maiintindihan.

According to Sofia, having children changes things. Despite been used to taking care of nieces and nephews, Sofia found having children as a different experience, especially since her children lost their father at such a young age. She expressed a kind of regret in acting the way she did when she lost her husband. She wished that she allowed herself to be vulnerable in front of her children when she was grieving because she believes that if she did, her youngest might not have been pretending to be so tough and may have had a more memorable childhood. She shared in this extract:

Sabagay... Kaya lang, Elaine, Gusto ko sana nung nawala 'yung asawa ko, sana 'yung... Hindi ako 'yung parang naging robot. Hindi ako 'yung kunwaring matigas, kunwaring kaya. Sana pinakita ko [sa kanila] noon na nag-iiyak ako. Hindi ko kasi pinakita 'yun. Parang ang tapang-tapang ko. Siguro... Siguro mag-iiba ugali ni D2 (youngest daughter). [...] kasi si D2, siya 'yung parang matigas ang ulo na caring naman, na parang kayang-kaya niya eh alam ko lalampa-lampa rin 'yun eh.

She added:

Parang nagkulang ako nung bata pa sila. 'Yung... Naging strikto ata ako noon eh. [...] Si D2 talaga parang ang tapang. Tapos kung minsan tatanungin ko sila, 'D2, anong na-mimiss mo nung bata ka?' Parang wala siya masyadong mai-share.

Furthermore, she admitted that she does not remember much about her children's childhood. She feels as if she has had a lot of shortcomings after the loss, and was not as supportive of her children's school activities as well. The thought of carrying the weight of the world seemed to have faded away and she continues to ask herself why, as shown in this extract:

[...] parang nakakalimutan ko na 'yung times na kasama ko sila nung bata sila, Elaine, nung wala na 'yung asawa ko. Parang feeling ko tuloy 'yun ang na-miss ko ngayon. Sabi ko, 'Ba't kaya...' Hindi ko na maalala 'yung... nung umalis 'yung asawa ko, kung anong ginagawa naming masaya kaming tatlo. Parang feeling ko ano ata... Naging strikto ba 'ko sa kanila, naging parang bato ako sa kanila na di ko pinapakitang mahina ako.

Amidst this, her children remain to be her source of motivation. She mentioned that she is able to do new and exciting things because her children believe in her capacity. She becomes courageous for her children in the smallest of ways, and ensures that her free time is mostly time shared with them. Also, Sofia claims that her children now better understand her and the grief she went through because they are a lot older and more mature. Little by little, her youngest daughter has been opening up to her and this contributed to an increase in mutual knowledge and understanding.

Now, currently on her 30th year in service, Sofia shares about her feelings and experiences in the workplace. As she may not be the type to experiment when she was younger, she yearns to constantly learn new things in the workplace. At the same time, she finds joy in sharing what she knows although she seems disappointed when people do not give her due credit to

her effort. The company that employs her has been giving her financial assistance after the demise of her husband who worked there for 25 years. Aside from this, it seems that the workplace was Sofia's stepping stone in moving forward. She recalls:

Tsaka 'pag minsan, alam mo 'yun, hindi naman totally 'yung tipong nakakalimutan ko 'yung asawa ko. Hindi ganun. Ilang years na? Ten years... More than ten years na, pero di ko pa rin makakalimutan 'yun. Andito pa rin siya. Oo, andito sa mind. Alam mo 'yung sinasabing nakamove on ka na? Siyempre, move on! Pero hindi mawawala sa puso 'yun. Siyempre kailangan mag-move on. Imagine mo naman. Kailangan mag-hanapbuhay ba.

Overall, Sofia deems work as a life's teacher. She identifies work-related pressure as primary—having to deal with customer complaints and inventory-related stresses. She feels as if she must prove that she can still do work, especially since she is being paid well and since the company has been of great help to her family. Simply put, she does not want to disappoint her employers. As a single mom, she is thankful that she still has work despite her age. Furthermore, she has begun to look at work as both physical and mental exercise through an encounter with one of their interns back then:

Sabi niya sa'kin, 'Ma'am, ilang taon ka na?' 54 years old na 'ko, J1. 'Ah talaga, Ma'am,' sabi niya. Okay lang, kaso sabi sa'kin ng isang dizer, 'Ma'am, konting tiyaga na lang 'yan. Konting tiis na lang 'yan, Ma'am.' Ginaganun ako. Pero hindi eh, ako ang pinagtiyatiyagaan ng [company

name]. [...] Hindi pa ako nagre-retire. Sumagot si J1, 'Ma'am, huwag muna. Exercise mo na 'yan eh.' Which is, alam mo, parang tama.

On the other hand, since her daughters are now more mature, it has been a lot easier to manage time. She considers her children as blessings, although she does continue to long for those days she missed with her children and their milestones. At present, she spends most of her time in work (nine hours a day), gets enough time for sleep (6 to 7 hours), and spends time using social media and in prayer as well.

Integrated Results and Salient Themes

Data was interpreted from the two cases narrated above and the common or intersecting points of the stories were identified. Using thematic analysis, a total of four main themes and six subthemes emerged from this research; the main themes are: (1) care for the family as priority; (2) coping with stressors and frustrations; (3) practical attitudes toward work and (4) having children as rewarding. The synthesis table (see table, below) summarizes the relevant themes on the experiences of the two working mothers.

It must be emphasized that the various discussions around these thematic areas would be useful for pastors or policy-makers who would formulate pastoral programmes as mandated by *Amoris Laetitia*.

Summary of Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Care for the Family as priority	Shortcomings in fulfilling domestic responsibilities

	Child's burden as mother's own
Coping with stressors and frustrations	Receiving help or extended family solidarity
	From working students to breadwinners
	Challenges as influential to child-rearing
	Priorities and fatigue vs. seeking recreation
Practical attitudes toward work	(none)
Being a working mother as tough yet rewarding	(none)

Care for the Family as a priority

Both mothers deem caring for their own families as their priority, specifically the welfare of their children. It is apparent that their decisions and perceived lapses revolve around a certain idea about what is most beneficial to their offspring. More so, it is also evident that they share the burdens of their children. The sub-themes and relevant extracts below elaborate on this main theme.

Shortcomings in fulfilling domestic responsibilities. Both mothers discussed particular shortcomings that have to do with their responsibilities at home, especially when it comes to child-rearing. They believe that they carry much of the responsibility to take care of

their children, and implied that they need time to focus on their kids' upbringing and well-being.

Given this, working mothers feel bad for their shortcomings and regular absence in their children's lives. More so, they are torn between their workplace demands and their domestic responsibilities; many times they are forced to make a painful choice. This is apparent in Andrea's statement:

Kasi may time na kailangan ng time ng mga bata. Halimbawa may activity sa school na kailangan mag-attend, minsan kailangang mong mag-absent. Tapos minsan naman kailangan sa trabaho. Minsan nagsasabay, kaya nakaka-pressure.

This is also evident in Sofia's experience after the death of her husband:

Parang 'Hay kawawa naman 'yung anak ko' parang di ko sila na ano talaga... totally 'yung nagabayan.

She shared later on:

Di ba siyempre kasama dapat 'yung magulang doon [school activity], hindi, hindi ako nakakasama. Dun lang ako sa dadaan ng parade, parade na 'yan. Hindi ako masyadong supportive ata 'pag may ano sila, school activities, parang absent ba ako nun o nasa [company name]. Siguro lang kung di lang ako [...] matigas ang ulo...

Child's burden as mother's own. Despite the differences between the two mothers, it remains evident

that the stress of their children becomes their stress as well. As Andrea has put it:

*Siyempre mas stressful 'yung ano... may anak
ka na kasi hindi lang 'yung stress mo iniisip mo,
pati 'yung para sa mga anak mo.*

As discussed earlier, Sofia's youngest daughter seems to maintain a tough exterior and Sofia links this with the fact that she became the model as she pretended to be strong after her husband's death. Up until now, Sofia admits that she carries the weight of not giving her children a memorable childhood. Her youngest does not remember much and perhaps feels sad about this, and in turn, this seems to have troubled Sofia.

Coping with stressors and frustrations

Both mothers had challenging childhoods and both also experienced difficulties in their present family life. Given this, the two respondents have shared the ways they have adjusted and tried to cope with varying stressors and personal frustrations. Below are the sub-themes belonging to this category as well as the related extracts.

Receiving help or extended family solidarity.

Both working moms have had a childhood which in large part consisted of dependence on other people such as their relatives. Because their parents cannot provide for all their needs, especially when it comes to their schooling, both Andrea and Sofia were given opportunities and resources by their relatives, as repeatedly mentioned in their individual cases.

From working students to breadwinners. As both participants experienced assistance from relatives,

they in turn tried to do well in school and eventually became more self-reliant. Amidst differences in circumstances, both Sofia and Andrea became breadwinners of their families. Sofia assumed the position after the passing of her husband, and as mentioned earlier, shared how difficult it was to not be able to have someone with whom one shares the burdens and troubles. Eventually, she was still able to successfully provide for her family despite relying mainly on her own resources. Meanwhile, Andrea appeared to have become more independent out of necessity, a choice she made with her husband and was not able to expound on during the interview. She did, however, explain how her experiences and struggles helped her at present. She explained:

Sobrang laking factor 'yung mga experiences. Kumabaga, dun ako natuto. Sa sobrang dami ng nakasalumuha kong tao, sa dami ng nakasama ko, natuto ako... kung paano mag-budget, mag-manage ng oras, 'yun, makisama.

Unconventional family set-up. In their own ways, both respondents have an unconventional family set-up since their family arrangements are not quite typical. Sofia narrated earlier on that they did not have a masculine figure at home, and that she thinks that it is difficult to not have a man at home specifically because of the reasons she stated above. On the other hand, Andrea lives apart from her husband and youngest son, as she briefly mentions:

May dalawa akong anak, uh, kaso magkahiwalay sila; 'yung isa kasama ko, 'yung isa nasa [province] kasama ng tatay niya.

Andrea adds:

Ako, ngayon, mahirap. Mahirap 'yung sitwasyon dahil nandito ako tsaka 'yung isang anak ko, ta's 'yung bunso ko nandun sa probinsya pati asawa ko. Mahirap... uh... pero napag-uusapan naman. Nakakayanan naman.

Challenges as influential to child-rearing. As expressed multiple times, both mothers have encountered challenging experiences. The struggles they faced and the lessons learned from them formed their character and influenced the manner of raising their children. As mentioned above, Andrea makes it a point to encourage her children to be vocal about what they feel. She attributes this effort to the fact that it was not really the norm back then to be so open about one's emotions. Moreover, she deems it difficult to handle her own children sometimes due to missed parenting time:

Mahirap na hindi mo nai-guide 'yung mga bata kaya mahirap din na kasama sa buhay kasi hindi ikaw nagpalaki. Haha.

On the other hand, losing a husband has made Sofia realize many things and she has transitioned from being the tough mother to one who is more empathetic. There are times, however, when the balance between discipline and warmth becomes more challenging. Sofia narrated the fight she once had with her daughter that exemplified this:

Minsan nga, nangyari, may drama. Nagalit ako, nandun 'yung kaibigan niya. Tapos parang nag-open up din siya, umiiyak siya. Sabi ko, 'D2, di mo na mababalik pa si Papa mo. Hindi mo

naman ma-aano 'yun, anak...' 'Yun sabi ko. 'I'm sure gusto ng Papa mo na maging successful ka, na maging mabuti ka pa ring anak.' Gumaganun ako sa kanya, iyak siya ng iyak. Parang first time kong makita siyang ganun. Hindi... Hindi ko alam. Sabi ko, 'Ano ba pagkukulang ko?[...] Bakit ang tigas ng ulo mo?'

Priorities and fatigue vs. recreation. Although both working mothers would likely appreciate days off and time for themselves and with their friends, they claim that they would rather only do so when they have extra time or when they are given the opportunity to do so. This subtheme is particularly about the fact that both participants normally choose not to actively search for means to relax as they are mostly preoccupied with both workplace and household responsibilities. That is, they tend to only go out when time and/or budget permits, when there are occasions, or when they are invited. This was implied in the interview as they seem to have associated tedium with lack of recreation. This is exemplified through Andrea's statement:

... hindi naman talaga ako pala-barkada. 'Yung tipong kaibigan— Hindi kasi ako mahilig nung gala gala. Minsan lang... Parang lumalabas, makisama, ganyan. Pero hindi talagang mahilig na 'Punta tayo dun, punta tayo dun,' hindi ganun. Kung may mag-aya, sige, sama, game! Pero 'yung sabihin mong ako ang [magsisimula], hindi, kasi unang-una budget! Bina-budget. Pangalawa, nakakapagod na, galing kang opisina ta's parang wala ka nang pahinga. Kaya kumbaga ang labas-labas, pakikisama na lang. Although masaya, masaya. Kaya lang, mas priority kasi 'yung budget para sa pamilya. Kasi

*'pag lalabas ka, di naman pwedeng makikikain
ka lang, makiki-join ka lang.*

Although there may be days when they have relatively more time, the working mothers interviewed are likely to choose spending it with their children rather than going out with friends or having a day out alone. Sofia said:

*'Yung time ko, na-occupy sa kanila [children]
mostly. [...]. Nag-eeenjoy din talaga ako kina D2,
D1.*

Practical Attitudes toward work

Although both working mothers have been staying in the same company for a long time, they do not exactly seek career-advancement in them but only look for a certain sense of satisfaction, life improvement and comfort. This statement by Andrea, for example, shows that she feels better in her current job than her previous one because she does not feel too pressured:

*Yung tama lang, tama lang sa pakiramdam
[yung trabaho]. Mababait 'yung boss, mababait
naman 'yung kasamahan ko sa trabaho. Sa
ngayon wala naman akong ano, wala naman
akong problema sa ano... hindi katulad dun sa
dati kong department. [Q: Bakit?] Dun talaga
sobrang pressure. [Q: Dahil?] Ang dami ng
trabaho tapos pupuntahan ka ng ahente,
pupuntahan ka ng member, tatawagan ka sa
telepono ng branch. 'Yon. [Q: Ah, parang sabay-
sabay lahat?] M-mm, dun talaga wala kang
pahinga.*

Meanwhile, Sofia seeks learning opportunities in the workplace and not necessarily for career advancement.

She looks for avenues through which she can improve and at the same time be able to teach others what she knows, as shown in this extract:

[...] pero sa'kin, gusto ko pa rin matuto. Gusto ko pa rin mag-share ng alam ko. Alam mo, may mga times may alam ako, di nila alam. Ganun eh, hahahah. Nakakatuwa na lang. [...] minsan diretso ako magsalita. Sinasabi ko din, 'Eeh, wala naman na 'kong natututunan sa inyo eh.' Pero alam nila nagbibiro ako pero may katotohanan. Gusto ko may natututo pa rin ako.

Being a working mother as tough yet rewarding

Amidst the difficulties that come with being a working mother, both participants found having children and being mothers as a source of strength. Their answers implied that regardless of the challenges they encounter, there continues to be a certain joy in simply seeing their children and spending time with them. To them, being a working mother is rewarding but is not as easy path to take. As Andrea shared:

Mahirap pero rewarding. [Q: Paano?] Mahirap kasi siyempre bilang mother gusto mong mabantayan, maalagaan ang mga anak mo. Gusto mong ikaw ang mag-aalaga, mag-aasikaso kaya lang hindi mo magawa dahil nagtatrabaho ka. Ang nakakatuwa naman dun, pag-uwi mo, may ano ka, stress reliever ka. Kahit anong pagod mo, pagdating mo ng bahay at nakita mo sila [mga anak], okay na. Solb na.

Conclusion

We do well to focus on concrete realities, since 'the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history',

and through these ‘the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family’. (AL 31)

This research looked into the experiences of two Filipino working mothers, and took into account their childhood experiences and family background. Themes which have emerged through the semi-structured interviews showed that working mothers do indeed experience struggles, *AL*’s “trying problems” that have to do with the demands of work, home, and personal life. Yet, the respondents continue to find being working moms as rewarding. The findings of this study prove to be either in line with or contradictory to the available literature on the topic of working mothers. It goes without saying, that working and mothering pose threats and opportunities.

First of all, it appears that the support for working mothers—or at least the idea of it—is present in today’s societal ethos. This is particularly apparent in the story of Sofia, where the decision was made between her and her husband. Their family set-up implies the acceptance or at least the tolerance of the reversal of stereotypical roles. Andrea was not restricted to staying at home and this can be primarily attributed to the need to work to be able to provide for family. Filipino working mothers then prove to be capable breadwinners and can act in a way that is discordant with the traditional gender roles; contrary to researches that show cultural expectations to be a hindrance to maintain employment.⁴² Furthermore, this supports findings that suggest that female employment status is dependent upon the circumstances the woman is in,⁴³ as both working mothers

⁴² Asian Development Bank, “Gender Equality in the Labor Market in the Philippines.”

⁴³ D. L. Rodin, K. McNeill, N. Vite-León & J. Heymann, “Deter-

work full-time to be able to make ends meet.

On the other hand, Sofia's story also showed that without the husband, the wife/mother immediately assumes the position of breadwinner and because of this, it becomes necessary to find other means to take care of children. Many studies have reported the use of alternative childcare services such as hiring nannies or seeking the help of relatives.⁴⁴ This is similar to Sofia's case; she looked for nannies to take care of her children and when she could not find any, she would leave them either with her sister or mother-in-law. Family solidarity is evident here, as well as the absence of non-family solidarities in this case, like the state-run or NGO-run or church-run day-care services.

In line with this, making adjustments to one's child-rearing practices and searching for childcare alternatives suggests that the working mother remains tied to her domestic responsibilities⁴⁵ and is also the one primarily concerned with the well-being of their children. An example of this was when Andrea expressed frustration upon pointing out that it is sometimes difficult to handle her children because she was not the one who raised them. This somehow implies that things may have perhaps turned out differently if she took on the role of being a full-time mom. Although this could be linked to literature that shows reduced time at home has negative effects on child development,⁴⁶ it does not quite make sense to immediately

minants of informal employment among working mothers in Mexico," *Community, Work & Family*, 15, 1 (2012): 85-99.

⁴⁴ Zdravomyslova, "Working mothers and nannies."

⁴⁵ Rodin, et al., "Determinants of informal employment among working mothers in Mexico."

⁴⁶ Brown, et al., "Do working mothers raise couch potato kids?"; Morrill, "The effects of maternal employment on the health of school-age children."; Ruhm, "Maternal employment and adolescent development."; Wills & Brauer, "Have children adapted to their

conclude that Andrea's hardship stems from her children's bad behavior or is caused exclusively by her employment. This is especially because she did not further expound on the matter. It seems that, similar to the implications of an existing study, the effect of the mother's employment will likely depend on what the family needs and pursues.⁴⁷

Aside from this, it also seems that the age of children influences a working mother's experiences. As seen in the results, Andrea's source of pressure mainly comes from the fact that both their kids are still young and studying which necessitates a certain focus on their development. Meanwhile, Sofia no longer feels the same stress because her children are older and more independent.

Work-life balance thus appears to be less problematic when children are older despite meager social support. Literature states that women try to create time for their families while trying to manage work responsibilities⁴⁸ and that work-life balance is something that working mothers find hard to attain.⁴⁹ The findings of the current study, however, suggests that it may perhaps be a lot easier for a working mother to achieve this when their children are older. Despite this fact, working mothers were found to make time for family regardless of the age of their children.⁵⁰

The "distressed mother theme" propagated by media⁵¹ partly holds true especially in the case of

mothers working, or was adaptation unnecessary?"; Sherlock, Synnes, & Koehoorn, "Working mothers and early childhood outcomes."; Zdravomyslova, "Working mothers and nannies."

⁴⁷ Youngberg, "Working mothers."

⁴⁸ Zdravomyslova, "Working mothers and nannies."

⁴⁹ Eija, Satu, & Kaarina, 2012; Steiner & Lachover, 2016; Youngberg, 2011

⁵⁰ Zdravomyslova, "Working mothers and nannies."

⁵¹ Motro & Vanneman, 2015

Filipino working mothers with younger children. However, the study found no evidence on working mothers being indicated or labelled as “bad moms.”⁵² However, it is worth noting that parenting concerns becoming moral dilemmas do not cease to exist for working mothers.⁵³ Amidst the tough decisions that Sofia had to make, she still carried the guilt of being frequently unavailable her children. Amidst recognizing her grief, she is still burdened by the past and wishes she could change the way she reacted to the loss of her husband so that she could have been a better mother to them.

Overall, it appears that the idea of working mothers has become acceptable in the Philippines, especially when circumstances require the mother to also take on the role of the breadwinner. There remain many challenges for the working mother, but the “trying problems” they face are not completely irreconcilable or unsolvable. They are open to making necessary adjustments and recognize whatever shortcomings they have especially in the area of family care.

Nevertheless, *Amoris Laetitia* is calling for pastors of the churches to get involved with working mothers, like Andrea and Sofia who “silently appeal” for solidarity as they tackle life’s troubles. Pope Francis also appeals for them: “This I ask you: be shepherds, with the “odour of the sheep”, make it real, as shepherds among your flock...”⁵⁴

⁵² Hadfield, Rudoe, & Sanderson-Mann, 2007

⁵³ Peskowitz, 2005 as cited in Steiner & Lachover, 2016

⁵⁴ Pope Francis, “Chrism Mass Homily, Saint Peter's Basilica, Holy Thursday, 28 March 2013,” http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html)

Monotheism Revisited: Islamic Monotheism in Dialogue with Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135-1204)

Thomas Mooren*

Abstract: The dialogue with Maimonides will differentiate the picture of God's oneness and of God's involvement in creation—Divinity's *being* and *doing*. In this way key concepts of Maimonides can also retrospectively function as an eye opener for what has begun long before Maimonides, i.e., as post-exile genuine Jewish theology with its specific interpretation of scripture and its openness to mystical speculation (kabbalah). In the end it will also become plausible that Christian theological thinking in the name of trinity owes much to Judaism and can never be understood without it – in the same way as Judaism cannot come to grips with its own history without taking into account Christian theology.

Keywords: monotheism, Islam, Maimonides, dialogue, binity, trinity

Introduction

We cannot conceive the 'being eternally three' of the divine being in any other way than the following: either we put the emphasis on God's unity [at the expense of his being three]

♦ Born in Germany, Dr. Theol. Thomas Mooren, OFMCap, dipl. EPHE (History of Religions), ELOZ (Oriental Languages) and EA (Anthropology [Sorbonne]), until 2016 Professor at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada; former Director of Mission studies and interreligious dialogue, invited professor in Indonesia, India, Germany, Washington and Rome. He is now working in PNG and the Philippines (Maryhill School of Theology, Quezon City; DWIMS, Tagaytay). Among his numerous publications are: *Purusha. Trading the Razor's Edge Towards Selfhood* (Delhi, 1997; on Islamic and Hindu Mysticism), *The Buddha's Path to Freedom* (MST, 2004; Introduction into Buddhism) and *Missiologie im Gegenwind* (Wien, Berlin, 2012; on Interreligious Dialogue).

or on his being three [at the expense of his unity]... i.e., our theological speech will always remain inadequate.

(Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Divine Trinity*)

Monotheism is a subject that is actually fiercely debated. Under the impact of recent political developments in the Middle East, in particular the creation of the Islamic Khalifat, and even more so because of worldwide terrorism claiming for itself this adjective “Islamic”, the bulk of monotheism studies focus on monotheism and violence.¹ However, while studies of this kind often inform us successfully about the different forms of violence, for which monotheism seems to be responsible, the question about the true nature of monotheism, amazingly enough, remains often untouched – namely, has there ever been in the history of religions such a thing like monotheism, not as project or aim but as grounded practised reality? The fact that there is often talk about the three “abrahamitic” religions, lumping together Judaism, Christianity and Islam does not help either, since this construct, often fruit of political calculation, rather obscures the reality “on the ground” than elucidates it.²

¹ See J. Schnorck, *Das alte Testament und die Gewalt. Studien zur göttlichen und menschlichen Gewalt in alttestamentlichen Texten und ihren Rezeptionen*, Neukirchen-Vllyn 2014 (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 136); J.-H. Tück (ed.), *Monotheismus unter Gewaltverdacht. Zum Gespräch mit Jan Assmann*, (Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2015), and in the same volume *Ambivalenzen und Konflikte des monotheistischen Offenbarungsglaubens*, 246-268; Th. Mooren, *War and Peace in Monotheistic Religions* (Delhi 2008) and idem, *Making the Earth a Human Dwelling Place. Essays in the Philosophy and Anthropology of Culture and Religion* (Würzburg, Altenberge 2000), 304-307 and numerous others.

² For the “abrahamitic” religions see f. ex. Th. Mooren, “Unity in Diversity. The “Prophets” Muhammad, Abraham, and Jesus and the

Facing this situation, and Islam generally being believed to be the strictest monotheism of the three “abrahamitic” ones, it seems best to begin our revisiting monotheism with a presentation of Islamic monotheistic thought—thanks to an investigation into the work of the Muʿtazilite Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (died 1025), more precisely into his *Sharḥ al-usūl al-khamsa* (The Explanation of the Five Principles³ = *Sharḥ*). The Muʿtazilites go back to Wasīl ibn ʿAtāʾ (699-748/9), who separated himself from his teacher Hasan al-Basrī⁴ because of a disagreement on the fate of the grave sinner (fāsiq). For Wasīl he was neither faithful nor totally unfaithful, but living in between these two stages (fī manzilatīn bainā manzilatayn).

The Muʿtazilites are known for their fight in favour of God’s unity (tawḥīd) and God’s justice (ʿadl). To keep both together seems almost impossible, in particular regarding the theodicy problem. Evil seems more easily explainable on the basis of two gods, one good one, one bad, than by maintaining that there is only one sole responsible. Related to this question is the problem of “qadar”, “free will” (literally: the human being having its own “quantity” of power at its disposal), equally fiercely debated,⁵ since the whole reflection on good and evil demands at least on the human side a minimum of free will which renders human responsibility, and thus God’s just punishment, possible. The oneness of God was also

Islamo-Christian Dialogue,” *MST Review* 6 (2004): 73-113.

³ Based upon a script by Sheshdiv, Mānkadīm and ed. Cairo 1965 by A.K. ʿUthmān.

⁴ Thus the name of the group from the verb “to separate” (iʿtazala)

⁵ See too J. van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie. Zwei anti-qadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hīra* (Beirut and Wiesbaden 1977), 109, 110, 183, 235, 243/4; Th. Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott - ausser Gott. Der Islam in der Welt der Religionen* 130/1 (Würzburg, Altenberge 1996), in part. note 354.

seriously threatened, in the eyes of the Mu'tazilites, by the people's belief in the eternity of the Qur'ān, that is that it has never been created in time (and naturally will never perish). Yet, this makes the Qur'ān effectively, as the Mu'tazilites saw it, a second God beside Allah!⁶

If this is the general picture of the theological situation⁷, in our present investigation I will concentrate on the study of God's unity (*tawhīd*).⁸ The Qāḍī's text on *tawhīd* is very concise and is called not for nothing a "Mu'tazilite 'aqīda", a catechism working by questions and answers. The hope is that the directness

⁶ Behind this we can detect the problem, how to distinguish God's attributes from his essence, a central problem of Islamic theology. See R. Caspar, *A historical introduction to Islamic theology. Muhammad and the classical period* (Rome 1998) ["Studi arabo-islamici del Pisai" no. 11], 154. By the way, the example of the Qur'ān, whether it is created or not, tells us something about the impossibility, even in the realm of Islam, about "true", "strict" monotheism "on the ground". On duality within monotheism see also, following J. Baudrillard, my reflection on the twin towers in New York and the 9/11 event. (Th. Mooren, "New York—Ground Zero 2001," *MST Review* 14 (2012): 183-188.

⁷ See also T. Nagel, *Geschichte der islamischen Theologie. Von Mohammed bis zur Gegenwart* (München 1994), 43-49, 101-117; D. Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane* (Paris 1980); J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des 'Adudaddin al-Iḥi. Übersetzung und Kommentar des ersten Buches seiner Mawāqif* (Wiesbaden 1966), 13-23 and the same: *Anfänge...*; R. Caspar, *Traité de Théologie Musulmane I., Histoire de pensée religieuse Musulmane* (Rome 1987), 145-172; and the same: *A Historical Introduction...*, 154-196, in part. 180; H. Laoust, *Les Schismes dans l'Islam. Introduction à une étude la religion musulmane* (Paris 1965), 101-114.

⁸ My study is based upon excerpts of the *Sharḥ*, as edited by the Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e Islamici, in its "Etudes Arabes", dossiers, Nr. 65, Rome 1983-2, under the title: *la passion del'unicité*: pp. 6/7 Arabic text, and pp. 8-10 introduction into 'Abd al-Jabbār's work followed by a French translation. [My own English translation is based upon this Roman text].

and transparency of the text guides us without detour into what I would call the heart of the monotheist mentality, into the heart of the *kalām*, i.e., Islamic theological scholasticism and its logic.⁹

After having studied what the *kalām* has to say about God's unity, we are ready to dialogue with one of the greatest philosopher-theologians of Jewish history, Maimonides, who has still much in common with the *kalām* but also, clearly as a philosopher of his time, takes his distance, in particular regarding the *method* of Islamic scholastics. The dialogue with Maimonides will differentiate the picture of God's oneness and of God's involvement into creation. In this way key concepts of Maimonides can also retrospectively function as an eye opener for what has begun long before Maimonides, i.e., as post exile genuine Jewish theology with its specific interpretation of scripture and its openness to mystical speculation (*kabbalah*). In the end it will also become plausible that Christian theological thinking in the name of trinity owes much to Judaism and can never be understood without it – in the same way as Judaism cannot come to grips with its own history without taking into account Christian theology.

I. The *kalām* and God's unity – *lā thānī lahu*: there is no second to Him¹⁰

1. God alone is creator and eternal

“When you are asked: ‘What about monotheism (*tawhīd*)?’ – here is the answer: ‘Monotheism is the

⁹ “*Kalām*” means the “word”, and the scholastic theologians were thus called “those who talk” (*mutakallimūn*).

¹⁰ La passion de l'unicité, 6; cf. *ibid.*, 8/9 – The transcription of Arabic terms has been simplified. Emphatic letters are rendered by italics.

science about something that God possesses alone, i.e., something regarding those attributes that no human being¹¹ shares with Him. It means we know, when it comes to the world, that there is a maker (sāni'), who made it; that He [God the maker] is someone that [really and fully] exists (maujūd), in such a way, that He has never stopped to exist and will never stop in the future¹²; someone who is [truly] eternal.¹³ Death (fanā') has no right upon him.¹⁴ We, however, enter into existence out of non-existence,¹⁵ neither are we eternal.¹⁶

*Commentary*¹⁷

The structural construction of the opening of the 'aḳīda, the creed, is impressive. We have, on top, the triple affirmation of God as maker, as existent, and as eternal. This is exemplified by three negations: did not stop (1), will never stop (2) – as negative explanation of what it means for God to exist (maujūd) – and that death will never hit him (3) as explanation of what it means to be “subsistent”, ever lasting and eternal.

Yet, when it comes to the human being, there too we have a triple affirmation: “one of us” [versus God] (1). Existence out of nothingness (2), and being submitted to death (3). In this way, “existence out of nothingness” is exactly the opposite to God’s way of existence. Yes, the “one of us” shares with God the attribute of maujūd, but only *after* (ba'da) having emerged out of the realm of

¹¹ “ahadun min mahḷūqīna”.

¹² “lam yazal...lā yazālu”.

¹³ “bāqin”; “subsistent”.

¹⁴ “lā yajūzu 'alaihi”: “is not allowed...”.

¹⁵ “ba'da al-'adam”, “after the state of 'nothingness”

¹⁶ “Death has a right upon us.”

¹⁷ The division in chapters and the commentaries of the chapters of the sharḥ are by ThM.

‘adam, the “nothingness”. This in turn means, with regard to death, which, indeed, is “allowed” upon us, that it is part of our lot. Obviously, “nothingness” is not to be understood here in a modern totally nihilistic sense, but rather as a “positive”, but not yet qualified “Urgrund” or “Ungrund” of all Being (like an idealistic philosopher, Schelling, would call it).

The key term, when it comes to “one of us”, i.e., to humankind, is “after” (ba‘da)! Single mindedly, the term ba‘da breaks open God’s quiet eternity, by throwing the human being into the realm of history, i.e., temporality and contingency, cutting off the “one of us” away from Being into the constituency of *Da-Sein*, “being there”, if we may use Heideggerian terminology. Being “after” puts the “one of us” under the wing of history, of *creature* in front of the creator. Everything else that follows, what we can still *say about God* – and this is what “attribute” (sifat) means – has to be read in the light of this fundamental fracture within Being, will necessarily take the form of analogy (qiyās): that is what God possesses in full, in His own right and forever, the human being has it only in a limited, “borrowed,” way.

2. God alone is almighty and omniscient

“Know that God is almighty (qādir). He has never stopped to be almighty nor will He ever do so. In other words: weakness (‘ajzu) has no grasp upon him. Furthermore God is knowing (‘ālim). He never stopped knowing nor will He ever do so. This ignorance (jahl) has no grasp upon him. More precisely; He really knows everything:¹⁸ that what is and what will be; and with regard to that what is not yet, what is still in the

¹⁸ “bi-lashyā’i kullahā”.

making, He knows how it would look like, if it would have been already realized.¹⁹

Commentary

The *scientia Dei* extends itself over the existing things, the present tense and the future. “Future” in the case of God means two things: shapes of things that can be guessed, like the form of a flower, while I only know the seed. Yet God’s future knowledge, unlike ours, also embraces even shapes of things that cannot be deduced from already existing visible models, things that are still totally hidden in the realm of mere potentiality, in the realm of ‘adam.

3. God is alive

“Also know that God is alive (*hayyun*) in such a way that He was always alive and never stops being so – neither harm (*al-āfāt*) nor pain (*al-ālāmu*) can hit him.”

Commentary

“Alive” is not the same as “to exist”, nor does it simply mean to be “immortal”. Rather, being alive, especially in the case of God, touches the *quality* of life, the “good form” of life, not necessarily the length of it. – Maybe we can point within this context to examples of peoples/beings in diverse folktales and mythologies, who “qualify” for eternal life, a life without death, but would find this condition totally painful and frustrating, so painful that they wish to die. Like the heroes of late antiquity Glaukos, who became immortal. Glaukus found out that immortality in itself is no good fortune at all – he throws himself into the ocean and becomes a demon. Another example: The cook of Alexander the

¹⁹ “Wa mā lā yakūnu lau kāna kaifa kāna yakūnu”.

Great discovers by chance the fountain of immortality, the same fountain Alexander was not able to find. He becomes so angry that his cook and not he himself has become immortal, that he tries to kill his servant by all possible means, but without success since his cook has become immortal. Finally the cook is chained to a huge block of bronze and thrown into the deepest spot of the ocean.²⁰

4. God is all-seeing

“Know that God sees the visible (rāʿin lil-murʾayāt), perceives the perceivable (mudrik lil-mudrakāt) and is not in need (lā yahtāju) of any sense organ (hāsat) nor instrument (ālat).”

5. God is self-sufficient

“And know that God is self-sufficient (ghanyyun), has never stopped to be so and will never stop to be self-sufficient. Any kind of need (hajat) will never hit him.”

Commentary

This attribute is fundamental. Maybe on the speculative-theological level of monotheistic thought even the most “successful”!²¹

6. God– the anti-body

“Know that God is not similar to anything that has a

²⁰ See L. Greisiger, *Messias - Endkaiser - Antichrist. Politische Apokalyptik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung* (Wiesbaden 2014), 188-190.

²¹ See f.ex. Th. Mooren, “Monothéisme coranique et anthropologie,” *Anthropos* 76 (1981): 543-545.

body [or shape or form].²² He is not concerned by what is characteristic for the movement of bodies: rising (*su'ūd*) and falling (*hub-ūt*); does not know the change of place (*tanaqqul*), neither any form of alteration (*taghyīr*), fixation (*tarkīb*) or development (*taswīr*). He does not need neither the absence of (certain) limbs (*al-jāriha*) nor the presence of (certain) organs (*a'dā'*) [like sex organs]. Also know that in God there is nothing similar to accidents (*a'rād*) characteristic of movement (*harakāt*) and repose (*sukūn*); to colors (*al-alwān*), flavours (*al-tu'ūm*) or smells (*al-rawā'ih*)."

Commentary

All this is basically the result, on the side of God, of the absence of what we have discussed under the term of "ba'da" (after), the immersion into becoming and decaying, birth and death.

7. God - the One

"Know that God is ONE (*wāhid*) in all eternity (*fil-qidam*) and from the very beginning (*al-awwalīya*); there is no second to Him (*al-thānī lahu*) and that everything else – apart from him (*kull mā sawāhu*) – is "created" (*muhdath*²³), made (*maf'ūl*), in need of someone or

²² "Lā yushbiḥu al-ajsān".

²³ The terminology used by our author belongs to the belief system of the Mu'tazila school. Instead of the Verb "khalāqa", to create, the Verb "ḥadatha" (in its IV. form), to bring forward, is used. Albeit both could be rendered by "to create", to "bring forward" might suggest a more limited participation of God in the act of creation. He only "pushes into" being what is already well determined as to its constitutive qualities, f.ex. to be "good" or "bad", for which God is *not* responsible. These precautions are taken because of the theodicy problem. – For more details see Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain...*, 3-60, 241-304, 334-360; van Ess, *Anfänge...*, 110, 109, 241, 243/4; Caspar, *A Historical Introduction...*, 180; Mooren, *Es gibt*

something (*muhtāj*), “directed” (*mudabbār*; determined from the outside), possessed (*mamlūk*) and dominated (*marbūb*; by outside forces).

If you have learnt all this, then you are an expert in the question of *tawhīd*!”

Commentary

Here, the *ʿaqīda* finally arrives at its dogmatic peak – the declaration of unity. However, the “unity” that has been proven until now bears more the character of “uniqueness” than with *numerical* unity, i.e., we are dealing with an ample description of what God is not – not “one of us”, a human being. Hence He possesses in fullness all the “good” attributes like seeing, knowing, being alive etc., which we only carry with us in a limited way, limited by death, sickness and all kinds of weaknesses.

However, the question that arises now is: does the uniqueness, once duly established, also imply a *numerical* uniqueness. In other words, is it possible or even thinkable, that the being that is creator and dominator of everything *shares* this “unique” status with someone else? Since until now the case has not been made that such a sharing (of power, life and total being) has to be excluded. It has only been supposed; rejected, on the level of God, as something unthinkable, logically impossible or otherwise totally impracticable. Yet before that *proof* of the impossibility of the existence of a *thānī*, a second beside the One God, has not been delivered, monotheism, as Islam understands it, is not yet secured. Thus we have to attack exactly this proof (*dalīl*) thanks to the text that follows.

II. Probing the *tawhīd*²⁴

1. The second as co-sharer?

“Question: ‘What is the proof (dalīl) regarding the statement that God is one and that there is no second with him?’ Answer: ‘If there would be a second with him, this one would also be eternal (qadīm); more precisely, he would necessarily be eternal *like* him (the first one), [i.e., out of himself], since being eternal means to be eternal “out of oneself” (li-nafsihi), and he would also be powerful (qādir) “out of himself.”’

commentary

A new perspective is introduced here. Certain attributes belong to God simply because He is God. Who says “God”, says also at the same token attributes like being eternal or being powerful. They come with God’s essence (dhāt) – li-nafsihi, out of God’s own “deep individuality”, so to speak. And the first of these attributes is to be eternal (qadīm). The one who shares in eternity with someone, “automatically” also shares in all the other attributes of the essence, like power, etc. These hypothetical “eternals” would end up to be equal to each other. This excludes any possibility of ranking among them, that one is dominating the other. Each eternal one is strictly “autonomous”. However this would lead to the following dilemma:

2. Proof *ad absurdum*

In case we have two powerful beings, powerful out of their own (li-anfusuhumā; because of their essence) what could happen is that one of the two would want to

²⁴ La passion de l’unicité, 7, cf. *ibid.*, 9/10.

move a body, while the other wants to keep it immobile. Now it makes sense to imagine three possibilities: Be it that the two wills have their way (realize themselves simultaneously) – but that is absurd (*muhāl*), because of the inherent contradiction of both of them (*litadā dihumā*). Or, be it that both don't get their way – which is also absurd, hence that would lead to the inefficacy (*al-durf*) of both of them. However, in God there is no place for such inefficacy. Remains that only one will of the two (*murādāhumā*) gets its way. But this would entail that this one (alone) is powerful, while the other is weak, lacking efficacy. However, what is weak cannot be eternal nor can it be God. In this way it is proven (*tabata*), that God is one. This comes down to what God himself declares in Sūra 21, 22: 'Had there been therein (in the heavens and the earth) Gods (*alihah*) besides Allah both [the Co-God and God himself] would be ruined (*lafasadatā*)'.²⁵

commentary

The logical proof presented by the *kalām*, the Islamic scholastic theology, is remarkable. It is not lacking astuteness. Since it makes perfect good sense, *as long as* we are dealing with the human reality and above all under the assumption that everything resides in the original fact that will A is opposite to will B. This, indeed, can only lead to a power struggle (and the loser will not be a God) or will have to end in draw where both Gods disqualify themselves. However, what is not taken into account is the possibility that at the very beginning there exists a situation where both wills (Gods) want exactly the same!

²⁵ Transl. Qur'ān King Fahd. (Qur'an: *The Noble Qur'an*. English Translation of the meanings and commentary, King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an.)

Now, this may be, indeed, a situation that on the human level might never occur. Or, precisely *only* in the state of perfect mutual love! And is this not exactly the situation John's gospel is struggling with, while trying to describe the relationship between God as Father and this famous "second one", His son? Truly, even here, the original situation, the relationship between Father and Son, seems to play exactly into the hands of Islamic theology, since the kinship terminology as such does *not* indicate or suggest a perfect coincidence between Father and Son. On the contrary, it indicates one being superior, the other inferior "*by birth*", *ex officio*, in all eternity. However, would perfect love not have the capacity to make both equal and to avoid the creation of winners and losers? In other words, one would have *to change the pattern* in order to take the relationship *out of the context of a mere power play!* The pattern of mere power, however, is the pattern that guides the discourse on the "second God" in Islamic theology. It is *the* permanent underlying pattern that keeps Islamic monotheism together.²⁶ It enables Islamic theology to demonstrate, successfully from its viewpoint, the inherent weakness, if not absurdity of the rival theologies, that threaten, at its highpoint of formulation, Islamic orthodoxy – and the state, the political powers, behind it.

²⁶And equally *keeps together* with the additional support of "predestination" or anti-qadar theology the society, i.e. *keeps the people submitted*. See v. Ess's remarks, *Anfänge...*, 183, 235, 241 on the "ideology of domination" (*Herrschaftsideologie*) embraced by the Umayyads, the first great dyansty in Islam (ruled from Mu'āwyya [661-680] until al- Walīd II [743-744]). See too Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott...*, 130-132.

3. Rivals defeated

“And in this way the theory of the Dualists (qaul al-*thanawīya*²⁷) becomes untenable according to which (there exist the two:) light (*nūr*) and darkness (*zulma*), both being eternal. Furthermore, our proof that bodies are created and that therefore a creator is needed also smashes (*yabtulu*) their belief system. Equally annihilated is the Christian doctrine (qaul) according to which there exist three “persons” (*uqnūm*²⁸) in God: the Father, the Son and the “Saint Esprit” (*rūh al- quds*).²⁹ Hence we have explained that God is One (*wāhid*) and that it is absurd for someone who is One in reality (*fil- haqīqati*) to be in reality also “threefold” (*thalāta*).

²⁷ Manicheans, Mazdeans.

²⁸ “*uqnūm*”, from the Syriac *qnômā* is a key term in Nestorian theology: two *kyanê*, two *qnômê* in one *parsôpa*. *Kyānā* indicates the “*physis*”, the “general nature”; that there *is* something, some being that then gets differentiated or concretized in *qnômā*, a “person”, in the most basic sense, i.e., enabling me to distinguish Paul from Peter. There does not exist any equivalent to *qnômā* in Greek or Latin, although some see in *qnômā* what the Greeks call “*ousia*”. Hence also *qnômā* cannot be divided and is permanent. Others propose to let *qnômā* untranslated. In any case it should not be translated by “*hypostase*” in the way Chalcedon uses this term. Thus “person” should be used very carefully and not be confounded with our modern subjectivity or autonomous individuality. – For the Syrian-Nestorian background and the meaning of *qnômā* see C.-St. Popa, *Gīwargīs I. (660-680). Ostsyrische Christologie in frühislamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden 2016), 116-138, in part. 136, and 116, note 247.

²⁹ For Islam and the Trinity see too Mooren, *The Trinity...78-107*.

III. A world with new borders

1. The shock of philosophy

Our excursion into the arguments of the kalām on tawhīd has demonstrated how ready-witted Islamic orthodoxy is when it comes to defend the faith in the One God. We can feel something like a raw power that runs through the arguments these early theologians have forged – a made body needs a maker, two wills will run in opposite directions, what is one cannot be three and so forth. They are experts in naming and analyzing the attributes (sifat) of the One who like a most sophisticated overseer holds the reins of the world in his hands, as creator and final judge – and yet, apart from the voice of the Prophets – remains hidden in his essence (dhāt). Or more precisely, the voice of the Prophets combined with the unique tool the human being possesses: its reason (nazar).

Yet, reason is also a double-edged sword. The moment theological reason embraces fully the non-Islamic intellectual heritage of late Antiquity by entering the treasure house of classical Greek philosophy,³⁰ the relationship to the One is also profoundly altered. New models of understanding the world emerge and put the ancient ways of understanding into question. New world views are elaborated thanks to the way of thinking that is spellbound by such intellectual giants like Plato and Aristotle. Now wonder, that the truth of scripture is seriously shaken. Dogmas concerning creation, the status of the world and the immortality of the individual

³⁰ See Th. Mooren, *Falsafa (philosophy) in Islam*, in Th. Mooren, “I do not adore what you adore!” *Theology and Philosophy in Islam* (Delhi 2001), 157-205.

soul, the relationship between the One and the Many³¹ – everything is up for reinterpretation, reformulation or even refutation. The biblical image of the One God seems to melt away in front of an “unmoved mover”. “Being” is submitted to potential and act and creation understood as emanation (*faid*). The whole religious and cultural tradition is scrutinized again – a mighty irreversible process that will produce at its peak giants like Avicenna (Ibn Sina) [980-1037] and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) [1126-1198]³²; in sum “philosophy”, under which name this new way of thinking and investigating is known, for its glory and threat at the same time!

It is a fascinating world that is spread out before our mind, but again – what about the truth of scripture, Qurʾān and Torah or Gospel? What about those who get lost in this new world, risking to abandon their faith? In this situation, strong souls are needed, strong in faith and reason; souls who have the courage to learn the language of philosophy without betraying the words of the age-old traditional creed, the belief in One God.³³ It

³¹ See Th. Mooren, *The One, the Many and the Case of Mysticism: Ibn Arabi's union of Being and the Mysticism of the Upanishads. Reflection on the Dynamics of Theological Imagination*, in: Mooren, “I do not adore...”, 206-253.

³² These two philosophical giants also stand for the two main-receptions of classical philosophy, namely Plato and Neoplatonism on the one side (see Avicenna), and Aristotle and the peripatetic school on the other (see Averroes). See too Musall, Schwartz, in: W. von Abel, I. Levkovich, F. Musall, (transl.), F. Musall and Y. Schwartz (Introd.), *Moses Maimonides. Wegweiser für die Verwirrten. Eine Textauswahl zur Schöpfungsfrage, Arabisch/Hebräisch/ Deutsch* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2009), 22; J. Sourdél and D. Sourdél, *Dictionnaire historique de l'Islam*, Paris [PUF] 1996; ed. “Quadrige” 2004, 118-120; furthermore, A. Badawi, *Averroes (Ibn Rushd)*, Paris 1998 (Études de Philosophie Médiévale, LXBis); M.-Th. D'Alverny, *Avicenne en Occident*, Paris 1993 (Études de Philosophie Médiévale, LXXI).

³³ Obviously for each religion the challenge is different. As for

is here that Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, 1135-1204) enters the scene.

2. The emergence of a Great Master

Maimonides was born in Cordoba (Spain), where his father was a famous judge at the rabbinic college. 1148 the family was forced to flee “one step ahead of the rise to power of the fanatical Almohade Dynasty.”³⁴ After years of errantry through Spain and Morocco (Fez), during which Maimonides and his family were forced to convert to Islam³⁵, they landed in Egypt, at Fostat, near Cairo. There Maimonides became later the spiritual chief of the Jewish community. He also acted as a court physician of the great Muslim leader Saladin.³⁶

Julius Guttman in his monumental opus on Jewish philosophy observes that the “theist Aristotelism” of

the Christians I only want to say this with regard to their trinitarian speculations, namely that the Syrian Christians did not live any more “at the door of the Jews, like poor relations not on speaking terms” to adapt a statement from R. Murray’s “Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A study in Early Syriac Tradition” and quoted by P. Brown in his *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York 2008 [1988]), 88, note 18. Rather, a close relative to Jewish monotheism is the emerging Muslim theology. It is too close for comfort, one could say...

³⁴ G. Robinson, *Essential Judaism. A Complete Guide To Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York 2000), 415.

³⁵ In order to survive! See Robinson, 415, but rejected as “peu probable” by Guttman. (See J. Guttman, *Histoire des philosophies juives. De l’époque biblique à Franz Rosenzweig*, (Paris [Gallimard] 1994), 197; which is a translation of J. Guttman, *Philosophy of Judaism* (Holt, Reinhart and Winston 1964) which follows Guttman’s Hebrew edition, which is based in turn upon Guttman’s original German work: *Die Philosophie des Judentums in Einzeldarstellungen*, Abt. I: *Das Weltbild der Primitiven und die Philosophie des Morgenlandes*, vol. 3 (Ernst Reinhart, München 1933). I follow the French edition. English transl. by Th. Mooren.

³⁶ Cf. Robinson, 415.

Maimonides “has determined the place of the biblical creator God inside the frame of the philosophic cosmology” which amounts to a realization of a true “metaphysical synthesis between biblical religion and Aristotelism.”³⁷ Obviously, Maimonides has had his predecessors.³⁸ In fact, his strength does not lie so much in the invention of new ideas, but in the exceptional quality of his synthesis.³⁹ So much so that the late Middle Ages honored him as the “Great Master, the one who had established scientifically the Jewish religion.”⁴⁰

This is valid on the practical-pastoral as much as on the dogmatic-speculative level. Suffice to turn toward one of his great halakhic (moral, pastoral) writings like the “Commentary on the Mishna,” written when he was still a young man. Therein he lays down the 13 truths which define, according to him, each Jew.⁴¹ Going

³⁷ Guttman, 232.

³⁸ “In his interpretation of the aristotelian system he follows the Muslim Aristotelians, al-Farabi and Avicenna. In his criticism of Aristotelism he was preceded by Ghazali and Judah Halevi. In his biblical exegesis and even his philosophical doctrines he is indebted in many points to preceding Jewish rationalists.” (Guttman, 196).

³⁹ Cf. Guttman, 196.

⁴⁰ Guttman, 232; cf. too H. Bresc, *Frédéric II et les juifs*, in: P. Salmona and J. Sibon (eds), *Saint Louis et les juifs. Politique et idéologie sous le règne de Louis IX* (Paris 2015), 144,150; see too E. Hoffman (ed.), *The Wisdom of Maimonides. The Life and Writings of the Jewish Sage* (Boston, London 2008), 157. — Still Cusanus “for his own understanding of God’s mystery” referred among others “to Rabbi Moyses [Maimonides]... With the help of Rabbi Moyses he explained one aspect of God’s action as creator.” (G.K. Hasselhoff, *The Image of Judaism in Nicolas of Cusa’s Writings*, in: Gleib, G. K., [ed.], *Medievalia et Humanistica, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, No. 40 [Lanham, etc., 2015], 32).

⁴¹ 1. truth: Existence of God. 2. His unity. 3. His incorporeity. 4. His eternity. 5. The proper liturgy concerning the One God. 6. The existence of prophecy. 7. The superiority of Moses over all other prophets. 8. The divine origin of the Torah delivered by Moses. 9. The eternal validity of the Torah. 10. God knows all actions of the

through the list we find that besides God and Torah – and the Messiah to come – the figure of the Prophet is of paramount importance for Maimonides. He sees the role of Moses in the light of the Muslim-Aristotelic interpretation of the nature of prophecy, which insists on the Prophet as legislator and politician.⁴² This is good pansemitic tradition. Even on the speculative-cognitive level the Prophet is not, as one might have expected, inferior to the philosopher, because the Prophet's knowledge “reaches out to intuitive heights that go well beyond the borders of discursive comprehension.”⁴³

Yet, even greater in fame and impact on his time (including our own) than Maimonides' “practical” skill commenting the Mishna for example, is this other opus magnum of the Cordoban Jew: “*The Guide for the Perplexed*”.⁴⁴ Yet even here, one can feel the “pastoral zeal” of the great philosopher, since his work is directed toward those who have troubles to harmonize – lest to accept – Aristotelic truth with biblical truth. The Guide for the perplexed, the lost and confused ones, “*Dalālat al-Hā'irīn*”⁴⁵ was written in Fostat between 1180 and

human being. 11. He rewards and punishes us according to our actions. 12. God will send a Messiah. 13. God will rise the dead. (See Guttman, 227/8; Robinson, 416/7). – Regarding the controversy around the last item (the resurrection) between Maimonides and his critics, like Rabbi Samuel b. Eli, Baghdad, head of the Torah academy, see Hoffman 26/7.

⁴² Cf. Guttman, 228.

⁴³ Guttman, 219. – See too within this frame Maimonides' statement about the *authenticity* of a prophet, i.e., that he had “to validate only his identity as a prophet and not the content of his prophecy” (letter to Hasdai Ha- Levi; quoted Hoffman, 74).

⁴⁴ See f. ex. G. Dahan, *L'étude chrétienne de la Bible au temps de Louis IX*, in: Salmona and Sibon (eds), 103; M. Kriegel, *Le procès et le brûlement du Talmud*, in: Salmona and Sibon (eds), 108; Hoffman, 156/7.

⁴⁵ Hebrew: Moreh nabukhim.

1190/91.⁴⁶ It envisages readers who are on the one side deeply rooted within the Jewish tradition, but on the other also equipped with a certain philosophical knowledge, with the great scientific questions of their time.⁴⁷

Being a guide in a world of such fundamental contradictions Maimonides has to offer a theory of language – the allegorical reading of anthropomorphic passages in the Bible; a theory of the attributes – what can we say about God and how do we have to say it; and above all: how do we have to understand that God is creator?⁴⁸ This leads us to the center of the dispute with Aristotle, for whom the world is eternal. However, a philosophical, i.e., scientific answer regarding this question is, according to Maimonides, not possible.⁴⁹ The question then becomes: how much of Aristotelism can be saved, so to speak, in the light of a re-defined role of the creator (and of the relationship between creator and creature) – re-defined with regard to the creation model proposed by the classical kalām – without, however, accepting the conclusion that the world “emanates” *necessarily* from God? Hence for a faithful Jew God’s *freedom* in the act of creation has to be respected at all costs!⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Cf. Musall and Schwartz in Maimonides, 21.

⁴⁷ Cf. Musall and Schwartz in Maimonides, 23; cf. too Dahan, 102/103.

⁴⁸ Cf. too Robinson, 418.

⁴⁹ Cf. Musall and Schwartz in Maimonides, 25.

⁵⁰ For Maimonides the central question is not “whether the world is eternal or has a beginning in time, but whether it emanates *necessarily* from God or is freely created by Him.” (Guttmann, 211; italics by ThM). And: to explain the eternal process, that is the world, with the help of God, as being conceived as “an eternal activity of a divine will” is just an effort of disguising what is fundamentally and fatally opposed to one another: “a necessary consequence and a free creation”. (Guttmann, 211).

IV. The Guide for the Perplexed

1. Preliminary questions: knowledge of God and knowledge of the world

The following examples from the “*Dalālat al-Hā’irīn*”⁵¹ do not pretend to deal exhaustively with all the problems of Maimonides’ philosophical and theological thoughts. Rather I will concentrate on the problem of creation and how this affects monotheism, the belief in the One God of the Bible. Yet before we throw ourselves into the discussion of this matter – an enterprise that necessarily implies the use of language – we better listen to some caution uttered by Maimonides with regard to any language that pretends to deliver knowledge about God.⁵² There is only one way knowledge about God can be expressed: “in parables and riddles”.⁵³

Despite this limitation, however, knowledge of God is the first foundation that has to be laid out⁵⁴, which really means that *metaphysics* is the true pathway to

⁵¹ I follow the Arabic-Hebrew-German “*Dalālat*” in Herder’s library of the philosophy of the Middle Ages, vol. 19 (=Maimonides). The choice of texts presented and translated by von Abel, Levkovich and Musall, with an introduction by Musall and Schwartz, comprises several chapters of book I and II of the “*Dalālat*” all dealing with the problem of creation. – For the list of editions and translations of the “*Dalālat*” see Maimonides, 310.

⁵²This warning is also in line with Maimonides’ general warning against proofs that are taken as convincing only because they are “written in books”. (See Hoffman, 61).

⁵³ “*bil-amthāl wal-alghāz*” (62/22). (The first number always denotes pages of the Arabic version of the “*Dalālat*” [vowels of the text put by ThM] or the German text [all English translations of this text by ThM], the second number the numeration of chapters according to the Herder edition).

⁵⁴ “*ūlahā idrāka ta’āla*” (62/24).

the knowledge of God.⁵⁵ Yet, metaphysics is truly “meta” (ba’da) - physics (al-tabī’a)⁵⁶, that is, those who want to practise it, have to study first the physis, i.e., “nature” and *then* what comes after it.

In sum, this already presents a program that shows how seriously one has to take the role of “nature” (physis) in any study of post-nature (metaphysics). Yet, part of an approach, which takes “nature” seriously, is certainly the study of *causality*, i.e., the role it plays within the realm of the concept of *creation*.

2. Creation and causality

Approaching this question Maimonides tells us that there is a difference in the understanding of “cause” among philosophers and theologians. The philosophers (al-falāsifa) call God the venerable one (ta’āla), the first cause (al-’illa al-ūla) and the first “foundation” (sabab al-awwal), while the mutakallimūn, the theologians, avoid this terminology (ismyyat) as much as they can (jiddan). In their eyes God can only be called the “maker” (al-fā’il).⁵⁷

The reasoning of the theologians makes sense, if we accept that a “’illa” cannot be separated from what is caused by it, that every “’illa” shows up simultaneously with its result and vice versa.⁵⁸ Applied to the world it

⁵⁵ “lā yasahhu dhalika illā bil-’ilm al-ilāhī” (62/24).

⁵⁶ “wa lā yahsulu dhalika ’ilm al-ilāhī illā ba’da al-’ilmi at-tabī’i” (62/24).

⁵⁷ See 72-75/39.

⁵⁸ “’illa lazima wujūd al-ma’lūl” (74/40). – When it comes to the kind of cause “’illa” represents, we have to think about the relationship between for example blackness and being black, or darkness and being dark, kindness and being kind, etc. For everything that can function as an attribute (adjective) there exists a noun that plays the role of a mere *logical* cause – the link between blackness and black being purely logical in nature. It is a mind

would mean an eternal and necessary *coexistence* of the world as caused with God as cause!⁵⁹ In other words, God would not have any choice with regard to the existence of the world,⁶⁰ no choice to be or not to be with the world or the world with Him.

Now we can understand why the theologians insist on the use of the term “maker” (fā’il). Hence the talk about a “maker” does not imply that, what he or she has made, relates to the “maker” by virtue of necessity, co-constituency or co-existence. Rather, the “maker” usually precedes the made object or action (to make it).⁶¹ That is, there is a moment where the “maker” is still “alone” while the object (or action) is not yet existing. To apply this to the world and its relationship with the “maker” obviously makes better sense than the reality suggested by the “illa”, if – and that is the condition, my purpose is to defend the freedom of the “maker”.⁶²

Furthermore, according to Maimonides there are some theologians that have the audacity to deduce from the fact that the maker and the made object are separated even something, what we could call in modern terminology a “God-is-dead-theology”! Meaning: if we

construct, a fact of grammar, i.e., nothing that could be destroyed by “outside” intervention. The link between blackness and black is absolutely necessary. The same reasoning, however, cannot be applied to the concept of “sabab” which rather indicates an *instrumental* cause. Such a cause cannot create the kind of necessary link a “illa” is creating.

⁵⁹ “yu’addi liqidami al-’ālamī wa an al-’ālam laha ’alā jihati l-lazūmi” (74/40).

⁶⁰ Cf. too 240, 241/278.

⁶¹ “lianna al-fā’il qad yataqaddamu fi’lahu” (74/40).

⁶² However, even in this kind of reasoning Maimonides discovers a failure: to suggest that the “maker” *always* has to precede the action or the object made comes down, in his eyes, to a non-distinction between what is potential and what is actual: “lā yaf’uqu baina mā bil-qūwati wa baina mā bil-fi’li” (74/40; see too 238 and 239/276).

really believe in this separated-ness between maker and object made, are we not entitled also to believe, that if the maker disappears, the object made might *not* disappear with him or her, but rather *continue* to exist? In other words: God might be dead but the world still continues!⁶³

3. The world is not a piece of furniture and God no carpenter!

A disappearing creator who leaves his creation alone, forgotten, but still alive in a certain sense, albeit rather erring alone in the vast universe like a rudderless boat, is certainly a logical possibility of the kind of *tawhīd* (monotheism) the theologians have developed.⁶⁴ They were driven by the fear that in any other creation paradigm God will lose his power and the world, being there by necessity, become a kind of “second god” beside the creator. Thus the preference among the theologians for what we could call the “carpenter model” of creation, where the world rather looks like a piece of furniture. Such a one has no autonomy, does not exist by ontological necessity, and might easily survive its maker, since, once made, the piece of furniture is no longer dependent upon the maker, whose job was to make it but *not* to keep it *alive*!⁶⁵

⁶³ “lau quddara ‘adam al-bārā lamā lazima ‘adam hadha al-shay‘ī alladhi awjada al-bārā ya‘nī al-ālam” (74/41).

⁶⁴ For Sloterdijk in his “After God”, this is not only a possibility but the birth certificate of modernity itself. (See P. Sloterdijk, *Nach Gott* [Frankfurt/M 2017], 27).

⁶⁵ That The furniture might need repairing is not part of the paradigm. Rather, the paradigm insists on the fact that the piece of furniture, let’s say a coffer, does not need ongoing intervention by the maker: “idha māta al-najjār laysa tafsīdu alkhizāna idh wa laysa yumaddahā baqā’an”: “if the carpenter dies the coffer does not die,

Not so in the case of the world! Contrary to the coffer that does not need the carpenter for survival, the world *does need* God by way of “creatio continua” – God is “always actually acting”⁶⁶ – hence God is scope or objective and form of the world: “ghayat wa sūrat min al-wahmi”, form and “picture of imagination”.⁶⁷ This totally changes the nature of the relationship creator-creature. What defines this relationship now is the fact, that it is based upon *caring*!⁶⁸

To come to this conclusion, however, one has to have the courage to look upon the world with a regard different from the outlook of the theologians. As the statement about God being scope and form of the world already suggests, it is philosophy that fuels the new regard on the world. Hence philosophy, as we have seen above, embraces not only metaphysics but should be based on solid knowledge about the physis also, the new paradigm of caring results from a new look upon *nature*; from a renewed respect for nature and the way things happen in the realm of creation (nature laws).

The theologians however do not listen to nature in this way. To break the rules of reason (‘aql) does not seem to be a problem for them.⁶⁹ Hence Maimonides’ sharp criticism of the mutakallimūn: “They all have for

hence the carpenter does not keep it alive!” (74/42); meaning: it is not his business to do so!

⁶⁶ “lam yazal fā’ilan” (238/277).

⁶⁷ 74/42.

⁶⁸ “al-‘ālam laysa huwa lāziman ‘anhu ta’āla luz’ūm al-ma’lūl li’illati” (240/278): “The world does not depend upon God in the way the result [what is caused] depends on the ‘illa”, that form of logical cause we have discussed above. Rather, between world and God, creator and creation a bridge is now built by “caring” whose nature will be discussed below. See too Maimonides 236, 238, 242, 244/276-282.

⁶⁹ Cf. 84/19. In classic Islamic theology nature laws are only God’s customs (‘adat). God almighty could easily change them!

basic premise *not* to take into account what reality (al-wujūd, the world, the way it really is), teaches them.”⁷⁰ To be sure, what the theologians discover this way might not necessarily be wrong. They might even arrive at conclusions similar to the ones proposed by the philosophers. But their *method*, nonetheless, will remain forever wrong. They do not follow this basic conviction of our Cordoban philosopher: “I do not contradict the nature of Being. I do not treat with disdain the world of the senses!”⁷¹

Now, looking carefully at nature and trusting his senses, what does Maimonides see, what does he learn?

4. The body of the universe

The first thing to know is that for Maimonides the universe is one big individual (*shahs wāhid*), the same way Zayd or Umar are individuals. The individual called “universe” is made of a “kura al-falak al-aqsa”, a celestial outer sphere plus everything what is in it.⁷² The sphere is composed of celestial bodies and of the four elements (earth, water, air, fire). In the midst there is the earth. Water surrounds (*muḥīt*) the earth, air the water and the fire the air. The universe (the world) is a composite structure full of parts exactly as the composite structure of the bodies of Zayd and Umar is full of parts.⁷³

We recognize the worldview of classic Antiquity. This is still the case when the celestial bodies are said to move in circles (*mustadīrat*), that they are alive (*hayyat*), possess a soul (*nafs*) that keeps them moving

⁷⁰ “an lā i’tibār bimā ‘alayhi al-wujūd” (84/59).

⁷¹ “wa lā ukhālifu *tabī’a* al-wujūd wa lā iltaj’ limakābaratil-mahsūsāt” (92/74)

⁷² “bikulli mā fihā” (96/78).

⁷³ Cf. 96/78.

(bihā tataharaku).⁷⁴ The idea of movement leads directly to the most important part of the edifice: the *heart* (qalb). First, let's say, in the world body as in the human body, there exist superior (ra'īsāt) and inferior (a'dā') parts. As for the human body the heart is the superior part and as such it is in permanent movement (mutaharrakun dā'iman). It is the principle (mabda') of all movement that can be found in the body.⁷⁵ The consequence is obvious: without heart – death, annihilation takes place! The same is true on the level of the universe.

Also the universe has a heart positioned in the superior parts, the superior celestial sphere (al-falak). It is this sphere that plays the role of the heart, performing on the universal level exactly the same task the human heart is exercising in the human body: being the centre of the movement. Thanks to its own power it makes all the other parts of the universe move!⁷⁶ Consequently: like the individual would die and all its movements and forces would stop, if the heart – and be it only for a single moment – would interrupt its activity, the same thing would occur, if the celestial spheres would come to a standstill! This would mean the annihilation of the whole world and the end of everything upon it (cf. 105/90).⁷⁷

As long as our heart is still beating, we are alive in the same way as the universe is still alive as long as the celestial spheres are beating. This is so, because the

⁷⁴ Cf. 100/85.

⁷⁵ See 102/88.

⁷⁶ “al-mudabbiru lisa'iri ajzā'i al-'ālamī biḥarakatihi” (102 and 104/88).

⁷⁷ “wa kamā annahu lau sakana al-qalb tarfa 'aynin māta al-shaḥs wa bātālāt kullu ḥarakātuḥu wa kull qūwā'u kadhalika lau sakanāt al-aflāku kāna dhalika maut al-'ālamī bijumlatihi wa butlān kullī mā fīhi” (104/90).

beating *animates*, i.e., moves the anthropo-cosmic players – all of them – in one direction only: the direction of *solidarity* and *mutual caring*. We are dealing with an interdependency of all elements in place. In the body as in the universe nothing exists for itself alone: “it is impossible that parts of the world could exist independently from one another”, thus “that fire would exist without earth, earth without sky or sky without earth.” (107/92).⁷⁸

Behind this – manifested through the process of heartbeat – resides the all important reality of a force (qūwa) – the true agent of solidarity! (Cf. 106/93). This force unites and penetrates, administers everything and provides for every organ “what is necessary in order to secure a healthy state for itself” (107/93).⁷⁹ It also belongs to this “healthy state” that qūwa, the force in question, is equally able to defend the individual against all harm. (Cf. 107/93). The physicians (al-aṭibbāʾ) too have noticed the existence of this force that organizes the body of the living being⁸⁰ – and not only that! The perhaps most remarkable result of this whole line of thinking resides in the fact that this force is called by the experts “nature” (tabīʾa).⁸¹ This it is “nature” which holds the universe together, “nature” that keeps us alive; in sum, “nature” that *cares* for us!⁸² Thus saving

⁷⁸ “lā yumkin an tūjida ajz’ al-ā’lami ba’dahā dūna ba’di... hattā tujada nār dūna ard aw ard dūna samā’ auw samā’ dūna ard” (106/92).

⁷⁹ “qūwat mā tarbutu a’dā’hu ba’dahā biba’di wa tudabbiruhā wa tu’tī kulli ’adwi mā yanbigħi an yahrusa ’alayhi salāhiyatahu” (106/93).

⁸⁰ “mudabbaratun libadani al-hayawāni” (106/93).

⁸¹ Cf. 106 and 107/93.

⁸² For Maimonides on “nature” see too “fayulzimu darūratan an ya’tabia hadhā l-maujūd ’alā mā huwa ’alayhi wa tatakhidha l-muqqadamāt mim mā yushāhidu min tabī’atihi. falidhalika yulzimu an ta’rifa sūratahu wa tabī’atahu al-mushāhadati” (94/76): “It is

us it is the key for the “*creatio continua*”, a creation model that distinguishes God’s creative power from the brute power of the carpenter, of the proverbial “maker”.

Nature’s caring power is all the more indispensable for the micro cosmos (‘ālam saghīr⁸³), which the human being indeed is, since it is impossible for any human being to survive *alone*, on its own! Living alone, “in a unorganized state of being” (qad ‘adama l-tadbīra), like a wild animal (kalbahā’imi), the human being would immediately encounter death (litalafi liwaqtihī).⁸⁴ For that reason the humans live in a community (ijtimār), under a leader and unifier⁸⁵ with the explicit scope to help one another.⁸⁶ Follows a description that shows, how the human being thanks to its reason (al-qūwa al-nātiqa) is capable to face all kind of adversities and to fulfill all kind of necessities.⁸⁷ Maimonides calls the nātiq power, this power of reason that dwells in every human being, the most important (ashraf) power of all, albeit it is invisible (khafīya).⁸⁸

In addition, we can find an equivalency between the way things are organized in the human being and in the universe at large (al-wujūd). In the same way as

necessary to consider this world the way it is and to grasp the premises of what you see (with your own eyes) regarding its nature. Thus it is indispensable to know form and nature of what you see.” (95/76). — See furthermore 146/142: “idh al-barāhīn...inamā tu’khadhu min tabī’ati l-wujūdi al-mustaqarati al-mushāhadati al-mudrakati bi-l-hawāssi wa ‘aqli”: “Demonstrative proofs... are only taken from the nature of Being (what really there is). A nature that is solid, experienced and grasped with all the senses (the five senses) and (the power of) reason.” (147/142).

⁸³ See 112/101.

⁸⁴ See 114/102.

⁸⁵ “man yasūsum wa yajmi’uhum” (114/102).

⁸⁶ “liya’āwina ba’dahum ba’dā” (114/102).

⁸⁷ Cf. 114-117/102.

⁸⁸ Cf. 116/102.

everything in the human being is submitted to the reasonable power “thanks to which the humans think, calculate and act” and which “governs all the members of the body”⁸⁹ – according to the same scheme things happen in the universe. Within the “wujūd”, the universe too, there exists this “something” (amr), that animates (al-mudabbar) the totality of all what there is, namely by putting into motion (al-muḥarriku) the heart of the universe itself, this “first and principle organ”⁹⁰ that thanks to its motion power has the vocation to administer everything. Should this “something” perish, the whole universe would perish, the celestial spheres and all its parts.⁹¹

At this point Maimonides even feels to have the right to declare: this “something” is God!⁹² A God, however, within a context different from the world of the carpenter, since this time his creation activity is inseparable from his *permanent guiding* (wa tadbīruhu) and *caring* power (wa ‘ināyatuhu). They accompany (sahaba), as Maimonides puts it, the whole universe, albeit the nature (kunh) and the true character (ḥaqīqa) of this companionship (istiḥāb), i.e., how it really functions, is hidden before our eyes.⁹³ Therefore the human capacity to understand this falls short (maqasiratun). The reason for this resides in the specific way God exercises his being the “ḥayāt al-‘ālam”, the life of the world.⁹⁴ Hence God is *not* in the world like for example “the capacity to speak is *in* the human being’s

⁸⁹ Cf. 115/102.

⁹⁰ “‘udwūhu al-ra’īs al-ūla” (116/103).

⁹¹ For this whole paragraph see 116/103.

⁹² “wa dhalika l-amr huwa aliha ta’āla” (116/103).

⁹³ Cf. 118/107.

⁹⁴ Maimonides calls God here with the words of the Bible, Dan 12, 17. (116/103).

body and cannot be separated from it”.⁹⁵ Meaning, God is not a force that can be fixed within the body of the world, but is separated from all its parts.⁹⁶ Yet, in spite of this separation, that constitutes the factor of divine transcendency, God takes care of everything. We have “proofs regarding the influence of His guidance and His caring exercise in each part of the world, including the smallest part, no matter how insignificant or despised it might be.”⁹⁷ Maimonides interprets this fact as a manifestation of God’s perfection (*kamāl*) that simply is overwhelming us (*abharanā*)⁹⁸.

5. Final outlook: Maimonides on creation versus eternity of the world

The purpose of the previous paragraph was to demonstrate the specific nature of God’s creation activity. The God Maimonides talks about does not always speak the same language as the one spoken by the early thinkers of Islamic monotheism. Developed on the basis of the classical model of celestial spheres governing the universe a spiritual solidarity (“guidance”) and an intensive way of caring emerge with Maimonides as the cornerstone of God’s creative activity.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ “hadha l-qūwat al-nāṭiqa hiya qūwa fī jismi wa ghairi mufā raqatun lahu” (118/107).

⁹⁶ “wa alahu ta’āla laysa huwa qūwa fī jismi al-’lami bal mufā raqun li jamī’i ajzā’i al-’ālamī” (118/107).

⁹⁷ “wa l-burhān yaqūmu ‘alā wujūd athāri tadbīrihi wa ‘inā yatihi fī kulli juz’i min ajzā’ihi wa lau diqqun wa haqūra” (120/107).

⁹⁸ Cf. 120/107.

⁹⁹ However, as always when speaking about God, this also has to be put through the raster of analogy (*qiyās*). It means that in spite of obvious similarities, we should not forget about the difference between God’s caring on the cosmic level and caring among humans on their level. Human caring usually is reciprocal, where one person

However, despite the differences between theologians and philosophers, due to the fact that the theologians don't use the correct method of nature observation, certain arguments advanced by the mutakallimūn are nevertheless also useful for philosophers like Maimonides. Arguments, for example, in favour of the idea that the world is a "*hāditha*", i.e., *not* without a beginning, but due to God's "outside" intervention, a "new creation" at a certain point in time.

The idea of such an outside intervention could, indeed, be sustained by the fact that also in our life as individuals we experience "new beginnings". For example, when we proceed from one life stage to the next, this is in fact best explained as God's work, who pushes the human being forward ("*wa naqalahu min hā li ilā hali*"¹⁰⁰). Equally unexplained, if divine intervention is denied, would remain the long lists of genealogies. We would then deal with long lines of descent that go endlessly ("*wa lā nihāyat lahu*") back into the past – which makes no sense.¹⁰¹ The question of origin comes also up with regard to Adam. Who created First Man? Was it dust? Then where does dust come from? From water? And what is the origin of water? Fire, and so on. Hence, without divine intervention we

becomes the usufructuary of another. Not so on God's side. The flux of life always goes in one direction, from God to the world and its creatures. (See 117/104). Another difference is mentioned by Maimonides regarding the position of the commanding center piece, the heart. The human heart is put into the center, *surrounded* by all the subordinated organs protecting it. In the universe, however, the "noble" (*ashraf*) part covers the less noble parts and thus is protected against outside influences. (See 118/105). A third difference has already been mentioned, namely that the ruling life force of the universe is not *in* the body as it is the case with humans, but is bodyless, albeit it "accompanies" the bodies. (119/107).

¹⁰⁰ See 128/119.

¹⁰¹ Cf. 128 and 129/120.

are confronted with an endless *regressus ad infinitum*, which is absurd (“yamarru ilā lā nihāyat wa huwa mahā ll”¹⁰²).

Another vast field where God’s intervention might be proven, is the whole problem of accidents (‘arad; pl. ‘arād) versus substance (jawhar; pl. jawāhir), i.e., that the world is *composed* of both of them.¹⁰³ What is composed, however, is not eternal. It is in need of someone “who either puts together, what is put together or separates, what is separated.”¹⁰⁴

From here the way is not far from this other big question, known under the term takhsīs, i.e., specification. In a universe where everything is differentiated from its neighbour, someone has to exist “who makes choices, is in possession of the freedom of his will and who finally has wanted one of two legitimate possibilities.”¹⁰⁵

These are some of the arguments that, for mutakallimūn as for philosophers, might have some weight, in a pre-Kantian universe, as “proof” for the intervention of a “supreme being”. In any way, Maimonides is of the opinion that, if you want to sustain that the world has been created, is a *hāditha*” and not eternal, one should go by the proof of the “mukhasis”,

¹⁰² Cf. 128 and 130/121.

¹⁰³ “al-‘ālam kulluha murakkabu min jawhar wa ‘arad” (130/124).

¹⁰⁴ “liman yajma‘u al-mujtama‘a minhā wa liman yafuqu al-muftaraqa minhā” (130/122). – However, many problems still remain debated. For example, are only the accidents new, while substances may remain? (For details see 131, 133, 135/124-127). Yet, the biggest problem stems from Aristotle himself, who denies that the circular movement of the spheres is accidental in nature. For him it neither has a begin nor an end (al-*harakat* al-dūrīya ghairu kā’inatin wa lā fāsīdatin” (132/126).

¹⁰⁵ “dalīl ‘alā mukhasis mukhtār arāda aḥada hudhaini al-jā ‘izaini” (134/129).

specifier, or by the proof that a *regressus ad infinitum* is not possible or by both arguments.¹⁰⁶

However, as useful as this kind of thinking might be for theology and piety, Maimonides envisages all this with the eyes of a philosopher. He is imbued with the knowledge about the relationship between *potentia* and *actus*, potentiality and actuality: “everything that goes from potentia to actus is by necessity propelled to do so by something outside of itself.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, every actus is there by necessity thanks to an “outside” agent.

This has consequences for the image of God as creator, hence the mutakallimūn suppose “that the maker always precedes the effect in time”.¹⁰⁸ This is due to the fact that on the human level, what pushes us into action, is the experience of a *need* (ʿadam). Feeling the need transforms a human being into a potential actor (al-fāʿil bil-qūwwati), who enters the reign of actuality only the moment it has fulfilled that need, i.e., has realized something (lama al-fāʿil kharaja ilā fiʿli).¹⁰⁹

However the situation is totally different, when we talk about God. Since preceding the effect in time on the human level is the result of a need, we see immediately that this cannot be the case for God. “He knows no need – since potentiality never applies to Him”. Rather, He is the one who is always “actual” (fāʿil).¹¹⁰ Consequently for both, man and God, the model “from potentiality to actuality” applies, but in a different way, because of a

¹⁰⁶ “*darūratun min istiʿmāli ahadā hataini al-muqqadataini aw kullatīhuma*” (“necessity of using one of the arguments or both of them” (142/137).

¹⁰⁷ “*kullu mā yakhriju min al-qūwwati ilā l-fiʿl fa mukhrijuhu ghairihi wa huwa khārij ʿanhu darūratun*” (154/1629).

¹⁰⁸ “*yataqaddamu al-fāʿil ʿalā fiʿlihi bi-l-zamān*” (238/276).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 238/276.

¹¹⁰ “*amā al-ilahu taʿāla alladhi lā ʿadamu fihi wa lā shayʿun bil-qūwwati aslan famā yataqaddamu firʿlahu bal lam yazal fāʿilan*” (238/277).

fundamental difference in their “essence” (dhāt), their deepest level of Being.¹¹¹ However, what also becomes immediately plain is the fact, that God’s being always active (lam yazal fā’ilan [238/277]) considerably re-enforces the previous observations regarding the “creatio continua”, the strength and the specificity about God’s *caring* for his creation. And with that, what we have to understand by “monotheism”, also *fundamentally changes its face*.¹¹²

If there is a problem regarding the enthusiasm of Maimonides for the potentia-actus scheme, it resides in the fact that one could argue, that the world was always with God since there was never a time a *specific* need would have pushed Him to act. That Maimonides saw this problem is proven by the chapter 30 of the second Book of the “Guide for the Perplexed”, where he goes into an in-depth exegesis of the first verse of the Genesis “In the beginning God created...” (276/319ff). To reproduce this exegesis would go beyond the scope of our own investigation. I only want to mention here, that Maimonides sustains with force, that God “has created the world out of nothing, without a temporal beginning”, and “even more than that: also the time itself is created by Him, since time depends on the movement of the sphere (al-falak) and the sphere (itself) has been created.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ “Kamā dhātihi mubāyinatū lidhātīnā” (238/277).

¹¹² That does not mean that the Qur’ān never talks about God’s caring for His creation. But it does so in a sporadic, *not systematic* way, surrounded by many other topics which seem equally, if not more important. At any rate the Holy Book is not a treaty in systematic theology, but functions more like a quarry providing the material for many possible theologies.

¹¹³ “an Allahu auwjada al-’ālam lā min shay’in fī ghairi mabda’i zamānī bal al-zamān mahlūq idh huwa tāba’a taharrukāt al-falaki wa al-falak mahlūq” (280/323).

Finally, it seems to me, that the most appropriated way to take leave from Maimoides and his “Guide” consists in quoting the general statement by the great Cordoban thinker about his fundamental relationship with the great Aristotle:

Everything that Aristotle affirms regarding the situation that exists below the sphere of the moon is without any doubt true!... On the other side, anything what Aristotle affirms regarding the sphere of the moon itself and regarding what lies above it – with some exceptions – resembles guesswork (*shibhu*) and speculation (*hadsu*).¹¹⁴

V. The mystery of “binity”

1. The drama of the “second”

In his ground-breaking study, “Two Gods in Heaven: The Image of God in Antic Judaism,” Peter Schäfer resumes for a larger public his lifelong studies regarding the “second” in heaven beside Yahve. We are dealing in fact with an investigation into the matter of Jewish monotheism. The result of Schäfer’s investigation is breathtaking: there has been no Jewish monotheism: “That what we are accustomed today to call monotheism, is nothing else than an ideal, again and again searched for, but rarely realized.”¹¹⁵ How difficult it is for the Yahve of the Exodus and Conquest stories up to the destruction of the First Temple to keep

¹¹⁴ “Kullu mā qālahu Aristū fī jamī’I al-maujūdi alladhi min ladun falaki al-qamari ilā markaz al-ardi huwa *sahih*... amā jami’u mā yatakallamu fīhi Aristū min falaki al-qamari limā fauqihi fakulluhu shibhu *hadsu* wa takhmīn illā ba’da ashā’i” (250/289).

¹¹⁵ P. Schäfer, *Zwei Götter im Himmel. Gottesvorstellungen in der jüdischen Antike* (München 2017), 151. (All transl. of Schäfer’s works by ThM).

his position as the one and only God probably does not come as a surprise.¹¹⁶ However, that “also regarding the period of post biblical Judaism up to late Antiquity the idea of a unique God is only an ideal” (a “Wunschbild”), the product of wishful thinking not only “on the part of the antic authors, but also of modern investigation” – but an ideal that “does not stand an unbiased test” – this might come as a shock!¹¹⁷ The shock might be softened if we consider the fact that what we call today monotheism, viewed as norm in the matter of religious classification, is a product of the XIX century under “the influence of Protestant Christianity.”¹¹⁸ Within this context Schäfer is of the opinion that only Islam among the three ‘Abrahamic’ religions, comes closest to the norm as the “most uncompromising form of monotheism”.¹¹⁹

Speaking of “two gods” in Judaism is not the same as embracing something like Iranian dualism. The *binity* (not to confound with trinity!), as Schäfer coins it, we find in Judaism, shows us two “gods”, indeed, but they don’t fight each other. Rather, they are ruling side by side and in peace.

However, it is supposed that one of the two, normally the older one, functions as the first with a higher rank. It is out of generosity that the first one offers the second, normally younger one, a place in heaven beside himself. The divinity of the second one

¹¹⁶ See Ashera in Juda 1 Kings 15, 13; Israel 1 Kings 16, 32f ; 2Kings 10, 18-20; Jerusalem, 2 Kings, 21,3-7; Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 151. See too *ibid.*, 20: “The hard core of my affirmation is nothing less than that the idea of a victorious monotheism cannot be sustained. And this is valid for post-exile Judaism since Daniel and even more so for the post- neo-testamentarian Judaism.”

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 151/2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

knows many different formulas. “A clear definition of a Second God in the full meaning of the word is avoided.”¹²⁰ The relationship of the second to the first can be coined as *Son of God*, *Son of the Most High*, or *Metatron*.¹²¹ Finally, we encounter the second also as the ‘small’ or the ‘young’ god.¹²² Schäfer speaks with caution of a “semi-divine figure beside the creator God.”¹²³ However, so Schäfer, the caution exercised on the terminological level should not obscure the fact that what was sought for, is “the greatest possible closeness of this second divine figure to the Highest God. The need for a second God makes no doubt.”¹²⁴

To exemplify this need for the time from the “Second Temple” onward, up to the Rabbinic Judaism and the early Jewish mysticism, is the whole purpose of Schäfer’s “Two Gods in Heaven.” In other words, we are dealing with the moment from the return from the Babylonian Exile and the reconstruction of the Temple (first destroyed in 586 BC) around 515 BC until the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 AD.¹²⁵ The end of this period leads to the temple-less period of Rabbinic Judaism (until the conquest of Palestine by the Arabs, first half of the VII century) and the early Jewish mysticism with its “Hekhalot” literature.¹²⁶

Schäfer begins with the discussion of the *Son of Man* in the vision of Daniel: “As I watched, in the night

¹²⁰ Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 152.

¹²¹ For this term see below, note 143.

¹²² For the whole see Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 152.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ For details see *ibid.*, 23/4.

¹²⁶ See *ibid.*, 23/4, 77/8. - See also *ibid.*, 18: *Hekhalot* means “halls” or “palaces” that the Jewish mystic has to pass through during his heavenly voyage toward God’s throne (*merkavah*).

visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient one and was present before him.” (Dan 7, 13).¹²⁷ What we have here is not yet a second God, but, according to Schäfer, in all probability a very high ranking angel. It cannot be excluded that it is Michael. This figure, nevertheless, can be seen as the point of origin “for all succeeding binitarian figures, whose high- and end peak will be Metatron”.¹²⁸

Typical binitarian potential can also be found in the speculation around the personified *Wisdom*, as in the proverbs of Solomon or Ecclesiasticus.¹²⁹ Another stone in the theological mosaic of binitarity is the divinized man in the “*Self-Boasting Hymn*” of Qumran (second half of the first century): “Nobody comes to me since I have taken a seat on a heavenly throne”¹³⁰. Qumran also offers us another text of binitarian tendency, the *Daniel Apocryphon* (last third of first century BC).¹³¹ Here we are confronted with a figure called “Son of God” (bar de -

¹²⁷ See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 25-30; A.J.B. Higgins, *Menschensohn-Studien* (Franz Delitzsch-Vorlesungen) (Stuttgart, etc., 1961), 15/6; see furthermore R.A. Horsley, *Revolt of the Scribes. Resistance and Apocalyptic Origins* (Minneapolis 2010), 82-104.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 30

¹²⁹ Prov. 8,30 “I was beside him like a child and was daily his delight”. For the translation of *amon* (master worker) as “child” see Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 32. For Ecclesiasticus see for example Si, 24, 3-6. For Wisdom and Torah see Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 36-39 plus the Midrash to Gen 1,1. - For Wisdom and Jewish Mysticism (Kabbalah) see also G. Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York 1987 [Jerusalem 1974]), 9/10.

¹³⁰ V. 6 of the Text (Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 40); see by the same 40-44. - For the connection between gods and their throne see already C. Clemen, *Die Reste der primitiven Religion im ältesten Christentum* (Gießen 1916), 36/7. - The self-boasting of the author of the Qumran text does not exclude that he shares characteristics with the *ebed Yahve* (cf. Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 42/3).

¹³¹ See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 45-51.

‘el) or “Son of the Most High” (bar ‘eljon). Is this finally the same “Son of Man” as in Dan 7? In any case we have to look for an “eschatological saviour figure like Melchisedek, Michael, and the Prince of Light in the writings of Qumran”.¹³² And clearly, “Melchisedek is the second God (Elohim) beside the Highest God (El).”¹³³ In this position he is El’s “agent and executive force”.¹³⁴ Again we have closeness and difference between these two figures. For Schäfer the importance of a text like the Daniel Apocryphon lies in the fact that we are dealing here with a Son-of-Man-like figure, which, however, goes far beyond the text of Daniel. The saviour-hero in the Daniel Apocryphon is “Son of God”, Son of the Most High”, higher than the highest angel – but his final victory, in his fight for God’s people, even this saving hero can only win with the help of the “Great God”.¹³⁵

A similar figure of a man being as close to God as the saviour of the Daniel Apocryphon is Enoch, in particular the Enoch of the *Ethiopian Book of Enoch* (at the turning from the first century BC to the first century AD). This text presents us with a “messianic saviour figure which is called – via Daniel 7 – ‘Son of Man’ or the ‘Chosen One’. Again the connection with Daniel cannot be denied.”¹³⁶ Furthermore – we clearly assist at “the transformation of the man Enoch into a heavenly being.”¹³⁷

From Enoch we are led to the “Son-of-Man-Messiah” in pseudo epigraphic 4 Ezra (circa 100 AD). In this text the Messiah clearly receives the title “Son of God”: “The

¹³² Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 47.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 51.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 52. See too *idem.* 52-65.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 57.

Messiah in 4 Ezras is really a Son of God, a younger God beside his father, the elder God.”¹³⁸ No wonder that Christian readers were able to see in this “Son-of-God-Messiah... without difficulties their own Messiah Jesus Christ.”¹³⁹

2. A problem of salvation history

The few examples we have seen already suffice to make us understand, that we are dealing here with a fund of a particular kind of images and speculations. They are ready to be exploited by rabbis and mystics of Judaism *as much as* by Christian thinkers to construct their respective theologies.¹⁴⁰ How this often dramatic interplay between Jewish and Christian theologies unfolded in the run of history is the theme of the rest of Schäfer’s “Two Gods in Heaven”.¹⁴¹

Now, the reason why I introduce Schäfer’s research on binitry into my own investigation becomes clear, when we ask the question concerning the final motivation for Jewish thinkers to take the risk, so to speak, to infringe upon traditional, self-understood monotheism via the introduction of a co-divinity: by projecting a younger God into the realm of the elder one, the well-established ruler of the world, or by putting David on a throne opposite to the great God.¹⁴² Furthermore, why could

¹³⁸ Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 65.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Higgins, 50, for example, points out that “the core of the christology of the primitive community was Son-of-Man-christology”.

¹⁴¹ See for this also the previous books by Schäfer: P. Schäfer, *Jesus im Talmud* (Tübingen 2007), and also: *Die Geburt des Judentums aus dem Geist des Christentums. Fünf Vorlesungen zur Entstehung des rabbinischen Judentums* (Tübingen 2010).

¹⁴² See for this the David Apocalypse, a text, so Schäfer, at the end of the Hekhalot tradition (Jewish mystical writing), discussed in “Zwei Götter...”, 98-105.

Enoch finally *mutate* into the figure of the highest angel *Metatron*¹⁴³ and from there into “full divinization”¹⁴⁴? My thesis is, if we find the answer to this question, we have also found the bridge to Maimonides’ theosophical investigation into the creator God centuries later!

For this we have to keep in mind that the most outstanding result of the approach by the author of the “Guide for the Perplexed” points toward the creator’s permanent and uninterrupted *caring* for his creation. His unique power, the proof of being the One God, resides exactly in this capacity to be creator in permanent connectivity with creation, and not in the “brachial” force of a one-time power stroke that produces objects in the way the capitalist system spills out commodities.¹⁴⁵ Yes, the creator, the heart, the heavenly sphere etc., are the “boss”, are superior to the rest; but they are not eager to “prove” this superiority via a tyrannic drive toward annihilation of their

¹⁴³ For the complexe figure of *Metatron* himself – the highest angel and clearly later on a second God see Schäfer, *Die Geburt...*, 97-132. - For Metatron, the “angel of the divine Face” and the identification Enoch-Metatron see too Idel, 85-88; see too *ibid.*, 113: “Theophoric names are more evident in rabbinic literature than in the earlier forms of Jewish writings. Rabbinic literature capitalized on the biblical verse from Exod. 23, 21 and claimed that the name of the angel is Metatron, and that ‘his name is like the name of his master’.” See too by the same author: *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London 2007), 139, 145, 279, etc. - For Metatron as “central cosmic force” in Jewish theosophy see also Scholem, 56; see too below note 146.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 112. See too *ibid.*, 119-149. - We are dealing here with the 3. Book of Enoch, which is “probably the youngest writing of a group called Hekhalot literature [Jewish mystical writing]” (idem, 112). Its final redaction is now believed to have taken place in Babylonia between 600 and 900 (cf. *ibid.*, 112).

¹⁴⁵ It is true that for some philosophers there might be a danger of down playing the gap between creator and creature in the name of “emanation” (al-fa'id) for example. See Mooren, *Falsafa...*, 184-189.

creature.¹⁴⁶ In fact I propose to see in God's creational activity a manifestation of his *mercy*, which obviously is not free from punitive wrath. Nevertheless it puts creation solidly into the orbit of *salvation history*, of the "He saw what He had made and it was very good" of Gen 1, 31.¹⁴⁷

The next step has to consist in investigating whether yes or no, what animates and characterizes the actions and the nature of the figure of the "Second God", be it the younger one, the Son or Metatron, can be understood as representing actions of God's mercy, mercy involved in salvation history. Going carefully through the relevant texts and what we have seen so far, it can, indeed, be shown that as for the great binitarian heros like Daniel, Enoch and so forth their guiding force is liberation from misery and oppression,¹⁴⁸ albeit the context is also one of divine wrath and punishment.¹⁴⁹ However, it is punishment of

¹⁴⁶ See for this in particular Maimonides' argument that we cannot deduce from the fact that God creates something, that he also necessarily has to end the existence of this creation ("an yufsida dhalika l-maujūd; 268/311; cf. too 269/310 and 311).

¹⁴⁷ Salvation history here not understood in the Augustinian sense of original sinfulness, but rather in the sense of keeping the world going in a healthy, sustainable way even after "paradise lost", in a way like Gen 3, 21 "and God made garments of skin for the man and his wife and clothed them."

¹⁴⁸ See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 43; see too Horsley, *Revolt*, 107-121 and by the same author: *Jesus and the Powers: Conflict, Covenant and the Hope of the Poor* (Minneapolis 2011), 29-41.

¹⁴⁹ For our purpose, salvation history and Judaism, Idel's reference in his "Messianic Mystics" to Metatron is of fundamental importance: "In earlier Jewish texts the angel Metatron was conceived of as having a redeeming function. Some of these views are related to the redemptive role of God's leading angel, who possessed the divine name, in Exodus 23, 20-21 or the expression the 'redemptive angel' in Genesis 48, 16 or Isaiah 63, 9... The later Jewish eschatologies resorted to the redemptive role of these angelic powers in order to build up their own vision of the end." (M. Idel,

the sinners and the unjust, of kings and powerful people, who now have to bow down in front of the “Son of Man” (1 Hen 62, 2-9)¹⁵⁰ or of the “filius” who annihilates the pagans through “the law that resembles fire” (4 Ezra 13, 13, 27/8).¹⁵¹

That salvation – and this is just another name for God’s mercy or caring – is at stake can also convincingly be demonstrated by the fact, that the two thrones in heaven, one for the old, one for the young God, also stand for the two divine attributes: the punishing power of God’s justice on one side and God’s mercy on the other.¹⁵² Indeed, the whole dynamics of binitarian theology is nurtured by nothing less than the dispute between these two “thrones”, these two divine attributes. And it is mercy, and with mercy *Israel*, that wins.¹⁵³ The Babylonian Talmud too delivers a hint in this direction, hence therein we find the discussion of the question, whether God prays or not. The answer is, so the Talmudic tradition, yes, which begs the question: to whom is He praying? Answer: *to Himself*! Thus, binitarity is reconverted here into an internal conflict within God Himself, God begging himself, when it comes to saving Israel, to let mercy “roll over” all the other attributes.¹⁵⁴

Messianic Mystics [New Haven, London 1998], 85).

¹⁵⁰ See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 54/5.

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 62/3.

¹⁵² See *ibid.*, 91/2. - Kabbalistic speculation has it that *evil* originates, when justice and love fall apart, are separated from one another. Cf. Scholem, 123.

¹⁵³ Much later, in Islamic theosophy this dramatic “struggle” between mercy and wrath, affirming that mercy prevails over wrath, is taken over and intensively developed by Ibn ‘Arabi. See Mooren, *The One, the Many and the Case of mysticism...*, 234/5.

¹⁵⁴ See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 136/7. (The text of God praying to Himself is of the first half of the third century). However, the fact that the two Gods are here the two sides of God’s unique heart, also

All this shows us that there exists, indeed, a “Son of God”- theology independently from Christian borrowing, i.e., thanks to a genuine Jewish tradition, as authentic expression of Jewish salvation history!¹⁵⁵ And it is this fact that enables us to build the bridge between authentic Jewish theology of the past and Maimonides’ approach to the creator God centuries later in his “Guide for the Perplexed”. What Maimonides has to say sounds like a remote, but nevertheless vital echo to positions taken in the past in the name of salvation history. An echo, however, formulated with the tools and in the spirit of a new age, one dominated by the influence of Aristotle and other like-minded thinkers.¹⁵⁶

Finally, what does all this mean for the theme “monotheism revisited”? In my opinion it indicates above all one thing. While the arguments of the classical Islamic kalām all appear logically correct, responding to certain mere rational criteria, as we could see in the first part of our investigation, in such a way that Schäfer could call Islamic monotheism “the most uncompromising form of monotheism”¹⁵⁷ – for Judaism and later on Christianity any kind of mere numerical discourse is *defeated* by the living shock or experience of *real salvation history*. This shock was (and still is) so great, that the numerically assumed oneness of God had to retreat into theological and pastoral “Zweitrangigkeit”, that is a second rank position.

shows that in spite of the successes Metatron and other binitarian heros could secure in some influential rabbinic circles – some rabbis also worked hard to rein in binitarity as much as they could. For details see Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 57, 93-98, 142-149.

¹⁵⁵ See also Idel, *Ben: Sonship...*, 111/2, 595-616; Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 18, 151-156.

¹⁵⁶ Not for nothing there exists a link between philosophy and early Jewish mysticism and finally the kabbalistic speculation. See for this too Scholem, 2, 22/3, 52, 160.

¹⁵⁷ Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 152.

In other words, what was and still is needed is a new language, the language of “myth”, no longer the language of mere *counting* numbers, too obvious at the service of an unforgiving power play!¹⁵⁸ Maimonides takes refuge in the “myth” of the cosmic spheres, of physical and metaphysical entities, cosmic in nature, that *care for one another*. While the rabbis before him did not find any better method in confronting the burning problem of an all powerful God, who is also caring for his people, than the method of personifying God’s mercy thanks to a *successful line of salvation history heroes*. The message of salvation *had to be* personified, since it could not (and cannot) be simply deduced, but has to be *told* – which is the proper of a “myth”. Again logic reminds us that one is not two or three, but here we are dealing with something different, larger than logic: the irruption of contingency, i.e. history into the daily life. Life that becomes salvation history. Here the numbers game is overruled by God’s caring, merciful *action*.

A final thought on trinity

Contrary to the logic of non-contradiction, [practised] by the philosophers, the myth puts forward a kind of logic one could call a logic of ambiguity and equivocalness... of [simultaneously] yes and no. (*J.-P. Vernant, Myth and Society [Mythe et société]*)

The following reflection regarding “trinity” refers to my paper “The Trinity in the Eyes of Islamic

¹⁵⁸ The term “myth” is not used here in the sense of “falsehood”, wild “invention” and so forth. Rather “myth” denotes here a “truth” that can only be told, a discourse which situates itself on a *trans-logical* level in order to express, often by means of personification, the deeper complexity of life itself; a complexity that the *surface*-logic of daily life is not able to grasp.

Theology.”¹⁵⁹ Within the present context I will only demonstrate, how trinitarian theology quasi-organically takes over key developments of binitarian theology. Indeed, on a structural level, the same arguments regarding binitarity also work against trinity.¹⁶⁰ The same number counting, number oriented “rational” logic at the service of an all-powerful One, which we could find in the *kalām* against the “second” God, is also used against trinity. For example, if two wills cannot be bent together into one – this well known argument is still used to refute the two-nature-teaching of the Nestorians with regard to God and the Messiah¹⁶¹ – how much of *equality* can be expected in the case of three, not only regarding the will but, in a broader sense, with regard to the question of “intelligence” (*fī l-‘aqli*)? None! We end up in a contradiction (*tanāqud*) as soon as we are assuming three *equally* “intelligent” Gods.¹⁶²

In fact, everything is getting worse, because of the Christians’ “inner drive” to multiply everything. More precisely, they give “independent” life and substance to the attributes of God’s essence (*dhāt*). They separate

¹⁵⁹ In: Mooren, “I do not adore, what you adore!”..., 78-107, based upon *Sharh*, 291-198. See too my “Es gibt keinen Gott außer Gott...”, 135-147.

¹⁶⁰ See too Y.D. Nevo, *Towards a Prehistory of Islam*, in: Ibn Warraq, (ed., transl.), *What the Koran really says. Language, Text, and Commentary* (Amherst, New York 2002), 131-167, and idem (together with J. Koren), *Crossroads to Islam. The origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst, New York 2003), 361-425, in part. 412-415; B. Lewis, *The Middle East, A brief history of the last 2,000 years* (New York 1995), 68-70; G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth. Consequences of monotheism in late antiquity* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1993), 142, 159. Nevertheless, as Fowden, 152-160, also shows, Islam, in spite of its anti-trinitarism, was capable of absorbing Christianity on the political level under the label of “monotheism”.

¹⁶¹ See Mooren, *The Trinity*..., 99.

¹⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 88/9.

them “artificially” from that essence, like calling them for example “Father”, “Son” or “spirit” and allow them, so to speak, to “float” outside of that same essence.¹⁶³ Thus the “persons” of the trinity are nothing else than those loose attributes that have fallen out of God’s essence. And why should that apply only to three attributes? Why not also to five, six ten or more? There is no logical reason to stop at three!¹⁶⁴ Yet, whatever the number, it is all wrong thinking in the eyes of Muslim theologians, since God’s essence is not “multiplied”¹⁶⁵, it cannot be “fractioned” or “partitioned”¹⁶⁶ But that is what Christians do when they say “three”. They fraction God into three portions, so when Christians say, that he is one in three persons, they are formulating a contradiction. Three can never be one and one never be three.¹⁶⁷ It is the same as one would say: “A thing is at the same time existent and non existent; eternal and subject to time (*muhdath*)”¹⁶⁸

What is at stake here is obvious: Islamic kalām looks like stone walling God into the impeccable logic of the number One – while binity and trinity, both in their own way, break this oneness, this numerical fortress open. They “sacrifice” this kind of logic under the “pressure” of *experienced salvation* history,¹⁶⁹ that is the

¹⁶³ Like astronauts float around the space ship, to use a modern simile.

¹⁶⁴ Reasons for stopping at three have to do with the “psychology of numbers”: with “three” you have said all what is there to be said, and above all the number depends on the *oikonomia* of salvation! See the discussion in Mooren, Trinity..., 91/2.

¹⁶⁵ *lā tuta’addadu*; Mooren, The trinity..., 91.

¹⁶⁶ See *tajazza’a*: to cut into slices; *ba’ada* V., to be divided, divisible; Mooren, The Trinity..., 85.

¹⁶⁷ See Mooren, The Trinity..., 86.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ For the nature of the non-contradictory “logic” as opposed to the primary *intimacy* of the life of the divine persons see also

experience of the *effective caring* of a living God. His mercy “rolls over” righteousness and number counting “logic” in the name of an eternal “Logos”, who becomes flesh from birth to death. This is, indeed, a “myth” that can and needs to be *told*!

Sloterdijk, 163. Cf. too D.-R. Dufour, *Les mystères de la trinité* (Paris 1990), 181, 188-190 (and many other instances) in his study on the “mysteries of trinity”. Because of trinity’s tension with non-contradictory forms of logic and reasoning, a tension proper to what we call *myth* (see *ibid.*, 149, 181), the Christian trinity, this “masterpiece” of *salvation* (cf. *ibid.*, 213), looks indeed, from the outside, “extremely embarrassing”. (*ibid.*, 213).

**Mga Kuwento at Salaysay ng Pag-asa: Buháy na
Mensahe ng mga Propeta at Makabayang
Awit-Protesta**
*Stories and Narratives of Hope: Living Message of
Prophets and Patriotic Protest Songs*

Ferdinand D. Dagmang*

Abstrak: Sa pag-aaral na ito, iuugnay ang mga makabayang mensahe ng mga Pilipinong mang-aawit sa mga mensahe ng mga propeta sa Bibliya. Pinapalagay na mala-propeta din ang mga katangian ng mga Pilipinong makabayang mensahe. Inaasahan na lilitaw mula sa mga makabayang awit-protesta ang ilang kuwento at salaysay na kamukha ng mga kuwento at salaysay ng mga propeta sa Bibliya. Ang pagtatabi ay pag-uugnay ng magkaka-mukhang mensahe—mga mukha ng protesta at pag-asa. Sa *ugnayang pagkakamukha*, ang pagkakatulad ang binibigyan ng diin at hindi ang pagkakaiba. Sa ganitong paraan, inaasahan na maitampok ang isang walang humpay na daloy ng kasaysayan ng mga protesta at pag-asa sa buong mundo.

Mga susing salita: propeta, pag-asa, makabayan, awit-protesta, Pilipino, kuwento, salaysay

Abstract: In this study, patriotic messages of Filipino singers are linked with the messages of the prophets of the Bible. It is assumed that the Filipino patriotic messages are also prophetic. It is hoped that by laying the patriotic songs beside the stories and narratives about the Bible prophets, the similarity will be highlighted. This is a process of uniting kindred messages—faces of protest and hope. Similarity is emphasized and not difference; this way, it hopes to feature an unremitting flow of history of protest and hope around the world.

Key words: prophet, hope, patriotic, protest-song, Filipino, story, narrative

♦ Dr. Ferdinand D. Dagmang is a Professorial Lecturer at Ateneo de Manila University and Maryhill School of Theology. His article on “working mothers” appears in this current issue of *MST Review*, pp. 1-42, above.

Panimula

Mga mahahalagang yugto sa buhay ng mga Hudyo ang paglitaw ng kanilang mga propeta.¹ Ayon sa Bibliya, ito ang ilang sitwasyon ng kanilang paglitaw o inaasahang paglitaw: kung may krisis sa nakagawiang buhay panlipunan, kung may grabeng problema ang pamayanan, kung masalimuot ang panlipunang sitwasyon, kung may mga naaapi at may nang-aapi.² Ganito din ang mga situwasyon ng paglitaw ng mga Pilipinong kompositor ng awit-protesta sa Pilipinas. Mala-propeta din ang kanilang paglitaw. Lumalantad sila kapag ang bayan ay nasa krisis o naghihirap sa gitna ng iba't-ibang uri ng krisis. Ang mga mensahe nila ay sumasalamain din sa mga panlipunang krisis at problemang nadadamay ang maraming Pilipino.

Ilan sa mga nagdadala ng mala-propetang mensahe ay ang mga awit-protesta at awit-pag-asa na binuo ng maraming kompositores sa iba't-ibang panahon sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas.

¹ Ang katagang propeta (prophet) ay mula sa Griyego: προφητεία, *prophēteía* (from *prophētēs*, “prophet,” which is derived from *pró*, “before” and *phēmí*, “make clear, assert as a priority”; <http://biblehub.com/str/greek/4394.htm>, accessed 8 June 2018. Kung ganoon, ito ay may kahulugang: *discourse; to speak out (or write); to know what is wrong; to diagnose; criticize; preach; predict; vigilant*.

² Tingnan sila: Richard Coggins & Jin H. Han, *Six Minor Prophets Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Victor H. Matthews, *Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001); Austin T. Sparks, *Prophetic Ministry: A Classical Study on the Nature of a Prophet* (USA: Mercy Place, 2000); Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: A Crossroad Book, 1979); Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Walter Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis: A Study in Hosea* (Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968).

Titingnan ko sa pag-aaral na ito ang ilang awit-protesta mula dekada '40 hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Lumilitaw sa mga komposisyon ang mga krisis panlipunan, ang mga hamon, pagtuligsa sa kinauukulan, at ang paghahandog ng positibo o alternatibong pananaw at larawan. Malinaw sa mga mensahe ang pagsasalarawan ng mga pambayang tema na nagsisilbing balangkas para sa mga mensaheng protesta at pag-asa para sa bayan.

Ang pag-aaral ay tutukoy din sa mga haliging-tema o ugat-salaysay na itinataguyod ng mga awit-protesta. Ihahambing ko ang mga ugat-salaysay na ito sa mga ugat-salaysay na siyang pundasyon ng mga mensahe at kilos ng mga propeta sa Bibliya.

Mahalagang banggitin dito na ang mga teksto sa Bibliya na naglalarawan ng mga panlipunang krisis at paglitaw ng mga propeta ay nag-uudyok sa mga isipang nasa gitna ng krisis ng lipunan. Ang mga sitwasyon ng mga propeta ay nagbubukas ng isipan o nag-aalog ng loob ng mga taong nakakaranas ng pang-aapi, pagsasamantala, at iba pang uri ng pagpapahirap.³

Ang Mga Kuwento at Salaysay sa Bibliya

Ang Bibliya o Banal na Aklat ng mga Hudyo at ng mga Kristiyano ay naglalaman ng iba't-ibang uri ng kuwento at salaysay,⁴ kasama na ang mga tula at mga

³ Sa usaping ito ay mahalaga ang isang prinsipyo ng interpretasyon na inilatag ni Paul Ricœur: "What has to be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text. In other words, what has to be appropriated is nothing other than the power of disclosing a world that constitutes the reference of the text." *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth: Texas University Press, 1976), 92. Tingnan din: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 357ff.

⁴ Ginagamit ko ang katagang "kuwento" para sa "story" at ang

kasabihan—mga kuwento at salaysay na pambayan, pantahanan, at pang-magkasintahan; may mga nakakalungkot, nagpapasaya, nagpapagalit, nakakaha-lukay ng dibdib, at nakaka-antig ng damdamin. May mahahaba, may medyo mahahaba, may maiikli, at may maikling-maikling mga kuwento at salaysay. Tila may kuwento at salaysay para sa lahat ang Bibliya.⁵

Kung ikaw ay makata o mahilig sa mga berso, mayroong mga tula at awit ang Bibliya. Marami sa mga ito ay mga panalangin o kaya’y panaghoy at pagsambulat ng sama ng loob. Kung masaya ka, kung ikaw ay malungkot, kung ikaw ay takot, maraming mga tula at awit na naghihintay sa ‘yo sa Bibliya. Kung ikaw ay medyo may katandaan na (o matanda ka kung mag-isip), isang awtoridad o lider, maaring magiging interes mo sa Bibliya ang mga batas, alituntunin, at mga salawikaing puno ng pagtuturo at seryosong pagsasanay sa buhay.

Kung ikaw ay may pangangailangang mag-riserts tungkol sa pagnanasa sa laman, ang mga kuwento tungkol sa seks ay sari-sari: may mga nakakapanabik

katagang “salaysay” para sa “narrative”. Ang salaysay ay nagbibigay ng kabuuang kahulugan, habang ang kuwento ay tungkol sa mga tauhan at kung anong nangyari sa kanila. Samakatuwid, ang salaysay ang nagbibigay ng kahulugan at malawakang kabuluhan sa iba’t-ibang kuwento at siwasyon ng buhay. Tingnan ang mga piling artikulo sa mga aklat na ito: Gresilda A. Tilley-Lubbs & Silvia Bénard Calva, eds., *Re-Telling Our Stories: Critical Autoethnographic Narratives* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016); Ruth Page & Bronwen Thomas, eds., *New Narratives: Stories and Storytelling in the Digital Age*, (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Christian R. Hoffmann, ed., *Narrative Revisited: Telling a Story in the Age of New Media*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010).

⁵ Ang mga kwento at salaysay ay mahalagang gamit sa pananaliksik. Tingnan ang aklat nina Leonard Webster & Patricie Mertova, *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method: An Introduction to Using Critical Event Narrative Analysis in Research on Learning and Teaching* (London: Routledge, 2007).

na ligawan sa Awit ni Solomon, panunukso ng asawa ni Potiphar kay Jose (*Gen* 39), pamboboso at di makatarungang pag-agaw ni David kay Bathseba (2 *Sam* 11), panggagahasa kay Tamar ng kanyang kapatid na si Amnon (2 *Samuel* 13:1-22), at patungkol sa seks ng kapwa lalake, atbp.

Iba't-ibang uri ng saloobin at pananaw sa buhay ang nilalarawan ng iba't-ibang uri ng kuwento, salaysay, dasal, tula, awit, batas, atbp. Sinasalamin ng iba't-ibang nilalaman ng Bibliya ang sari-saring kulay ng buhay, ang sala-salabat na galaw ng tao, ang sapin-saping hirap ng buhay, ang kabi-kabilang pagsubok ng tadhana, at ang 'di mawaring ikot at galaw ng mga bituin at mga planeta (tingnan ang *Job* at *Ecclesiastes*).

Kung mapapansin ang pagkakaiba ng mga nilalaman at sari-saring direksiyon ng maraming salaysay at kasulatan, masisilip din ang laging paglingon ng mga ito sa iilang salaysay na parang nagsisilbing haligi o ugat o bukal. Ang mga salaysay na ito ay parang mga haligi ng isang buong bahay; para din itong mga ugat na sumusuporta sa puno, sa mga sanga, dahon, at bulaklak ng isang punong-kahoy; o bukal-salaysay na nagbibigay ng tubig sa mga balon, talon, o batis. Walang tibay ang bahay kung hindi ito suportado ng haligi; ang buong puno ay mamamatay kung hindi na naka-ugat sa lupa; ang isang balon ay manunuyo kung wala na ang bukal. Ang mga haligi-ugat-bukal na mga salaysay ang dahilan kung bakit ang ibang kuwentong Bibliya ay may buhay at may mas malalim pa na kahulugan.

Ang mga haligi-ugat-bukal na salaysay ay maihahambing din sa isang malaki at nakasisilaw na liwanag kagaya ng araw—liwanag na nag-iilaw sa buwan at sa iba pang maliliit na planeta sa kalawakan. May liwanag ang buwan, kaya lang ang liwanag na ito ay hiram lang mula sa araw. Ang mga maliliit na

kuwento, o tula, o awit, o batas ay parang mahinang liwanag ng buwan; nagbibigay ito ng liwanag sa dilim pero nagtuturo din sa atin na pansinin ang pinagmulan ng kanyang liwanag—ang araw.

Ang mga haligi-ugat-bukal na salaysay ay maari ding tingnan bilang mga haligi ng buong Bibliya. Iilan lamang ang mga haliging-salaysay na matatagpuan sa Bibliyang Hebreo: kagaya ng kuwento ng Exodus at ang paglikha ng Diyos sa daigdig at tao. Ang ibang mga salaysay ay may mga sanga-sangang kabanata at eksena. Ang mga mahahalagang kabanata ay ang paglalakbay-pagtitiis sa disyerto, ang pagpapatibay ng Sampung Utos, ang pag-angkin sa lupaing inasam-asam, ang pagsakop ng dayuhang puwersa sa Israel. Ang kuwento ng pagpatay ni David kay Goliath o ang pagpapakasal ni Tobias at Sarah ay mga eksena lamang sa isang kabanata na nakaugat sa isang mas malaking salaysay ng buhay. Ang mga kabanata at eksena ay may liwanag dahil sa mga haliging-salaysay na nagpapa-liwanag.

Sa Kristiyanong Bibliya, iilan lang din ang mga haliging-salaysay: ang pagsilang ni Hesus at ang panggagamot niya ng may kapansanan at ang pagpapatibay niya ng loob sa mga dukha at isinasantabi ng lipunan, ang pagpako sa krus at ang kanyang muling pagbangon.

Ang pagbibinyag kay Hesus, pagpili niya ng mga kasama, pagtuligsa niya sa mga katarantaduhan ng mga pinuno, atbp. ay mga kabanata ng kanyang salaysay bilang kinikilalang tunay na anak ng Diyos. Ang mga eksena ay napakarami at mas marami pang maliliit na mga kilos at galaw ng ibang tao.

Ang Mga Propeta sa Bibliya

Ang isang pamayanan ay nagigising at nagugulantang sa mga sinasabi at ginagawa ng mga propeta. Apoy ang sumasagitsit sa kanilang mga dila; mala-usok at putik ng bulkan ang bumubuga sa kanilang mga labi. Para bang ang loob nila ay laging kumukulo. Ang dugo nila ay nakakalapnos sa mga nagdiriwang na mayayaman at makapangyarihang uri. Nagsasaboy din sila ng malamig na tubig sa mga tulog, malalagkit at maamoy na dagta sa mga nagmamalilinis, dura sa mga nagmamamunong, singa ng ilog sa mga nagbabanal-banalan, at tae sa mga diyos-diyosan ng lipunan.⁶

Sa mga propeta galing ang unang sigaw laban sa mga panlipunang katiwalian; tinititigan nila sa mata ang mga nang-aapi, at; galit sila pag may nakikitang naaapi; tinutukoy din nila ang pinag-ugatan ng mga masalimuot na situwasyon. Tingnan natin si *Amos* 4:1-3:

Pakinggan ninyo ito mga babae sa Samaria
na naglalakihang gaya ng mga baka ng Bashan,
Na nang-aapi sa mahihina, nangingikil sa
mahihirap, at nag-uutos sa inyong mga asawa
upang dalhan kayo ng inumin.
Ang Panginoong Yahweh ay banal, at
kanyang ipinangako;

⁶ Tingnan, *Ezekiel* 4:12-13: “¹²Eat the food as you would a loaf of barley bread; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel.” ¹³The Lord said, “In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them.” NIV. Tingnan din ang *Ezekiel* 5:1-5.

Tingnan: J.J. Pilch, “Insults and Face Work in the Bible,” *HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70, 1 (2014) Art. #2655, 8 pages. [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2655](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2655); J.J. Pilch, “The Art of Insult,” in J.J. Pilch, *A Cultural Handbook to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 158–162.

“Darating ang araw na kayo’y huhulihin ng pamingwit.

Bawat isa sa inyo’y matutulad sa isdang nabingwit.

Ilalabas kayo sa siwang ng pader at kayo’y itatapon sa Harmon.

Itinuturo ng mga propeta ang dahilan ng krisis. Ang pinakamahalaga sa mga sinasabi at ginagawa ng mga propeta ay ang paglalarawan nila ng ugat ng problema: ang pagtalikod sa Diyos at ang pagkalimot sa kasaysayan ng bayang kinalinga ng Diyos. Ito ang buod ng kanilang matatapang at maiingay na mensahe at salaysay. Mula naman ito kay *Jeremiah* 2:19:

Paparusahan ka ng sarili mong kasamaan.

Ipapahamak ka ng iyong pagtalikod sa akin.

Mararanasan mo kung gaano kapait at kahirap ang mawalan ng takot at tumalikod kay Yahweh na iyong Diyos.

Samakatuwid, ang mensahe ng propeta ay pagpapaalala sa kaugnayan ng bayan sa isang malikhaing Diyos at sa mga pinakamahalagang karanasan na kinapupulutan ng saligang-aral at karunungan. Sa kanilang mga mensahe, nangingibabaw ang paalala sa kasaysayan ng buhay at paglaya mula sa pagka-alipin. Sa pag-uusig nila sa mga nang-aapi at nalilihis ng landas, binabalikan nila ang haliging-salaysay tungkol sa isang Diyos na malikhain at mapagpalaya. Siya ang kanilang pag-asa. Sa propetang *Hosea* ay ang malinaw na mensahe ng katapatan ng Diyos at ang dapat na gawin ng mga tao (14:1-2):

Manumbalik ka Israel kay Yahweh na iyong Diyos.

Ang pagbagsak mo ay bunga ng iyong kasamaan.

Dalhin ninyo ang inyong kahilingan,

lumapit kayo kay Yahweh; sabihin ninyo sa kanya,

“Patawarin po ninyo kami.

Kami’y iyong kahabagan, kami’y iyong tanggapin.

Maghandog kami sa iyo ng pagpupuri.”

Si Hesus ay kabilang din sa hanay ng mga propeta na nagpapa-alala sa atin ngayon kung paano mabuhay at maging isang tunay na anak ng Diyos.⁷ Si Hesus ay propeta at tunay na anak ng Diyos dahil isa siyang tunay na malikhain at mapagpalayang anak.

Mga Propeta ng Bayang Pilipinas

Dumako naman tayo sa mga personalidad na maaring maiugnay sa mga kuwento ng mga propeta sa Bibliya.

Mala-propeta din ang uri ng mga sinasabi at ginagawa ng ilang mga mahahalagang taong naging bahagi ng kasaysayan ng ating bayan. Marami silang mga naisulat at naitala tungkol sa kanilang mga hinaing. Punong-puno sila ng damdamin habang binubuo nila ang kanilang komposisyon. Sa mga titik, tunog, at tinig na naipamana nila sa atin ay maririnig

⁷ Tingnan: Richard A. Horsley, *The Prophet Jesus and the Renewal of Israel: Moving Beyond a Diversionary Debate*. (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers: Conflict, Covenant, and the Hope of the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 2011); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011); Tom Cheetham, *Green Man, Earth Angel: The Prophetic Tradition and the Battle for the Soul of the World* (New York: SUNY, 2004); Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001).

ang pang-uudyok na gumising tayo mula sa ating himlayan, tumayo mula sa ating mga *wheel-chair*, at tumalikod sa ating mga *cellphone*, *Xbox*, *PSP* at *iPod*. Naririnig at nakikita ang ilang mga mala-propetang Pilipino na sumisigaw, o ‘di kaya’y umiiyak sa galit at lungkot, nagpupuyos ang damdamin habang umaawit o nagtatalumpati.

Naalala pa siguro natin sina Rizal, Bonifacio, at Mabini; sina Bobby de la Paz, Lean Alejandro, at si Ninoy Aquino. Ang mga mensahe at gawa nila ay may hawig sa mga gawi ng mga propeta sa Bibliya kagaya nina Moses, Nathan, Amos, Hosea, Isaias, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, at Micah. Naalala din natin lalo ang kuwento ng ating buhay dahil sa buháy-na-buháy na ala-ala ni Hesus na tumuligsa sa katarantaduhan ng mga pinuno at baluktot na pagsasabuhay ng relihiyon sa kanyang panahon.

Mala-Propetang Mensahe ng Awit-Protesta

Ang tawag sa mga makabayang awit at tula na mala-propeta ang mensahe ay mga awit-protesta na awit-pag-asa din. Ang bansag na awit-protesta ay nakaka-purol sa kahulugan ng mga awit dahil ang katagang protesta ay nakasanayan nang isipin na gawain ng mga rebelde at sa gayon ay nagtatanim diumano ng gulo, giyera, at rebolusyon. Ngunit hindi lamang ganito ang ibig sabihin ng katagang protesta—ang kahulugang ito na inuugnay lagi sa gulo at giyera ay isang pakahulugan ng mga ayaw maistorbo sa kanilang mga luklukan o kinauupuan. Kung ang katagang *protesta* ay tukuyin natin mula sa paningin ng mga dukha at aping-api (‘yong mga walang trono), ang ibig sabihin nito ay hindi panggugulo kundi mga paghamon na isulong ang pagbabago at mga pagtuligsa sa isang buhay na walang pag-asa. Sa halip na

ipagpatuloy ang isang sistema na iilan lang ang nabibigyan ng pag-asa, ang gawaing protesta ay nag-uudyok ng pagbabago na kung saan ang mga walang-wala ay may lugar. Sa madaling sabi, nagpoprotesta sila laban sa isang buhay na magulo na dala ng walang katarungan at kalayaan. Nagrereklamo sila laban sa pahirap at paniniil dahil sila'y naghahangad ng pagbabago. Kung para sa mga mayayaman at mga pulitiko ang paghahangad ng pagbabago ay isang “kaguluhan,” hindi ibig sabihin na “kaguluhan” ito sa mga nahihirapan—maari pa ngang ang tukoy nito ay ang isang bukas na kung saan wala nang mga “naghaharing aswang” na naghahasik ng takot at nagkakalat din ng mas malaking gulo. Halimbawa, ang protesta ng mga manggagawa laban sa mababang pasahod ay kaguluhan sa mga may-ari ng pabrika, pero para sa mga nagugutom na manggagawa ay pagbandera ito sa isang salaysay ng matiwasay na pamumuhay at magandang bukas.

Ang mga awit-protesta/pag-asa ay siksik sa yaman ng iba't-ibang uri ng pagtuligsa sa iba't-ibang anyo ng pagpapahirap. Dito rin ay may mga binhi ng pagbabago. Ito ay mga buháy na buháy na salaysay o diwa ng katarungan at kalayaan. Kaya naman mga awit-pag-asa din ang mga ito.

Iba't Ibang panahon

Ang mga awit sa Dekada '40 ay pinangungunahan ng mga awit na tukoy ang mga kuwento ng paglaban sa mga pasistang Hapones. Kabilang dito ang mga awit tungkol sa mga matatapang na ninunong gerilya. Himagsikan ang kuwento na binabalangkas ng salaysay ng kalayaan o kaligayahan ng bayan. Isang halimbawa:

Maghimagsik Tayo

Tayong lahat ay magkaisa't maghimagsik
Tayong mga Pilipino ay likas na matatapang
Panahon pa ng Kastila nuno natin nakilaban
Ang sandata nila noon ay di hamak na tabak
lamang
Ang Republika ng Pilipinas sa Malolos doon
itinatag.
Kaya, tayo naman ngayon, magkaisa't maghimagsik
Bayan natin nilulupig ng dagit na pasistang
Hapones
Panahon na, maghimagsik, ang tabak ay hawakan
At lipulin Hapones na tulisan
Mandarambong sa Silangan.

Ang bandila ay atin iwagayway
Watawat ng pagkakaisang-hanay
Nang lumigaya itong Bayan
Maghimagsik tayo!

Mapapansin sa halimbawang ito ang pagpapaalala sa isang kasaysayan ng himagsikan laban sa Kastila—ang himagsikan laban sa Hapones ay katulad ng himagsikan laban sa Kastila. Ang mga diwang makabayan, pagkakaisa, at kalayaan ang nangingibabaw. Isang tradisyon o pamana ng kasaysayan ang himagsikan at pagtuligsa laban sa mga mapaniil. Kaugnay ito ng tula ni Andres Bonifacio, ang *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa*. Isang awit pa ang tumutukoy nito:

Kasaysayan ng Himagsikan

...Bahay kubo, kahit munti
May bayani roon ay katangi-tangi
Andres Bonifacio, Rizal, at Mabini
Ang tatlong pag-asa nitong ating lahi.

Kaya ngayon ang bilin ko sa iyo
O kababayan tigasan ang loob
Sa pakikibaka ihain ang puso
Ihandog ang buhay
At huwag manatili sa kaalipinan.

...Ipagtanggol ang ating bayan
Pilipino ay lumaban...

Sa matinding problemang pananakop ng Hapon, ang ibang problemang panlipunan ay hindi gaano naitaguyod ng mga awit-protesta.

Sa Dekada '50 at Dekada '60 ay maraming sumulpot na awit ng Bagong Hukbong Bayan (Huk at NPA). Sa buling bahagi ng Dekada '60 ay mapapansin ang mga pagsabog ng kuwento ng pag-aaklas at papapatatag ng hanay ng mga manggagawa. Malinaw na ang dating kalabang Hapones ay napalitan ng mga kalabang panginoong maylupa at ang tinaguriang "liberator" na Amerika ay pinupuntirya din bilang ugat ng mga pahirap sa bayan. Sa panahong ito, ang pangalawang "pambansang awit" ay sumikat.

Bayan Ko

Ang bayan kong Pilipinas
Lupain ng ginto't bulaklak
Pag-ibig ang sa kanyang palad
Nag-alay ng ganda't dilag

At sa kanyang yumi at ganda,
Dayuhan ay nahalina
Bayan ko, binihag ka,
Nasadlak sa dusa.
Ibon mang may layang lumipad

Kulungin mo at umiiyak,
Bayan pa kayang sakdal dilag
Ang 'di magnasang makaalpas

Pilipinas kong minumutya
Pugad ng luha ko't dalita
Aking adhika,
Makita kang sakdal laya.

Mula sa panahong ito, ang *Bayan Ko* ay magiging koro o “refrain” sa lahat ng mga awit at mensaheng protesta sa mga darating pang mga dekada. Sa lahat ng mga awit ng mga kompositores, mapapansin na ang *Bayan Ko* ay may kakaibang importansya sa kilos protesta. Kung hindi sa simula ng martsa, inaawit ito sa bandang huli bilang koro ng buhay na naghahangad ng kalayaan. (Meron ding pinaka-sikat na mga awit-protesta sa Estados Unidos, ang *We Shall Overcome* o 'di kaya'y *Give Peace a Chance*; sa Italia naman ay ang *Bella Ciao*, at; *Redemption Song* sa Jamaica.)⁸

Hindi nawawala ang ugat-salaysay ng kalayaan, katarungan, at ng Inang Bayan. Ngunit nadagdag sa mga awit-protesta ay ilang alternatibong pananaw na nakaugat sa sosyalismo o komunismo: ang pagkakapantay-pantay ng mamamayan at ang natatanging posisyon ng masa, katulad ng sumusunod:

...Ang linyang pangmasa
Mula sa masa, tungo sa masa
Ito ang ating patnubay
Makibaka, huwag matakot

⁸ Tingnan: Hardeep Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song: A Reference Guide to the 50 Songs That Changed the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 1-8, 77; Dario Martinelli, *Give Peace a Chant: Popular Music, Politics and Social Protest* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 10-13.

Harapin ang kahirapan
 Magsamahan, magtulungan
 Nang makamtan ang tagumpay
 Makibaka, huwag matakot
 Nang mapalaya ang bayan
 At durugin ang kalaban
 Hanay natin ay tibayan
 Imperyalismo ay ibagsak!

Ang Dekada '70 ang pinakamayaman sa mga mas militanteng uri ng awit-protesta. Ito ang “galit na dekada” na pinangungunahan ng mga estudyante, manggagawa, at propesyonal. Nariyan pa rin ang “linyang pang-masa” na dala-dala ng mga pulahang grupo. Ngunit ito rin ang Dekada ng First Quarter Storm, diktadurya ni Marcos, ng Martial Law, *human rights violation*, ng *salvaging*, ng *military abuses*, *political prisoners* at ng pag-aapoy ng diwa ng pakikipaglaban at pakikipagtuos sa mga sari-saring kalaban, hindi lamang laban sa mga panginoong maylupa at imperyalistang 'Kanô. Lumantad na rin ang ilang awit na tinutuhog ang kolonyal na mentalidad ng maraming Pilipino. Ilan dito ay mga awit nina Heber Bartolome (“Tayo’y mga Pinoy, tayo’y hindi ‘Kanô, huwag kang mahihiya, kung ang ilong mo ay pango...”); Florante (“Ako’y isang Pinoy sa puso’t diwa, Pinoy na isinilang sa ating bansa...”); at ang grupong Asin (*Balita*, “Ang lupang pinanggalingan ko’y may bahid ng dugo, May mga lorong di makalipad nasa hawlang ginto”).

Maiintindihan lamang ang mga nilalaman ng mga awit ng pakikibaka sa Dekada '70 kung alalahanin natin ang situwasyon noon ng lipunan—isang lipunan na kung hindi galit ay takot o 'di kaya’y sanay na rin sa iba’t-ibang uri ng hirap, panunupil at pagsasamantala lalo na sa larangan ng ekonomiya at pulitika. Ang mga

pahirap, panunupil at pagsasamantala ang siyang dahilan kung bakit may mga awit na punong-puno ng mga galit at nagpupuyos na damdamin ng mga kompositores. Mainit sa pakikibaka ang iba't-ibang samahan laban sa mga dating tinaguriang kalaban ng bayan: imperyalismo at piyudalismo, at ngayo'y nadagdagan pa ng burukrata-kapitalismo. Ang mga ito ang tinaguriang tatlong ulo ng isang halimaw na nagpapahirap sa bayan. Ang halimaw na may tatlong ulo ay siyang laman ng ugat-salaysay ng kahirapan ng bayan. Ito rin ang malimit na tinutuligsa ng mga awit-protesta ng Dekada '70. Isang awit (*Huwad na Kalayaan*) ang kinatha ng mga detenido ng Camp Crame noong 1975. Lagi itong naririnig sa mga rali ng mga pulahang grupo:

May kalayaan ba kung bayan ay dumaraing sa hirap
Kung kayamanan ay hawak ng dayuhan at masa ay
salat

Kung manggagawa ay dusta at magsasaka ay inaapi
Huwad, sadyang huwad ang kalayaan kung ang
bayan ay ganyan

...

Gapos ay lagutin, kamao ay itaas
Laya natin ay itindig at ipagtanggol
Hirap ay lunasan, pag-aapi ay wakasan
Ang bayan ay ipaglaban,
Ang bayan ay ipaglaban.

Ang *Pinggan* ni Pol Galang ay may diwa din ng kontra imperyalista ngunit may pagkakaiba sa istilo dahil hindi ito palaban na martsa:

Nais kong isalaysay
Ang yaring kasaysayan
Ng dalawang magkaibigan

Ang kuwento ni Juan at ni Sam

Itong si Sam ay dumayo
Sa bayan ni Juan katutubo
Dala-dala niya'y plato
Na wala namang laman kahit ano

Si Jua'y kanyang kinaibigan
Gumawa siya ng kasunduan
Sabi ni Sam sagot niya ang pinggan
Si Juan naman daw ang bahala sa laman

Nang mapuno na itong pinggan
Na handa na sanang paghatian
Nawala ang pinggan kasama ang laman
Ninakaw ng tusong si Sam

Dahil ang pangyayari'y di nakita ni Juan
Kunwari'y nagalit pa si Sam
Dapat daw ay bayaran ang nawawalang pinggan
Kawawang si Juan nabaon sa utang ...

Kung may ugat ng kahirapan na nagpaparusa,
mayroon ding ugat ng pag-asa sa mga damdaming
masidhi ang pagnanasang makamtan ang kalayaan.
Kagaya ng nailahad sa isang awit:

Mabuhay ay langit sa sariling bayan
Kung ang sambayana'y mayro'ng kalayaan
Umaga ay tula ng kaligayahan
At ang dapit-hapo'y awit ng karikitan

...

Taas ang kamao'y tanda ng paglaban
Daan-libong anak pagtutol ang sigaw
Ang tibok ng puso'y pag-ibig sa bayan
Mamatay ay langit, lumaya ka lamang

Ang mga tinatanaw ng pag-asa ay laging kaugnay ng diwa/salaysay ng kalayaan, katarungan, at pagkakapantay-pantay. Tampok ang mga diwang ito sa *Awit ng Manggagawa*:

Bakit kaya nagkaganyan?
Ang ating kapaligiran
Ngayon dito ay luhaan
Kahit saan may tangisan

Bakit kaya naghihirap
Yaong mga lumilikha
Ng yaman ng isang bansa
Silang mga manggawa

Tanong ko sa inyo
Isa lamang kaibigan ko
Tanong ko ay pakinggan ninyo

Saan tayo patutungo
Saan mula rito?

...
Ngunit nagbabago ang lahat
At tayo ang siyang gaganap
Lakbayin natin kahit may kalayuan
Ang maaliwalas na daan
Sampung bundok man ang hadlang
Sa ating paroroonan
Hukayin natin hanggang sa mawala
Tayong lahat ay lalaya

Tuloy, ang buong bayan ay hinihimok na makilahok at sumulong tungo sa mithiing kalayaan. Ang *Awit ng Tagumpay*, sa tempong martsa, ang pinakatampok sa ganitong uri ng paghimok sa mga mamamayan.

Awit ng Tagumpay

Bangon bayan, tayo'y magwawagi
Abot tanaw ang bagong araw
Puso diwa ng bayang dinusta
Sumisigaw hustisya at paglaya ng bayang api
Walang katarungan
Daang-taon hawak ng dayuhan

Sulong bayan
Tayo'y magwawagi
Ating yaman laging ipaglaban
Lupa, langit, dagat kabundukan
Nasa kamay ng mga dayuhang mapang-api't ganid
mapagsamantala
Kapit bisig hindi malulupig
Sumulong ka bayan
Tayo ngayo'y lalaban
Ubos lakas ang tinig
Isisigaw ang sulong

Tibayan ang hanay, gapiin ang kaaway
Tibayan ang hanay, gapiin ang kaaway

Sulong bayan
Tayo'y magwawagi
Ipaglaban ating karapatan ...

Dagdag sa unang yugto ng Dekada '80, at bukod sa mga dating militanteng awit-protesta, ay ang mas maraming mga awit pa na alay sa manggagawa (*Limot na Bayani, Manggagawang Ina, Hatinggabi sa Picket Line*). Bukod sa dating mga mang-aawit na ngayo'y nagkakaroon na rin ng “kamalayang '80,” may mga dagdag na mga mang-aawit ngayon (mula sa hanay ng EDSA revolt, sa kampo ni Cory Aquino o sa dilawang

grupo) na nakikiisa sa mga nakikipaglaban para sa katarungan at kalayaan. Sa dekadang ito ay mapapansin ang dagdag ng “kakaibang” mga mang-aawit. Kahit na alam nila ang mga nakasanayang malawakan at pulahang linya ng pagtuligsa sa mga pahirap, mapapansin sa mga mga awit ang pagbabago ng tono (hindi na lamang martsa at kundiman) at dagdag na mga sanga ng kahirapan (hindi lamang isang halimaw na may tatlong ulo). Ang kanilang mga awit-protesta ay kakaiba dahil sa mga bagong karanasan at adhikain mula sa ibang puwesto at panahon, at dahil din naranasan nila ang bagong klima ng lipunan pagkatapos ng diktador at kulibat-yaman na si Ferdinand E. Marcos.⁹ Ang awit nila ay pagtuligsa ngayon sa mga kuwento ng katiwaliang tukoy na tukoy at ayon sa sarili nilang perspektibo. Ang mga ito ay sumusundot na rin sa mga katiwaliang may antas pang-indibidwal (*Nena ni Heber Bartolome*), isyu ng kababaihan (*Abante Babae, Sabon, Bangon Maria*) at pang-kalikasan (*Kapaligiran ng Asin*) at hindi lamang yaong *laging nakatutok* sa pagtuligsa sa malawakan ngunit basal o di-gaano maunawaan (ng karaniwang tao) na mga isyung imperyalismo, piyudalismo, at burukrata-kapitalismo.

Pagkatapos ng EDSA revolt (at sa unang yugto ng Dekada '90), ang mga awit-protesta ay mas malimit nang tukoy at tiyak ang mga problemang tinutuligsa. Nandoon na rin ang pagkakasanga-sanga ng pang-unawa sa mga dating hindi pa gaanong kilalang mga

⁹ Doyle Mcmanus, “U.S. Seizes Funds, Gold of Marcos: Alleged Holdings in N.Y. Also Frozen After Manila Suit,” *Los Angeles Times* March 04, 1986; http://articles.latimes.com/1986-03-04/news/mn-14979_1_ferdinand-marcos, accessed 8 June 2018; “Ferdinand Marcos: Hail to the thief,” *The Economist* 12 Nov 2016, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2016/11/12/hail-to-the-thief>, accessed 8 June 2018.

ugat ng mga problemang panlipunan. Ang imperyalismo ay nabibigyan ng mas tiyak, malinaw at simpleng pagsasalarawan.

Ang piyudalismo naman ay hindi lamang sa panunupil sa probinsiya naisasalarawa kundi tinitiyak na nakaugat na sa puso ng mga *traditional politicians* (hal. *Trapo*); ang problemang burukrata-kapitalismo ay nakatanim na sa eskwela at hindi lamang sa mga nangyayari sa gobyerno (hal. *Pamantasan ng Puso, State U, Paaralan*).

Ang huling dekada ng '80 at ang simula ng Dekada '90 ay puno ng mga awit-protesta na hindi lamang nakabatay sa iisang linya at tono ng pakikibaka kundi mula sa iba't-ibang pinag-uugatan ng iba't-ibang uri ng pagpapahirap o paniniil, sa gawain man ito o sa diwa't damdamin o sa mga espasyo o lugar. Tingnan natin ang isang awit ni Gary Granada:

Academy Supermart

Kung ang problema mo'y research, thesis at reports
Kami aay maroong solusyong very smart
Available kami, viable kami dito sa academy
supermart

May academic freedom, may academic costume
May academic rock and roll, business as usual
Lahat ng unusual welcome mag-enrol

Basta tungkol sa edukasyon, kahit ano ang okasyon
Lahat ng bagong imbensyon na state of the art
Dito lahat mabibili, dahil ibang-iba kami
Dito sa academy supermart

Kung gusto mo'y diploma, kung gusto mong mag-
magna

No problema, tuloy ka bay!
Kung gusto mong mag-summa, kung gusto mong
mag-sauna
Nasa mabuti kang kamay.

Kung gusto mo'y graduation ring, just give us a ring
At kung ang grades mo'y suffering, let's talk heart-
to-heart
Huwag ka ng mangunsumi, ang lahat mabibili
Dito sa academy supermart

Ang pinakadahilan siyempre ng pagbabago ng awit at musika ay ang pagbabago din ng sitwasyon at ng mga kompositores at mang-aawit na kinabibilangan na rin ngayon ng mga tinaguriang mga “martial law babies.” Hindi sila yaong mga direktang nakaranas ng matinding pahirap-pulitikal noong Dekada '70. Sila yaong may mga bagong pananaw tungkol sa pakikibaka. Hindi ibig sabihin na wala na ang Diwang Dekada '70 na punong-puno ng militanteng pag-iisip at mensahe. Malimit, ang mga datihang mag-aawit ng Dekada '70 na sina Jess Santiago, Pol Galang, at Heber Bartolome ay nagkapit-bisig na rin sa mga bagong “alternative artists” kagaya ng Jerks, Wuds, Inang Laya, Patatag, Yano at sina Joey Ayala, Gary Granada, at ang yumaong Susan Fernandez-Magno. Kung minsan nga ay nagkakasama-sama sila sa mga konsyerto kagaya ng “Bistro sa Amoranto” noong Disyembre 17, 1993 sa Amoranto Stadium, Quezon City at sa “Parangal kay Saro Bañares” sa Quezon Memorial Circle. Sumikat na rin ang ilang mga bistro at club na tumatangkalilik ng alternatibong awit: Mayrick's, Club Dredd, QA Ihaw-Balot Restaurant, at Bistro '70.

Sa huling yugto ng Dekada '90 at pagpasok ng 2000 ay lalong nahaluan ng napakaraming sari-saring tema at istilo (pop, rock, rap [Francis M.], reggae, novelty)

ang mga awit-protesta/pag-asa. Dati, mas malimit na ang mga awit na punong-puno ng galit at kaseryosohan ang malimit na naririnig, at ang mga ito ay madalas na inaawit sa mga rally, piket, martsa, at ipa pang mobilisasyon. Ngayon, marami na sa kanila ang gumaya kay Heber Bartolome, Freddie Aguilar, at sa grupong Asin. Pumasok na rin sila sa pop o rock na mga awit-protesta na naririnig na din sa mga AM at FM radio (Yano [*Banal na Aso*, *Santong Kabayo*], Noel Cabangon [*Men Move*], at Joey Ayala [*Magka-ugnay; Wala nang Tao sa Santa Filomena*]). Dagdag pa diyan ang ilang grupong pambabae katulad ng Tribal Fish at Keltscross. Mapapanood na rin sila sa YouTube; puwede na rin silang i-download ngayon.

Mapapansin tuloy ang ganitong mga pagbabago:

- nagsimula sa panahong ang mga awit-protesta ay niyayakap at “ginawang sandata” ng mga grupong lumalaban (mga sundalo sa himagsikan at mga aktibista);
- pumunta sa panahon na ang mga awit-protesta ay pinakikinggan at personal na inaawit; at
- hanggang sa ang mga ito ay mga bagay na ibinebenta na rin sa merkado o mga mall.

Sa ganitong mga pangyayari, ang awit-protesta/pag-asa ay hindi na lamang pagmamay-ari ng ilang mga samahan. Kahit na ang karaniwang tao ay umaawit na rin ng ilang mga naririnig nilang sikat na awit-protesta (*Banal na Aso*, *Santong Kabayo* ng Yano, *Halina* ni Jess Santiago, at *Dam* ni Gary Granada).

Dam

Sa ngalan ng huwad na kaunlaran
 Ang bayan ko’y sa utang nagipit
 At eto na ang kabayaran

Ang kanunu-nunuang lupain
Ang mga eksperto'y nagsasaya
At nagpupuri at sumasamba
Sa wangis ng diyos-diyosan nila
Ang dambuhalang Dam

Ref.:

Dam, dam, dam, dam dam dararam,...
Dam, dam, dam, dam dam dararam,...
Dam, dam, dam, dam dam dararam,...
Ang dambuhalang Dam

Ang mga tribu'y nagtatatangis
Nananaghoy at nababaliw
Habang ang mga turistang mababangis
Nalilibang at nag-aaliw
Sa mga pulubing nagsasayaw
Mga katutubo ng Apayao
Na napaalis kahit umayaw
Alang-alang sa Dam (Ref.)

Titigan ninyo ang ga-higanteng bato
Nagsasalarawan ng lipunang ito
Tulad ng gumawa rin nito
Walang pakiramdam

Iba't Ibang Diwa / Salaysay

Kung sa diwa naman pag-uusapan, ang mga awit ay tumbok na tumbok ang mga tinutuligsang kapangitan sa lipunan, at mga gawain tungo sa pagbabago at sa mga inaasam-asam na bagong kinabukasan. Laban ang mga ito sa pasismo, imperyalismo, huwad na kalayaan, huwad na edukasyon, huwad na pag-unlad, huwad na relihiyon, huwad na pangulo kagaya ni Gloria (tingnan ang binagong bersiyon ng *Doon po sa Amin* ni Jess

Santiago), huwad na pagdiriwang ng pasko, pagsira ng kalikasan, pagpapahirap sa kababaihan (*Magda* ni Gloc-9), brownout, basura, base militar, hamleting (*Wala nang Tao sa Santa Filomena*), plantang nukleyar, panghahalay at pagsasamantala sa kababaihan (*Spolarium* ng Eraserheads [tungkol ito sa kaso ni Pepsi Paloma na di umanoy pinagsamantalahan ng ilang *Eat Bulaga* hosts¹⁰]), buhay komersiyo, at iba pang uri ng kasinungalingan at pang-aapi. Napakarami sa mga ito ang nagpapagising at nag-aanyayaang makibaka at makiisa sa mga pagpupunyaging tukoy ay mga ugat-salaysay ng katarungan at kalayaan. Kahit ang ilang mga awit ng pag-ibig (*Awit sa Kasal ng Bilanggo*, *Walang Hanggang Paalam*) ay inaangat ang mga haliging-diwa ng kasarinlan, kapatiran, pagkakaisa, pakakapantay-pantay, katotohonan, katarungan, kalayaan, at kapayapaan.

Sa mga awit-protesta ng bayan ay masasalamain ang mga pagtutol at pagtuligsa hindi lamang laban sa mga taong baluktot ang konsiyensya, o laban sa mga sistemang nakakasakal, kundi sa mga mapaniil o nagpapahirap din na nakasanayang diskriminasyon (*Sirena* ni Gloc-9); nakasanayang kaayusan (*Upuan* ni Gloc 9; *Tatsulok* na orihinal na komposisyon ni Rom Dongeto ng Buklod at pinasikat naman ni Bamboo); o nakasanayang pang-araw-araw na gawi't gawain sa mga espasyo ating lipunan (ang *Esem* ng Yano).

Esem

Patingin-tingin, di naman makabili
 Patingin—tingin, di makapanood ng sine
 Walang ibang pera kundi pamasaha
 Nakayan ko lang pambili ng dalawang yosi

¹⁰ <http://asianjournalusa.com/a-blast-from-the-past-was-pepsi-paloma-murdered-p13834-95.htm>, accessed 19 June 2018.

Paamoy-amoy, di naman makakain
Busog na sa tubig, gutom ay lilipas din
Patuloy ang laboy, walang iisipin
Kailangang magsaya, kailangang magpahangin

Nakakainip ang ganitong buhay
Nakakainis ang ganitong buhay...

Gumagabi na, ako'y uuwi na
Tapos na ang saya, balik sa problema
At bukas ng umaga, uulitin ko pa ba
Ang kahibangang ito, sa tingin ko hindi na

Nakakabaliw ang ganitong buhay
Di nakaaliw ang ganitong buhay...

Ang mga manunulat–mang-aawit ay mga taga-bandera at taga-ingat ng mga salaysay ng pag-asa ng katarungan at kalayaan. Sila ‘yong mga taong naghahasik ng mga adhikaing maka-katarungan at maka-kalayaan. Dahil sa kanilang abilidad na mang-antig ng damdamin sa pamamagitan ng mga tugtog-kuwento at mensahe ay napupukaw muli ang ating loob sa diwa ng pagbabago. Daklot ng kanilang mga mensahe ang diwa na humahataw sa mga taong napapaalila na lamang sa mga nakasanayang gawi at gawain ng mga nakasanayang mga hari ng lipunan. Kung hindi man tayo napapatindig at nagiging palabantungo sa pagbabago ay napupukaw naman tayo mula sa ating nakasanayang higaan na tawag natin ay Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, o di kaya’y tahanan o sa nakasanayang upuan sa mga paaralan at opisina, o di kaya’y nakasanayang mga lugar/espasyo kagaya ng Starbucks, McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, at iba pang lugar sa mga malls.

Ang mga mang-aawit at manunulat ay nagtatampok ng mga kuwento ng paniniil at nagtataguyod ng mga saloobin na nagsisilbing mga susi upang mabuksan ang ating mga piitan at makita natin na tayo rin pala ang namamahala sa mga piitang ito. Ang mga mang-aawit at manunulat ay nag-aalay din ng pag-asa sa kanilang isinisiwalat na balita tungkol sa isang bukas na hindi na pamamahalaan pa ng mga mananakop at mga mapaniil na gawi at gawain.

Paglalagom

Kung ang mga awit-protesta ng bayan ay nagsisilbing susi sa mga saloobin, pang-unawa, at disposisyon ng mga taong nangarap ng isang buhay na matiwasay dahil may tunay na kalayaan at katarungan, ang mga awit na ito ay may hawig sa tinutumbok ng mga propeta ng Bibliya na nagtuturo ng isang buhay na ang namumuno ay walang iba kundi ang Diyos ng kasaysayan. Hindi lahat ng awit-protesta ng bayan ay may sinasabi tungkol sa haligi ng buhay na walang iba kundi ang Diyos. May mga awitin nga na ang pinagmulan ay mga grupong hindi naniniwala sa Diyos. Ngunit dahil sa mga awit-protesta ng ating bayan, ang mensahe at kilos ng mga propeta sa Bibliya ay naalala muli o di kaya'y nabibigyan ng pansin. Ang mga mang-aawit-protesta ay para bang nakasakay sa isang napa-kalaking sasakyang-panlakbay na kung saan matatagpuan din, at mapapansin tuloy, ang mga mang-aawit ng ibang bansa, mga mang-aawit na may mala-propetang mensahe kagaya nina John Lennon ng Liverpool; Woody Guthrie, Nina Simone, Phil Ochs, Peter Seeger, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Tracy Chapman, at Ani DiFranco ng USA; Luis Eduardo Aute (na ipinanganak at nag-aral ng elementarya dito sa Pilipinas) at Chicho Sánchez Ferlosio ng Espanya; Lluís Llach ng Catalonia,

Espanya; Manu Chao ng Pransiya; grupong Modena City Ramblers ng Italia; Daniel Viglietti ng Uruguay; Nicomedes Santa Cruz at Eva Ayllón ng Peru; Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés, Noel Nicola, at Carlos Puebla ng Cuba; Zélia Barbosa ng Brazil; grupong Quilapayún at Victor Jara ng Chile; Bob Marley ng Jamaica; grupong Boukman Eksperyans ng Haiti; Johnny Clegg, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, at Brenda Fassie ng South Africa; at marami pang iba.¹¹

Ang mga propeta ng Bibliya ay kasama sa kasaysayan ng isang pandaigdigang kapatiran ng mga propeta na nagpoprotesta at nagbibigay pag-asa; sila'y lulan ng isang sasakyang-panlakbay—nakikibaka at patungo sa isang hinahangad na bukas na puno ng kalayaan at katarungan.

Napapanahon na rin na lumantad ang mga propetang-bayan, dito sa Pilipinas, sa gitna ng mga patayang sinusulong ngayon ng mga pinunong bulag sa mga ugat-salaysay ng katarungan at kalayaan—mga pinunong matalas na matalas sa pananakit ngunit mapurol na mapurol sa karunungan at malasakit.

¹¹ Tingnan ang mga pag-aaral na ito: Dario Martinelli, *Give Peace a Chant: Popular Music, Politics and Social Protest* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017); Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton, eds., *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011); Barbara Lebrun, *Protest Music in France: Production, Identity and Audiences* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); Hardeep Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song: A Reference Guide to the 50 Songs That Changed the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008); Gage Averill, *A Day for the Hunter, A Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

Doing Political Theology in the Time of Violence: Unmasking Violence with René Girard and Walter Wink

Helen C. Romero*

Abstract: This paper examines René Girard's mimetic theory and uses it to surface the nonviolent resistance offered by Jesus to counter the violence that is waged by certain groups of people who use the sacred texts to perpetuate and legitimize their acts of violence. I use Bonaventure's journey toward God as a lens to explicate how Girard's conversion deepens his concept of mimetic desire. Toward the later part of this paper, I proposed pairing Girard's mimetic theory with the framework of Walter Wink in engaging powers through nonviolent resistance. Mimetic desire could only be countered by desiring God whose presence and language is love, and whose ways are humble, just, and nonviolent as exemplified and lived by Jesus.

Keywords: mimetic desire, violence, nonviolent resistance, engaging powers, René Girard, Walter Wink, St. Bonaventure

A look into religious violence

Defining religious violence could be problematic especially since acts of violence committed by people who adhere to a particular religion and subscribe to its

♦ Helen C. Romero holds a master's degree in Public Communication from Fordham University, New York City and master's degrees in Theological Studies (MTS) and Ministry in a Multicultural Church (MAMC) at the Franciscan School of Theology-Graduate Theological Union (FST-GTU), Berkeley, California. She is currently a doctoral student in theology at the St. Vincent School of Theology, Quezon City, Philippines. She directs the communication and marketing unit of St. Paul University Iloilo and teaches Communication courses at the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education.

tenets have much in common with those committed by secular or military groups.¹ Put another way, violence is violence whether sponsored by a duly elected political body, sanctified or blessed by a religious leader, or committed by common criminals. We could, however, rightly address it if we know its source.

What can be gleaned from Reader² is that violence could have a religious orientation. In this sense, religious violence could be viewed as acts that are rooted or could be traced directly to “religious causes and teachings and whose commission was conditioned and framed by the religious orientations of the perpetrators and that could only have come about because of the religious milieu and modes of thought and practice within which they lived and operated.”³ Based on this explanation, religious violence is not new; take, for example, the crusades. But even with these acts of violence, it still remains problematic to categorize religion as violent, especially since it interfaces with other forces in society that include nationalism and politics.⁴ Based on Reader’s survey, while there have been cases of violence involving religion, these are considered small and not significant. Then, too, from a sociological standpoint, while acts of violence are committed by a group of people with religious affiliations, a conclusive statement on religious violence could still not be drawn because religion is not free from other social influences outside of its sphere. What could be emphasized, however, is that violence could have a religious orientation and could possibly be incubated or hosted within a particular

¹ See Ian Reader, “Religion and Violence,” in *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* (London, Routledge, 2016), 480.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 486.

⁴ Ibid., 487.

religion. And this is where political theology could take its cues.

From the cases presented by Reader, the two major trends common to these so-called religious violence involve: the fight for their holy lands and the use of the sacred text to justify violent acts.⁵ This sociological investigation prompts us to rethink our theological views of sacrifice, especially on the suffering of Jesus on the cross; and reconstruct a political theology of nonviolence. Here, the works of René Girard and Walter Wink are relevant.

Girard and Wink could offer ways of dealing with violence without succumbing to the temptation of replicating or repressing it. Both Wink and Girard present a way of re-reading and interpreting the Scriptures, especially on the view of the cross. For them, Jesus' way on the cross is not a blood sacrifice to placate an angry god, but rather an ultimate form of resistance to the "logic of 'redistributive justice' that is at the core of both Christian theology and politics."⁶ Girard's approach surfaces the concept of violence that emanates from scapegoating brought about by mimetic desire; while Wink's deals with power by naming, unmasking, and engaging it. Both works bear this thought: "For theology to be political, it must engage the Powers; but for politics to be theological, it must aspire to nonviolence."⁷

⁵ Reader, "Religion and Violence."

⁶ Ched Meyers, "Confronting the Powers," in *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Theology*, eds. William T. Cavanaugh, J.W. Bailey, and C. Hovey (Michigan USA/Cambridge, U.K: Wm Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 340.

⁷ Meyers, "Confronting the Powers," 341.

René Girard: mimetic desire and scapegoating

Girard's literary criticism of the great works in Western literature by five novelists, Cervantes, Proust, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Stendhal led him to conceptualize "triangular desire."⁸ This notion becomes the take-off point of mimetic desire. It points to the fact that we do not have innate desires, because we learn from others whom we observe and imitate. Our desire for an object is always stirred by another person's pre-established desire (the model) for the same object. Thus, every subject's route toward the object of desire is not direct but mediated by the model, the mediator, who also acts as a challenger or a rival. As a result, there develops a state of mimetic rivalry over desired objects and this would escalate into a "mimetic contagion" where every member of society is driven by imitation. "The mediator can no longer act his role of model without also acting or appearing to act the role of obstacle."⁹ In this unconsciously shaped state of rivalry, the model/mediator Other, is actually the one who is sought, the object of the Self's pursuit or dreams. The mediator between the Self and the Other is the lever that propels the Self to either mimic the desire of the Other, or break away from it in order to reclaim what is true to one's Self. The role of this mediator, a metaphysical presence in Girardian sense, has a bearing on the way we understand our God and the way we live and organize ourselves. In other words, mimetic rivalry and contagion produce certain ways of thinking as well as forms of social order, arrangement, or social stratification and classification that determine behavior.

⁸ René Girard. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Trans. by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 1-52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Formulated from his literary criticism, triangular desire is a concept that becomes the staging area of Girard's mimetic theory. One might ask, if this concept is derived from literary criticism, how valid and reliable could this be in examining violence? Here, I would let Girard explain himself and the significance of his methodology, especially on the value of explicating truth and reality from great body of literary works.

All types of structural thinking assume that human reality is intelligible; it is a logos and, as such, it is an incipient logic, or it degrades itself into a logic. It can thus be systematized, at least up to a point, however unsystematic, irrational, and chaotic it may appear even to those, or rather especially to those who operate the system. A basic contention of this essay is that the great writers apprehend intuitively and concretely, through the medium of their art, if not formally, the system in which they were first imprisoned together with their contemporaries. Literary interpretation must be systematic because it is the continuation of literature. It should formalize implicit or already half-explicit systems. To maintain that criticism will never be systematic is to maintain that it will never be real knowledge.¹⁰

From this literary horizon, Girard also forays into the Hebrew Scriptures ("Old Testament") and Christian Scriptures ("New Testament") and, from there, he sees a way out or a transformation of this mimetic desire that leads to rivalry and, thus, violence.

It is worth noting that while Girard mentions the logos that structures the intelligibility of human reality,

¹⁰ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 3.

it is his experience of religious conversion that deepens his conceptualization of mimetic desire. Girard undergoes a religious conversion himself that first happens at the aesthetic level and later permeates his life when he re-embraces his Roman Catholic faith.¹¹

Girard's conversion, or turning toward God,¹² refocuses his view of the mediator and sees this as an empty space within the Self. This void makes it possible for the Self to mimic the Other's desire. The emptiness within resonates with the emptiness of the Other thus to fill this space, the Self tends to imitate the Other. Girard recognizes that this mimicry as explicated from the struggles of the heroes and heroines in the novels, was their feeble attempts at self-divinization.¹³ It is a lie that shapes the consciousness of the heroes to believe that they are autonomous, yet their mimicry of each other's desires lays bare their dependence on one another. Girard expounds on this:

All the heroes surrender their most fundamental individual prerogative, that of choosing their own desire; we cannot attribute this unanimous abandonment to the always different qualities of the heroes. For a single phenomenon a single cause must be found. All heroes of novels hate themselves on a more essential level than that of "qualities." It is exactly as the narrator says at the beginning of *Swann's Way*: 'Everything which was not myself, the earth and the creatures upon it, seemed to me more

¹¹ See Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology* (London, UK & New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2009), 1-3.

¹² I use the Bonaventurian lens to explicate how Girard's conversion deepens his conceptual framework on mimetic desire. See Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*. (New York: New City Press, 2001), 99-114.

¹³ Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 3.

precious and more important, endowed with a more real existence.' The curse with which the hero is burdened is indistinguishable from his subjectivity.¹⁴

Girard sees this as the false promise of autonomy and the resulting attempt of the Self to one's divinization. Here Girard posits, "Only when the false divinity which attaches itself to the desiring hero and to his or her model is renounced can a genuine transcendence be opened up."¹⁵ And this is where Girard brings Christianity into his horizon and considers it as one that "directs existence toward a vanishing point, either toward God or toward the Other. Choice always involves choosing a model."¹⁶ This echoes Augustine's exposition of desire as an orientation of the heart. The models in Augustine's desire are the earthly city and the heavenly city, where the orientation toward the first tend to power over, dominate, and exploit things and people; while desire oriented toward the second, seeks to love things and people for their own worth and find its greatest fulfillment in God. This choice couched in Augustine's notion of free will is the pivot point of desires that could lead either to violence (caused by sin, a turning away from God); or peace (that seeks to do what is good based on loving God, self, and one another).

Choosing a model entails a movement toward it. And here Girard, like Augustine, moves toward God, through a conversion of consciousness revealed in his unmasking of the mediator in mimetic desire. He names this as pride, the one that occupies the autonomy of both the Self and the Other. It is an autonomy founded on a false promise of freedom. Like Augustine, Girard regards

¹⁴ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 55.

¹⁵ Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 3.

¹⁶ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 58.

freedom as the “basic choice between a human or a divine model.”¹⁷ This pride, as an impostor, occupies the autonomous Self and the Other and it could only be unmasked by humility. Or put simply, humility resists pride. By poring through the characters of the great works of the five novelists that he studied, Girard uncovers the structure of this religious truth and reality: “The false prophets proclaim that in tomorrow’s world *men will be gods for each other*.” He continues that the passion that drives humans to seize or gain more possessions “is not materialistic; it is the triumph of the mediator, the god with the human face.”¹⁸ This is to say that transcendence could still be achieved whether one moves toward God or the Other. But the movement toward the Other creates a desire that is not true to one’s Self thus transcendence here happens through the creation of an idol. Albert Camus refers to this as a “metaphysical rebellion,”¹⁹ or perhaps a human attempt to “take the place of God,” hence the tendency of “humans to worship one another.”²⁰ This tendency is

¹⁷ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 58.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁹ “Metaphysical rebellion is the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it contests the ends of man and of creation. The slave protests against the condition in which he finds himself within his state of slavery; the metaphysical rebel protests against the condition in which he finds himself as a man. The rebel slave affirms that there is something in him that will not tolerate the manner in which his master treats him; the metaphysical rebel declares that he is frustrated by the universe. For both of them, it is not only a question of pure and simple negation. In both cases, in fact, we find a value judgment in the name of which the rebel refuses to approve the condition in which he finds himself.” Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 90

²⁰ See, Wolfgang Palaver, *René Girard’s Mimetic Theory*, Trans. by Gabriel Borrud (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 2013), 29.

exhibited in desiring what the Other desires. And because it is mimetic, neither innate nor original, it creates sameness and uniformity. Imitation obliterates the distinction between the one who imitates and the other who is imitated. Thus, to want to possess and acquire what the Other desires creates a competition. And conflict ensues when the Self and the Other desire the same thing that is merely a replica of what each truly desires. Taking on Augustine's formula, Girard claims that the pride that occupies both the Self and the Other "is more exterior to us than the external world."²¹ Thus for Girard, the movement toward God is a retreat into the Self, a movement inward, that later flows outward.

This is the conceptual field where Girard's mimetic desire could be used as the interpretive key to unlock the message of the Scripture on peace and violence, seen through the sacrifice and crucifixion of Jesus. Here Girard surfaces the concept of violence that emanates from the scapegoat mechanism resulting from the containment of mimetic desire. How does violence appear in mimetic desire?

Girard posits that mimetic violence and the scapegoat mechanism exist in ancient mythologies as well as in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Here Girard goes beyond his studies of the great European novels as he forays into classic and mythic literatures including the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures to study violence and ritual sacrifices. The desire for violence is not original since there is no desire that is independently directed to it, unless instigated by a model.²² Girard shows how this is played out in the Christian Scriptures and how Jesus teaches his disciples to resist the temptation of desiring violence and in the process,

²¹ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 58.

²² Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Desire*, 129.

subvert the violent system of the world caused by mimetic contagion and the scapegoat mechanism.

He singles out the death of John the Baptist (considered as the prophet who bridges the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures) to show how mimetic contagion could lead to a violent death, in this case of the prophet John, who is blamed for disturbing the household of Herod and Herodias who are in an illicit relationship.

The story is found in both the Gospels of Mark (Mk. 6:14-29) and Matthew (Mt. 14:1-12). John the Baptist's death sentence resulted from the dance of Salome, staged by her mother Herodias who "had a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but could not" (Mk. 6:19-20). Herodias is the wife of Philip, the brother of Herod who married Herodias and was called out by John the Baptist because of this illicit act. According to Girard, Herod taking the wife of his brother Philip is a classic example of mimetic desire that resulted in dire consequences, in this case the death of an unsuspecting victim, John the Baptist.

To have Herodias, to carry her off, is forbidden to Herod not by virtue of some formal rule but because his possession can only be at the expense of a dispossessed brother. The prophet warns his royal listener against the evil effects of mimetic desire. There is no illusion in the Gospels about the possibility of arbitration between the brothers.²³

However the rivalry between the two brothers, Herod and Philip, seem to have been contained because the animosity is directed to a scapegoat, John himself. It is Herodias who bears ill thoughts against him.

²³ René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, Trans. by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 128.

According to Girard, John is a “scandal” to Herodias because he speaks the truth about her relationship with Herod. Girard expounds, “there is no worse enemy of desire than truth.”²⁴ So Herodias convinces Herod to arrest John. But since Herod considers John as a “holy and righteous man” (Mk 6:20), he spared John’s life. However, this decision is soon overturned by a dance. According to Girard, ancient people typically considered ritual dancing as the “most mimetic of all arts,”²⁵ thus in this particular Markan scene on the dance of Salome, Herod promised to grant anything that she desires. But Salome, not sure of what to ask, rushed instead to Herodias and asked what her mother desires. Herodias urged Salome to ask for “John’s head.” Herod consented against his better judgment because the guests (crowd) urged him on to fulfill his promise to Salome. John is the scapegoat in the looming trouble in the household of Herod: a brother is dispossessed of his wife, and the wife seethes with anger at her failure to convince Herod to kill John the Baptist so she turns to her daughter, Salome, to accomplish the task.²⁶ Thus even if Herod is inclined to spare John’s life, he gives in to what Salome and the crowd desire, “John’s head.” This mimetic contagion choreographed by Herodias, spared no one, not even the powerful person, Herod. This same contagion also influenced Pontius Pilate to sentence Jesus to death despite his conviction that Jesus is innocent. As Girard points out, “leaders who do not stand up to violent crowds are bound to join them.”²⁷ And this is how violence is perpetuated and becomes uncontrollable that could overwhelm even strong, powerful men, like Herod and Pilate. How does Jesus

²⁴ Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 133.

²⁵ Girard, “Are the Gospels Mythical?,” paragraph 5.

²⁶ Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 129-30.

²⁷ Girard, “Are the Gospels Mythical?,” paragraph 5.

deal with such violence?

Girard cites Peter as one who “spectacularly illustrates this mimetic contagion. When surrounded by people hostile to Jesus, he imitates their hostility.”²⁸ In Matthew 26:52 when Jesus was arrested, Peter struck the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus rebuked Peter and ordered him to put his sword back, to resist the temptation of succumbing to the same violent act as those arresting him. Prior to his arrest Jesus already predicted that “he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Mt. 16:21). Peter was scandalized at this revelation so he wanted to put sense into Jesus not to go through what he just said but rather live and rule the world as a Messiah. At this instigation, Jesus rebuked Peter, “Get behind me, Satan, you are a *skandalon* to me.”²⁹ Here Jesus names the instigator, Satan, a *skandalon*, a stumbling block to God’s will whom Jesus obeys and follows.³⁰ Jesus is trying to break the spell of mimetic contagion that grips humanity in its vicious cycle of violence. Jesus is modeling a new way of resisting a *skandalon*.³¹ The scandal here takes on a new turn from the scandal of John the Baptist who speaks truth to Herod and Herodias.

This scene with Peter is not the first time that Jesus named and confronted a *skandalon*. Before he began his public ministry, Jesus was led into the wilderness and

²⁸ Girard, “Are the Gospels Mythical?,” paragraph 7.

²⁹ Girard, “Are the Gospels Mythical?,” paragraph 8.

³⁰ In the Christian Scriptures, the Hebrew word שָׂטָן (*satan*) is either retained as Σατανᾱς (*satanas*) or translated into the Greek διάβολος (*diabolos*), devil.

³¹ In the Septuagint, מִקְשָׁל (מִקְשָׁל) is translated into Koine Greek *skandalon* (σκάνδαλον), a word which occurs only in Hellenistic literature, in the sense “snare for an enemy; cause of moral stumbling”. See, <http://biblehub.com/greek/4625.htm>.

was tempted by the devil. When he was famished after fasting for forty days and forty nights, the tempter taunted him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread” (Mt 4:3). Despite his hunger, Jesus resisted, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Mt. 4:4). Undeterred, the devil insisted, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone’” (Mt 4:5). Jesus resisted, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Mt. 4:6). The devil is persistent, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” (Mt. 4:9). Jesus stood his ground, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him’” (Mt. 4:10).

Notice that in this exchange, the devil mimics the Scriptural passages to entice Jesus to do what God says in the Scripture. But Jesus sees through it and calls it out by unveiling what the Scriptures truly say: abide in every word of God, do not put the Lord your God to the test, and worship the Lord your God, and serve only God. This is the same command written in Deuteronomy (6:4-5), “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” The key to resisting the *skandalon* is to love God. Jesus brings this even further, “But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt. 5:44). To resist is to love so that one could unseat the mediator in one’s Self and the Other. This mediator is a presence that masquerades as “divine,” it is a replica, an idol. It produces deceit like the *skandalon* that entices Jesus to do as it wills by mouthing the words of God. Jesus quotes Isaiah when he rebukes those who pretend

to do the will of God yet their hearts are far from God, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines' (Mt 15:8-9). This is at the very core of idolatry. Girard considers the unmasking of idolatry as the essential aspect of the Scripture, the key that sets it apart from archaic myth.³² Echoing Augustine's thoughts on desire played out in the earthly city, Girard drives home the point that humans who usurp the power of God to their own ends "inevitably fall victim to [a] metaphysical desire that ends in reciprocal violence and death."³³ And here lies the valuable contribution of Girard in exposing violence and the resistance Jesus offered to counter it, paradoxically, through the violent act of the way of the cross. Girard emphasizes that the sacrifice of Jesus is shown in his prayer, "Not my will, but [Yours] be done."³⁴ In that regard, the following is remarkably enlightening:

Imitation is characteristic of both Jesus and Satan. We always imitate someone when we desire, either Jesus or Satan...Since Jesus recommends imitation, mimetic desire is good. It is even very good, the best thing in the world, since it is the only road to the true God. But it is the same as human freedom, and it is also the road to Satan. What is the difference between the mimetic desire of Jesus and the mimetic desire of Satan? The difference is that Satan imitates God in a spirit of rivalry. Jesus imitates God in a spirit of childlike and innocent obedience and this is what he advises us to do as well. Since there is no acquisitive desire in God, the docile

³² Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 207.

³³ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁴ McDonald, "Violence and the Lamb Slain," 341.

imitation of God cannot generate rivalry.³⁵

It is through this lens where Girard shows how Jesus models his life to the will of the Father and why he vehemently addressed Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!” because he saw Peter obstructing his way toward the Father.³⁶ For Girard, Satan is the “prince of the world,” regardless if Satan is a personal being or not.³⁷ From this context, worldly existence is “Satanically” structured insofar as it propagates lies and murder,³⁸ the centrifugal force that fortifies the cycle of violence. The death of Jesus, Girard propounds, is not the “death that [could] make [humans] feel confirmed in their lives, but to call [humans] into question.”³⁹ As to the use of the sacred text to justify acts of violence, we could learn from Girard’s insights:

*Everything which happened to Jesus is now happening to the gospel texts. They are scapegoated. They are blamed for what is wrong. And yet it is precisely these texts that have brought scapegoating mechanism to light!*⁴⁰

The Gospel texts are intelligible to human minds that are turned toward God because the texts carry the Logos, the Word made flesh. A human mind not turned to God, is more likely to miss the mark and fail to grasp the language of God who is love.⁴¹ Jesus’ counsel to love

³⁵ René Girard, “Satan,” *The Girard Reader*, James G. Williams, ed. (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Co., 1996), 197.

³⁶ McDonald, “Violence and the Lamb Slain,” 352.

³⁷ Ibid., 351.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 352.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ A mind turned toward God is a Bonaventuran concept which I have layered in my analysis of Girard’s mimetic theory. See Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 12.

one's enemy makes sense only when one embraces what Jesus says about being children of the Father in heaven who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45). The sun, the moon, the stars, the universe, they do not discriminate against us, albeit we are capable of conquering or extinguishing them. This same freedom of God to create is given to us through our free will thus we could fall away from the good not because we are naturally corrupt but because we can defile what we have and inhabit.⁴² This, in theological (Augustine) term, is what it means to be fallen, which Walter Wink gives a deeper perspective in the following section of this paper. God is free and so are we, but in Camus's term, we stage a "metaphysical revolt"⁴³ against the very source of our freedom. Like Satan, we could mimic and mouth the words of God simply because we hold the same freedom to be like a god, either as God's true image or god's replica, a mimesis, an idol.

Turning toward God—key to overcoming mimetic contagion

The Creator's freedom is not equal to the creature's freedom although both have the same attribute of being able to do what each one wills. God's freedom is defined by God being infinite (immortal) while human freedom is bound by it being finite (mortal), subject to the limits of space and time the human inhabits. Hence, without abiding in God,⁴⁴ humans could only mirror each other's

⁴² Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Augustine," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 44.

⁴³ Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 29.

⁴⁴ This is the same thought on conceit and deceit offered by John Duns Scotus. See William A. Frank, "Don Scotus on Autonomous Freedom and Co-causality," in Scott MacDonald, ed., *Medieval*

mortal selves, making the ground ripe for mimetic contagion. Girard uncovers this truth in his earlier works thus he posits that “the ultimate meaning of desire is death but death is not the novel's ultimate meaning.”⁴⁵ Death could satisfy a desire that is mis-directed and mimetic. In his rigorous literary criticism of the five European novelists, Girard finds echo of their works in this verse, “If the seed does not die after it has been sown, it will remain alone, but if it dies it will bear much fruit.”⁴⁶ And he claims that all of the novelists that he reviewed describe how their heroes/heroines undergo conversion where self-divinity is renounced leading to their freedom from slavery (idolatry).⁴⁷ In this state of conversion, “Deception gives way to truth, anguish to remembrance, agitation to repose, hatred to love, humiliation to humility, mediated desire to autonomy, deviated transcendence to vertical transcendence.”⁴⁸ Girard points out that all these great works use this Christian symbolism of death and resurrection, but it is kept hidden by their use of literary devices.

All the great novelists respond to this fundamental appeal but sometimes they manage to hide from themselves the meaning of their response. Stendhal uses irony. Proust masks the true face of novelistic experience with romantic commonplaces but he gives the stale symbols a profound and secret brilliance. In his work symbols of immortality and resurrection appear

Philosophy and Theology, vol 2 (Open access, Philosophy Documentation Center, 1992), 151 [142-164]; doi: 10.5840/medievalpt199228; https://www.pdcnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/purchase?openform&fp=medievalpt&id=medievalpt_1992_0002_0000_0142_0164, accessed 11 June 2018.

⁴⁵ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 290.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

in a purely aesthetic context and only surreptitiously do they transcend the banal meaning to which romanticism reduces them.⁴⁹

Without the blinders of romanticism, we could reread Jesus' way of loving and nonviolent resistance to evil that eventually led him to the cross.

Jesus' way: claiming one's identity in God

Like John the Baptist, Jesus dies innocent of the crime leveled against him. But unlike John, Jesus enters into his death fully aware of what is going to happen hence he resisted the *skandalon* that would obstruct his way toward the Father, toward his sacrifice that reveals all that is wrong with mimetic violence and scapegoating. Jesus imparts to his followers what it is like to live as children of God, which is different from being a mere image or a replica.

Jesus' Sonship

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. He is not an afterthought or an abrupt addition to salvation history.⁵⁰ And Matthew's (1:1-17) genealogy of Jesus is recognized by most scholars for its carefully ordered structure,⁵¹ hence this particular section shows how systematic and organized Matthew is in presenting his materials. Because of this, the reader could notice the break in Matthew's narrative pattern in verse 16 when

⁴⁹ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 312.

⁵⁰ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdsman Publishing Company, 1999), 78.

⁵¹ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdsman Publishing Company, 2001), 161.

he proclaims the birth of Jesus by Mary: “Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.” Raymond Brown claims that with this radical shift in the narrative, Matthew presents the “total absence of the father’s begetting, establishing that Jesus was actually begotten through God’s Holy Spirit.”⁵² Read in this context, I could say that the credibility of Jesus’ teachings on how to live as children of God springs from his authority as the Son. And Jesus’ identification with his Father is important as this is his origin.

After conversion, the other key to overturning violence brought by mimetic contagion and the scapegoat mechanism is to claim one’s originality that is rooted in one’s origin. And this is where the anthropology of Girard assumes its importance. If violence is perpetuated by the human propensity to mimic the desire of the other then there is no exit except for the total destruction of each other’s replica, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (Mt. 5:38). But in Jesus, Girard sees a different model, a different victim of violence.

One can call him an incomparable victim without any sentimental piety or suspect emotion. He is incomparable in that he never succumbs in any way, at any point, to the perspective of the persecutor—neither in a positive way, by openly agreeing with his executioners, nor in a negative way, by taking a position of vengeance, which is none other than the inverse reproduction of the original representation of persecution, its mimetic repetition.⁵³

Jesus models a way out of this vicious cycle, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek

⁵² Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, (The New Updated Version; The Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 74.

⁵³ Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 129.

and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves” (Mt. 11:29). Jesus’ humility is shown in his resistance to Satan taunting him to show his power that is equal to God’s, “If you are the Son of God, show it!” He did not prove his Sonship on Satan’s terms, but rather empties himself of his divinity (Phil. 2:7). He goes through the stages of what it is to be human before God, even dying on the cross. Yet even here, Satan did not get what he desired for Jesus to call on the angels to save him. Satan at the scene of the crucifixion has inhabited the crowd who mocked Jesus, replicating the way Jesus was tempted in the desert. Jesus’ resistance to Satan’s instigation has reached its final stage in his death. Still, Satan did not have the upper hand here despite Jesus feeling abandoned by his Father. Jesus resisted till he breathed his last. But those who witnessed his death, like the centurion and his companions declared, “Truly this man was God’s Son” (Mt. 27:54). This recognition comes from those who executed his death sentence.

On the cross, Jesus conquers the evil force that seeks to annihilate what is good in this world. His act of sacrifice reveals what holds both his human and divine natures together: love. A *skandalon* fails to capture this essence because a humble God shifts and redefines power. Jesus’ humble and nonviolent ways are active resistance to power that obstructs and divides the people from acting on their own will and God’s. It is in this context where Jesus’ declaration that he comes “not to bring peace, but division” could be understood. The presence of the instigator still remains to sow discord among the people. Thus Jesus shows how this could be resisted and overcome.

His whole passion is geared toward revealing the Father’s salvific and gratuitous love to all of humankind in this world, the sun shines to both the just and the

unjust. Jesus manifests his Sonship by responding to God's love and embracing his life even in the face of great injustice and suffering. This is what Girard sees as the marked departure of Christ Gospels from all the mythic tales of religion.⁵⁴ Jesus owns his narrative from beginning to end. The authority of his teachings on nonviolent resistance and love comes from his own integrity as the Son. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt. 5:9). Jesus has closely interwoven his Sonship with the Father because the Creator becomes the created partaking in the mortality of the creatures. This is an uneven exchange lopsidedly in favor of the mortals which ancient Israel has long recognized, "What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him?" (Ps. 8:5). Again in Matthew, the evangelist presents Jesus as the goal to which Israel's history pointed⁵⁵ but as a Messiah, Jesus also belongs to all peoples. In this context, Jesus is the fulcrum of history, he is very much connected with the heritage of Israel as he is with other peoples, including the Gentiles who walked with him, and those others who follow him in succeeding generations.⁵⁶ The Gospel of John (1:1-14) would even bring this further by proclaiming that Jesus, the Word, is in the beginning with God. And Jesus shows what God's love and power is about as he embodies It. This is the God who subjected the God's Self to human rule so God can show the people what it is like to rule as God, on the cross. Jesus himself declares, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Mt. 5:17),

⁵⁴ Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 126.

⁵⁵ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 77.

⁵⁶ Donald Senior, "Direction in Matthean Studies," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdsman Publishing Company, 2001), 29.

making it explicit that to follow his way is the new rule as it is the fulfillment of God's law. This is where Jesus subverts the violent mechanism of the instigator and brings the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures into one seamless whole. And here Girard contends that the Gospels expel the scapegoat mechanism and the violence attendant to it.

The interest of the Gospels lies in the future offered mankind by this revelation, the end of Satan's mechanism. The good news is that scapegoats can no longer save men, the persecutors' accounts of their persecutions are no longer valid, and truth shines into dark places. God is not violent, the true God has nothing to do with violence, and he speaks to us not through distant intermediaries but directly. The Son he sends us is one with him. The Kingdom of God is at hand.⁵⁷

It is through his power that Jesus himself shows how mimetic contagion could be tackled. He has to come to terms with himself as the beloved Son of God, before he sets out in his mission and chooses his companions. Like the people of Israel who continually discern their covenantal relationship with YHWH and eventually embrace their identity as YHWH's people,⁵⁸ Jesus goes through the same process of claiming his origin as the Son of God. And united in his Father's love, Jesus' power uplifts the lowly, enriches the poor, glorifies the humble, and resurrects the dead. To be filled with this kind of power entails turning toward God, or a conversion. Hatred and vainglory resulting to idolatry

⁵⁷ Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 189.

⁵⁸ See Walter Brueggemann, "Scripture: Old Testament," in Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 8.

are the conditions that Girard consistently mentions in his scapegoat mechanism and mimetic theory. To turn toward God, to freely choose God as a model - is to resist the temptation of a *skandalon* to usurp God's power to one's end.

This violence wrought by idolatry, as the consummate expression of mimetic desire, could be countered when we bear witness to God's gratuitous love. Our Christian moral and public life portrays the story that is closest to our hearts, and our action flows from this experience. A constructive move on political theology builds upon the narrative of the nearness of God, Emmanuel, a God who is with us (Mt. 1:23). This is where I bring Walter Wink into the frame to unpack power: of the good that ordains it and the evil that corrupts it.

Walter Wink: Engaging the Powers⁵⁹

From this Girardian theory of mimetic desire as the incubator of violence through scapegoating, I bring in Wink who unpacks the source of violence in the exercise of power and the evil that sustains it.

For both Girard and Wink, the satanic structures—structures borne out of generalized imitation of pursuits and models that shape self glorification or produce violence to humans—need to be unveiled, exposed, and unmasked in order to continue and uphold the Reign of God already inaugurated by Jesus. From the inward movement toward God, the response is always the movement toward the world, not apart from it. And this framework radically departs from Augustine's view of the world. This is where St. Bonaventurian becomes

⁵⁹ Drawn from the title of Walter Wink's book, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992).

relevant. The human person, according to Bonaventure, embraces the world and does not flee from it, in order to be drawn to its source: God.⁶⁰ In this sense, Wink's framework could provide a way where the one who truly desires God could counter, together with the faithful community, the institutional powers that are founded on mimetic desire where self glorification and idolatry are deeply entrenched. There could be other frameworks where Girard's anthropologic view of mimetic desire could be housed. But for the purpose of this paper, Wink's framework is chosen as it too touches upon idolatry and satanic structures that prop powers toward acts of violence and injustice. Nonviolence and the unmasking of idolatry are two crucial points raised by Girard in his mimetic theory.

Wink provides a theological framework to understand the nature of power and anchors it on the theological themes of the good, the fallen, and the redeemed.⁶¹ This framework does not make evil absolute but rather views it from the fallen nature of systems created and designed to address human needs, that include religious, economic, educational, social, and political institutions. Wink sees evil as not just personal but structural and spiritual as well; and regards it as systemic where no human individual has full control of its consequences.⁶² This hews closely to what Bonaventure posits that the human person "having fallen and lying on the ground needs a helping hand to raise" him/her up.⁶³ From this perspective, Wink form-

⁶⁰ Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 101.

⁶¹ Walter Wink, "Identifying the Powers," in *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Theology*, eds. William T. Cavanaugh, J.W. Bailey, and C. Hovey (Michigan USA/Cambridge, U.K: Wm Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 364.

⁶² Wink, "Identifying the Powers," 364.

⁶³ Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 101.

ulates a theological framework that regards: Powers are good; Powers are fallen; Powers must be redeemed.⁶⁴ He expounds that they are good insofar as they are created to serve the “humanizing purposes of God;” they are fallen when they look after their own interests at the expense of the others; but they can be redeemed because “what fell in time can be redeemed in time.”⁶⁵ The tensions inherent in these three conditions are held all at once to resist the temptation of demonizing those who do evil. This is the foundation of Wink’s nonviolent resistance to evil—also avoiding mimetic violence. Powers are there with a God-given purpose but this could be thwarted when Powers usurp or arrogate to themselves what is good, exploiting others in the process, something that is learned or imitated by humans as they follow the structured ways of thinking or are embedded in ordered, arranged, or classified environments. But exploitative and oppressive environments wrought by Powers are not without hope because what falls can rise again.⁶⁶

Power in the biblical world is both invisible and visible contained in the language of the demons, spirits, and the angels and performed by the rulers, kings, and priests. In modern times however, the spirit that animates every institution or corporation is no longer supernatural but one that imbues and permeates the language of the corporate culture or contained in the institutional vision, mission, and goals. The theological and spiritual challenge is how to discern whether these institutions are fulfilling their God-given vocation or simply imitating the common frenetic pursuit of capitals⁶⁷ or the bottom line. By identifying their

⁶⁴ Wink, “Identifying the Powers,” 365.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ See, Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in J.

idolatrous acts (those that pervert the purposes of God) we could unmask them and recall their powers to go back to their divine vocation of serving the highest good. Thus for Wink, the task of unmasking and recalling the powers to serve what is good falls on the church, the *ekklesia* or assembly. This is to say that any attempt to transform power would involve the collective efforts of communities where forms of solidarity and not rivalry and mimetic competition would prevail. This finds echo in James M. Gustafson's *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker* where he emphasizes that the humankind's common life or community is where God sustains human existence in the world.⁶⁸

In Wink's theological framework, while we acknowledge the presence of God in each person and human community or the world, we also cannot deny the existence of structures that create a hostile environment to human lives. Powers could corrupt, pervert, and distort the purposes to which they are ordained. But they too are in need of "God's creative, ordering and redeeming presence. They are constantly in need of prophetic criticism and reformation; indeed, they also await the full redemption that is to come."⁶⁹ By recognizing power in its goodness, in its corrupt state, and its need for redemption, we could resist evil nonviolently because we do not destroy something that is good nor eliminate a system that could be restored.

By identifying and unmasking power when it obstructs the flourishing of the good, we could avoid reverting to the scapegoat mechanism. Bringing back Girard into this frame, we could reread the persecution

Richardson, ed., *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

⁶⁸ James M. Gustafson, *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker* (Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1970), 68.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

of Jesus in the Bible by looking at it from the notion of mimetic contagion. Here Girard posits that those who persecute do not realize that they influence one another mimetically, but this ignorance does not cancel their responsibility, it only lessens it. This is where we could gain a deeper appreciation of Jesus' utterance on the cross, "Father, forgive them," Jesus cries, "for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).⁷⁰ By confronting power and opening our eyes to our complicity to mimetic violence, Wink and Girard offer us a pathway toward resisting evil and redeeming "Satanic" structures that could obstruct the way toward God.

The theological-anthropological view of Girard allows us to go deep into our resources and identify our own personal "satanic" structures that create idols that either incite or contribute to violence. Being conscious of our own idols we could curb the mimetic contagion in the world already reeling from its own destructive desires.

Wink's framework, on the other hand, gives us a space to forgive our own failings and work together to restore what have been corrupted and perverted because we have a theological view of a God that is good and One who unites what is good in us through the love shown by Jesus on the cross. The nonviolent resistance is both personal and communal because the violence that we confront has been embedded in our political structures. These structures have been blinded by a *skandalon*, obstructing the power that is God's. The mischief of this *skandalon* elicits desires that are not our own.

Girard and Wink reopen our eyes to this power and rekindle a desire for the good, a true desire for God. Theirs is a Gospel of Nonviolence that could counter the

⁷⁰ Girard, "Are the Gospels Mythical?," paragraph 15.

acts of violence committed in the name of religion, particularly in the Christian tradition. Both Girard and Wink do not deny the existence of Satan but they jolt our collective memories and remind us not to submit to its terms but to resist it according to the way of Jesus, “give the other cheek,” “walk another mile,” or simply put, “Don’t react violently against the one who is evil.”⁷¹

Other public theologians, like the 20th century American thinker and theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, could be very critical of principled nonviolence claiming that such an act is naïve and that it cannot be sustained in a sinful world.⁷² Niebuhr subscribes to Augustine’s notion of original sin and rationalizes the use of force in bringing about peace and justice. However, the world altering events of the 20th century like the World War II, the Cold War, the rise of communism, the threat of nuclear war, and Vietnam War, made him rethink his earlier positions on nonviolence and the use of force. Especially with the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war, Niebuhr developed a more nuanced view of the world that is no longer black or white, good or evil, virtuous or sinful.⁷³ In his book, *The Irony of American History*, Niebuhr posits that both virtues and vices are inextricably joined in us, and that “there is a hidden kinship between the vices of even the most vicious and the virtues of even the most upright.”⁷⁴ This is also what Wink is trying to present in: powers are good, powers are fallen, and powers are redeemed. This is the same

⁷¹ See, Walter Wink, “Jesus’ Third Way,” [https://cpt.org/files/BN-Jesus’ Third Way.pdf](https://cpt.org/files/BN-Jesus%20Third%20Way.pdf), accessed 22 October 2017.

⁷² Ira Chernus, *American Nonviolence: The History of an Idea* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 111-12

⁷³ See Paul Elie, “A Man for All Reasons,” *Atlantic Magazine*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/11/a-man-for-all-reasons/6337/2/>

⁷⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr. *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952), 147.

message that Jesus imparts to his followers in his parable on the wheat and the weeds (Mt. 13:24-30) where he counsels to let the wheat and the weeds grow together until the harvest, signaling that weeding out belongs to the Creator not to the creatures. The task is to continue to till the field, care for the crops, until the harvest. The power of the Creator is not equal to the power of the creatures although both have the capacity to do what they will.

The power of the Gospel lies on the witnesses of those who have walked Jesus' way, those who resist evil, and reveal God's mercy and love. The world is good. The world is fallen. The world is in need of redemption. To those who might question the realism of this Christian faith and political theology, we might refer them to Jesus' own realistic view of the world when he entrusted his mission to his disciples, "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves" (Mt. 10:16). And from an anthropological perspective, Girard insists that there is one desire worth having for our own sake, "The time has come for us to forgive one another."⁷⁵ Our mortal time is finite and so is the world that we inhabit. But all through this, God's mercy remains, "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20). This mercy is the only thing that can save the world from human arrogance, destructive desires, and frailties.

Conclusion

Mimetic desire that leads to violence could only be countered by desiring God whose presence and language is love, and whose ways are humble, just, and nonviolent as exemplified and lived by Jesus, the Son of

⁷⁵ Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 212.

God. The world is “replete with the power, wisdom, and goodness of God,”⁷⁶ thus powers need to be reoriented to this original source. Powers are good. Powers are fallen. Powers are in need of redemption. The task in political theology is to conform powers to the image of the Reign of God already inaugurated and proclaimed as good. Let it be. So be it.

⁷⁶ Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 101.

