

From the Editor

To train their candidates and members, seminaries and convents adopt carefully planned formation programs that serve their respective charisms. These programs are intensely put into operation during the initial stages of formation. As the candidates approach the perpetual-profession stage or ordination, the more formal formation could turn into an “on-the-job” training through apostolate or missionary work. Nevertheless, prior to their exposure to *formal* training, candidates have already embodied in themselves dispositions through the “silent,” but powerful, *informal* and common process of socio-cultural formation. The latter produces deeper and more ingrained qualities in the individual since this involves the sustained primary formation that starts early at home and further refined or adjusted in the neighborhood and other public spaces.

The formal and informal domains of formation and development would have their respective formators who may be referred to as the “more knowledgeable others” (MKO; Lev Vygotsky’s term for “a teacher, parent, or peer, with a higher skill set and helps a learner to understand things that s/he cannot acquire by one’s own abilities”). In a shared popular culture, the MKOs are the elders and, sometimes, one’s peers. (It is more complex in advanced societies since media celebrities, popular personalities, or a highly educated self’s insights and conscience could be regarded by many people as MKOs.) In convents, seminaries, or vocation formation houses, the MKOs are the novice masters, spiritual directors, or academic mentors. The MKOs, in turn, will have to rely on formation traditions or on masters of spiritualities, as well as take into account the wide-ranging influence of society and culture on

every person's bio-psychosocial development. Thus, the concept of formation cannot sidestep the informal or the more hidden and implicit aspects of human development.

The person's inner bio-psychological goings-on are difficult to fathom but important factors to consider in formation. This is shown in the article of Ferdinand D. Dagmang ("God-Talk as a Means of Healing: A Spiritual Rebirth Through Novel Writing and Auto-Analysis") who discusses how he dealt with trauma through novel writing and academic analysis. The novel writing afforded him the opportunity to re-experience and come to grips with a previously unconscious and largely untreated interior pain caused by various internal and external factors. The academic writing involved framing his personal history with the classic stories of Teresa de Ávila, Juan de la Cruz, and Thérèse de Lisieux. In the process of dealing with trauma, he was also able to affirm the abiding presence of the Divine Therapist. The article ends by acknowledging the salvific regard of Jesus whose own narrative of suffering may theologically chart other stories of suffering.

Ben Carlo N. Atim's work, "The Human Will in Meister Eckhart's Understanding of Deificatory Event," is about a certain recurrent issue in spirituality: the fate of the human will in the context of the deificatory event. He makes use of various authors (Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Heidegger, among others) to argue that the human will is not lost in the process and realization of deification.

In the article "The Monster Underneath: Subversion and Ignored Realities in Literature in the Age of Imposed Normalcy," Veniz Maja V. Guzman touches on some hidden socio-cultural elements that shape individuals. She discusses Michel Foucault's panopticon

and the functions of fairy tales and modern fiction in order to show how societies, in their effort to maintain or defend social formation and development, would define and produce their respective versions of who is normal and not-normal (the Other). This formative classification of individuals into normal and not-normal pre-empts and could upset carefully planned formation programs.

Ferdinand D. Dagmang

God-Talk as a Means of Healing: A Spiritual Rebirth Through Novel Writing and Auto-Analysis¹

Ferdinand D. Dagmang*

Abstract: In this article, I discuss how I dealt with various traumatic experiences through the processes of novel writing and academic analysis. The novel writing involved a process of re-experience where I was able to empathize with my previous self-in-quandary who needed the abiding presence of the creative Divine Therapist. The academic writing involved a realignment of personal history via the classic stories of Teresa de Ávila, Juan de la Cruz, and Thérèse de Lisieux and toward the salvific (soteriological) regard of Jesus whose own narrative of suffering may theologically chart other stories of suffering.

Keywords: trauma, self-expression, creative non-fiction, Divine Therapist, healing, spirituality

Introduction

*Candlelights*² is a novel based on my experiences in

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¹ This article was published in *Journal of Dharma* 37/3 (July-September 2012): 325-338; reprinted here with kind permission from the publisher.

² The novel appears under my pen name Karla H. Marco, *Candlelights: Memories of a Former Religious Brother Seminarian* (Quezon City: Central Books, 2012). The first companion work of the novel *Candlelights* is my published article: "Ecological Way of Understanding and Explaining Clergy Sexual Misconduct," *Sexuality & Culture* 16 (2012): 287–305; or *Sexuality & Culture* (19 November 2011): 1-19. doi:10.1007/s12119-011-9124-z. The second is this

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a monastic setting, including my own reflections gained through the novel's writing process. The experience/re-experience of trauma (and its 'domestication') is one major element of the novel which served 1) as the *central motif* in the way I gave flesh to my own character, Kari, the protagonist, 2) as a *driving force* for the simple acts of making myself disposed to and in constant communion with the Divine, and 3) as a *main strand* that links together the following: (a) my past and present life, (b) the religious life which has a long contemplative tradition and a mystical approach to experiences of trauma, (c) the Transcendent as object of my personal quest, and (d) the potential readers and myself as the novel's central character.

As a spiritual memoir, it is a composition offered in the form of self-examination/auto-analysis and a presentation of my struggles to God. This present article is a meta-analysis, through which further disclosures and discoveries of truths have become possible. The talk about the whole experience of religious life, communication through the novel and this present work serve to present a more integrated presentation of God-talk through spiritual rebirth.

The Novel's Plot

Kari, the protagonist, initiates a journey, a quest, in response to a perceived calling to monastic life. After a tense 'farewell' scene with his parents, he brought himself, warts and all, to the Trappist Monastery in Jordan, Guimaras, Philippines, where a devastating but self-revealing experience forced him to face his own demons. The inner forces that vehemently intruded into his mind and body pushed him to backtrack and return

present study that dwells on the use of the novel as a form of communication of a psycho-spiritual quest.

home, after only three days of stay in the Trappist's guest house. This is his first encounter with the hidden forces which were lurking inside him. The experience of separation, isolation, exterior silence, and helplessness triggered the surfacing of involuntary memories/forces previously hidden from his awareness.³

Three months after the Guimaras Trappist monastery fiasco – months of waiting and discernment – he applied and was accepted as a postulant of the Candlelights, a religious congregation which adopts the contemplative tradition based on the teachings and examples of the three great saints Teresa de Ávila, Juan de la Cruz, and Thérèse de Lisieux. After six months of postulancy, he was confirmed as a novice. He took his first temporary religious vows after a year of novitiate and renewed this four more times until his voluntary exit from the congregation.

Inside the Candlelights, Kari faced not only his own fragility/infirmities but also the failings of other monks whose behavior went against the monastery's ideals and traditions. Mediocrity and misconduct committed by several of his confreres shook Kari's already traumatized mind. The presence of inner-world and

³Berntsen wrote about involuntary autobiographical memories that help “to keep our temporal horizon wide. Through such memories, past events are rehearsed and maintained with little cognitive effort. Involuntary memories automatically make us aware of the fact that our life extends way back into the past and probably a great distance into the future as well. They tap us on the shoulder and remind us that we should adjust our present behavior accordingly.” Dorthe Berntsen, *Involuntary Autobiographical Memories: An Introduction to the Unbidden Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

This is also referred to in the article of Spence as passive memory. Donald P. Spence, “Passive Remembering.” In Ulric Neisser and Eugene Winograd eds., *Remembering Reconsidered: Ecological and Traditional Approaches to the Study of Memory*, pp. 311–25 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

outer-world contradictions further disturbed Kari's almost heroic efforts to conquer self. Eventually, he decided to leave the Candlelights. His departure from Candlelights did not, however, point to the defeat of Kari's goal. It rather provided a contrast to the downspiralling movement of the Candlelights as it was being pulled down by the irrational behavior of many of its members. While the Candlelights is stifled by humanity's perverse and middling efforts to face religious life's formidable challenges, Kari's exit testified to a growth in personal capacity which becomes a sign of hope in his prospect of bouncing back in future quests. Moreover, Kari's exit did not diminish the meaning of his conquest of self and determination to further pursue self and God. The story also gives an account of how a deep personal commitment to the Christian interior life may thrive if the appropriate support or conditions are available. Kari gained a renewed sense of self and reality after having listened to God's re-creative presence through his own quest and suffering. Kari's return to his parents' home provided the plot's final moments.

Kari's Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Kari became a member of the religious congregation better known for its three saints who have personally struggled with their respective traumas in their journey toward spiritual maturity and divine intimacy – all their writings reflect the harsh sufferings they endured in life.⁴ The novel reveals Kari as psychologically

⁴St. John of the Cross was incarcerated for 9 months inside a cubicle just large enough to fit his body plus he was subjected to public lashing before his Carmelite community. It was during this time when he completed a large portion of his most famous poem,

traumatized but his determination to lead a contemplative prayer-life brought him closer to God and, thus, healing, spiritual growth, and transformation.

The first seven chapters of the novel present Kari's traumatized (and trauma-disposed) state, that is, he suffered from some sort of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁵ In the novel, under the pen name of Karla H. Marco, I gave the reader some insights about my/Kari's condition:

1) The first sign of the presence of PTSD in Kari was his characteristic hyper-aroused reactions against his parents who failed to support him in his ambition to pursue a career in music (3-29).

2) Next is his extreme reaction to a 'desert' environment after his separation from his family and his girlfriend. The symptoms of PTSD showed during his brief stay in the Trappist monastery's guest house in Guimaras (42-51).

A prolonged version of the Guimaras episode was replayed in the Candlelights monastery; but this time Kari, as a postulant, was determined to continue the pursuit of religious life and face his turbulent self too. After three days without sleep and months of interiorized experience of terror, he finally gained a different sense of self (see section on 'The

Spiritual Canticle.

Sta. Teresa de Ávila suffered from malaria for a long period without the benefit of modern-day anti-malaria medications.

Descouvemont reports that after feeling abandoned by her elder sister/surrogate mother who entered the monastery, St. Thérèse de Lisieux, whose mother died when she was four and half years old, suffered from nervous tremors and "reacts to an emotional frustration with a neurotic attack." Pierre Descouvemont, *Therese and Lisieux*, photos by Helmuth Nils Loose (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 53.

⁵Discussed below; see Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Contemplative Way,' below). What happened was that despite the storm and stress, Kari still could live more or less as expected from him by the congregation. More importantly, he listened to the three great saints and followed their contemplative forms of prayer; he did not lose sight of his goal – never gave up hope as he constantly invoked the Divine despite his plunge into his own version of chaos and dark night (56-112).

3) A more common experience of trauma is revealed in Kari's reaction to the earthquake that struck on August 2, 1968 at a magnitude of 7.3 on the Richter scale (19-20) and brought down Manila's Ruby Tower.

The succeeding chapters of *Candlelights* present other episodes where Kari's staying capacity and tolerance were further challenged by more shocks and unexpected discoveries inside the monastery – new episodes are juxtaposed with older/previous traumatic experiences that further show why Kari is extremely vulnerable to shocking events (107-110; 171-174). Other trauma-inducing episodes, some 'minor,' others 'major,' further occupied the pages of *Candlelights* (203-204, 198-202, 245-250).

PTSD Clarified

The American Psychiatric Association's fourth edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) has the following diagnostic criteria for PTSD:

A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present: (1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Note: In children, this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.

B. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one (or more) of the following ways: (1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. Note: In young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed. (2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event. Note: In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognizable content. (3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated). Note: In young children, trauma-specific re-enactment may occur. (4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event (5) physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following: (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma (3) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities (5) feeling of detachment or estrangement from others (6) restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings) (7) sense of a foreshortened future (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span).

D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following: (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep (2) irritability or outbursts of anger (3) difficulty concentrating (4) hypervigilance (5) exaggerated startle response.

E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D) is more than 1 month.

F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

The *cause* of Kari's suffering/s (Criterion A,1, above) whose symptoms resemble those of DSM's PTSD (Criteria D, E, and F) is not easy to determine. He has no remembrance/recall of any act of abuse or external traumatic experience before the 1968 earthquake; yet his re-experienced fears in Guimaras or the early months in Candlelights do not seem to have any link to the earthquake event. In fact, even before the earthquake episode, the 13-year old Kari already exhibited signs of hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal (cf. reference to his sufferings from a serious case of skin allergy and chronic asthma). In other words, he was already a trauma-stricken Kari even before the traumatic Ruby Tower episode—that is, even without the recalling of any event, Kari's memory (brain/brain function) had already been injured. What caused these signs of woundedness in Kari's character? Clearly, DSM's diagnostic criteria must be informed by other explanations especially those from recent researches in the biopsychosocial approaches to health and epigenetics. Without those explanations, DSM-IV remains blind.

The following lines from *Candlelights* may help us piece together the Kari puzzle:

Kari's departure brought them [parents] back to their earliest memories of Kari the infant who suffered much from allergies and milk intolerance – they had to feed him (belatedly) with a special hypoallergenic infant formula called Nutramigen. Researchers today have discovered that allergy to casein in cow's milk (and to gluten in wheat) bring about gastro-intestinal inflammation that allowed enzymes, partially undigested proteins, and toxins to

escape from the gut; these enter into the bloodstream and could reach the brain, producing neurological inflammations and negative effects on a child's mood, disposition, and personality ... Partially undigested proteins, called peptides, resemble opiates and have an effect much like morphine or heroin in the brain and nervous system. Long-term exposure to these opiate peptides can impair a developing brain and also affect behavior (9-10).

If we categorize Kari's hyperarousal and hypervigilance as exaggerated reactions and hypersensitivity to situations similar to the 'original experience,' there is no original *external* (observable) traumatic experience to talk about, except if we regard his chronic exposure to allergens (casein and gluten) as the original, but *internal* (invisible), traumatizing event, explaining the PTSD in Kari. Without any other original cause to talk about, toxins and enzymes reaching and inflaming his brain would be the most plausible explanation for Kari's wounds which also showed signs in his chronic asthmatic attacks, inability to concentrate (reading a page of a book 4-5 times before he could absorb what the author is saying) and his manic-depressive behavior (recurring 'highs and lows' episodes). This way of judging Kari's underlying troubles is not really the concern of mainstream diagnosis (which would say: "Diagnosis is based on behavior, not cause or mechanism.") or part of DSM's criteria (unless this is seriously considered in the DSM-V consultation process⁶); but more and more medical and psychiatric practitioners are already moving toward this state-of-the-art knowledge which always emphasizes on the etiology and epidemiology, or, better still, the genealogy and ecology of diseases—incorporating the 'deep

⁶See John E. Helzer, et al., eds, *Dimensional Approaches in Diagnostic Classification: Refining the Research Agenda for DSM-V* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2008).

diagnosis' of various systems, structures, apparatuses, and mechanisms including worldview, discourses, morality, doctrines, and the like, in the understanding of ailments especially the ones we call environmental illnesses.⁷

One of my daughters (a Fine Arts student) suffers from psoriasis – another condition resulting from an allergy-induced gastro-intestinal inflammation that causes the 'leaky gut' syndrome. When she was born, she was denied of breast-milk because her mother was ill. She was fed with non-hypoallergenic infant formula (market pushed; in fact, in some hospitals milk products are offered by manufacturers as 'gifts' [a Trojan horse] to the nursing mother) which afterwards produced in her extraordinary signs of reactive stress or anxiety: she would cry for hours until she falls asleep and when she wakes up she would be crying again even after her

⁷See Ferdinand D. Dagmang, *The Predicaments of Intimacy and Solidarity: Capitalism and Impingements* (Quezon City: Central Books, 2010), esp. Chapter I.

Cf. the case of Ernest Hemingway who suffered from hemochromatosis – the inability to metabolize iron, thus, the iron overload in the body. He was diagnosed with the disease which he and his siblings may have inherited from their father who committed suicide. James R. Mellow, *Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 367; Rose Marie Burwell, *Hemingway: The Postwar Years and the Posthumous Novels* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 189. The undigested element caused 'wounds' to the brain and body resulting in mental and physical deterioration. His sister and brother also committed suicide. Charles M. Oliver, *Ernest Hemingway A to Z: The Essential Reference to the Life and Work* (New York: Checkmark, 1999), 139–149.

See also Susan M. Gasser and En Li, eds., *Epigenetics and Disease: Pharmaceutical Opportunities* (Basel: Springer, 2011); Alexander G. Haslberger, ed. and Sabine Gressler, co-ed, *Epigenetics and Human Health* (Weinheim: WILEY-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co., 2010); W. Doerfler and P. Böhm, eds., *DNA Methylation: Basic Mechanisms* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2006).

meal. The formula milk was never suspected as the culprit. She was merely judged as an infant 'difficult' to please when actually she was allergic to cow's milk and, later, to wheat products. Her psoriasis was diagnosed when she was about 12 years old. Dermatologists were unable to treat her psoriasis until I did my own research on the ailment. Along the way, I discovered that cases of autism/ADHD were low in the 1960's (1 in 2,000-2500 children; another study in 1970 puts it at 1 in 10,000) but turned into an epidemic today, 1 in 166 children⁸ (some report that 1 in 50 children are born with autism) on the spectrum.⁹ I was able to verify similar patterns of increase in the incidence of cases of asthma, eczema, psoriasis, arthritis, lupus, and the like – the problem here is allergy; the primary mechanisms are allergens in food and other toxic elements that escape through the inflamed gut and dispersed throughout the person's whole body, producing inflammation in various organs, including the brain.¹⁰ I found out that people who suffer

⁸Cf. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6947652/ns/health-mental_health/t/autism-cases-soar-search-clues/ accessed 22 Sept. 2011.

⁹Psychiatrists have developed a systematic way of describing autism and related conditions which are placed within a group of conditions called pervasive development disorders (PDD). Within PDDs, the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) category includes: autistic disorder, pervasive development disorder—not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), Asperger's syndrome. Other conditions share symptoms with PDDs and ASDs. These conditions include Rett syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder. See, <http://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/history-of-autism/> accessed 21 Sept. 2011.

¹⁰For the biopsychosocial explanations of allergy and the like, see Brian Jepson, *Changing the Course of Autism: A Scientific Approach for Parents and Physicians* (Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications, 2007); see also Leeann Whiffen, *A Child's Journey Out of Autism: One Family's Story of Living in Hope and Finding a Cure* (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009).

See also Ruby Pawankar, Stephen T. Holgate, and Lanny J. Rosenwasser, eds. *Allergy Frontiers: Epigenetics, Allergens and Risk*

from food allergy (processed food from the grocery/market) would be first affected in their gastro-intestinal tract (causing inflammation), which is not possible to observe unless seen through an endoscopic gastro-intestinal probe. Enzymes, partially undigested proteins, and toxins would escape from the inflamed and thus enlarged pores of the intestinal lining. These would affect (inflamm and impair) different organs of the body causing ailments or combination of ailments like arthritis, lupus, eczema or psoriasis, and autism. Such diseases are engendered by foods that produce factors that seep through the person's leaky gut, thus inflaming or debilitating a person's brain/brain parts, kidney, lungs, skin, bone marrow, etc. — *making autism, AD/HD, psoriasis, arthritis, glomerulonephritis, lupus, asthma, etc., environmental illnesses* (this explanation, of course, takes into account the presence of a genetic *predisposition* [not genetic mental defect] to allergies).¹¹

Factors, vol. 1 (Tokyo/New York: Springer, 2009); Idem, *Allergy Frontiers: Classification and Pathomechanisms*, vol. 2 (Tokyo/New York: Springer, 2009); Idem. *Allergy Frontiers: Clinical Manifestations*, vol. 3 (Tokyo/New York: Springer, 2009); Idem, *Allergy Frontiers: Diagnosis and Health Economics*, vol. 4 (Tokyo/New York: Springer, 2009).

¹¹“The molecular structure of partially undigested proteins, called peptides, resembles opiates. These peptides have an effect much like opiates (i.e., morphine, heroin) in the brain and nervous system. Long-term exposure to these opiate peptides can have many damaging effects on the developing brain and also affects behavior, just as any narcotic would. The opioid peptides involved are identified as casomorphines from casein, and gluten exorphines and gliadorphin from gluten. Children with Aspergers [an autism spectrum disorder] usually have gastrointestinal problems (e.g., reflux, constipation, diarrhea, vomiting, hiccups, etc.). Proteins found in wheat, rye, oats, barley and dairy products (gluten and casein) aren't completely broken down in the Aspergers child's digestion process. These undigested proteins can leak into the bloodstream, potentially interfering with neurological processes by having an opiate-like effect upon their systems. These undigested

My daughter's psoriasis is now under control for as long as she avoids intake of foods that cause gastro-intestinal inflammation (mainly wheat [cf. gluten and Celiac sprue disease¹²] and milk products [cf. casein]). This knowledge about my daughter's case has, today, mediated my understanding about my PTSD. In the monastery, more than 30 years ago, all that I could do was to present my incomprehensible bio-psychological trauma and its excruciating signs to God.

Writing the Novel: Communicating the Human-Divine Encounter

Trauma has been captured in its details by prose in *Candlelights*. PTSD-rooted pain and emotions took form with the narration, meshed into scenarios, knotted by events, entangled in interactions—objectifying them so that they may be offered vividly to every reader for appreciation or for a more palpable examination. The Divine Presence is in every page. In fact, by painfully incising myself with the novel's language, I have exposed my memories and revealed my own soul thirsting for God. I have consciously owned and appropriated the novel as an art that profoundly disembowels and communicates. I have done this with conviction and interest, in order to communicate not only suffering but also my eventual re-creation and

proteins (peptides) can reach toxic levels, with the youngster seeming to 'crave' milk and wheat products." <http://www.myaspergerschild.com/2011/02/gluten-free-casein-free-diet-does-it.html/> accessed 21 Sept. 2011.

¹²This has even become an issue in religion, in the case of ritual communion in Eucharistic Celebrations. See, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/resources-for-the-eucharist/distribution-of-communion/celiac-sprue-disease.cfm> and http://www.usccb.org/search.cfm?site=newusccb&proxystylesheet=newusccb_frontend&q=use+of+mustum.

redemption.

Candlelights is a piece of literary work crafted according to the mould of the novel as a creative expression of deep and strong emotions – not propositions or explanations of some sort.¹³ Although one may find plenty of didacticism in *Candlelights*, the novel does not dwell on the need to teach or inform. The didactic insertions still serve to communicate the profundity of trauma, its various facets in the character of the protagonist, and God's Presence pervading my mind and body.

Accounts of traumatic/traumatizing events are vital to the novel's composition of a bigger life-story and these serve as the gates that have brought me into my own depths and hopefully the same gates that would open up and lead readers into Kari's more profound experiences with the Divine. An examination of his trauma-traversed life would thus allow readers to gain entrance into Kari's past and the way this past has shaped his faith, his character, and outlook in life. With the composition's reliance on the centrality of traumatic/traumatizing events and their effects on Kari, readers are given substantial means by which they could build their understanding about what the novel may communicate to them.

Candlelights comes out of the depths of memory, *de profundis*. My memory became the capital of my art; it will be seen that this memory is also the storehouse of my faith. Readers, too, are invited to plumb their depths as they would accompany me who communicates, through Kari, my quest for self and God.¹⁴

¹³See Jane Smiley, *13 Ways of Looking at the Novel* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) and Joan Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007).

¹⁴Pain and trauma occupy a large area in the Filipino literary

The novel's composition of details did serve to show a biography filled with pain and troubles. But the same artful composition also served to announce the more creative power of God's grace, transcending the original experience and overcoming my handicaps.

The novel may project a well-planned structure but it is really a work that did not follow a ready-made neat outline. It has gradually taken its definitive form as I organized and improved it based on my own recollections-revelations-narratives that progressively tackled my trauma's genealogy and ecology – a formidable task which could be characterized as one involving after-experience multi-layered 'analytic management' (a post-factum analysis) of a once partially hidden/partially exposed disorder. Deeper layers of my own character were opaque to me when I started composing the novel, but these gradually became more visible (less opaque) as I struggled to accompany myself in the searing progressive self-disclosing narration of traumatizing experiences and their biographical truths.¹⁵ In other words, an invisible story of psychological trauma's re-experience and transformation (story 3; my story not visible to the reader)¹⁶ developed side-by-side the progressive narration-in-

spaces: *Noli me tangere*, *Satanas sa Lupa*, *Insiang*, *Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag*, *Slave of Destiny: Maria Rosa Henson Case*, etc. Although these works are not imbued with faith accounts, they are full of narratives that bring back painful memories into present consciousness – not only for personal but for collective consciousness as well.

¹⁵Levine writes: "In *Being and Time*, truth is understood not in the Platonic sense of *mimesis*, correspondence to a pre-existing reality, but as *aletheia*, the remembering or uncovering of what is hidden and needs to be brought into the open to be seen." Stephen K. Levine, *Trauma, Tragedy, Therapy: The Arts and Human Suffering* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009), 31.

¹⁶As clarified in section 4, above.

fiction (story 2; process of story-telling)¹⁷ of traumatizing events, character development, divine enlightenment, sanctifying healing, and life transformation (story 1; what is being narrated in the novel). This current article (story 4; a story of analysis of stories 1-3) is an abstraction that has brought my whole experience into another stage of organization, self-analysis, and spiritual God-talk. Such stories are themselves composed of various elements and levels of discoveries and unanticipated insights into my own 'secrets.' As narrations after narration followed, disclosures after disclosures from deeper sources unexpectedly surfaced outside my plans. The whole exercise of novel-making plus analysis is like a process of uncovering of the various aspects of the self nested inside another deeply nested aspect (like a matryoshka or babushka doll) previously unknown/hidden (thus untamed/undomesticated) to my own awareness.

While writing the novel I was, however, beset with difficulties as I must muster composure, patience, focus, and courage if I should communicate my constantly agitated psyche – the aspect of my life that will drive me through a spiritual quest that starts and ends at home. The question, however, is this: if my psyche is troubled, how will I be able to name it when it is by way of my

¹⁷It took me approximately four-and-a-half years to complete the novel. All along, by actively unearthing my past, I would access details that made me re-experience powerful emotions that resembled the original *Sturm und Drang*. Slowly, in stress and anxiety, I would recall and, thus, narrate the details of traumatizing scenarios; and what is generally understood as inaccessible to active recall was made available by allowing numerous moments of passive remembering to take over – something that was plentiful once I allowed those painful memories to surface and not be too mindful about re-living the stress that such remembering would impose on me. This was possible only in a prayerful disposition, in the company of God.

troubled mind that I must try to give a name and put a handle to my troubles? The cognitive capacity to organize and communicate the self is handicapped in this instance; how then must I be able to compose my novel which is about a self hampered by trauma when that trauma itself constantly causes my mind to fall apart?

How can one domesticate something that has been traditionally conceived as ego shattering, overwhelming, unsettling, or paralyzing¹⁸ and thus disrupts reflective functioning or, in some cases, even nearly wipes out the ability to think? To domesticate trauma means to be able to have control over untamed aspects of the self; but the overwhelming experience of trauma suggests the inability of consciousness to retrieve this significantly 'wild' and 'terrifying' part of its content. How can consciousness, not being in its normal state, run after the cause of its fall when it is actually tending to run away from it? And trauma not being available to the mind cannot be available for domestication. Trauma, being an event that brings about dissociation, cannot just appeal to consciousness and suggest to it to catch and tame that which will always prevent it from functioning normally. How can one catch and tame something that incapacitates the ability to catch and tame?

It is probably a similar question that seeks answer from a wounded healer: How can you prepare a cure when you yourself are not in good shape? Or in less

¹⁸Christianson and Safer refers to some of trauma's effects as "conversion reactions, where the patient exhibits physiological/sensorimotor symptoms (e.g., paralysis, numbness) without any organic basis for the symptoms." Sven-Åke Christianson and Martin A. Safer, "Emotional Events and Emotions in Autobiographical Memories," in David C. Rubin, ed., *Remembering our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory*, pp. 218-243 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 220.

poetic instance: How can an insane prove his insanity? This may remind us about *Catch 22*, but in *Candlelights* I did not intend to escape from my task even if trauma/PTSD puts extreme demands on the memory and its representation.¹⁹

In tasking myself to recreate a past for my novel, I am confronted by the difficulty of retrieving that which is not open to voluntary active recall, because 1) recalling it arouses the pain of remembrance thus exposing my mind to unrest and 2) many of these memories are involuntary and these became available only in 'right/desirable amount' when I am not busy and occupied. The pain, in the first place, signals to the psyche to refrain from voluntary recall; second, the pain signals to the body to flee from the intruding passions – such are signals that command avoidance, more than acceptance, of involuntary and troubling memories precisely because they are not easy to bear or accept since they are not features of one's life schema or they do not form part of one's goal-directed behavior. Voluntary *active* recall is also not possible because memories hidden in my depths are precisely hidden from active consciousness. Of course, those hidden memories are available and accessible, but only when I am 'in the desert' where I am at 'rest,' free from the 'normal' world's routines, undirected by precise goals,

¹⁹According to Scaer, "Bringing these memories and feelings into consciousness, and providing a narrative verbal format for the experience, appears to be necessary to begin the process of integrating the memories into conscious experience, and presumably to inhibit the patient's cue-related arousal recycling. By learning to apply words to these terrible feelings and memories, the patient may begin to attain skills in containing and to some extent controlling them, and in relegating them to past experience rather than to an ongoing traumatic experience." Robert C. Scaer, *The Body Bears the Burden: Trauma, Dissociation, and Disease* (Binghamton, New York: The Haworth Medical Press, 2001), 160.

and before the Divine Presence that those ‘precious’ unbidden memories from my depths would surface – but, again, back to the turmoil.²⁰ It would seem that only the re-creative Divine presence could have made possible the sort-of ‘impossible’ plunge into the unknown, God-talk and spiritual rebirth.

To passively endure (with passive patience and long-suffering) and thus ‘perpetuate’ the blocking and sometimes anaesthetic effects of painful memories would not be promising for my intention to write *Candlelights* since I had to be actively receptive and perceptive (proactive) to the burdens of my past which shoot up like steams from the earth’s fiery sediments. I must anticipate what I could neither predict nor control, what I do not welcome, and actively grab it when accessible, even if painfully, and avoid the mistake of pushing it back to the unconscious or dissociated memory closet.

To make way for cognizance and narration, I decided to resolutely face and feel the pain that the disorder is causing me. I tried my monastic prayer style of ‘active vulnerability’²¹ as I considered this appropriate for a novel-writing that is significantly hinged on traumatic

²⁰ See Berntsen, the chapter on involuntary memories of traumatic events, 143-181.

²¹ Active vulnerability is also ‘vigilant vulnerability’ in the constant presence of God – a sustained intuitive reception and possession (a contemplation) of God’s presence and power – when the person constantly sensitizes oneself to a greater awareness of self and the Divine, especially in moments of sufferings where s/he must welcome (or even ‘seize’) pain, trauma, or any forms of distress as necessary ingredient in the persons’ crucible of purification toward self-knowledge, character development, or spiritual transformation. One must be convinced that trauma and pain could lead to one’s depths for as long as there is resolute determination and unfailing hope in God’s own time of healing and re-creation. This way of active vulnerability became a suitable way of retrieving from my depths autobiographical materials for my novel.

experiences. There and then, Divine re-creation was at its most profound presence in my depths.

I had to face and confront again my own demons or its residues to prepare myself for a writing engagement along with an analysis of my own PTSD. Through a progressive pro-active reception, the eventual face-off with the roots of my problem (through novel-writing) became a sustained episode of display/unveiling of the power of psychosomatic turmoil and my determination to actively receive and represent it. This display of and struggle with the effects of trauma, which happens on the level of composition, makes the whole novel-writing experience itself part of the long journey into my own depths, Divine company, and a constant discovery of what my depth has ‘allowed itself’ to disclose about myself and God. *Candlelights* is thus able to communicate only those materials that I have been able to retrieve and, with Divine assistance, domesticate – but this ‘limitation’ certainly has not failed in broadening and deepening my field of consciousness. Further plumbing into myself may require more journeys to my dark self. A sequel to *Candlelights* may help me toward more discoveries of truths and a profounder God-talk.

Naming the hidden pains (mediated by epigenetics [see section #4, above] and psychodynamic theories²²)

²²Recent discussions on trauma owe their insights from the pioneers of psychodynamic thinking about dissociation: Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud, Sándor Ferenczi, and William Ronald Dodds Fairbairn.

Howell adds: “Janet’s writings about hysteria, trauma, and dissociation spanned more than half a century, and he continually expanded on his concepts regarding the impact of dissociation on mental illness during that time. However, the key premise of his theory on trauma and dissociation is that when people are terrified or overwhelmed by extreme emotion, they are unable to assimilate the experience into already existing mental frameworks, and are

was probably the start of this face-off; but this exercise was definitely not a vacation in Boracay beach (or walk in the park). It was a difficult journey into a dark past that still painfully intrudes into the present and thus not easy to negotiate. Being able to remember and re-experience a troubled and troubling past makes one also suffer a different kind, another level, of pain, a present pain of remembrance that almost always brings the afflicted to worry about his future. Composing *Candlelights* thus involved the stressful dealing with trauma along the psychic and somatic axes of pain spanning across various periods in my life. God was a faithful company in my journey.

The Contemplative Way: Spiritual-Theological Reflections

In psychotherapy, the patient must be able to come to terms with his painful past or the past lodged in her already impaired and pained memory. Otherwise, she will be constantly besieged by the vehemence of its negative effects on her psyche and body. This process of ‘coming to terms’ entails a re-experience²³ of the

therefore unable to link the experience with the rest of personal history. Overwhelming terror or overwhelming ‘vehement emotion’ interrupts the coherence of experience; as a result, the synthesizing functions of the psyche fail. This is still the key premise of trauma theory today.” Elizabeth F. Howell, *The Dissociative Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 52.

²³van der Kolk adds: “Trauma, which we once defined as being external clearly leaves residues inside the human organism that need to be faced, processed, and reset. It is likely that this is possible only if the human organism is provided with experiences that approximate the original trauma, but that, instead of being overwhelming and leaving people in a state of inescapable shock and learned helplessness, provides them with pathways of concentrated action and sensations of mastery.” Bessel van der Kolk, “The Body Keeps the Score: Brief Autobiography of Bessel van der Kolk,” in

traumatic event in a more harmless setting and with the help of a professional therapist. There, the patient may narrate or re-live or re-create or recall, or dramatize, etc., her original experience while the therapist gives her support and guidance (sometimes affection, depending on the therapist's psychoanalytic approach) toward a gradual process of recognition, acceptance, organization, and integration of her suppressed or dissociated past into her life. This healing process normally takes a long time, which also depends on the disposition or capacity of the afflicted individual. The constancy of support (from her family and therapist or through contemplative prayer and spiritual direction) and the patient's determination is crucial to the healing process. Sometimes, even in the absence of a professional therapist, religion or faith and hope in a benevolent God would be enough to bring a patient to the road of recovery.

Kari did not have any therapist or receive any professional help equivalent to a psychiatric assistance. In fact, it was only when he entered the religious life that he realized he had a psychological problem needing some professional help.

Kari's help, he soon realized, was the Ultimate Therapist working powerfully despite his trauma. Kari's entrance into Candlelights was auspicious, considering his state of mind. Once he had set himself into the contemplative course and guided by the three great teachers of contemplative prayer, his postulancy and novitiate periods made him more aware of his troubled self and he headed toward a greater commitment to the contemplative way of dealing with it (see footnotes # 20 and # 23). Inside the monastery, in silence and aridity,

Charles R. Figley, ed., *Mapping Trauma and its Wake: Autobiographic Essays by Pioneer Trauma Scholars* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 225.

and depending on the hour of the day, Kari would experience the vehement rush of involuntary terror, depression, psychic chaos and the accompanying somatic tremors. In all of these involuntary visitations coming from an unknown cause, Kari never entertained any form of despair or loss of interest in anything he had set himself to achieve inside the Candlelights. Readings from the three great saints and especially their testimonies about their own sufferings which were stories resembling trauma and PTSD made Kari feel he was in the right institution to face his interior troubles. In fact, PTSD's symptoms, if translated in the writings of the saints, could be treated as 1) sufferings that one should 'ignore' like small flies buzzing around one's head while still concentrating on more important tasks (Sta. Teresa de Jesús would counsel her nuns to treat involuntary distractions as mere 'flies' that could not really disturb their communion with God.) or 2) the fire or the dark night that burns the Christian soul toward purity in hope, faith, and love (San Juan de la Cruz taught about contemplative prayer as a 'living flame' that burns one's impurities like a flame would consume the impurities in a soggy wood – eventually producing pure flame.).

Inside the Candlelights, where silence, absence of the usual remunerated industry, absence of the usual sources of distraction like TV, movies, or buddies, one would really be forced to become rested ('restless') and 'unproductive.' In an atmosphere of sustained silence and deprivation of diversions (food, drinks, sex, possessions, salary, freedom of movement, etc.), one is into an ideal setting for the rush of involuntary biographical memories. With the trouble that these brought to Kari's mind and body, the three Carmelite teachers of contemplation provided the necessary instructions: the 'dark night' process, the 'way of

perfection,’ and ‘the little child’s trust’ in God.²⁴ In a nutshell, no matter how Kari was besieged by the onslaught of psychological mutiny, hope in God and God’s abiding presence, with the corresponding devotion to monastic duty and community life provided him the ‘means’ for his dramatic struggle (which nobody suspected) and toward eventual healing. The contemplative way further broadened and deepened Kari’s road toward transformation.

Recreated from the Chaos of the Past: Theological Reflections

“Kari felt like a renewed creation – recreated by God from the chaos of the past.”²⁵ This is my resounding conclusion and conviction about how God’s surplus creative power has transformed me into a new person. It is also through this experience of God’s power that I come into a very deep and intimate knowledge of a personal and powerful creative Divine Therapist.

In my depths, trauma is overpowered by the creative presence of the Divine. In the monastery, I eventually learned that an active form of sustained vulnerability (‘vigilant vulnerability’ in the constant presence of God – a sustained intuitive reception and possession of God’s

²⁴The three great Carmelite saints were known for their forms of contemplative prayer. San Juan de la Cruz taught about the journey of the soul toward union with God as a ‘dark night’ journey – representing the hardships and difficulties that one encounters in the process. Sta. Teresa de Jesús taught recollection as a way of perfection – “where the soul collects together all the faculties and enters within itself to be with God.” St. Thérèse de Lisieux’s approach to communion with God is through her ‘little way’ – the way of a little child whose “prayer is a movement of the heart; it is a simple glance toward Heaven; it is a cry of gratitude and love in times of trial as well as in times of joy”.

²⁵Marco, *Candlelights*, 88.

presence and power) was necessary in order to face a reality that was not easy to handle and to welcome it by disposing myself like a malleable organism living steadily in a quiet, “non-productive, barren and useless” monastic desert. I did learn this art of vigilant vulnerability in the contemplative form of prayer, a form of constant receptivity and everyday-life response to the Divine Presence even as I was swamped by torrents of psychic and somatic storms and distress – intense forces that would discourage people from staying ‘passive.’ Mystics have a name for this –*via negativa*, the way of nothingness, the desert life, the dark night (Juan de la Cruz), prayer of quiet, recollection, devotion of union, and rapture (Teresa de Ávila), the little child’s ultimate trust (Thérèse de Lisieux). I have learned that I must continue to trust in God and lead my hope-filled life no matter what and how much vehemence is imposed on me by trauma and its effects, which I could never avoid as these are etched in my amygdalae²⁶ – the seat of trauma and anxiety and a ground of God’s creative-healing activity.

The *Candlelights* novel and this article on God-talk about spiritual rebirth helped me gain a deeper self-analysis, opening myself to the healing presence of a forgiving God – summoning my capacity for genuine reconciliation. Thus, *Candlelights* is not just about publishing and communicating a life-story; it is also a

²⁶Parts of the human brain that perform the primary role of storing and processing of memories associated with emotional events or experiences such as shocking, horrifying, or painful encounters or incidents. Traumatic experiences store negative images, agitating emotions, and confusing ideas in one’s memory and from there send their corresponding signals of pain and distress to the psyche and body of the traumatized person. It is also in one’s memory where traumatic experiences leave their undesirable effects. Because such traumatic experiences cause wounds or injury, memory may be said to suffer from impairment.

spiritual exercise that helped to develop in myself a deeper sense of solidarity with a Sin-soaked world and a greater sensitivity to the Divine mercy's gradual but sustained work in my own depths.²⁷ A merciful God is thus encountered not just as a God who forgives malicious intentions and actions, but as someone who understands and pours compassion on humans amidst the unintended negative consequences of their good intentions.

The communication process was also a work that involved freeing the truth from the trauma by setting up a world-in-text that revealed what was hidden in the otherwise unremembered memories. The novel recreated what was lacking in history; by the process of re-experience (as technique of transforming a hard-to-understand-and-difficult-to-accept-reality) I was able to empathize with my previous self-in-quandary who needed the abiding presence of the creative Divine Therapist. As a result, the technique involved an empathetic realignment of personal history via the classic stories of Teresa de Ávila, Juan de la Cruz, and Thérèse de Lisieux and toward a salvific (soteriological)

²⁷I wrote the following in 2007: "I resist at the prospect of walking unperturbed in a world secured mainly by pillars of polite lies – as if they are necessary; as if securing them means virtue. That is why I have unloaded some recollections, no matter how distant and far they have been disemboweled, seemingly outside traditions of mercy and consensus. I do not mean to despise or hurt anybody; I just feel that those who have become part of my memory, including myself, are also responsible for what they have scattered and propagated." This article no longer reflects on a novel supposedly imbued with 'spiteful' intention as I set myself to write it in 2007. I did realize that even before I could pull the trigger, four of my fingers were already pointing at me. Thus, instead of highlighting the novel as a work on social criticism, this article helped me gain a deeper self-analysis, opening myself to the healing presence of a forgiving God – summoning my capacity for genuine reconciliation.

regard by Jesus whose own narrative of suffering theologically emplots every other story of suffering.

I worked with materials provided by my unbidden memories of trauma; in the process, I shaped some truths by setting up a world made of those unbidden materials. Truths are thus revealed, no matter how impolite these truths are for those who were not aware of their responsibility for their behavior that brought unwanted worlds, destruction, and suffering to others. What happened is an unexpected confrontation, struggle, and coming to terms with demons that I have never invited in the first place.²⁸ Moreover, the smaller stories of trauma gave me the possibilities of further widening my time horizons and pain avenues (also doubling as 'care avenues') which allowed a better view of my life story against the background of the Divine Therapist's invitation for humans to become better persons or creative wounded care-givers themselves.

Stories of horror or terror tell about the cause (traumatic event) and the effects (PTSD/dissociation/suppression) in almost every case. But narratives of healing and successful integration of individuals into ordinary life required a model, the wounded healer – somebody who was part of the story of trauma and dissociation but who was not totally incapacitated and was still able to face the effects of the traumatic event, bringing about change. I was lucky to have the three great models. The courage, determination, consistency, endurance, resilience, long-suffering, persistence, hope, faith, and love of the wounded healers/models, Teresa de Ávila, Juan de la Cruz, and Thérèse de Lisieux were the noble ways needed to face the event, deal with the

²⁸I am referring to the demons of my past – those unwelcome inner forces that produced involuntary terror, depression, psychic chaos and the accompanying somatic tremors which, thus, revealed my true character: fearful, depraved, miserable, and spiteful.

effects, ‘catch and tame’ both the event and its effects, and integrate these with the ‘normal’ waking self and its relations. With their ways of following Jesus as example and inspiration, I was able to face the seemingly insurmountable. I thus consider the novel, *Candlelights*, as a testimony to divine grace working in my dark continent.

Kari’s fragility and pain was a human predicament upon which God has bestowed grace and strength. The weight of trauma threatening collapse on Kari’s head was one reason why he had to deal with it, face it, grasp it, and be able to tell it to himself and to the world; freeing it from confinement and disempowering it through a reliving in a story that gives shape and sets up a world that reveals its truth, no matter how painful that truth is.²⁹ Trauma and its children must be conquered as God’s creative work is reflected in the way a traumatized Kari would face pain and suffering with resolute determination. In this sense, a creative affirmation of life despite trauma is also an affirmation of Jesus’s resurrection through His conquest of suffering and death.

²⁹ “The writing points to the fact that ultimately the ground of our work is not psychology, the theoretical understanding of the mind, but *poiesis*, the human capacity to respond to and change the world through the act of shaping what is given to us.” Levine (25).

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The Human Will in Meister Eckhart's Understanding of Deificatory Event

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Abstract: This paper shall explore the human will in the context of Meister Eckhart's understanding of deificatory event. Contrary to Eckhart's view that deificatory event does somehow need no will, I shall argue that willing is required in the said event. The reason for this is that any intentional act necessitates the operation of the will. Second, in connection to the first, taking cue from Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* or letting-be or *releasement* as a condition for deification remains within the domain of the will. Third, in post-deificatory event, a deified person still functions as divinely human creature and so thus the will remains operative. This is because the will serves, as this paper argues, as a 'hinge' where any form of human act is informed by the will.

Keywords: Meister Eckhart, deification, human will, *Gelassenheit*, mysticism

Introduction

Contrary to Eckhart's position that deificatory event somehow does not require willing, I shall argue that such event is a human event which presupposes the act of the will. The reason for this is that any act of willing, that is the will to be in union with God necessitates the operation of the will. Second, in connection to the first, taking cue from Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* or letting-be or

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releasement as a condition for deification remains within the domain of the will. Third, in post-deificatory event, a deified person still functions as a creature, though, divinely yet still human and thus the will remains operative. This is because the will serves, as this paper argues, as a ‘hinge’ where any form of human act is partly influenced by the will.

Among the post-Scholastic philosophers and theologians, Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) is known to be, if not the most, highly influential, speculative and profound thinker,¹ ‘an extremely complicated and multifaceted thinker,’² a speculative mystic,³ a ‘philosopher of Christianity,’⁴ and ‘one of the rarest of beasts: a theological mystic or mystical theologian,’⁵ a ‘synthesizer of the Neoplatonic and the Aristotelian

¹ See Bernard McGinn, “God Beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart,” *The Journal of Religion* 6, no. 1 (January 1981): 1-19; Richard Kieckhefer, “Meister Eckhart’s Conception of Union with God,” *Harvard Theological Review* 1, issue 3-4 (October 1978): 203-225; Benedict M. Ashley, “Three Strands in the Thought of Eckhart, The Scholastic Theologian,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 42, no. 2 (April 1978): 226-239.

² Dermot Moran, “Meister Eckhart in 20th-Century Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart* ed., Jeremiah Hackett (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 674.

³ Although not all of Eckhart’s scholars and critical readers agree on this. The likes of Bernard McGinn, Alois Haas, and Kurt Ruh are forerunners of Eckhart’s mysticism while the “Bochum School” represented by Kurt Flasch tries to counter the hegemony of what he calls “Mystical flood” in Eckhart’s studies. See Jeremiah Hackett, “Preface” *A Companion to Meister Eckhart* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), xxii-xxiii.

⁴ Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity* trans., Anne Schindel and Aaron Vanides (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).

⁵ Oliver Davies *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), 37 as cited by Joan O’Donovan, “The Way of Meister Eckhart,” *Eckhart Review*, 11:1 (2002): 23-36, p. 25, n. 4.

traditions,⁶ and controversial thinker in the Western tradition of mysticism, theology, and philosophy. As McGinn puts it, “no other figure combines as well as he [Eckhart] the dual roles of professional theologian and mystical preacher and writer.”⁷ Meister Eckhart is not just only a profound mystic but “an original and important speculative thinker”⁸ as well. “It is precisely,” as Jeremiah Hackett quips, of being “a *speculative thinker* that Eckhart stands out among his contemporaries.”⁹ His speculative thinking puts forward in a masterful way “the notion that consciousness is in some sense non-being” which is “basic to any theory of knowledge and which [sic] has been recognized in an especial vivid way only in recent times.”¹⁰ We may then infer that Eckhart is not only considered as a medieval theologian *par excellence* but “an original philosophical thinker who formulated his own philosophical-theological synthesis.”¹¹

As a synthesizer, Eckhart heavily influenced by his predecessors most especially the Augustinian and Thomistic traditions. But this is not to discount the fact that other non-Christian philosophers played significant role in the development of his philosophical and theological reflections.¹² As pointed out by Alessandro

⁶ Reiner Schürmann, “Neoplatonic Henology as an Overcoming of Metaphysics,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 13:1 (1983): 25-41, p. 28.

⁷ McGinn, “God beyond God,” 2.

⁸ John Caputo, “The Nothingness of the Intellect in Meister Eckhart’s *Parisian Questions*,” *The Thomist* 39 (1975): 87; See also, Renier Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

⁹ Jeremiah Hackett, “Preface,” xxiii.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² There are two salient motifs, according to Caputo, in Eckhart’s writings, namely: a Neo-platonic theme, “the unity and simplicity of pure being,” and, second, “life and birth, of emergence

Palazzo, there are several salient Eckhartian concepts which came from the influence of Islamic and Jewish philosophers such as Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averröes.¹³

As a mystic, his brand of mysticism is far distant from other commonly known mystics such as Teresa of Avila or Catherine of Siena. Benedict Ashley, for instance, asserts that unlike the southern contemporary mystics, ‘northern mystics’ – the Germans like Eckhart “thematized ‘innerness’, anticipating that concern for ‘subjectivity’ which has marked the whole course of German thought.”¹⁴ McGinn describes the Eckhartian mysticism as the “type [of mysticism] aims at penetrating the ordinary in order to reveal the extraordinary.”¹⁵ However, Eckhart’s mysticism shared

and pouring forth, of life being passed on to life.” See John Caputo, “Fundamental Themes in Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 42 no. 2 (April 1978): 197-198.

¹³ Alessandro Palazzo, “Eckhart’s Islamic and Jewish Sources,” in *Companion to Meister Eckhart* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 254-193. Among these concepts, as argued by Palazzo, are *bullitio* (boiling) and *ebullitio* (boiling over) which believed to be of Avicennian origin. Also, it was Avicenna from whom Eckhart relied greatly by more than a hundred quotations, many of which were explicit all throughout his works. He referred to Avicenna as ‘meister’ for twenty-one times in the sermons. While expressions such as “soul’s breaking-through into God” and “having no ‘why’” were from Avicbron whom Eckhart quoted in his Latin sermons fourteen times. Also Eckhart made use of Averröes’ philosophical ideas. He referred to Averröes for forty-three times as a ‘commentator’ in his Latin sermons. Among the philosophical concepts, according to Palazzo, that Eckhart borrowed from Averröes were namely: the idea of nature, God as perfect being, time is non-real being, and human intellect as the lowest in the hierarchy of intellectual substances.

¹⁴ Benedict M. Ashley, “Three Strands in the Thought of Eckhart,” 228.

¹⁵ Bernard McGinn, “God Beyond God”, 18. Of course, many interpreters have identified various characterizations of Eckhart’s mysticism. For instance, Caputo describes Eckhart’s mysticism as

certain affinity with another brand of mysticism developed by the Beguine Mystics such as Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete.¹⁶ Most notably among them who influenced Eckhart was Marguerite Porete's seminal work *The Mirror of Simple Souls* which for McGinn greatly influenced Eckhart, "[it] appears to have had a profound effect on one of the most noted scholastics of the day, the Dominican master of theology known as Meister Eckhart."¹⁷ Obvious among Porete's doctrines seen in Eckhart are about annihilation¹⁸ and deification which for Juan Marin "sprouted from a fertile beguine imagination, one that nourished Porete's own distinctive and influential ideas in the *Mirror of Simple Souls*."¹⁹ As to the direct religious-mystical relation of Eckhart with Hadewijch and Mechthild, McGinn contends that

"atheistic", (John D. Caputo, "Fundamental Themes in Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 211); Radler describes it as "fluid mysticism" (Charlotte Radler, "In Love I am more God: The Centrality of Love in Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," in *The Journal of Religion* 90, no. 2 [April 2010]: 171-198), 174. While Lanzetta calls it "anarchic" (See Beverly J. Lanzetta, "Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart," *The Journal of Religion* 72, no. 2 [April 1992]: 248-268), 249.

¹⁶ See, Bernard McGinn (ed.), *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

¹⁷ Bernard McGinn, "Introduction," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, 2.

¹⁸ See Joanne Maguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), xii. Robinson observes that "the doctrine of annihilation of the soul was never a mainstream theological doctrine before or after Marguerite Porete, yet it reveals profound insights into the possible relationship between God and the soul." We can see in this study how the Beguine mystics represented by Porete made an extremely radical view of mysticism.

¹⁹ Juan Marin, "Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*," *Harvard Theological Review* vol. 103, Issue 01 (January 2010): 89-109. See, p. 90.

this remains questionable.²⁰ That being said, however this does not discount the fact that Eckhart “*shared* with them, that is, the community of discourse and joint concerns in which his thought and theirs developed and enriched each other.”²¹ Nonetheless, what separates Beguine mystics and Eckhart from their contemporaries is their radical claim that according to Amy Hollywood, “the soul herself can and must be refigured or reimagined, and as such become united without distinction in and with divine.”²² Such “extreme mysticism”²³ made Eckhart a subject of various (mis)interpretations. The replicating tendency of (mis)interpreting Eckhart, according to Mojsisch is due to the “expulsive aspect of Eckhartian aporetic-progressive method” and whose thought is “constantly in motion; then when it come to rest, it provokes doubt, soliciting further thinking.”²⁴ Despite this difficulty,

²⁰ In the case of Hadewijch, Murk-Jansen remark runs quite contrary to McGinn when the former argues that it is false that Eckhart “has been quite unable to read” the work attributed to Hadewijch. See Saskia Murk-Jansen, “Hadewijch and Eckhart,” in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, 17. Furthermore, in the case of Mechthild, one can easily identify differences between her and Eckhart. One of these is the kind of mystical character that Mechthild developed in herself which is quite the opposite of Eckhart. The former is an ecstatic and visionary mystic while Eckhart is not. But certainly, Eckhart was aware of this kind of mysticism, more so, of Mechthild which led us to establish similarities or congruences between them. See Frank Tobin, “Mechthild of Magdeburg and Meister Eckhart: Points of Coincidence,” in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*.

²¹ Bernard McGinn, “Introduction,” 4.

²² Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 24.

²³ Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 61.

²⁴ Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity* trans., Orrin F. Summerell (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 2001), 5.

some readers and scholars find Eckhart's sermons and treatises a "better example [sic] of a certain mystical dissemination and a religiously joyful wisdom..." by rewriting the "words of Scripture, turns and twists the most familiar sacred stories, reinterprets the oldest teachings in the *most innovative and shocking ways*."²⁵

Being controversial, McGinn contends that Eckhart is "the *only* medieval theologian tried before the Inquisition as a heretic."²⁶ As Oliver Davies points out, the papal bull *In agro dominico* (March 27, 1329) "stands out from other such condemnatory Bulls in a number of ways." As Davies explains,

[I]t was the first and only occasion when the full machinery of the Inquisition was used against a member of the Dominican Order, and it was similarly the first and only time in which a theologian of the first rank was charged with the *inquisitio haereticae pravitatis*: the most serious accusation which the Inquisition had at its disposal and the one which carried the heaviest penalties.²⁷ (*italics added*)

But the reason for this condemnation of twenty-eight propositions as argued by Alain de Libera is not because of Eckhart's unorthodoxy and radicality but "[w]hat the Pope was condemning in reality were certain specific expressions of Eckhart's Christian medieval theology" which "from the point of view of Eckhart's opponents, his doctrine was simply poor theology – neither unorthodox qua philosophical, nor unorthodox qua

²⁵ John D. Caputo, "Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart," in *Derrida and Deconstruction*, ed., Hugh J. Silverman (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 34.

²⁶ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: A Herder and Herder Book, 2001), 1.

²⁷ Oliver Davies, "Why were Eckhart's propositions condemned?," *New Blackfriars*, 71 (1990): 433.

mystical but *unorthodox qua theologically incorrect*.”²⁸ His notoriety as an unorthodox and radical thinker is not only measured by the fact that his theological positions are, *prima facie*, quite contrary to the teachings and doctrines of the Catholic church – the reason why even his fellow Dominicans were disconcerted by his deep reliance on Neoplatonic themes,²⁹ but because of “[his] startling a-theistic and ‘un-Christian’ elements in his thought”³⁰ and comfort on an aberrant use of language. This attunement to a quite different linguistic bent led his readers and astute intellectual opponents to commit grave misinterpretation of his texts. His manner and style of presenting his views both in the sermons and treatises are heavily glued with rhetorical/linguistic tropes and are cognitively daunting and tormenting. The most that Denys Turner could say in describing Eckhart’s use of language is this:

[Eckhart] twists the discourse, breaks it up, recomposes it. His rhetorical devices are *artifices*...Eckhart wants to force the imagery to say the apophatic...he knows perfectly well that the unsayable cannot be placed within the grasp of speech. Yet he will use speech, necessarily broken, contradictory, absurd, paradoxical, conceptually hyperbolic speech, to bring to insight the ineffability of God.³¹ (emphasis added.)

²⁸ Alain de Libera, “On Some Philosophical Aspects of Master Eckhart’s Theology,” *Review of Philosophy and Theology of Fribourg*, 45 (1998): 152-157.

²⁹ Richard Woods, “Meister Eckhart and the Neoplatonic Heritage: The Thinker’s Way to God,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 54, no. 4 (October 1990): 610.

³⁰ Beverly J. Lanzetta, “Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart,” 249.

³¹ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 151.

This kind of linguistic usage employed by Eckhart made him one of the tough thinkers in German intellectual tradition. The difficulty of understanding properly and correctly his insights and thoughts makes us think about the use of language. That being said, his use of language shows his act of revolt against the language's self-limiting nature. It is this limitation that Eckhart is trying to overcome and experimenting on when he subversively played with it "not only [as] a linguistic strategy designed to prevent the mind from assigning closure to reality but also is a critique of the enclosure of being."³² What this description amounts to is what Oliver Davies is hinting at when he describes Eckhart's employment of language as 'poeticisation'. For Davies this process "involves the loosening of the relation between signifier and signified, and thus the foregrounding of language as bearer of meaning, rather than meaning itself – a phenomenon which is usually judged to be a prime characteristic of poetic texts."³³ But it is by way of doing such violence to language that Eckhart was able to avoid reification of discourse. In the words of Charles Robinson, referring to Eckhart's subtle improvisation of language to avoid reification, "he...[has] 'mapped out' the divine geography on a finer scale than any other man who had ever heretofore undertaken such daring explorations."³⁴ It is through escaping the reificatory power of language that one is able to find a way to express what could not be clearly expressed by some linguistic modalities and categories.

Similarly, Radler describes Eckhart's 'linguistic

³² Beverly J. Lanzetta, "Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart," 252.

³³ Oliver Davies, *God Within* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), 180.

³⁴ Charles K. Robinson, "Meister Eckhart's Doctrine of God," *Heythrop Journal* 5:2 (1964):150.

flexibility' or upheaval as "symptomatic of his constant use of reversible analogy, mobile perspectives, and apophysis, which emancipates his thought from ossified differentiations"³⁵ of various concepts necessary in articulating his inner thoughts. This, according to Radler, is in order to allow thinking to free itself of the "scholastic categories of substance and accident, analogy and proportion, being and intellect."³⁶ This means that any language that attempts to account for what God is or our true knowledge of Him is bound to fail. Eckhart in Sermon 96 says that "the finest thing one can say about God is to be silent from the wisdom of inner riches. So be silent and do not chatter about God, because by chattering about Him you are lying and so committing a sin."³⁷ Indeed, as Denys Turner asserts, "[o]f God there can be only silence accompanied by a sort of stunned amazement."³⁸ Woods is correct when he said that the "very language he [Eckhart] used to express his profound insights into the mystery of the human encounter with God is challenging and yet elusive."³⁹ His being controversial is not only due to his writing style but due to the fact that his intellectual profundity escapes and evades the limits and restrictions of doctrinal teaching of both Augustine and Aquinas.⁴⁰

³⁵ Charlotte Radler, "In Love I am more God': The Centrality of Love in Meister Eckhart's Mysticism," 175.

³⁶ Lanzetta, "Three Categories of Nothingness," 252.

³⁷ Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. and ed. by Maurice O. Walshe, rev. by Bernard McGinn (New York: Herder & Herder, 2009), Sermon 96 p. 463.

³⁸ Denys Turner, "The Art of Unknowing: Negative Theology in Late Medieval Mysticism," 479.

³⁹ Richard Woods, OP., "Eckhart's Way," in *The Way of the Christian Mystics*, volume 2, ed. Noel Dermot O'Donoghue, OP., (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986), 12.

⁴⁰ Walshe, "Introduction," *Complete Works of Meister Eckhart*. As Walshe observes, "whether he was worried about this [his doctrinal teachings] because he truly felt inwardly that the church

Part of Eckhart's tendency of leaning toward unorthodoxy might also be attributed to his Order's intellectual openness allowing their members to engage in "original speculation of their own,"⁴¹ provided that they remain faithful to the Thomistic teachings without any attempt to undermine nor depart from it.⁴²

Given all these, it is apparent how Eckhart tries to go beyond the limits of Aquinas' philosophical system and doctrines. However, despite this tangential departure from Aquinas' tradition, Eckhart remains faithful to the core philosophical and theological teachings of Aquinas. Among these core teachings of Aquinas are his views on the intellect, will, and analogy⁴³ but twisting them a bit.⁴⁴ For example, Eckhart views the intellect as not simply a cognitive capacity but primarily the source of such cognition in the world.⁴⁵ Furthermore, he finds the intellect as the place of the soul, "a light, moreover, which is a 'nothing',

had to be right, or rather because he had to conform, is perhaps to a certain extent open to question. We might tentatively put it that Eckhart, being utterly convinced of the threat of what he was saying, *hoped* it was after all fundamentally orthodox or at least would pass for such, but felt he had to say it just the same" (19).

⁴¹ William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order* (New York: Alba House, 1965), 155 cited by Benedict M. Ashley, "Three Strands in the Thought of Eckhart, the Scholastic Theologian," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 42 no. 2 (April 1978): 227.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ For suggested readings, see Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*; Jeremiah Hackett and Jennifer Hart Weed, "From Aquinas to Eckhart on Creation, Creature, and Analogy," *A Companion to Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah Hackett (Leiden/London: Brill, 2013).

⁴⁴ Of course, other than this is Eckhart's use of the doctrine of Analogy which Eckhart's commentators and scholars believed to be borrowed from Aquinas.

⁴⁵ Oliver Davies, "The Challenge of the Past Meister Eckhart," *Medieval Mystical Theology*, 20, 1 (2011): 16.

an ‘emptiness’, a ‘desert’, it is formless and featureless and it is all these things with the nothingness, the emptiness and the desert-like formlessness and featurelessness of the Godhead,”⁴⁶ a place where deification makes possible. While the will is seen as a human faculty that needs to be abandoned in order for the union of God with the soul is rendered possible.

Of course, equally important is situating Eckhart today. In both philosophical and theological enterprises, we find the echoes of Eckhart’s thoughts. Philosophically speaking, Eckhart plays a significant role in the development of continental philosophical tradition most especially in Hegelian tradition which was also followed by Heidegger, and today by the likes of Jean-Luc Marion.⁴⁷ In theological discourse, Eckhart as well made significant contributions to the discussion concerning negative theology, Christology, Christian anthropology, and mysticism. But what is not apparent in Eckhart scholarship is his contribution to pastoral and missiological enterprise of the Church which I think is an interesting and fruitful study to work on. This study will only surmise that Eckhart’s thoughts and teachings may have contributed significantly on how we view and exercise pastoral and missiological works of the church. But to specifically identify those elements is for now quite difficult to determine. However difficult, we may glean from his historical personality connections which are maybe helpful in establishing this fact. First, he belonged to the Dominican order that is undoubtedly known for their pastoral and missiological charism. As a member of the Dominican order, Eckhart

⁴⁶ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 159.

⁴⁷ See Cyril O’Regan, “Eckhart Reception in the 19th Century”; also, Dermot Moran, “Meister Eckhart in 20th Century Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, edited by Jeremiah M. Hackett (Leiden and London: Brill, 2013).

did not fail to live its apostolic calling. This is seen how Eckhart was admired by his listeners and students because of his prowess in preaching and intellectual acumen. Just like St. Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart exhibited the kind of skills and talents deserving of being a Dominican. Though, as a preacher and intellectual there is no doubt that he is one of the greatest, but as with regard to his theological thought in missiological studies, one has to suspend judgment until one has able to carefully examine his work in relation to this. Hence, this is beyond the scope of this paper. However, based on the discussion below, one can infer with careful attention to the text that Eckhart's account of deification can be interpreted in missiological terms as simply a call for genuine Christian living. It is clear for Eckhart that more than the external practices or mercantile-like religious practices, is the nourishment of the soul, to be one with God, to be in union with God. This is reminiscent of the internal mission of the Church, more than the Church's external mission that springs from the command of Jesus, i.e., the reality that the Church should participate in the mission of the Trinity. This participation does not only require external demonstration or activities but most importantly the internalization of what it means to be called as a member of the missionary Church.

Meister Eckhart's Notions of the Will: Connolly vs Stump

At the heart of Eckhart's anthropology is the trinitarian powers of the soul: memory, intellect, and will.⁴⁸ Many have already undergone examining and problematizing Eckhart's conception of the will and so

⁴⁸ Eckhart, Sermon 96 p. 464.

as far as this paper is concerned, I do not claim any originality in this respect. For instance, John Connolly in *Living without Why: Meister Eckhart's Critique of the Medieval Concept of Will* examines and situates Eckhart's concept of will based on one of Eckhart's famous phrases "liv[ing] without why" in "historical and metaphysical context."⁴⁹ Connolly argues that Eckhart's conception of will in this context refers to will as purpose or goal. As Eckhart in Sermon 11 says, "All things that are in time have a 'Why?' Ask a man why he eats: 'For strength.' – 'Why do you sleep?' – 'for the same reason.'"⁵⁰ For Connolly, the 'why' and 'will' are synonymous terms. Any action is always directed toward something, and this directedness implies goal or purpose. That is why, for Connolly, Eckhart can be considered along with Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas as 'teleological eudaimonist'. Connolly concludes that Eckhart's view of will is not so different from Aquinas and Augustine, and hence is no radical. However, what is lacking in Connolly's study of Eckhart's concept of will is its role and implications for mystical union which both preoccupied Eckhart in his sermons and treatises. What Connolly highlights in his work so far is Eckhart's view of will as an ethical concept.

Aside from Connolly, Eleonore Stump's essay entitled "Not My Will but Thy Will Be Done" discusses though cursorily, Eckhart's view of will in relation to God's will. Stump's central claim has to do with "appropriate response to the problem of suffering"⁵¹ as necessary element in healing 'post-Fall human disorder'

⁴⁹ John Connolly, *Living Without Why: Meister Eckhart's Critique of the Medieval Concept of Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

⁵⁰ Eckhart, Sermon 11, p. 96.

⁵¹ Eleonore Stump, "Not My Will but Thy Will be Done," *Medieval Mystical Theology* 22:2 (2013):155.

in the soul, most especially the will. Stump argues that Eckhart finds the person's will "internally fragmented"⁵² which therefore requires healing in order to be in union with God. As such is the ultimate goal of every person, to "focus their [people] care on their flourishing, their ultimate, spiritual flourishing, and *only* on it."⁵³ Stump calls this 'stern-minded attitude' which she believes is Eckhart's position. This attitude according to Stump takes a no-self view of denunciation. Such attitude, as Stump defines, "seeks to eradicate all desires other than the desire for God's will."⁵⁴ This form of denunciation of self is extremely radical which for Stump characterized Eckhart's 'stern-minded attitude' view. For her, this position runs contrary to the Christian call of self-denial since "one cannot crucify a self one does not have."⁵⁵ I think Stump here committed a category mistake. She thought of the self and person as synonymous concepts. What the Jews crucified was not the self of Christ but Christ himself – as a person. However, Stump suggests a more plausible form of denying the self without eradicating the self altogether. This view of denunciation for Stump does not require shutting down one's own faculties of intellect and will.

Borrowing the modern philosophical categories from Harry Frankfurt,⁵⁶ Stump classifies the will into first-order and second-order will. This hierarchical structure of the will paves the way for articulating Eckhart's understanding of will as a faculty, though 'internally fragmented' but can be unified only when one wills the

⁵² Though the phrase is from Stump, the idea remains to be Augustinian. See Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1960), Book VIII.

⁵³ Stump, "Not My Will but Thy Will be Done," 161.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵⁶ See Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68 no. 1 (Jan. 14, 1971): 5-20.

will of God. Stump gives an example of Christ whose first-order will and second-order will are in conflict. As Stump illustrates, Christ's first-order will is his desire not to die, while his second-order will is letting God's will be done, that is, making the second-order will take precedence over the first-order will. Because the second-order will preceded Christ's first-order will, he remained in conformity with God's will. As Stump explains: "In this rank-ordering of desires, Jesus does not give up his desire not to die. He still has that desire; he just acts counter to it because he desires something contrary to his desire not to die if that is God's will."⁵⁷ We may say then that Christ's 'deferred will'⁵⁸ signals the arrival of the union because as Stump explains "[w]illing what God wills is necessary for internal integration around the good, which is itself necessary for union with God; and union with God is a person's ultimate flourishing."⁵⁹ The point I want to draw from Stump's essay is how she appropriates and understands Eckhart's view of the nature of the human will. To be sure, Stump does not subscribe to what she considers as Eckhart's view of stern-minded attitude. At the end of her essay, she states there that "there cannot be union between God and a human person if there is no will at all in the human person."⁶⁰ But this somehow contradicts the claim of Eckhart on how the mystical union can be achieved. The union as an achievement act does not depend on one's faith nor from grace (Augustine's) alone

⁵⁷ Stump, "Not My Will but Thy Will be Done," 169.

⁵⁸ Davis defines this as "letting one's own will go in favor of the will of another, whether passively acquiescing to, or actively becoming a vessel for, this other will, whether this other be the leader of a state, a god, and so on" (22). See Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*.

⁵⁹ Eleonore Stump, "Not My Will but Thy Will be Done", 160.

⁶⁰ Stump, "Not My Will but Thy Will be Done," 171.

but through “awakening to our intrinsic divinity.”⁶¹

Stump’s essay attracted a negative response from Connolly. In the same journal with Stump, Connolly published an essay entitled “Eckhart and the Will of God: A Reply to Stump”⁶² as a reaction to the former’s claims that Eckhart has views of (a) ‘stern-minded attitude’, (b) the no-self view of denunciation, and (c) the impossibility of willinglessness in the act of union with God. Connolly argues that Stump’s understanding of Eckhart’s thoughts is mistaken due to her failure to “situate some of Eckhart’s extreme claims in the framework of his metaphysics and the larger context of his [Eckhart] writings, which show he is clearly not stern-minded.”⁶³ Connolly points out that Stump’s faulty understanding of Eckhart is based on Stump’s view of Eckhart’s concept of will. For Connolly, Eckhart does not hold a view of stern-minded attitude and no-self view just like what Stump believes to be. Eckhart’s view of willing, according to Connolly, should not be taken simply as fulfilling one’s ultimate, spiritual flourishing because this is in fact what Eckhart is rejecting. “What Eckhart was rejecting was making the ultimate goal, i.e., the beatific vision, the organizing principle of our lives and the motivating ground of our good deeds...”⁶⁴ Connolly explains. On the other hand, in relation to denunciation or detachment, Eckhart’s view of willing should not be taken to imply, according to Connolly, “a rejection of ‘the power’ called the will altogether, including intention, choice, consent, etc”⁶⁵ for this is not

⁶¹ Benedict M. Ashley, “Three Strands in the Thought of Eckhart, the Scholastic Theologian,” 236.

⁶² John Connolly, “Eckhart and the Will of God: A Reply to Stump,” *Medieval Mystical Theology*, 25:1 (2016), 6.

⁶³ Connolly, “A Reply to Stump,” 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

what Eckhart meant by denunciation. With regard to the impossibility of willinglessness in the union with God, Connolly underscores that Eckhart does not deny man's teleological character but insists we are not just rational beings, "we are also more than creatures, since we are capable of sharing in the divine nature itself; and, as he [Eckhart] often reminds us, God acts without why."⁶⁶ Connolly explains that because we ourselves are like God in virtue of our union with Him, we become one with Him and since we are one with Him, we share the same nature with Him. What Connolly argues against Stump's claims is reflective of what I am doing as well. Connolly and Stump are correct in their assertions that in deificatory process the will functions necessarily but both failed to address the status of human willing in post-deificatory state. This paper will show that following Heidegger, the will as a faculty remains operative both during and after deificatory event. The reason for this is that, the will remains a fundamental faculty of the human person and that all human actions imply the function of the will. Heidegger, commenting on Eckhart's idea of *Gelassenheit* says that Eckhart's view of *Gelassenheit* is still "within the domain of will."⁶⁷ What this means for Eckhart according to Heidegger is that, "casting off sinful selfishness and letting self-will go in favor of the divine will"⁶⁸ which is not for Heidegger meant by *Gelassenheit* but rather non-willing. Whether Heidegger is correct in his interpretation of Eckhart or not is beyond the scope of this paper.

In what follows, I will be discussing the concept of the will in general and with this it is unavoidable to take detours along the way, such as giving brief

⁶⁶ Connolly, "A Reply to Stump," 18.

⁶⁷ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

accounts on the concept of the will. The purpose is to see the complexity of the problem of the concept of the will and how Eckhart appropriated the will in his own theological-philosophical synthesis.

The Concept of the Will: Augustine and Aquinas

There is no one-size-fits-all definition of the will. In the history of western philosophy, very few have attempted in providing a somewhat definitive meaning to the concept 'will'. Among them are Augustine and Aquinas. In contemporary philosophical landscape, however, the concept of the will remains problematic and obscure.

Unlike other philosophical concepts and problems, the discourse on the will gains varied receptions among various western philosophical traditions and poses several conceptual difficulties. For instance, Hannah Arendt observes that "the greatest difficulty faced by every discussion of the Will is the simple fact that there is no other capacity of the mind whose very existence has been so consistently doubted and refuted by so eminent a series of philosophers."⁶⁹ Following Augustine, Karl Jaspers finds the will as incomprehensible. For him, "I cannot will this will, but through it, because of it, I can will."⁷⁰ Similar observation is put forward by contemporary philosophers such as Thomas Pink and M.W.F Stone who find the idea of the will "much more obscure"⁷¹

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, "Willing" in *The Life of the Mind* (New York and London: Harcourt, 1978), 4. One of these philosophers as Arendt pointed out was Gilbert Ryle. See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), 62-82.

⁷⁰ Karl Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Ralph Manheim (New York: Harvest Book, 1962), 90.

⁷¹ Thomas Pink and M.W.F. Stone, "Introduction," in *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London and

compared to other philosophical ideas. Pink and Stone argue that “[t]here is hardly any clear consensus, either among philosophers or within everyday opinion, about what might be counted as a clear case of willing (*thelein*). The very absence of such a consensus might be said to reflect a fundamental lack of clarity about just what the notions of ‘will and willing’ legitimately involve.”⁷² That is why some philosophers such as Ryle violently reject that there is such a natural kind of faculty as ‘will’. Ryle considers the will as an “artificial concept”⁷³ just like any other forms of philosophical dogmas such as the ‘trinitarian theory of mind’ or soul – which for him “is not only not self-evident, it is such a welter of confusions and false inferences that it is best to give up any attempt to re-fashion it. It should be treated as one of the curios of theory.”⁷⁴ Corollary to this of course is the ascription of ‘freedom’ to the will that somehow further complicates the problem. But what exactly, we may ask, is the problem with the idea of the will? If we try to examine it carefully, we find that the problem has to do with an account of its nature. The least that we can say about the will is that it is a human faculty, not just a faculty of the soul.⁷⁵ And since it is a human faculty, then it is a faculty of the subject.

New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

⁷² Pink and Stone, “Introduction,” 1.

⁷³ Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 62.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ I think there is something wrong with the idea that the will is a faculty of the soul rather than of human being. For instance, Augustine would consider willing not just an act of the soul but of the human person. Heidegger also contends that the will is essentially the ground of human action. “By the word ‘will’ I mean, in fact, not a faculty of the soul, but rather – in accordance with the unanimous, though hardly yet thought through doctrine of Western thinkers – that wherein the essence of the soul, spirit, reason, love and life are grounded” (cited in Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, p.6).

Nevertheless, despite the absence of consensus as to what to think about the will, it does not mean that no definition or meaning can be functional when talking about it. Moreover, what is more important is not about how to make everyone agree, for this would seem impossible.

Against the skeptical and virulent attack by some contemporary philosophers, other philosophers way back time, as far as I know, never doubted its existence and thus, it is a genuine concept rather than an ‘artificial’ one. Beginning from the time of the Greek thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic schools, the will as a human faculty was a pivotal issue in their philosophical activity. Although, according to W.D. Ross, “Plato and Aristotle have no distinct conception of the will”⁷⁶ since there is an absence of linguistic and conceptual equivalence to what we understood as will and as McIntyre argues “Aristotle, like every other ancient pre-Christian author, had no concept of the will and there is no conceptual space in his scheme for such an alien notion in the explanations of defect and error.”⁷⁷ The context of this statement of McIntyre is the contrast or difference between Aristotle and Augustine in terms of understanding the nature of defect and error. As McIntyre explains in his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, Augustine predicates the defect and error of the intellect to the will and thus making the intellect dependent and limited in its judgments. But this does not necessarily imply that the Greeks had not thought of it as part of their philosophical reflections. Also, it is believed that the will is of late linguistic and conceptual invention.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ W.D. Ross, *Aristotle*, 5th edition (London: Methuen, 1949), 199.

⁷⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Version of Moral Inquiry* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 111.

⁷⁸ Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*

Evidentially, Charles Kahn identifies four perspectives on the concept of the will, namely: (1) theological concept, (2) post-Cartesian, (3) Kantian notion, and (4) will in relation to determinism.⁷⁹ This Kahnian classification shows exclusion of the Greek philosophical tradition as important factor in the formation of the concept of the will. But again this does not mean that the early Greek philosophers and the Hellenistic schools have no conception, or at least have not thought of the will. As T.H. Irwin warns:

It would be both a historical and a philosophical mistake, however, to claim that Greek philosophers lack a concept of the will if we simply mean that they are not voluntarists. For the debate between voluntarism and intellectualism is a debate between two views of the will, among disputants who share a concept of the will.⁸⁰

And so there, Irwin challenges our limiting notion of the will because it is only being thought within the conceptual duopolistic framework – which I believe a symptom of disjunctive thinking. Hence, the issue with regard to the origin of the concept of the will has got to do with properly identifying its essential characteristics and features which to some philosophers cannot be found in the philosophical teachings of Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic schools. But what exactly are those characteristics and features of the will?

Simply put, the will is obviously the faculty of the

(Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1982), 123.

⁷⁹ Charles H. Kahn, “Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine,” in *The Question of ‘Eclecticism’: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, edited by J.M. Dillon & A.A. Long (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988), 234-235.

⁸⁰ T.H. Irwin, “Who Discovered the Will?,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 6 (1992): 468.

subject.⁸¹ As a faculty, it functions as one of the sources of human action. This means that no amount of mental states is translatable to action without the will. This makes will quite powerful in terms of its function. Even Augustine has recognized this fact about the will. It is the will that enables us to perceive, memorize, imagine, believe, and feel. Even the act of unwilling remains to be within the domain of will, i.e., the will acts to perform such action. As long as unwillingness is a form of human act, then we may infer that it is still form of willing. As Sorabji argues “unwilling acts follow the will, even if not the full (*plena*) will. That is why Augustine says even (*etiam*) unwilling acts are done by will. *A fortiori*, all other acts are so done.”⁸² As a source of human action the will exerts influences to the human person in various ways. The will, although, is not an exclusive/essential property⁸³ of human beings and so “[h]uman beings are not alone” as Harry Frankfurt asserts, “in having desires and motives, or in making choices, they share these things with the members of

⁸¹ Heidegger reverses this. Instead of thinking that the will is a faculty of subjectivity, for him, subjectivity is an expression of the will. This radical reversal somehow points to something very crucial in Heidegger as he attempts to overcome the will in terms of thinking without the company of the will. This is where Heidegger departs from Eckhart’s notion of *Gelassenheit*, where the former wants to overcome the will in thinking. See Heidegger’s *Discourse on Thinking*; also David Lewin, “The Middle Voice in Eckhart and Modern Continental Philosophy,” *Medieval Mystical Theology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 42.

⁸² Richard Sorabji, “The Concept of the will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor,” in *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 16.

⁸³ See, Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, translated by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). According to Heidegger, “‘willing’ here designates the being of beings as a whole. Every single being and all beings as a whole have their essential powers [*das Vermögen seines Wesens*] in and through the will” (91).

certain other species, some of whom even appear to engage in deliberation and to make decision based upon prior thought,”⁸⁴ but it remains to be a fundamental faculty of human action. Our consciousness of it moves us up higher in the hierarchy of beings as this capacity becomes reflective of human capacity to form what Frankfurt calls ‘second-order desires’. Provisionally by way of examining the views of the two intellectual giants of their time: Augustine and Aquinas, we hope to find signposts to describe and properly identify essential characteristics of the will, as this will be necessary in understanding Eckhart’s view of the will.

From Plato to Aristotle and down to the Hellenistic schools, the completion of the concept of the will culminated in Augustine. As Sorabji argues “Augustine’s treatment of the will is new in more than one way. Most relevantly, Augustine brings together all the criteria which we have seen occurring separately in others.”⁸⁵ For Sorabji, there are at least six important will-relating concepts which Augustine was able to bring together into one term called ‘will’, namely: (1) rational soul, (2) freedom, (3) responsibility, (4) will-power, (5) ubiquitousness of willing, and (6) perversionality of the will.⁸⁶ For Augustine, the will is thought to be a human faculty that is defective. It is precisely because of this defect that man commits sin. The defectiveness, therefore, makes the will limited. But it is not only the will that is affected but also the intellect. For Augustine, according to Josef Lössl, “the limitations of the will caused by sin are not primarily affecting the physical and moral faculties but the

⁸⁴ Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of Will and Concept of a Person,” 7.

⁸⁵ Richard Sorabji, “The concept of the will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor,” 18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

intellect”⁸⁷ because the will has a “special relation to reason and a number of functions associated with it.”⁸⁸ Among the functions of the will has to do with a) freedom and responsibility and b) will-power. This shows the intimate connection between these two faculties of the human person.

In a more general context, Augustine’s view of the will despite its defectiveness, is an essential operative faculty which every being is bound to exercise. That is why for Augustine, human will cannot by itself achieve deification without God’s grace. And since we do not have any capacity through our own will or initiative to be in union with God, we simply render or submit our will to Him. But Aquinas may find will different from Augustine’s.

What then is Aquinas’ concept of the will and how his view departs from or influenced Eckhart?

The will is defined as a rational appetite which belongs to the power of the soul. As an appetite, it has the power to direct the soul to what is the end or goal. Aquinas distinguishes sensory appetite from intellectual appetite. The will belongs to the latter. For him the difference lies on the fact that the will commands not on the immediate impulse of the body unlike other animals but based on the command of the will. Aquinas said,

In other animals, the appetite of desire or aggression is acted upon immediately; thus a sheep in fear of a wolf, runs away immediately, for it has no higher appetite to intervene. But a human being does not react immediately in response to an aggressive or impulsive drive, but waits for the command of a higher appetite, the will.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Josef Lössl, “Intellect with a (divine) Purpose,” 53.

⁸⁸ Richard Sorabji, “The concept of the will from Plato to Maximus the Confessor,” 7.

⁸⁹ Cited in Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 64. See *ST* 1, 81, 3.

As a *rational* appetite it means, according to Gallagher, the following: (a) it involves relating means and ends; (b) capacity for reflection on one's practical judgments; (c) ability to desire universal objects or simply particular objects as instances of some wider universal.⁹⁰ Moreover, the will points to something which is desirable or good. It is the nature of the will, as Aquinas argues to predicate goodness or badness to what it desires to accomplish. That is why, when we think of human action, we value them whether it is good or bad/evil instead whether true or false for this value belongs to the intellect.

While the exercise of the intellect is found in one's capacity to understand the object which the intellect has perceived, the will, on the other hand, exercises affective disposition such as love, charity, justice, etc.⁹¹ In this sense, it sounds as if the will is supremely higher than the intellect since it is the charity – which is a matter of the will, that makes the person a 'something' rather than 'nothing'. This obviously runs contrary to Aristotle's claim, which Aquinas also followed, that among the faculties of the soul, the highest among them is the intellect. Does this mean that Aquinas abandoned the Scriptural affirmation of the superiority of the will and instead opted to side with Aristotle?

It is clear to Aquinas that between intellect and will, the former is the highest faculty. For instance, in *ST I, q. 82 a. 3* Aquinas addresses the question concerning the issue of superiority between intellect and will. For Aquinas, both faculties assume a sense of superiority but as such must be qualified. This means for him that "[t]he superiority of one thing over another can be

⁹⁰ David M. Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (October 1991): 559.

⁹¹ Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 42.

considered in two ways: ‘absolutely’ and ‘relatively’.”⁹² Aquinas continues,

If therefore the intellect and will be considered with regard to themselves [in a sense of absolute], then the intellect is the higher power...[f]or the object of the intellect is more simple and more absolute than the object of the will; since the object of the intellect is the very idea of appetible good; and the appetible good, the idea of which is in the intellect, is the object of the will.⁹³

In other words, for Aquinas the intellect is nobler and greater because it has the capacity to process or cognize something that is not readily cognizable and at the same time comprehending the most abstract of things. However, Aquinas also makes clear that ‘relatively’ the will is superior over the intellect. He explains: “[b]ut relatively and by comparison with something else, we find that the will is sometimes higher than the intellect, from the fact that the object of the will occurs in something higher than that in which occurs the object of the intellect.”⁹⁴ In this sense, while the intellect’s object is found within the soul, thus directs itself introspectively, the will’s object is outside of itself, directing its gaze toward something concrete and thus on things. As Aquinas puts it: “that ‘good and evil,’ which are objects of the will, ‘are in things,’ but ‘truth and error,’ which are objects of the intellect, ‘are in the mind.’”⁹⁵ Toward the end of that section, he insists the superiority of the intellect over the will, despite the fact that love is an expression of will which according to St. Paul makes us ‘something’ rather than ‘nothing.’ Aquinas says, “[w]herefore the love of God is

⁹² Aquinas, ST I, q. 82 a. 3.

⁹³ ST I, q. 82 a.3.

⁹⁴ ST I, q. 82 a.3.

⁹⁵ ST I, q. 82 a.3.

better than the knowledge of God; but, on the contrary, the knowledge of corporeal things is better than the love thereof. Absolutely, however, the intellect is nobler than the will.⁹⁶

It should be noted, therefore, that the position of Aquinas regarding the superiority of the intellect can be thought in line with the thinking that intellect is superior ‘absolutely’ as far as its power to know is concerned. As Anthony Kenny argues, “[b]oth of them [intellect and will] are concerned with goodness: but while the will can want various concrete goods, the intellect can achieve a general theory of goodness.”⁹⁷ It is like saying that the intellect determines the content of what goodness consists in and thus guides the will into it. While the will, though its end is to desire goodness, its determination is dependent on the intellect. It is as if saying, the will is blind though it infinitely desires, without the intellect it cannot find its destined direction.

We see in Aquinas that the will is not entirely independent of the intellect. In a sense that their interaction is so intimate and that each of their vested powers when exercised are shown to be so intertwined. Due to this, Aquinas finds it difficult to give a clear-cut separation line between them. For instance, Aquinas says “it happens sometimes that there is an act of the will in which something of the [preceding] act of reason remains...and, *vice versa*, there is [sometimes] an act of reason in which something of the [preceding] act of will remains.”⁹⁸ It is this intertwining relation between will and intellect that according to Stump is the source of the freedom in the will. The *liberum arbitrium*, as

⁹⁶ ST I, q. 82 a.3

⁹⁷ Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 71.

⁹⁸ Cited in Eleonore Stump, “Aquinas’ Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will,” fn. 29. See Aquinas ST I-II q.17 a.1

Stump argues, is “not a property of the will alone. It can be understood as a property of the will only insofar as the will itself is understood to be the *rational* appetite and to have a close tie to the intellect.”⁹⁹ But this view no longer holds water when it comes to Eckhart. To be sure, Eckhart follows the view of Aquinas about the intellect with certain form of radicality but not on the issue concerning the will. Here, Eckhart follows Augustine. But as to whether he has succeeded in getting rid of the will altogether in his speculation on deification remains doubtful. In what follows will be a discussion on Eckhart’s view of the will, and in conjunction with the conditions for the union or deification.

Meister Eckhart on the Human Will and Deification

In *Sermon 9*, Eckhart identifies three kinds of will, namely: *sensible*, *rational* and *eternal* will. According to him:

The sensible will seeks guidance, so that one needs a proper teacher. The rational will means following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and the saints, that is, so that words, deeds and way of life are alike directed to the highest end. When all of this is accomplished, God will give something more in the ground of the soul, that is, an eternal will consonant with the loving commands of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰⁰

The first two kinds of will are inherent in humans while eternal will is something that humans must work in order to achieve it. The condition for this achievement of the eternal will is to ‘accomplish’ the essential functions

⁹⁹ Stump, “Aquinas’ Account of Freedom,” 285.

¹⁰⁰ Eckhart, *Sermon 9*, p. 88.

of the first two kinds of will. In so doing, according to Eckhart, the eternal will can be attained. It is therefore not in human being's inherent capacity unlike the sensible and rational will to exercise the eternal will.

However, if this happened, humans enjoy the fullness of God's love without ceasing. What then is implicit in this description of the types of will is how the will is understood by Eckhart. Following the views of his predecessors, Eckhart does not deviate radically from what they thought is the proper or formal signification of the will. Eckhart thinks, following Augustine, that the will must be eliminated insofar as the desire for the union with God is concerned. Thus, Eckhart argues "[a]s long as a man is so disposed that it is his *will* with which he would do the most beloved will of God, that man has not the poverty we are speaking about: for that man has a *will* to serve God's will – and that is not true poverty!"¹⁰¹ What this means for Eckhart is that poverty implies the abandonment of the will, relinquishing it totally without condition. One can only become poor when one "wants nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing."¹⁰² In other words, there is nothing more to a human being than to be 'poor' aside from emptying oneself of one's own will – turning oneself into 'no-thing' because what hinders a human being to be no-thing is one's attachment to things or objects. As long as a human being clings to one's will, never will one be able to empty oneself of the same. Here, Eckhart turns extremely radical. He says in the same sermon, "as long as you have the *will* to do the will of God, and longing for eternity and God, you are not poor: for a poor man is one who wills nothing and desires nothing."¹⁰³ That is why Eckhart invokes the figure of the 'poor' to insist the

¹⁰¹ Eckhart, Sermon 87, p.421.

¹⁰² Ibid., 420.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

idea that poverty implies lackness. But, it is because of this lack of something, that gives the poor the privilege to gain ‘no-thing’. Nonetheless, in order to understand more what Eckhart is trying to do here, we may then ask: what does it mean by leaving one’s own will and let God’s will become my will? And what implication/s would it have once one has achieved the flight from the self-will?

In one of his treatises, Eckhart poses a question, “when is the will a right will?” his answer is that “the will is perfect and right when it has *no selfhood* and when it has gone out of itself, having been taken up and transformed into the will of God.”¹⁰⁴ What this passage amounts to is that the key to the relinquishment of the will is to cut-off one of the most essential predicates of the human person – the self. Eckhart might have been thinking that for the will and the act of willing to be abolished, it is the self that we must first eliminate. Interestingly, Eckhart has foreshadowed Heidegger’s project of doing away the will in thinking through his concept of *Gelassenheit*. But most importantly is the fact that Eckhart sees the fundamental connection in the formation of the self to the will and vice-versa. For instance, Eckhart says “we must learn to free ourselves of ourselves in all our gifts, not holding on to what is our own or seeking anything either profit, pleasure, inwardness, sweetness, reward, heaven or own own will.”¹⁰⁵ What does this passage mean in relation to the eradication of the self? Let’s recall the criticism lodged by Stump against Eckhart when she said that Eckhart holds a no-self view of denunciation. In her essay, Stump argues that such view, denouncing oneself altogether without remainder, is totally implausible. But as I argued against Stump, it is a category mistake

¹⁰⁴ Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, 53. Italics added.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 78.

to think of the self as synonymous to person. What was crucified on the cross was the person of Christ and not his self. But in the issue concerning total abandonment of the self as intimated by Eckhart, it is not clear if such an act, which for Eckhart is “one work which is *right* and proper for us to do,”¹⁰⁶ the will will totally disappear. Also, we may wonder as well as to what are we to do once the self has been eradicated, reducing it into nothingness? All the more we think about this, the more we see the complexity of Eckhart’s thoughts.

We should take into account some important considerations in appraising his seemingly conflicting claims and aporias. Eckhart speaks about the will that must be eliminated. But in what sense did Eckhart use the term ‘will’? Eckhart speaks about the will as the source of the production of self-interests and all other externalities which do not help the person forming himself in God. Eckhart insists that in order for the union to operate, one has to be actively passive, in Eckhart’s words ‘potential receptivity’.¹⁰⁷ What this active passivity means for Eckhart is that in the mode of passivity one is not merely just a passive witness to the arrival of the Godhead. But you are instead actively participating in it. This, of course is possible only when one has overcome oneself by having no self at all. Eckhart asserts, “he who has abandoned self and all things who seeks not his own in any thing, and does all he does without Why and in love, that man...is alive in God and God in him.”¹⁰⁸ For Eckhart the Godhead reveals himself to the ‘ground’ of the soul where the union takes place. And so, one is being aware only when one is able to get rid himself of himself. As Eckhart puts it, “your being aware of Him is not in your power but in

¹⁰⁶ Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, 83.

¹⁰⁷ Eckhart, Sermon 4, p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ Eckhart, Sermon 16, p. 125.

His. When it suits Him He shows Himself, and He can hide when He wishes.”¹⁰⁹ And since God is not a being unlike anybody else, the way to know Him is to “come to the state of being *nothing* in order to enter into the same nature that He is.”¹¹⁰ Again, Eckhart insists that this can only happen when the will is annihilated and “where you truly go out from *your* will and *your* knowledge, God with His knowledge surely and willingly goes in and shines there clearly.”¹¹¹

However, it is not only just through the annihilation of the self in order to be nothing that man can be with God. Another condition for the deification is what Eckhart calls ‘unknowing’. This unknowing is still within the bounds of the activity of relinquishment or *Gelassenheit*. In this sense, it is not only the will that is to be abandoned but knowledge as well which is the product of one’s intellectual faculty. All knowledge, according to Eckhart, are images. What this means for him is that any form of representational knowledge by virtue of its being a representation takes a form of an image or a copy of what is real and true. That is why Eckhart keeps on insisting that in order to really know God is to abandon all our knowledge of images and concepts. As Eckhart puts it, “unknowing is the way to be one with God. This means if not knowing that is made of images and such images hinder the soul to be in union with the One.”¹¹² Hence, anything that is an image or a concept and whatsoever are inadmissible in the process of knowing God since those are all forms of hindrances to the accessibility of the hidden essence of the Godhead. Eckhart unceasingly reminds his audience that “*anything* you put in the front of your mind, if it is

¹⁰⁹ Eckhart, Sermon 4, p. 58.

¹¹⁰ Eckhart, Sermon 7, p. 74.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Eckhart, Sermon 8, p. 77.

not God in Himself is – however good it may be – a hindrance to your gaining the highest truth.”¹¹³ It is due to our creatureliness that we have persistently create images or concepts which are only representations of things real. This is inevitable insofar as we are creatures endowed with intellectual faculty but as such falls short to account for what a thing really is in itself. Here, Eckhart rejects the principle of adequation wherein one can have truth by way of correspondence. For Eckhart, in relation to knowing God, such principle cannot be applied. The only way to get access to the inaccessible and ineffable is to exercise the mode of unknowing. This mode of unknowing is “not a lack but your chief perfection, and your *suffering* your highest activity.”¹¹⁴ In relation to knowing and creatureliness, Eckhart says, “where creature stops, God begins to be. Now all God wants of you is for you to go out of yourself in the way of creatureliness and let God be within you.”¹¹⁵

Given all this, there remains the problem concerning the will. On the account of detachment and deification, we find the necessity of cutting off from the person one of its essential properties – the self. Its destruction paves the way for the will to disappear giving an opening for the unwillingness and unknowing as well. These modes of human activity are required for deification to happen. In order for God to be in me and I in God, I must *will* to will the eradication of my selfhood through the process of relinquishment or detachment. This is also true for unknowing. One has to get rid of all intellectual impurities brought about by the images and concepts one has created for oneself. This kind of doing,

¹¹³ Eckhart, Sermon 14, p. 115.

¹¹⁴ Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, Sermon 2, p. 44.

¹¹⁵ Eckhart, Sermon 13, p. 110.

i.e., of non-doing is a precondition for one to know God not in the form of representations but in the direct and true revelation of God of Himself to oneself there in the locus of the union which Eckhart calls the ground.

However, behind this modes of deificatory process is the will that is at play. As I indicated in the beginning of this paper, the will, in general, has not been totally obliterated. Why is that so? When thinking about the abandonment of the will, it is quite implicit therein that one has to will to will such abandonment. In this sense, following Harry Frankfurt, we have structured our will such that we form a ‘first-order will’ and ‘second-order will’. This will to will in Frankfurtian sense is the second-order will. In the case of abandoning the will, it is not a simple willing that is required since what it tries to do is to abandon the thing that which gives the power to do so. It is like saying that I want to abandon my body but in abandoning it you need to get out from it which is extremely impossible. Applying this structural formation of our will to the case of Eckhart, we find that in our will to will the ejection of the will we have arrived at what Michael Sells calls “volitional aporia” which means according to him, “the more one wills to abandon her will, the more one is willing and is caught up in her will.”¹¹⁶ Sells continues,

The paradox of will in Eckhart here finds a new expression. To give up will (in the radical sense of no longer even willing to do God’s will, willing not to have sinned, willing blessedness, heaven, avoidance of hell) is to reach a point where the human will is voided and only the divine will remains a kind of mystical union of will.”¹¹⁷

Similarly, commenting on Heidegger’s attempt to

¹¹⁶ Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 166.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 167.

overcome the domain of will in thinking, David Lewin argues that the negation or submission of the will

Remain[s] within the economy of the will and are, to that extent, sublimations that serve merely to sustain or even extend, the currency of willful subjectivity. Where mystical theology rests upon the suppression of human will, it fails to radically undercut this structure.¹¹⁸

What they are trying to say is that in the end, Eckhart's view of the will in relation to the abandonment of itself fails to do so. As I argued in the previous section, the will remains operative in trying to detach oneself from the will and in the act of unknowing. I agree with Radler when she points out that what is being deserted is not the will in general but just a form of it, "[a]bandonment of the autonomous self implies the kenotic desertion of the *personal will* and *self-assertiveness* of the individual existence that automatically excludes the other."¹¹⁹ In the same vein, Lewin explains that Eckhart's "conception of detachment does not rest with the suppression or negation of the will, but makes the move to undercut entirely the structure of willful subjectivity."¹²⁰ Does this mean that since the will has not totally eradicated, deification is nullified? My take is that it is not. Deification remains plausible despite the failure to abandon the will in the process. I say so because elsewhere in his works Eckhart himself claims that deification can be attained in the here and now. Richard

¹¹⁸ David Lewin, "The Middle Voice in Eckhart and Modern Continental Philosophy", 41.

¹¹⁹ Charlotte C. Radler, "Living from the Divine Ground: Meister Eckhart's Praxis of Detachment," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* vol. 6 no. 1 (Spring 2006): 34.

¹²⁰ David Lewin, "The Middle Voice in Eckhart and Modern Continental Philosophy," 41.

Kieckhefer enumerates different forms of union with God, namely: (1) Habitual, (2) Ecstatic, (3) Unitive Life, (4) Abstractive, (5) Nonabstractive.¹²¹ Among these forms of union, according to Kieckhefer, Eckhart holds the (1) and (5).¹²² He explains “Eckhart did not view ecstatic or abstractive union with God as integral to the life of the soul, or even as a goal to be sought or particularly treasured. The state to which he invites his reader is that of habitual and nonabstractive union.”¹²³ The union with God can be attained in this lifetime and so because it is attainable in the spatio-temporal setting, then it is sound to think that the will does not in any way whatsoever nullifies the fulfillment of the union with God. On the contrary, the will remains operative in the process. And so, another issue arises. If deification is spatio-temporally possible, what happens to the will or to the person after reaching the union? In other words, in a post-deificatory event, does the will remain operative? It is clear that in a post-deificatory event, the will remains active. It is due to the fact that despite being deified, the person remains finite whose personhood is informed by his/her intellect and will. As long as a human being lives the will remains intact and working. The same applies to the intellect. Here lies Eckhart’s extreme radicalness when it comes to his notion of the union of God. It is, unlike, other forms of union experienced by mystics, Eckhart’s view of the

¹²¹ Richard Kieckhefer, “Meister Eckhart’s Conception of the Union with God,” *Harvard Theological Review* 71, no. 3-4 (October 1978): 204.

¹²² For Kieckhefer *habitual* union is “that God is present within the human soul and within creation generally, and that the moral task incumbent upon human beings is to heighten their awareness of God’s indwelling so that they may better manifest it in their lives” (208).

¹²³ Richard Kieckhefer, “Meister Eckhart’s Conception of the Union with God,” 224.

union requires a kind of active engagement with the world and its ordinariness. So in a post-deificatory event, when man has been trans-deified he finds the ordinary, may it things or objects or event, extraordinary.

Conclusion

What I have mapped out so far in this paper is the role of the human will in Eckhart's understanding of deificatory event. For Eckhart, in order to achieve deification one has to abandon the self and the will, so that God's will becomes one's own will. In abandoning the will as a faculty and the self as an essential human predicate, it paves the way for the entry to the union with God. For Eckhart these are the preconditions for deificatory event to occur. However, as this paper tries to show, it seems implausible for the will to be eradicated or totally annihilated in the process of abandonment. As argued, this is because the will, despite its limitation and defectiveness, remains an essential source of human action together with the intellect. And so, even in willing not to will or willing to abandon the will, it remains a form of willing which is a function of the will nonetheless. Moreover, despite the ineliminable condition of the will, it does not affect in sinister manner nor nullify the deificatory event. Further, the same will works in post-deificatory event.

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The Monster Underneath: Subversion and Ignored Realities in Literature in the Age of Imposed Normalcy

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Abstract: Aided by Michel Foucault's concept of panopticon and a discussion on the function of fairy tales and modern fiction, this paper aims to deal with the question: If human beings truly are civilized, then why do we glorify the Other in our literature? History has shown that human beings have been forming and developing societies for thousands of years. This development also constantly shows that societies have been dealing with or acting upon violent impulses in order to produce a certain level of normalcy; and considering how modern societies have relied upon surveillance and discipline to produce normalization, we could say that this process of production of the normal would also produce the unacceptable non-normal, the Other. However, from the fairy tales to the more modern forms of fiction, we keep on finding this paradox: the portrayal of the non-normal Other to the point of acceptability.

Keywords: violence, panopticon, society, prison, fairy tales, crime fiction

Introduction

According to Rene Girard,¹ human beings do not have the ability to stop violence and they instead resort to

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¹ Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1979).

blaming methods directed toward a singular object—a scapegoat—and in the process, legitimating and saving society from its own self. All throughout the years, from the primitive to the contemporary, humans have been establishing societies and civilizations. However, this does not automatically mean that people are capable of living and working together peacefully, hence the need for the formation of certain mechanisms that enable the creation and exploitation of outlets. This is usually more apparent in religion where the killing of a chosen Other restores harmony and reinforces the social fabric,² although recent literature also shows that human sacrifice was done to reinforce the current social structure and legitimize the people in power.³ However, the end product of the act is still the same: sanity. In ancient cultures we have the Aztecs practicing human sacrifice⁴ and other Austronesian cultures took part in that practice as well.⁵

The concept of the Other has been present and featured in ancient literature. In the Bible we have the sacrificial lambs and bulls from the Old Testament, while in the New Testament we have Jesus of Nazareth as the ultimate sacrifice. In Greek literature we have the seven men and women who are sent yearly to the labyrinth to be fed to the fearsome Minotaur,⁶ Medea's infanticide,⁷ and other stories. From the *Epic of*

² Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 8.

³ Joseph Watts et al., "Ritual Human Sacrifice Promoted and Sustained the Evolution of Stratified Societies", *Nature* 532, no. 7598 (2016): 228-231, <https://doi:10.1038/nature17159>.

⁴ Lizzie Wade, "Feeding the Gods", *Science* 360, no. 6395 (2018): 1288-1292, doi:10.1126/science.360.6395.1288.

⁵ Jan N. Bremmer, ed., *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*, Vol. 1 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2007).

⁶ Edith, Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942).

⁷ Euripides, *Medea And Other Plays*, trans. E.P. Coleridge

Gilgamesh to the fiction of present times, there is always the antagonist—however, in some cases, this Other is the main character of the story.

When the modern judicial system developed, and the process of discipline was integrated into society and punishment was sanitized,⁸ one would expect that our literature would follow suit. The Other should have been relegated to the status of an outlier or an outsider, but our literature shows that this is not the case. From the famous fairy tales written back in the 1600s to the more recent literature showing our need for release, it seems as if some things just never change.

This paper thus aims to discuss the question: If human beings are already civilized, then why do we still glorify the Other in our literature? It does this in two parts: a) an explanation of Michel Foucault's theory of Panopticon and b) a discussion on fairy tales and modern fiction.

Foucault's Panopticon

Foucault's Panopticon shows that the role of the observatory mechanism is to build a good, stable society.⁹ In *Discipline and Punish*, He discusses Jeremy Bentham's architectural creation and how the arrangement of its spaces abolished the collective to create a collection of individuals that are much easier to monitor and track.¹⁰ Rather than being a singular piece of architecture which encloses the people that need to be watched, the Panopticon has inched itself into the

(Stilwell: Neeland Media LLC, 2014).

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1975).

⁹ Ibid., 195-228.

¹⁰ Jeremy Bentham and John Bowring, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, Vol. 7 (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1843).

everyday lives of people unnoticed in the form of everyday institutions such as hospitals, schools, workplaces, prisons, and other seemingly harmless societal apparatuses.¹¹ The main idea behind this is discipline achieved through constant surveillance because the knowledge that one is continuously being watched forces one to start acting in certain ways.¹² Instead of behaving in such a way that would be questioned by society, one submits to what the institutions want without having to be thrown in a cell. In other words, constant recording and tracking of

¹¹ Cf. Foucault's definition: "What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus [*dispositif*]. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements. Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely. Thirdly, I understand by the term 'apparatus' a sort of—shall we say—formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function. *This may have been, for example, the assimilation of a floating population found to be burdensome for an essentially mercantilist economy: there was a strategic imperative acting here as the matrix for an apparatus which gradually undertook the control or subjection of madness, mental illness and neurosis.*" Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon, translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 194-195. (italics supplied)

¹² Foucault, 176.

everyday transactions and everyday movements become second nature in such a way that one acts in accordance to laws of discipline and punishment regardless of actual volition and will. But the Panopticon is not operated by any one individual; it is operated by whoever wants to, effectively making individuals be in constant surveillance of one another. The human being takes it upon herself to control and limit her own actions in the same way that she, through her constant surveillance of others, makes them act in such a way that society would find acceptable. Instead of a single, dictatorial type of institution like Big Brother from George Orwell's *1984*,¹³ the public becomes the Panopticon, although they are largely unaware of it.

One important characteristic of the Panopticon is the classification of the observed. The people in the different institutions have labels to make it easier for them to be seen and differentiated from one another.¹⁴ This individualization (subjectification) is beneficial for the institution's work of carrying out training and control of each subject while testing out different experiments at the same time.¹⁵ Moreover, it also exists to distribute individuals in a way that would utilize them best. Different methods of discipline evolved and the utilization of the individual has become a better way of preventing future mishaps than violent punishments.

The eruption of the disciplines also promoted something else—the idea of normalization.¹⁶ Those who are predictable are less scrutinized than the unpredictable such as children, the mentally ill, and criminals. The idea of the Other is unacceptable, that is why even those who are still somewhat normal are also

¹³ George Orwell, *1984* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1949).

¹⁴ Foucault, 218.

¹⁵ Foucault, 203.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

placed under scrutiny.¹⁷ For the system to keep on working, the human person must be as formulaic as possible. Those who are less conformist to norms and rules are schooled toward docility and complicity so as to be integrated or reintegrated into the society of normals.¹⁸ The point of the normalizing schema is that it is supposed to disappear into anonymity while each individual is highlighted to be as visible as possible, and these individuals subscribe to what the schema promotes as normal, acceptable, and real.¹⁹

This schema is applicable to different kinds of organizations because of the imposition of behavior that it enables, all the while permitting more and more individuals to be under the influence of fewer and fewer people.²⁰ The very nature of the schema itself highlights its role as a preventive measure, rather than a cure for possible infractions.

The idea of a Panopticon then, has evolved from a singular architectural project to a way of life and to life's project. There becomes a normalization of observation which in turn produces a conformity amongst individuals, all the while promoting that each individual becomes a productive member of society. The people conform because of cultural conditioning since birth and they have also learned that conformity means safety and security. There is no need for violence because the individuals themselves police one another. And how could they not, when in the end, it benefits society as a whole?

¹⁷ Ibid., 193.

¹⁸ Ibid., 182-183.

¹⁹ Ibid., 193-194.

²⁰ Ibid., 204.

From Fairy Tales to Modern Fiction

However, as was mentioned earlier, one would expect that our literature would follow suit—considering how the Other is even more “othered”. As society introduces and reinforces the concept of normalcy and creates a reality which disallows non-conformity, one would expect that even in the stories we read and the ideas we consume, we would enforce the same rules we enforced in ourselves. It is rather surprising that this is not the case, and it is even baffling that certain ideas that we shun in society becomes more acceptable, likeable even, when placed within the pages of novels and other forms of stories, like fairy tales and crime fiction.

Fairy tales have an important function that seems to be overlooked: they feature an assigned Other whose persistent presence also subtly subverts the idea of a stable and normalized self. Crime fiction and certain satirical pieces also provide a similar function: overt subversion. But the two converge in the third function: they show realities we shun in the real world because of how they mangle what we believe should be normal.

a) Stability, subversion, and the self

Fairy tales by definition are children’s stories which involve magical beings, amazings feats, and faraway lands, and in which conflict resolution lead to a happy ending. We typically see them as stories which involve princesses; or at least, princesses-to-be. For example, Cinderella²¹ was an orphan girl with a rich stepfamily who turned her into a helper, while Beauty²² was a

²¹ Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, “Aschenputtel,” in *Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, 7th edition (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1857).

²² Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont, “La Belle et la Bête,” in *Magasin des Enfants* (1756).

merchant's daughter. After a series of events, the antagonist or antagonists in the story are defeated, and the protagonist lives happily ever after. But fairy tales are not simply tales to entertain; they have their roots either in history or in culture. They do not just tell stories to show the listener that there is a rainbow after the rain, that improbable events can lead to a good outcome at least for the protagonist. For one, they have multiple uses. According to Zipes, "Fairy tales are informed by a human disposition to action—to transform the world and make it more adaptable to human needs, while we also try to change and make ourselves fit for the world."²³ This is why fairy tales focus on the acquisition of magical items or people which would enable the main character to resolve the conflict and to live a life of peace and contentment. For example, Aladdin was the son of a poor tailor and was what one would call a 'street rat,' and the magic lamp being in his possession gave him the ability to become someone he was not: a prince. The mermaid from the original Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid,"²⁴ and even from the Disney adaptation both wanted the same thing: legs, and they both went to the sea witch to acquire it. This is one of the main problems that human beings face not just back then but even in today's society: Many times, we feel like an outsider, an Other, and this is what pushes us to do things that we would not normally do. With power comes change, and with change comes acceptance.

This seems more in line with Foucault's discussion on the imposition of normalcy. We do not want to be the

²³ Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012).

²⁴ Hans Christian Andersen, "The Little Mermaid" (1836), http://hca.gilead.org.il/li_merma.html.

Other, and so we do everything in our power to make ourselves fit in.

However, as was mentioned earlier, fairy tales subvert the idea that we are perfectly sane and acceptable. The stability is not looked for in the community only; it is also looked for in the self. We noticed the evil stepmother, the witch, but no one noticed that Prince Charming fell in love with Snow White while she was a corpse, and that he was going to take her back to his castle when the apple got dislodged from her throat and woke her up. No one noticed that Cinderella was a liar who cried on her mother's grave for pretty dresses. No one found it disturbing that Beauty fell in love with an animal. No one found it creepy that the little mermaid sacrificed her world and would rather feel like she was treading on knives every time she took a step, just so she could be with someone she saw once. No one found it questionable that Aladdin lied his way into the princess's arms and poisoned his uncle. From the beginning the reader is conditioned to think that the main character is acceptable and could do no wrong. The reader and the listener end up condemning the assigned Other because they were portrayed to be shunned right from the start.

If we think about it, this is also what goes on in many of our current literary pieces. "Morality is seen pragmatically, as whatever keeps the system going, and individuals who depart from the norm are ignored or condemned."²⁵ It is the concept of the Other that scares the people accepted in society, and it scares us even more that the Other could be us. We know what would happen to us in a 'civilized' society such as ours if we are ever to commit rebellious acts and act as one of the outsiders. In a society that thrives on surveillance and

²⁵ James Roy King, *Old Tales and New Truths: Charting the Bright-Shadow World* (Albany: State U of New York, 1992), 2.

control, a society that upholds the idea of discipline and individualization, we know that people would find out if we put a toe out of line. What would happen to us then?

But we also see in our more modern stories forms of overt subversion of the idea that the self is stable and sane, and for some reason these people who would be considered as an Other are the ones we root for. In stories like *Fight Club*,²⁶ we have an unnamed character who is not even allowed to feel, and that is why he joins support groups where people are dying until he creates a club where people with mundane jobs and mundane lives could beat the living daylights out of each other. In that story, Tyler Durden, his other persona, is literally the type of person who does everything he can to make the people who live such boring, normal lives feel unsettled and disturbed. And we like him for it. In *A Clockwork Orange*,²⁷ we have the character of Alex who commits crimes from rape to murder, and we like him despite it. In *The Silence of the Lambs*,²⁸ the readers do not root for Clarice Starling; they root for Dr. Hannibal Lecter, the prim and proper psychiatrist-slash-cannibal. In *American Psycho*,²⁹ the readers root for Patrick Bateman, the high-society man who literally thought he was butchering people. In fairy tales, the main characters still look like decent people—at least, they are portrayed as such. The existence of the assigned Other makes the main character look better in comparison. However, in more modern forms of literature we see that it is blatant that the main

²⁶ Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (London: Vintage, 2006).

²⁷ Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (Cutchogue, N.Y.: Buccaneer Books, 1962).

²⁸ Thomas Harris, *The Silence of The Lambs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

²⁹ Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho* (New York, NY: Vintage Contemporaries, 1991).

character is the Other. What does it say about us then, when we still root for characters who are so blatantly horrible?

b) Ignored realities

Fairy tales, although at first glance look like stories for children, do not just talk about a single problem—they are complex stories about complex problems.³⁰ Fairy tales thrive in conflict; they show that the situation is never so simple that a main character would simply need to do a good deed for them to be incorporated in the community they want to call home. In many cases, the stories are unsettling. In many cases, it leaves one asking themselves, “What in the world did I just read?”

Once a fairy tale is read, the listener or the reader understands that there is something else beneath the story. The original fairy tales are typically morbid. Take Bluebeard³¹ for example. He goes out and marries a girl then takes her home and tells her to not go into a specific room then gives her the key, and when she does enter the room, he kills her. His last wife, Fatima, survives only because she was able to hold him off long enough for her brothers to come and kill Bluebeard for her. The story of Bluebeard is not just a scary story meant to terrify girls, so they would learn to be wary of the men pursuing them; the story of Bluebeard is one about a serial killer. “If we take any of the classical fairy tales such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella,” or “Beauty and the Beast,” we can trace them as best as we can to tales of antiquity, perhaps even prehistory, that concern rape, sibling rivalry, and mating.”³²

³⁰ Zipes, 8.

³¹ Charles Perrault, “Bluebeard,” in *Stories or Fairy Tales from Past Times with Morals* (Paris: Léon Curmer, 1697).

³² Zipes, 9.

This is exactly how fairy tales serve their purpose in the context of the Panopticon. Since the Panopticon in and of itself has been established as an institution that enforces and perpetuates normalcy and conformism without overt structures or mechanisms to do so, fairy tales serve as grim reminders of what is still normal beyond the Panopticon's influence. It is just that these fairy tales serve them up in a way that makes them more digestible and palatable to the sensitivities of modern times and people.

Simply put, fairy tales tell us stories that we do not normally want to hear. They tell us truths that cannot be talked about directly, that is why we hide them safely within the pages of our children's books. No one wants to know that there are disturbing issues that need to be talked about and dealt with. We value peace in our everyday lives; we value pretending that the homes we see around us are perfectly safe and warm, and that all the people we meet are perfectly sane.

According to King, "But above all traditional narratives have generated in certain readers and listeners the firm conviction that other worlds (i.e., patterns of experience) exist, the worlds where these stories take place, beyond the world in which most of us spend our lives, and that it is possible to enter these worlds and draw strength from them."³³ The realities that we see in fairy tales are most definitely the types of realities that we try to keep as far away from ourselves, but we still like to see them from time to time for some unexplainable reason. It would do us well to remember that these stories that discuss these disturbing themes that show us both the capabilities of the people around us and our personal need for acceptance in a society which we hope does not host these types of personalities

³³ King, 3.

are placed in children's storybooks. These are realities that we would usually shield our children from, but instead we willingly introduce them to safe versions of these. According to King, "Fairy tales and folk tales, which are so often grounded in the bizarre, the abnormal, even the supernatural, carry out certain creative functions as they summon their hearers out of the normal, the accepted, the rational, the modern to possibilities that are speculative but also experience-enhancing."³⁴

In crime fiction, we do the same thing. From the seats of the readers and the listeners all the experiences that could be had and all the doors that could be opened are opened and the contents of their rooms recognized. All they had to do was to open the book. In crime fiction, the readers learn about the serial killers and the plotted crimes and the cover-ups that take place. In *A Pocketful of Rye* by Agatha Christie³⁵ from the Whodunnit type of crime fiction, the reader learns about grudges and how the word 'family' can lose its meaning. In Clue-Puzzle the readers learn that the butler is rarely guilty; that the criminal is more often than not within the social group. In Hard-boiled the readers learn that the crime is more often than not, not the only one at work, that there is something else going on that lead to the main crime in the first place. Everyone is guilty of something. In Police Procedural the readers learn that people are not staying away from a life of crime because of their high moral ground but because they are scared of the law.

The real issue is shunned and considered as an evil, but once put in a story, it becomes more acceptable, even entertaining. We do not have to go out into the night and experience the crime itself to know what it is

³⁴ Ibid., 2.

³⁵ Agatha Christie, *A Pocket Full of Rye* (Fontana, 1953).

about; all we have to do is take a book and read. And this is because we all know what is going on out there, but we do not want to face that reality. This is one of the problems that people end up facing because of the structures of society.

Conclusion

One price of the enlarging of experience which I am postulating may be a certain reimagining of the nature of the human personality, the unsettling realization that it is not nearly so stable as had been imagined.³⁶

Both in fairy tales and in crime fiction, the readers get their own dose of a certain reality that, as was stated before, they do not want to face. People want the image of a safe community. People want stability, not the idea that somewhere, someone is lurking in the shadows, ready to do them harm. In fairy tales, the subtle subversion of the stability of the self allows the main character to get away with the wrongdoing because there is already someone else to blame. Acceptance into the community is still a big part of the story, if not its priority. However, in the more modern types of fiction, it is the main characters themselves who unapologetically break away from the rest of the relatively stable community, and they like it that way. There is a certain satisfaction that comes with knowing that there is someone else to blame for all the wrong things that are going on in the story, but there is also a certain satisfaction that comes with knowing that the Other in the self can come out and still turn out okay. In a society whose stability depends on the sanity of its members, one would think that the idea of being different would be unacceptable even in the literature

³⁶ King, 8.

we read. However, what it looks like is that the readers would want to see—deep down, more than their desire to see the restoration of order—they want to see the criminal win.

Perhaps what one could surmise from all these things is one thing: That even in the face of a society that thrives on imposing normalcy, we still have that urge to be the Other—and we want to be accepted despite being one.

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