

Diaspora, Empire, Solidarity:

Hope and the (Marginalized) Subaltern as rupture(s) and repetition(s)¹⁾

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“Di ba, Ate? Para akong toilet paper sa tindahan? Kung mabili ka, okay. Kung hindi, diyan ka lang. At pag nabili ka naman, pagkagamit sa iyo, tapon ka na lang. Hindi ka naman kinukupkop.” [Is it not true, Big sister, that I am like a roll of toilet paper in a store? If I am not sold, I remain on the shelf; if someone buys me, I get used up and thrown away afterwards. I am not cared for...], A Filipino migrant worker in Hong Kong, September 2005.

“Every declared rupture is an undeclared repetition.” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present

1) otes and References

1) Prepared for the Congress of Asian Theologians (V), “Sharing Hope for a New World: Summons to Asian Theology at the beginning of 21st Century,” Hong Kong, August 20-26, 2006. This paper will be the basis of my plenary presentation on the theme, “Sharing Hope in the Struggles of Marginalized Peoples.”

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 333.

“Then the man said, ‘Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.’” Genesis 32:28 (NIV).

Introduction: Struggle and Hope, Rupture and Repetition

At least three perspectives inspire and orient this paper. The first is from the Christian Scriptures: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh...” (Jn 1.1ff).

The second is from Karl Marx,

The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses... As philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its spiritual weapons in philosophy... The head of this emancipation is philosophy; its heart is the proletariat. Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat; the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality.

The third is from a Filipino migrant worker whom I shall call, Rowena,

“What has WTO got to do with your being a domestic helper?” Almost indignantly she replies: “Don’t you know that I am a product of this WTO? I never dreamed I would end up a domestic helper in Hong Kong. I had to leave my family because the salary I earned back home would not allow me and my family to live decently. I’ve been here for more than six years now. I want to return home but I can not. No job awaits me there... each time I try to start saving (part of my salary), the price of oil at home rises. I am stuck. I am a stock.

Turning to a migrant advocate, she said, “Di ba, Ate? Para akong toilet paper sa tindahan? Kung mabili ka, okay. Kung hindi, diyan ka lang. At pag nabili ka naman, pagkagamit sa iyo, tapon ka na lang. Hindi ka naman kinukupkop.” [Is it not true, Big sister, that I am like a roll of toilet paper in a store? If I am not sold, I remain on the shelf; if someone buys me, I get used up and thrown away afterwards. I am not cared for...]

The religio-moral dimension, if not challenge, of the theme of this session, “Sharing Hope in the Struggles of Marginalized Peoples,” is underscored by these three perspectives. We need to discover not only where this Word has become flesh but also where the hope that animates it lies; we need not only to find again the power of a transformative philosophy but also to articulate the conditions of its possibility as a transformative practice; we need not only to proclaim the legitimacy of the struggles of the marginalized but also to nurture and defend their struggles as the expression of their hope. At the same time, we need to be mindful that while these expressions, at their best, are ruptures that give birth to our desires for struggle and hope, our own repetitions of these expressions, at their worst, often times colonize the struggles and hopes to which we aspire.

In other words, part of what is at stake in sharing hope is finding new and better languages of struggle and hope: words that are good to eat; sentences that can fly. Part of the two-fold dilemma professional theologians face today is that what we have inherited as food no longer nourishes our individual bodies or for the political and theological body; and that what we offer to the hungry is hardly food at all.

Put cryptically, if philosophically, “every declared rupture is an undeclared repetition.” It is this problematique that I wish to explore with you this afternoon.

The First Rupture and Repetition: Location and Critique

The intellectual production, reproduction, and representation in which I am engaged—perhaps, in which all of us are engaged, as much as it may desire the sublime, is still the discourse of what one might call, a privileged male flaneur, if not bricoleur, however personally innocent, even if he aspires towards a Gramscian “organic intellectual.” Because all intellectual work is a passage through privilege, it is fraught with both dangers and possibilities: dangers because we are a species marked, not only by reason, or by freedom, but also by error; possibilities because the history of thought, read as a critical philosophy appreciative of “fallibility,” can become a “history of trials, an open-ended history of multiple visions and revisions, some more enduring than others.” As Sharon Welch notes, it was Michel Foucault who pointed out that

“If the history of the sciences is discontinuous—that is, if it can be analyzed only as a series of ‘corrections,’ as a new distribution that never sets free, finally and forever, the terminal moment of truth—the reason, again is that ‘error’ constitutes not a neglect or a delay of the promised fulfillment but the dimension peculiar to the life of human beings and indispensable to the duration [temps] of the species” (Sharon Welch 2001).

I hope to make clear in this paper that a recognition of location, not to mention positionality and maneuver, is not mere confession which would be good for the soul, but rather, methodologically decisive for the production and reproduction of knowledge as a passage to transformation—the creation of the fundamentally new which is also fundamentally better in the context of conflict and collaboration, continuity and change, and the creation of justice (Manfred Halpern 1985). Here, there is a great need to begin with an affirmation of self-critical accountability because “every declared rupture is an undeclared repetition.” Listen one more time to Foucault:

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them from their sleep. Perhaps, it would invent them sometimes—all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms.

Foucault continues:

The work of an intellectual is not to shape other's political will; it is, through the analysis that he carries out in his field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb peoples' mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions and on the basis of this re-problematization... to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role as a citizen to play).

Let me suggest that the discourses on hope and struggle that we professional

theologians draw from the world of the “everyday-life” (our individual practice) when brought together in symposia such as this one (in other words, our intellectual production, reproduction, and representation) becomes profoundly embedded in an intellectual idealism which is the dominant, if often taken for granted, perspective in most institutions of higher education throughout the US, if not the world. By intellectual idealism I mean, the surrender of the real to the concept, or in Christian theological language, mistaking the attributes of God for the Being of God. In this perspective, knowledge is transformed into abstract representations of the real—which is not to assert they are untrue—only that these representations are a different order of reality not to be confused with that which we claim they represent. Intellectual idealism is the surrender of the real to its concept. More important, perhaps, is that the institution and its intellectuals are often the privileged and autonomous repository of knowledge and truth from which other institutions in society draw their legitimation, if not guidance and inspiration.

In a different, though not unrelated context, Jacques Derrida (1983) has argued that this intellectual idealism, often believed to be autonomous from the ensemble of relations in which it is implicated, is rooted, in the *raison d'être* itself of the modern university, after which most divinity schools, theological schools, and seminaries are modeled, namely, the principle of reason which is construed as the ground that legitimates the university's existence (Lyotard 1984). Unfortunately, in the world of modernity, reason has often been understood, uncritically, as instrumental and technological rationality. That the triumph of this type of rationality has led to the eclipse of the gentler, more human passions of life, and therefore has become destructive of humanity and nature, has been argued persuasively elsewhere it is important only to be reminded of it here (Gadamer 1982; Heidegger 1977; Leiss 1972).

Invariably, this grand narrative of reason produces “meticulous rituals of power” (Foucault 1984) that are widely circulated, no doubt globally, and which reproduce the narrative itself, constituting thereby the political, economic, cultural, and social terrain known as modernity which has become the naturalized home of the university, the divinity school, the seminary, and their intellectuals. By “modernity,” I mean, taking Richard K. Ashley's lead, the “multifaceted historical narrative rooted in the Enlightenment, dominant in Western society, expressed in rationalist theory, and centering on the progressive unfolding of universalizing reason and social harmony via

science, technology, law, and the state” (Ashley 1987: 412). Where Ashley assists us in identifying the contours of this multifaceted historical narrative, Anthony Giddens provides a useful institutional cartography of modernity, arguing in *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) that there are four institutional dimensions of modernity: capitalism, i.e., capital accumulation in the context of competitive labor and product markets; industrialism, i.e., the transformation of nature or the development of the ‘created environment’; surveillance, i.e., the control of information and social supervision; and, military power, i.e., the control of the means of violence in the context of the industrialization of war. We need only look carefully—meditate if you will—at the dominant institutions of state and society: their rhetoric, rites, and procedures, their modes of demonstration, their rituals of authorization and legitimization, and their bureaucracies and hierarchies, to realize how profoundly and thoroughly infused they are, in varying degrees, with the practices that constitute the grand narrative of modernity. To this point, I will return later in this paper.

What is important to understand about the intellectual idealism that resides in the narrative of modernity is its logocentric disposition, i.e., the tendency to regard all thought, feeling, and action as grounded in some fundamental identity, principle of interpretation or necessary thinking substance which is itself regarded as unproblematic, ahistorical, and hence, in no need of critical accounting. Crucial to this logocentric disposition, as Ashley points out, is that the principle of interpretation and practice is conceived as existing in itself, as a foundation or origin of history’s making, not a contingent effect of political practices within history (Ashley 1987). Such a disposition has become a principle of articulation, if not a ground for domination, that creates and re-creates human life in its own image of the modern—to use a theological metaphor familiar to many of us.

Such a grand narrative has not gone unchallenged. John Dewey, Ivan Illich, and Paulo Friere have challenged it on pedagogical, political, and cultural grounds (Dewey 1897; Illich 1970; Friere 1970). In the last twenty years, two challenges have been particularly fascinating to me. On the one hand, Jacques Derrida, by rendering the principle of reason transparent, refuses to submit to its logocentric pretensions, and casts profound suspicion on the idealist construal of reason as the arche and telos of the university, and by extension, its intellectuals. In doing so, he problematizes not only these modern institutions of higher education, but also the moral responsibility in

society of its intellectuals (Derrida 1983). On the other hand, Jean François Lyotard proclaims his incredulity toward metanarratives noting that “the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus corresponds to the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it” (Lyotard 1984, xxiv).

The cultural and philosophical challenge posed by Derrida and Lyotard, in fact, have religio-moral, political, and pedagogical correlates. Several historically-significant examples may be noted here: i) Paulo Friere developed a pedagogy for liberation that repudiates modern educational practices for being sites of domination (Friere 1985); ii) Gustavo Gutierrez re-states the theological task as “critical reflection on the praxis of Christians in the light of the Gospel”—in other words, “theology as second step” (Gutierrez 1988); iii) women like Namsoon Kang, Kwok Pui Lan, Angela Wong, and Anna Mae Say Pa—in their own respective ways—have struggled with their male and malecentric counterparts, challenging not only the gendered production, reproduction, and representation of knowledge, but also insisting that only when the “woman question” is articulated as a constitutive fundamental problematique for epistemology, ontology, and politics can the possibility of new and better knowledge and being arise. Similarly, by summoning “Asian theology at the beginning of the 21st century” to share hope for a new world, this Congress of Asian Theologians, may be read, perhaps against its grain, and in the context of its multiple, not to mention contested and contesting perspectives, as aspiring to a similar cultural, philosophical, and theological challenge.

These historically-significant examples are, in fact, ruptures in the modernist narrative previously noted. While these challenges originate from different perspectives and have divergent destinations, they intersect, at least, at one critical point, the significance of which, by its being self-evident has often been seriously underestimated, namely, they insist, following Régis Debray, on both the rigorous and compassionate elucidation of their academic and conceptual assertions and the testing of these assertions against concrete, sensuous reality. However, it is also at this same intersection, that the dangers of repetition arise, not only at the level of the production and reproduction of knowledge, but also at the level of consumption and representation. It is not enough, for example, to assert the importance or desirability of struggle and hope as a necessary orienting principle for theology and politics; it is necessary not only to uncover the ways in which they may function as “empty

signifiers” on which particular aspirations for “the fundamentally new which is also fundamentally better” are inscribed, but also whether and in what ways, in fact, as “empty signifiers” they allow the migration of patriarchal, war-mongering, chauvinistic ideologies and sensibilities associated with some aspects of many Asian cultures on to the new signifiers of hope and struggle. For example, in an effort to avoid the inequities of over- or under- representation in conferences such as these, the notion of “proportional representation” has often been invoked. However, can such representations overcome the ghosts of a territorially-defined, nation-state-oriented identity that understands Asia to be limited only to this geographical area of the world? Such territoriality is the hallmark of the liberalism of a Thomas Hobbes or a John Locke—not particularly interesting or new—or even “Asian.” In other words, every declared rupture is an undeclared repetition. Nietzsche called it the “myth of the eternal return.”

The Second Rupture and Repetition:

US-led Empire in a post-September 11, 2001 world

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that the discourses of struggle and hope, particularly, of social and civil society movements in the so-called West or global North, were ruptured by what we now simply call “9/11.” Recall that the last quarter of the 20th century was marked by the real possibility of world peace: from perestroika in the Soviet Union, to the “Peace Dividend” in the US, to the apparent collapse of détente, the Berlin Wall, and of apartheid in South Africa—historic events which peoples’ movements help bring into fruition. Remember the optimism of “political solutions” migrating into the armed struggles of revolutionary movements. Note as well, the successes of the UN Summits, and the emergence of “global civil society” especially what has now come to be known as the World Social Forums: from Porto Alegre to Mumbai to Caracas, Bamako, and Karachi.

There is much truth to this wisdom that still remains to be fully excavated. Indeed, I would not be surprised if the majority of participants in this Congress of Asian Theologians, including those in the previous four congresses, understand that 9/11 by itself was a profound rupture—not only a breach of security, but a breach of

understanding, of civilizational proportions. The events following 9/11 that continue to reverberate to this day hint only at such a breach: the invasion of Afghanistan, the occupation of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and the "pre-emptive" US-led, global war on terrorism, are ruptures along the pathways to peace heralded in the last quarter of the 20th century. In the US, for example, principled pacifists are re-evaluating the political, if not philosophical adequacy or efficacy of pacifism in a world of globalized terrorism. Even a Richard Falk, known for his consistent critique of US hegemony, was prepared to bracket this critique in the face of the need for some kind of post-9/11 proportional response to the threat of terrorism. Only after the US-led war against global terrorism was unmasked as a US-led strategy for saving the empire in the occupation of Iraq and the lies about weapons of mass destruction, did he return to his critique that yet again, the US was primarily interested in the re-inscription of its hegemony in the post, post-Cold War era.

Five years later, such re-inscriptions are found in the US Patriot Act and its re-incarnations in other similar laws enacted by other states, in the redundant, if unproven security measures undertaken at ports of entry world wide, and, in the US today, the hundreds of millions of dollars spent—and will be spent—on such interesting border measures as building a fence—a Maginot Line or Berlin wall of sorts—between the US and Mexico to keep so-called undocumented aliens outside of the US, while at the same time criminalizing US citizens for employing or harboring undocumented workers as nannies, farm workers, and household helpers. One way to read the compulsive expansionism, the impatience with the UN and other multilateral frameworks of foreign policy, and the politics of perpetual war of neoconservatives like Elliot Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, John Bolton, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and R. James Woolsey—is as a refusal to surrender state and individual sovereignty as the cornerstone of modern liberal politics—the same principle that has migrated through Hobbes and Locke and that has given rise, if Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben are to be believed, to the Nazi concentration camp as the metaphor for sovereignty in our time. Such sovereignties have deepened and widened the marginalization of peoples of the planet and have radicalized the struggles for justice and peace. Indeed, marginalization today conjures images not only of exclusion but of incarceration; and struggles of hope, not unlike the trajectories of migration, move between the local and the global. To these issues I will return later in this paper.

Thus, every declared rupture is an undeclared repetition. Indeed, it would be an act of hubris if one accepts the short-sighted wisdom that September 11 is a one-of-a-kind, unrepeatable historical event that has changed forever the US and the rest of the world. Not only is it not unique in the context of the broader patterns of direct violence in our contemporary world of which Vietnam, Chile, Iran, the Congo, Indonesia, South Africa, Laos, Guatemala, El Salvador, Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Rwanda, and Sierre Leone are examples now easily forgotten; it is also not yet the “mother of all victimizations”—even though it touches all our lives and casts a long dark shadow on our planet. The US is not the only victim of terrorism. On September 11, 1973, Salvador Allende, the democratically-elected president of Chile, died while refusing to flee an air attack on the Presidential Palace by members of the Chilean armed forces supported by the US. September 11, 1973 not only gave us Augusto Pinochet, now an icon of terror, it allows us to understand the deeper significance of 9/11.

In fact, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the invasion and occupation of Iraq, an extensive debate has emerged over the prospects and conditions for organizing opposition to the various currents of US policy that advocate imperial rule. These currents share essential ends but differ on the means to achieving and consolidating a system of US hegemony. What is notable is the extent to which military power and the role of the state has come to the fore, a decade after the state's eulogy was being delivered worldwide. Prior to 9/11, an emerging focus was on globalization as the dominant form of imperial rule (often framed as globalization with adjectives: neoliberal, corporate, imperialist).²⁾

Still the reality of a US empire, if not a US-led empire, refuses to go away.³⁾

2) The academic literature on this is extensive. See for example, Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2003), David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), Gopal Balakrishnan and Stanley Aronowitz, eds., *Debating Empire* (London: Verso, 2003). Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* and *Multitude* offers one analysis that is notable for its extensive popular consumption as much as its message of a decentered system of imperial rule challenged by a rather amorphous formation they called “multitude.”

3) See generally Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean, eds., *Empire's New Clothes: Reading Hardt and Negri* (New York: Routledge, 2004). See especially Ernesto Laclau, “Can Immanence Explain Empire?” in Passavant and Dean, *Empire's New Clothes*, pp, 21-30. Cf. Mark Taylor, *Religion*,

All empires for the last five hundred years have had European roots.⁴⁾ The contemporary Euro-American history and imperial model begins with Christopher Columbus in 1492, followed by Vasco da Gama in 1498.⁵⁾ While the Western imperium began with Iberian Catholic colonization, the last four hundred or so years following the “sinking of the Spanish Armada” in 1588,⁶⁾ was dominated by the emergence of North-Western European empires, mostly from Protestant countries.

Often generally unacknowledged, the US has had a much longer imperial history dating back at least to the colonization of the Philippines in the 1890s. This imperial status is now being proclaimed unashamedly by many in the US government. But its imperial history is well in continuity with the classical European pattern which emerged at the end of the fifteenth century and through which Europe, and by extension, European immigrant states claimed the right to all civilizational contributions, sources and foundations. While there have been unique expressions of this imperial project, its fundamental structures retain their European foundational values.

Every empire, whatever their *raison d’être*, is fundamentally an articulation of power. Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem: “White Man’s Burden: The United States & the Philippine Islands, 1899,”⁷⁾ with its binary of benighted natives and do-gooder colonizing Westerners, is a classic example of an unrepentant, self-aggrandizing, paternalistic *raison d’être*. Though a British colonialist, Kipling urged America to pursue its colonial and imperial project, while justifying the effort as a great contribution to the colonized peoples of the Philippines:

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile

Politics, and the Christian Right: Post 9/11 Powers in American Empire (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), Sharon Welch, *After Empire: The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004).

4) H. J. de Blij, and Peter O. Muller, *Geography: Realms, Regions and Concepts*, 11th edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004), p. 40.

5) Vasco da Gama is famous for his completion of the first all water trade route between Europe and India. He set out from Lisbon, Portugal, on July 8, 1497, arriving finally in Calicut, India, on May 20, 1498.

6) While the war lingered on for at least a decade after 1588, Iberian power lost nautical and therefore also colonial imperial monopoly.

7) This was first published in an 1899 issue of McClure’s Magazine, and later in Rudyard Kipling’s *Verse: Definitive Edition* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1929).

To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Foucault has argued persuasively that power and knowledge are inextricably-related. He makes this point in the "Conclusion" of his book⁸⁾ where one discovers two voices: one posed as the interrogator, from the arrogant stance of one possessing all knowledge already, and the other from a respondent who is still only on the possible way to knowledge. The position of the former could be read as that of the Cercle d'Épistémologie,⁹⁾ and the latter as Foucault himself. A more interesting reading is suggested by William Connolly's critique of the interrogator's claim. He argues that one sort out the two voices present within Foucault himself, "recalling that both voices must be present in any text that seeks to speak to its own culture while contesting some of its patterns of insistence."¹⁰⁾

Following Connolly, this paper argues that the West at its imperial best, the US being a great example, arrogates to itself the power and privilege of the interrogator, consistently negating or demeaning the role of other peoples in civilizational, socio-cultural, political and economic history, while claiming this history as an exclusively Western possession.¹¹⁾ At the same time the West is very quick to hyperbolize the imperial powers, practices and ambitions of others, and to point out their pathologies: all that is good is of Western origin and all that is wrong is part of the larger tragic human condition which is external to the West. Here the logocentric predispositions of modernity noted previously have migrated to "empire:" "I think therefore I am" becomes "I conquer therefore I am."

8) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

9) *Ibid.*, p. 17.

10) William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 61. See, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 205.

11) Examples of this diminution include: the ante-Nicene fathers are quickly equated with Europe despite their Asian and African origins; although almost all the Greek knowledge of the Mediterranean comes to the West through Muslims, they are mostly negated or at best given perfunctory recognition.

Thus, to read the rest of our lives in terms of 9/11 is to overestimate the significance of this specific set of events, and to underestimate the complexity of the processes that gave rise to them, and the nihilistic responses to them of the institutions of capital, perhaps, the most repugnant of all, the US Government's economic stimulus package given to corporations to offset their losses as a result of September 11, 2001: \$1.4 billion for IBM, \$833 million for General Motors, \$671 million for General Electric, \$572 million for Chevron Texaco, \$254 million for Enron, at the same time that countless, if unnamable, victims have sought assistance to restore their broken lives, but who have yet to receive something from the Government.

Five years later and a thousand and one justifications for Homeland Security and a Christian Crusade against global terrorism, and, a war to vindicate George the Older, there is no doubt that the US is still moving through a profound crisis. The US response, particularly by its Government, is nothing less than an undeclared repetition of what Richard Slotkin has documented as the US mythology of moral regeneration through violence (Slotkin 2000). The mother of all ironies is that the desire to regenerate itself rests on an incarcerative model of life that first locks down the space for thinking, feeling, and acting; and, second, stops, freezes, and overwhelms time. Once space, time, and place are colonized—incarcerated, if not executed, as we saw in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, or the institutionalization of Homeland Security in the US legitimized under R.A. 3162, “The USA Patriot Act of 2001”, and now, the obsessive drive to go bring Iraq out of barbarism into civilization while refusing to bring New Orleans out of the ravages of Hurricane Katrina—once this happens—the moral/ethical and political life comes to an end. For ethics and politics require open space, and moving time, i.e., history—human beings actively engaged in the creation and recreation of their everyday lives.

The Third Rupture and Repetition:

Diaspora, Global Capital, and Strangeness—Dimensions of Marginalization

In his analysis of modern international politics and global capitalism, Michael Dillon notes

Our age is one in which...the very activities of their own states—combined regimes

of sovereignty and governmentality—together with the global capitalism of states and the environmental degradation of many populous regions of the planet have made many millions of people radically endangered strangers in their own homes as well as criminalized or anathemized strangers in the places to which they have been forced to flee. The modern age's response to the strangeness of others, indeed, the scale of its politically instrumental, deliberate, juridical, and governmental manufacture of estrangement, necessarily calls into question, therefore, its very ethical and political foundations and accomplishments—particularly those of the state and of the international state system. (1995 357-358).

In my context, this estrangement is clearly demonstrated by the migration of Filipinos, today numbering almost ten million, to other parts of the planet.¹²⁾ Such migrations, especially to the US could simply be the consequence of an ineradicable colonial experience—the inevitable “return” of the colonized to the home of his or her colonizer.¹³⁾ However, such a “journey,” particularly in the last twenty years could very well be the apotheosis of modernity, the effect of the fundamental transformations that are occurring under the sign of a globalizing transnational capitalism.¹⁴⁾ Perhaps,

12) Historically, Filipinos were always a “migrant” people: the “original” inhabitants of the islands later called Las Islas Filipinas were nomadic; the first “settlers” were “boat people” from the Malayo-Polynesian region. Under Spanish colonialism, the “natives” migrated to Europe, especially to Spain; under US colonialism, to the US. In the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, migration and immigration to the US, despite a painful Philippine-US war, was virtually unbroken. In fact, Filipinos, whether prominent or not, were part of the woof-and-weave of American life: Filipinos in the Hawaiian pineapple and sugar cane plantations, Filipinos claiming World War II veterans benefits promised by the US government in return for their role in the USAFFE, Filipinos going to the US to study, Filipinos joining the US military, Filipino nurses, Filipinos in exile in the US. Recent studies estimate that Filipinos are now in over 184 countries. The numbers are dramatic: North America: 4.3 million as migrants, immigrants, and undocumented; Europe: 1,000,000; Middle East: 1.6 million of which 900,000 are in Saudi Arabia; Australia: 130,000; Africa: 50,000; Oceania: 63,000; South America: 3,000; Asia 1.3 million of which 120,000 are in Hong Kong (out of 250,000 foreign domestic workers in a city of 7.6 million).

13) That the Philippines was the only “official” colony of the U.S. (although Puerto Rico and Hawaii could certainly make such a claim as well) suggests a significant difference in the dynamics of Filipino migration and immigration to the U.S. vis-à-vis other immigrations. Filipinos, by definition, are not immigrants, but rather, members, if not citizens, of the U.S. nation (though definitely the “colonized”). Our identities, in other words, are constituted primarily in relation to U.S. colonialism, not, as other immigrations are, in terms of the relation to both the “homeland” and the “host country.”

14) Dillon, “Sovereignty and Governmentality,” pp. 323-368. See also Sarah Anderson, ed., *Views from the South: The Effects of Globalization and the WTO on Third World Countries* (San

the most innovative of all metaphors deployed for such fundamental transformations has been that of turbulence, suggesting by its use not mere motion, activity, or movement, but disruptive, unpredictable, volatile speed.¹⁵⁾ Of migration, Nikos Papastergiadis notes:

The flows of migration across the globe are not explicable by any general theory. In the absence of structured patterns of global migration, with direct causes and effects, turbulence is the best formulation for the mobile processes of complex self-organization that are now occurring. These movements may appear chaotic, but there is a logic and order within them...As Manuel de Landa noted, 'a turbulent flow is made out of a hierarchy of eddies and vortices inside more eddies and vortices...'¹⁶⁾

Epiphania San Juan, Jr., writing on the "condition of the Filipino," particularly in the US, observes of their contemporary experience as one of a people dispersed, displaced, and dislocated.¹⁷⁾

So significant has this experience of displacement, dislocation, and dispersal become in the last quarter of this century that some Filipinos have come to refer to this, not so inaccurately, as a "Filipino Diaspora," much in the same way that "Diaspora" has been used in the Jewish and Afro-American contexts. This experience encompasses immigration, migration, and exile—from overseas contract workers (OCWs) to political exiles, from the so-called "undocumented" to the variously "documented" (students, businesspeople, overstaying tourists, "regular immigrants," and "expats")—under conditions ranging from the voluntary to the coercive, to the oppressive.¹⁸⁾ In fact, such an experience has called forth—provoked/invoked—the vocabulary, in addition to what has already been noted, of estrangement, border, and hybridity, as well as of subjectivity, identity, and, agency, particularly under the conditions of transnational

Francisco: Institute of Food and Development Policy, 2000).

15) Paul Virilio, *Open Sky*, trans. Julie Rose (London: Verso, 1997).

16) Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp. 3-21.

17) Epiphania San Juan, "Fragments from a Filipino Exile's Journal," *Amerasia Journal* 23: 2 (1997):1-25.

18) William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1: 1 (1991): 83-99; Peter Stalker, *Workers without Frontiers* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000); Khachig Tololyan, "Re-Thinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment," *Diaspora* 5: 1 (1996): 3-36; Grace Chang, *Disposable Domesticity: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000).

capitalism.¹⁹⁾

It is important to note that the experience of “Diaspora” is not about the dispersal, displacement, and dislocation only of those “outside” the homeland. In fact, Diaspora, dissolves, not only the boundaries of “inside” and “outside” (as geopolitical, geostrategic, and territorial construals of state and society tend to require), but also their epistemological and ontological foundations. To speak of a Filipino Diaspora today is to speak of a specific human condition of dispersal, displacement, and dislocation at the substantive, methodological, metatheoretical, and political/institutional levels. This has produced new forms of belonging and identity, not to mention novel understandings of contemporary politics and culture. They evoke and provoke images of “border crossings” as well as invasions. They reveal global de-territorializing trajectories as well as local re-territorializing surges or insurgencies. They underscore contradictions and antagonisms, while intensifying the asymmetries, of political, economic, cultural structures and processes.”²⁰⁾

In this sense, the Filipino experience of Diaspora is not exceptional. William Safran, for example, using the Jewish Diaspora as a model, has identified a number of defining features of Diaspora that resonate with the Filipino experience:

dispersal from an original “center” to two or more “peripheral” places;
retention of a “collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland”;
belief that they are not and perhaps cannot be fully accepted into their host society;
belief that they or their descendants would or should eventually return to their homeland when conditions are appropriate;
collective commitment to the maintenance or reestablishment of their homeland;
collective consciousness and solidarity “importantly defined” by this enduring relationship with the homeland.²¹⁾

However, the name itself may reflect a fundamental transformation in the “condition of the Filipino.” For while the experience of Filipino migration and immigration is not new,²²⁾ the speed and scope, not to mention, the character, of this movement, has certainly accelerated alongside the transformations in the structures and processes of

19) See, for example, Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration*, passim.

20) Ibid. See also Nevzat Soguk, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

21) Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies,” pp.83-84.

22) Pyong Gap Min, ed., *Asian Americans* (London: Sage, 1995).

global capitalism itself.²³⁾ While the dynamics of Filipino migration and immigration continue to reflect the political, economic, and cultural character of “traditional” immigration, i.e., the centrality of the “homeland” in the identity of the immigrant, these dynamics have been thoroughly recast by the experience of modernity: (i) the separation of time and space (including the emptying of time and space), (ii) the development of disembedding mechanisms, and, (iii) the reflexive appropriation of knowledge.²⁴⁾ One could say, in this context, that “Diaspora” is, in fact, a creature of modernity. The very dynamics of modernity, which is unavoidably a “globalizing” experience, create the very reality of “Diaspora.”

However, as a creature of modernity, “Diaspora” is not only a “condition” that has gained some level of autonomy at the global level which is sustained by the movements and flows of capital, people, good, information, ideas, and images, and which alters the conditions under which communities and identities are enacted.²⁵⁾ “Diaspora” is a social construction constituted by those who are “in Diaspora,” by the actions and/or activities of these individuals and communities situated in different parts of the world. In short, “Diaspora” is also, and fundamentally so, the “practice of subjects,” the imagined transnational relations between and among the minority and its homeland, as well as its counterpart overseas communities throughout the world.²⁶⁾ James Clifford has noted that these relations include cultural, economic, and social linkages evident in the circulation of people, money and consumer goods, and

23) The term “global capitalism” used throughout this essay is intended to be imprecise. My concern is less with a substantive definition of capitalism—clearly an impossibility given the plural forms of capitalism today—and more with specifying a region of discursive practices characterized by the globalizing trajectories of modern capitalism. In fact, it might be argued that “transnational capitalism” could very well be the more useful term to describe the many capitalisms at the end of this century. By “globalization” I refer to those processes of profound structural transformation that have gained some level of autonomy at the global level, which sustain the movements and flows of capital, people, goods, information, ideas, and images, and which are altering the conditions under which communities and identities are enacted. See Michael Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990). Cf. Yoshikazu Sakamoto, ed., *Global Transformation: Challenges to the State System* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1994); Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.)

24) Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 16ff.

25) Anthony King, “Architecture, Capital, and the Globalization of Culture,” in Featherstone, *Global Culture*, p. 397.

26) Jonathan Okamura, *Imagining the Filipino American Diaspora: Transnational Relations, Identities, and Communities* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

information and ideas though not necessarily in reference to their original homeland.²⁷⁾ “Diasporas,” in other words, produced and reproduced as they are by “collective human agency” which are at once multiple and polyarchic,²⁸⁾ also sustain what we call globalizing capitalism.

At the same time, “Diasporas” are more than creatures of modernity. The very experience of dispersal, displacement, and dislocation, in the context of the trajectories of globalization noted earlier,²⁹⁾ have created among other things, conditions of hybridity and contingency, of contradiction and antagonism, which are articulated, not only in academic life, but also in political, economic, and cultural life.³⁰⁾

In fact, the (Filipino) historical example of “Diaspora” in this paper is a fundamental rupture in at least three areas important to any theory and practice of politics. First, it raises a critical question about the nature of the social totality of which we are a part. In fact, political, epistemological, and disciplinary boundaries are constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated especially in terms of the long held correspondence among nation, culture, identity and place.

Second, the reality of “Diaspora” also raises a question not only about subjecthood, but also about subjectivity. This is the question of “the Subject”: not only who the subject is, but also what being a subject entails (Cadava, Connor, and Nancy 1991). This is particularly important since the very reality of a “Diaspora” ruptures any notion of a “unitary” subject—even a “collective human subject”—which, modern institutions require, if not presuppose (Critchley and Dews 1996).³¹⁾ The plurality of subjects and subjectivities pre-supposed by a “Diaspora” directs us not only to the question “What is to be done?” but also to the questions of “who we are, what we hope for, and

27) James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 3 (1994): 306.

28) Roger Rouse, “Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism,” *Diaspora* 1: 8 (1991): 11.

29) This includes those processes of profound structural transformation that have gained some level of autonomy at the global level, which sustain the movements and flows of capital, people, goods, information, ideas, and images.

30) Charles Lemert, ed., *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993, 1999).

31) See also, Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006).

where we go?" In short, "What does it mean to be a people?" under the conditions of "Diaspora." By posing the issue as a question of community, it places the normative and ethical task at the heart of the struggles for transformation, and in the context of both hope and hopelessness.

Third, the reality of a "Diaspora" identifies, indeed, it situates the locus of struggle and hope at the intersection of self, other, and world. In fact, starting from the perspective of "Diaspora" situates the question of hope within a relational, and therefore, political, whole. This is of no small significance. Locating the question at the heart of a peoples' life, in my language, their cultural practices—defined broadly as those concrete, sensuous realities embodied in rhetorical forms, gestures, procedures, modes, shapes, genres of everyday life: discursive formations and/or strategies, if you will, which are radically contingent arenas of imagination, strategy, and creative maneuver (Ryan 1989)—not only challenges the narrow confines of conventional understandings of struggle and hope, but also foregrounds their most comprehensive point of departure: a peoples' pluralistic, plurivocal, and therefore, always and already contradictory, antagonistic and agonistic histories: political, economic, aesthetic—expressed in their stories, songs, poetry, arts; embodied in their political struggles; articulated in their economic institutions, safeguarding, thereby, the adequacy and relevance of our intellectual aspirations. Another way of stating the point is to suggest that "Diaspora" ruptures the pretensions of modernity's appetite for intellectual idealism as the foundation for human thought and action, and re-positions them in them as articulations of the non-necessity of the present. In other words, struggle becomes the constitutive ground for hope; and hope transforms the past and present into creatures of the future.

If rupture is the defining character of "Diaspora," then strangeness, i.e., the Stranger, the Other, is its religio-moral challenge. For, indeed, "Diaspora," as a creature of both modernity and postmodernity,³²⁾ radicalizes the experience of the Stranger or of

32) The modern-postmodern divide is a profoundly contested one. By placing them in proximity, as I do here, I want to suggest that these structures of meaning are best understood in both their continuities and discontinuities of method, cultural form, and political practice. Thus, I understand modernity and postmodernity less as periodizations and more as "conditions," "sensibilities," and "practices." Helpful guides to navigate the sometimes treacherous, often exhilarating, divide include Jencks (1991), Cahoon (1996), and Hall and Gieben (1992). My own orientation, sensibility, and location are probably more congenial with the theory and

Otherness in our time; and the existence of the Stranger in our midst raises for us the problems, prospects, and possibilities of fundamentally new and better forms of knowledge and being. Strangeness, not to mention marginalization, it seems, is the condition of possibility for community. It is its constitutive outside. At the same time, if the Stranger is the constitutive outside, then, its constitutive inside is hospitality. This I take to be the philosophical significance of Jacques Derrida's January 1996 Paris lectures on "Foreigner Question" and "Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality." Because hospitality is that which "arrives at the borders, in the initial surprise of contact with an other, a stranger, a foreigner" it ruptures the boundaries—the borders—that seek to contain migration and immigration in the name of state sovereignty, if not national integrity. Indeed, in the Biblical tradition, the existence of the Stranger is always accompanied by the challenge of hospitality towards the Stranger. Who the Stranger is, is the socio-analytical question; how we treat the stranger in our midst is the ethical demand. The danger of repetition, is that the notion of hospitality itself requires the existence of strangers "in need of hospitality" dictating, therefore the creation of normative spaces that exclude before they include. In other words, the exclusionary logics of, for example, race, gender, class, migrate on to the structures of "hospitality" without being overcome or transformed.

The Fourth Rupture and Repetition:

Resistance and Solidarity—Again, a Filipino Example

Given the previous discussion of Diaspora, global capitalism, and strangeness, the importance of solidarity as a creature of hospitality becomes fundamentally important for struggle and hope. It is quite clear that the concept of solidarity that we inherited, say from the French Revolution onward was understood largely as a normative practice shaped by the metaphor of "solidity," that is, to be "in solidarity" meant being "the same," identical, unified, with the Other. Philosophically put, one might say, the project of solidarity was about the theoretical and practical resolution of the "one and the many" in favor of the One (whatever that One was perceived to be). However, it is precisely the "effect" of Diaspora, not to mention the challenges of postmodernity or postcoloniality, if not globalization, that renders the metaphor of solidity problematic—

practice of postcoloniality than with modernity or postmodernity.

for “all that is solid melts into air.” Thus solidarity either becomes a pathway to an open future (in other words, a genuine rupture) or it deteriorates into a fortress to which one must retreat in order to prevail over what is perceived as regrettable plurality that accompanies Diaspora, and the consequent “loss of solidity” in human life (in other words, a regrettable repetition).

This loss, which is both danger and possibility, rupture and repetition, raises a number of issues not only for the future of solidarity, but also for the existence of efficacious struggle and hope among the dispersed and the marginalized of our world. I believe there is not one but many futures for solidarity and therefore for struggle and hope—in particular, of solidarity as a fundamental question of identification and strategic practice in these struggles. These issues are: i) the character and location of the political, i.e., the nature of the social totality, ii) whose “solidarity” is being assumed and under what conditions, i.e., the question of the subject and of subjectivity, and iii) the languages (or discourses) of solidarity itself.

The first cluster of issues is tied to the location of the “political”; and, that precisely because this is so, it is today no longer possible to simply assume that the state (or the system of states) and “civil society” are the primary if not the exclusive, loci of politics, and, that the “political” which has always been more than government, governance, or the state and civil society, needs to be re-thought in order that the questions of solidarity can be re-thought as well. The restructuring of labor on a global scale (of migration and immigration), for example, does, in fact, raise the question not only of the nature of social totality, but, of the character and location of the “political.” As well, the discourses around, for example, the revitalization of civil societies, of ecological and environmental politics, as well as of gender, race, and class, are significant also for this reason.

The second cluster of issues is tied to the reality that it is today no longer possible to simply assume that demands worthy of solidarity are mainly those that have political (understood as “statist” or counter statist) consequences or “pay-offs,” but, rather, are about the demands for recognition (including survival) by those who have been historically mis-recognized, indeed, excluded from “solidarity” efforts: because their demands were not immediately “political;” and that, any notion of solidarity must include these demands as part of its self-understanding. This is the significance of discourses that raise the question of the marginalization and proletarianization of peoples of color, the pauperization and feminization of poverty, the sexual division of

labor, not to mention sexual slavery, the commodification of sex, domestic violence, and enforced prostitution and trafficking of women and children, for the understanding and definition of solidarity. These peoples are the ones excluded, or mis-recognized, and made to pay for the costly obsessions and rituals of repetition of capitalist-led globalization.

The third cluster of issues insists that it is no longer possible to make facile assertions, as modern epistemologies and ontologies do, about the separation, say of knowledge and power, reason and desire, fact and value, language and institutions; that, in fact, what appears to be abstract, in reality, are articulations of actual relations of ruling—beyond the fact that they may also be mere ideological legitimations of certain ruling elites. Thus, there is a need to attend today to the very language, that is, the discursive formations and strategies, of solidarity itself—as part of the task of re-thinking the political and revolutionary project. The point, of course, is not only that language is not innocent, nor that who speaks, and whose language is spoken, shapes the political agenda; but also, that language is productive: it produces an effect. Equally one must note, that language can no longer be made to bear only the burden of oppression or the promise of liberation, that is, language does not only signify, it often becomes empty or floating signifiers which can be made to carry meanings chosen by particular communities.³³⁾

Moreover, I believe there are at least four other areas, articulated by a wide range of political, economic, cultural, and social analysts, that invite further reflection. While not obvious, these substantive areas are crucial to the theory and practice of solidarity, especially if solidarity is understood, not simply as unity and identity with a particular project, even a revolutionary project, but as a question of identification and strategic practice:

the impact of current population movements on the prospects of the national state, and especially the fragmentation of national identity and the rise of multiculturalism;

the impact of feminist analysis and issues of gender on the nature of solidarity itself, as well as on the national projects, identities and communities, and the role of gendered symbolism and women's collective self-assertion;

33) The example here is simple, even as it is profound. It will not do to insist that “solidarity” can mean only one thing since “solidarity” has been used by government as well as by revolutionary movements. The task is to discover the “discursive context” of the language, and to “intervene” appropriately, where appropriateness is defined by the normative context.

the predominantly normative and political debate on the consequences for citizenship and liberty of civic, ethnic types of nationalism, and their relations with liberal democracy, particularly in terms of the multiple Diasporas in the world today, of which the Filipino Diaspora is one example; and

the impact of globalization trends and of “postmodern,” postcolonial discourses and practices, on solidarity vis-à-vis national sovereignty and national identity.

Moreover, the future of solidarity as a conjunction of discursive practices, may require at least, three discursive “tasks.” First, discourses and practices of solidarity need to continue to recognize, affirm, and articulate different ways of producing and reproducing knowledge (solidarity as epistemology): here, not only is this about situated knowledges and partial perspectives, but also of subjugated and insurrectionary knowledges and agents of knowledges—and the ways in which they are related. Even more important, however, is the need to consistently focus, among other things, on the fundamental situatedness and partial character of our ways of organizing thinking, feeling and acting; and, on the necessity, if not desirability, of rethinking “the relationship between knowledge and emotion and construct[ion of] conceptual models that demonstrate the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional relationship between reason and emotion.” On face value, this may be a straightforward, even simplistic, if not obvious, statement about the nature of knowledge. However, when one understands that these claims are set in the context of the historical pretensions about the universality of (masculinist) reason as opposed to say, feminist desire, and of the reality that emotion is associated with subordinate groups—particularly women—and deployed to discount and silence those realities deemed to be irrational, then one begins to realize how these epistemologies actually explore patriarchal myths about knowledge.

Second, discourses and practices of solidarity need to continue to recognize, affirm, and articulate different modes of being (solidarity as ontology): here, not only is this about thinking, feeling, and acting-as relational practices, but also about “volatile bodies,” i.e., of re-figuring and re-inscribing bodies, of moving through and beyond the conventional divide of gender as socially-constructed, on the one hand, and of sex as biologically-given, on the other hand, to “our bodies our selves.” Some public intellectuals have suggested that the “male (or female) body can no longer be regarded as being socially inscribed.” “As a socio-historical ‘object’,” “the body can no longer be confined to biological determinants, to an immanent ‘factitious’, or unchanging social

status. It is a political object par excellence; its forms, capacities, behaviours, gestures, movements, potential are primary objects of political contestation. As a political object, the body is not inert or fixed. It is pliable and plastic material, which is capable of being formed and organized.” This profound insight is shared by others, who argue that the body is an “inscribed surface of events.” Thus, the body becomes “malleable and alterable,” its surface inscribed with gender, appropriate behaviour, standards of, for example femininity. The significance for solidarity of such an understanding cannot be underestimated. For, this means, not only that solidarity for example, is about “imagined communities” or “community sentiments of solidarity,” but that its “what, when, where, and how” are inscribed-written on, embodied—in our very bodies.

Third, discourses and practices of solidarity need to continue to recognize, affirm, and articulate different empowering practices (solidarity as politics): here, not only is this about the importance and power of self-definition, self-valuation, nor of self-reliance and autonomy, but also about transformation and transgression, of finding safe places and voices in the midst of difference (yet another name for “plurality”), and of making the connections between these differences. This is illustrated very well by a public intellectual, who, in a different, but not unrelated context, notes,

...third world women’s writings on feminism have consistently focused on (1) the idea of the simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism; (2) the crucial role of hegemonic state in circumscribing their/our daily lives and survival struggles; (3) the significance of memory and writing in the creation of oppositional agency; and (4) the differences, conflicts, and contradictions internal to third world women’s organizations and communities. In addition, they have insisted on the complex interrelationships between feminist, antiracist, and nationalist struggles...

The fifth and Final Rupture:

Resistance and Truth—How can the Subaltern Speak?

The fifth and final rupture and repetition returns us to the conversation with which I began: back to the intellectual production, reproduction, and representation of intellectuals such as ourselves. For as Derrida put it aptly, if cryptically, “Today, how can we not speak of the university?” (Derrida 1983, 3). To be sure, I am profoundly

skeptical about the capacity of our modern institutions of higher education, including divinity schools, theological schools and seminaries to exercise a truly consistent transformative role in the societies that still value these institutions of higher education and its intellectuals as sites of legitimation and meaning, especially if these institutions insist on their commitment to the principle of reason and if they refuse, or are unable, not only to render this principle transparent and therefore open to transformation, but also—and this is directly related to the commitment to the principle of reason—if they hesitate to open themselves to other *raison d'être*, other destinations that might lead into a friendlier, gentler, happier future. Unfortunately, human history of the last hundred years, particularly of its so-called underside, is an unrelenting witness to the seriously flawed and dangerous practices and consequences of an undisciplined, unbridled principle of reason, not to mention, modernity itself.

Yet, I do not believe that the modern university—and those institutions modeled after it—will wither away more so that they should. For these institutions in their medieval and modern form have always represented society: its “scenography, its views, conflicts, contradictions, its play and its differences, and also its desire for organic union in a total body” (Derrida 1983, 19). It will not do, therefore, to disqualify these modern institutions of higher education and their intellectuals from playing a religio-moral role in society. In fact, these institutions—such as we know them—are more necessary than ever, precisely because they are already implicated in society both as sites for practices, not just modern, that discipline human experience, as well as a *topos* for thinking, feeling, and indeed, acting, and, as sites of contestation, of contending perspectives, commitments, values, about the good, the true, and the beautiful. As both *topos* and intersection, they are religio-moral events that require articulation in order that choices can be made about the future, particularly a future of struggle and hope.

What are some of these practices that require articulation, precisely because they are ruptures in the logics of location and critique, Diaspora, and empire?

First, there is the practice of deliberation. Deliberation cannot be reduced to mere speech. It encompasses the whole range of participative practices, which Jürgen Habermas, when reminded of his flirtations with “ideal speech situations,” is pointing to

in his theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984-1987). It is Paulo Friere's dialogics of liberation, and John D. Caputo's radical hermeneutics (Caputo 1987; 2000). These practices pre-suppose a recognition and affirmation not only of the plurality of human life, celebrating difference as constitutive of community, but also of meaningful and direct participation in the governance of the community—at whatever level governance is called for. As Charles Taylor puts it, though in a different context: "...it is not enough that a given regime take account of my values, which it might do without thought or action on my part...what is important is that I play a part in a common deliberation" (Taylor 1980, 79).

This practical activity of participation undermines the statist, bureaucratic, and hierarchical logics of modernity. Indeed, such practices become sites of resistance and solidarity, articulating models of conviviality that are radically democratic and participatory, republican as much as cosmopolitan, and which challenge the structures of violence, unrepentant power, and privilege. Here, "community" is less the aggregation of groups based exclusively on racial, gender or class identities or solidarities, and more the sites where human beings, if not citizens, recognize and affirm their mutual obligations and relationships while simultaneously accepting norms of tolerance and radical inclusion (Young 1990; Williamson, Imbroscio, and Alperovitz 2002). These practices are retrieving the meaning and significance of popular participation, which have been largely eclipsed by the logic of modernity (Unger 1975; Macpherson 1962; Laclau 2005). Retrieval, of course, is not retreat or mere repetition, nor simply imitation (Mimesis), but appropriation (Ereignis), which is an historical event of mediation (Ricoeur 1981).³⁴⁾

Second, there is the practice of creating, nurturing, and defending what Hannah Arendt called "the common," that is, the public realm (Arendt 1958). Contrary to those modernist practices that reduce the common to a pre-given structure of reality, or even to an ethnocentric project given ontological or universal status through its imposition worldwide, the common is the space for difference carved out by deliberating communities as they seek meaningful consensus. By being committed to the retrieval and preservation of the common, particularly a global common, one casts suspicion on the logocentric and totalizing pretensions of the modernist narrative and undermines its hegemony. It also redefines the common beyond the conventional notions of

34) See Footnote 38.

territoriality, recognizing not only our shared context or our profound pluralistic existence, but also of our human specie identity. By identity I do not mean some kind of universal “gattungswesen,” but rather, a kind of radically inclusive cosmopolitanism that is more than formal representations of ethnic, gender, or class identities—what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls a “contaminated cosmopolitanism” (2006). For diversity is not primarily about “representation” or even “identity.” Rather it is about (plural) “locations”, and (multiple) identifications—not some colorful polycentric liberal multiculturalism advocated, say by a Robert Stam, but a “radical multiculturalism” that, in the words of Spivak, “thinks of ‘culture’ as the name of a complex strategic situation in a particular society—residual moving into the dominant as emergent.” Once shifted on to this “ground,” the critical question becomes, “How should struggle and hope look like given our multiple locations and identifications?”

Third, there is the practice of utopia. We are reminded, “Where there is no vision, the people perish…” (Proverbs 29: 18, NIV) This vision, is not a description of the future, rather, it is an orientation in the present, a point of entry, a beginning, a departure, but not a final solution or goal. This is not a deficiency, however. Such a practice celebrates the simple fact of our historicity that is always in the process of being created and re-created towards the common goal of deliberating communities. While this orientation is mediated through the limits of these institutions of higher education, and of the communities that constitute these institutions, this unavoidable, if necessary, limitation, can be transformed into a practical critique of universalizing hegemonies, that, in the language of Foucault, makes transgressions possible, making it imaginable to undermine, subvert, put into question, those dominative practices—particularly of pseudo-universals and false dichotomies—which discipline present-day political, economic, cultural and social experience. Limitations are transformed into sites of resistance and solidarity. The practice of utopia is the reality of hope.

These sites of resistance and solidarity are not simple; nor are they simply given. Indeed, they are a multiplicity of spaces that constitute a complex, interrelated cultural terrain, often undergoing continual displacement, as they are constantly being created and recreated by the communities from which they emerge and to which they return.

Thus, those who wish to carry their institutions into worlds that are fundamentally

new and better may need to return to the originary transformative inspiration that made them possible, this time, with a recognition that transformation requires different understandings and practices that acknowledge but do not privilege racial, sexual, and class categories. If there is any inspiration for pedagogy that may be derived from the politics organized around the notion of “global civil society” (Arato and Cohen 1992) in the 1980s, or the World Social Forums that call to “Globalize Struggle, Globalize Hope!” (it is the possibility of creating communities and strategies that cut across political, economic, religious, and gender lines, that challenge the narrow confines of conventional and territorially-defined institutional thought and practice. There is no need to romanticize the politics arising out of the contestation between “state” and “civil society” to see that the significance of these movements lie not only in their capacity to articulate different understandings and practices of politics and ideology, nor simply in their keeping open the political space open for transformation, but also as sites in which deliberation occurs on the character of that space—what it means, for whom is it space, which spaces are important. They are, therefore, in the best sense, historical blocs, counterhegemonies, in the struggle for cultural transformation (Gramsci 1971).

These historical blocs and their corresponding subjectivities, include the aggregation, dis-aggregation, and re-aggregation of political subjectivities, in short, the reality of human community under the conditions of global capitalism’s dissolution of communities (of which the Filipino Diaspora is one specific form)—for example, in the context of immigration and emigration, or cross-border and internal refugees (economic or otherwise), or ecological disasters and degradation. While such political subjectivities are not overdetermined, and while it is not possible to reduce them to mere particular and discrete subjects, the multiplicity of subjects and subject positions, each relatively autonomous, even antagonistic of the other, but all connected by virtue of their respective struggles against violence, insecurity, and avoidable harm, and, each constituted not a-priori, but in the context of these very struggles,³⁵⁾ they remain

35) See Oscar Campomanes, “The New Empire’s Forgetful and Forgotten Citizens: Unrepresentability and Unassimilability in Filipino-American Postcolonialities,” *Critical Mass* 2: 2 (1995): 145-200. See also Epiphania San Juan, Jr., “Configuring the Filipino Diaspora in the United States” *Diaspora* Volume 3, Number 2 (1994): 117-133; Epiphania San Juan, *From Exile to Diaspora: Versions of the Filipino Experience in the United States* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998).

constitutive for any discourse of struggle and hope.

More than the multiplicity of subjects and subject positions is at stake here, however. For one's space, time, place is of fundamental significance to the question, not only of politics and ethics, but, to transformation, i.e., the creation and nurture of the fundamentally new that is also fundamentally better.³⁶⁾ Pluralism, even a normative pluralism, has no inherent virtue or efficacy. Who the subjects are, what they hope for, how they get there, are decisive not only to the nature and character of peace, security, and conviviality but also to any transformative practice. This, to my mind, is what the discourses that go under the sign of postcolonialism, understood broadly as "oppositonality which colonialism brings into being,"³⁷⁾ are addressing, as when Gayatri Spivak asks, "Can the subaltern speak?"³⁸⁾ Intellectuals such as ourselves are tirelessly and relentlessly reminded that, in this context, struggle and hope are inextricably related to the singular and specific opposition to all forms of domination by concrete "subjects of history" who struggle both against "turn[ing] the Other into the Same" and challenge those who would deny Otherness. The danger of repetition here lies in yielding to the temptation of becoming the "native informant" as a marker of authenticity, at the same time that we conflate the fact of our being the world's privileged, however personally innocent flaneurs, with the reality of the forced migrations of workers in the streets of our global cities, following the scent of global capital.

Critical to this "oppositional challenge" is an affirmation of the necessary, though insufficient, role which transgression plays in any ethical practice.³⁹⁾ In her essay "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident", Julia Kristeva argues that it is only in becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex, and identity that one avoids "sinking into the mire of common sense."⁴⁰⁾ "Writing," she adds, "is impossible without

36) Manfred Halpern, "Choosing Between Ways of Life and Death and Between Forms of Democracy: An Archetypal Analysis," *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance* 12: 2 (1987): 5-35.

37) Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, p. 117.

38) Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds., Nelson, Cary and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988).

39) bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

40) Julia Kristeva, "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident," *The Kristeva Reader*, ed., Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 292-299.

some kind of exile... [which is] already itself a form of dissidence..."⁴¹⁾ At the heart of dissent—as exile and sites of difference and contestation—is both the recognition of limits and the practice of transgression of those limits. Borrowing from Richard K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, one might therefore suggest that ethics-in-Diaspora is about

The questioning and transgression of limits, not the assertion of boundaries and frameworks; a readiness to question how meaning and order are imposed, not the search for a source of meaning and order already in place; the unrelenting and meticulous analysis of the workings of power in modern global life, not the longing for a sovereign figure...that promises deliverance from power; the struggle for freedom, not a religious desire to produce some territorial domicile of self-evident being that men of innocent faith can call home."⁴²⁾

In the concreteness, contingency, and oppositionality of their differences, this plurality of subjects and subject positions widen and deepen not only the challenge to global capitalism, and provides a larger ethical/political perspective, but, more important, it creates a fundamental structure of undecidability (which is not to say it is “groundless”), that makes possible genuine political choices. The joining and conjoining of different movements in civil society, for example, speak eloquently to this aggregation, dis-aggregation, re-aggregation of political communities; and so do those communities of resistance and solidarity: the excluded, the marginal, those rendered redundant. Without genuine, even antagonistic, perspectives, which admit their contingency and recognize the desirability, if not the necessity, of fundamental transformation, there is no possibility of what Jacques Derrida calls the “theoretico-ethical decision.”⁴³⁾ Moreover, without the recognition not only of the alterity of these different struggles, but especially what Ernesto Laclau underscores as the contingency of their connections, and, the contingency of their connections, there can be no possibility of constituting our own political identities.⁴⁴⁾ For Laclau, this “theoretico-ethical decision” stands between the undecidability which lies at the heart of plurality, and which is the “terrain of the radicalization of the decision,” and the undecidability

41) Ibid.

42) Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, “Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 34: 3 (1990): 265.

43) Cited in Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, (New York: Verso, 1996), p. 89. See also Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1993).

44) Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, p. 89.

which is the “source of an ethical injunction.”⁴⁵⁾ Without it, there can be no ethics or politics; and struggle and hope lead to nowhere. As Derrida puts it, “there can be no moral or political responsibility without this trial and this passage by way of the undecidable.”⁴⁶⁾ Indeed, if everything were reduced to the decidable, and if the undecidable were avoided, there would be no ethics, politics, or responsibility—only a program, technology and its irresponsible application.⁴⁷⁾ This is part of what I mean by letting the subaltern speak to intellectual flaneurs and bricoleurs such as ourselves. To paraphrase Emmanuel Levinas, the voice and face of the subaltern are the conditions of possibility for struggle and hope, as well as for transformation.

Finally, there is the practice of truthfulness, of institutions of higher education striving to be places of truth in church, society, and world. Despite their implication in modernity’s “meticulous rituals of power,” divinity schools, theological schools and seminaries, by intention and design, could challenge the practices of thought and action generated by the grand narrative of modernity, or other historical narratives for that matter—sexism, racism, class. They can seek to articulate different understandings of the world in which they are situated, provide alternative readings of political, economic, cultural, and religious life—without pretending or aspiring to be legislators for church, society, and world.

Truth, however, is always inextricably related to thought, to the past, present, and future (temporality), and to location and positionality (spatiality). Martin Heidegger observed that the unfolding of truth, which involves both concealment and unconcealment, was inseparable from thought itself. Not simply consciousness, even critical consciousness, thought required situating one’s self as a *topos* through which the truth of Being was brought forth and appropriated (Heidegger 1977). However, thought also requires, Derrida notes, and Heidegger admits, both the principle of reason and what is beyond the principle of reason, the *arkhe* and *an-archy* (Derrida 1983), which is the opening, the clearing that sets history before the future (here fragmentary space and time are brought together). Thus, thought presses beyond the

45) Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, pp. 81-82. See also Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (New York: Verso, 1990).

46) Jacques Derrida, *Limited, Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 116.

47) Campbell, “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility,” p. 477.

principle of reason, though it does not repudiate it, and refuses to surrender to the everyday, the conventional, and the traditional.

Here I return to the place of location and critique. What may be, in the last analysis, the appropriate role of intellectuals such as yourselves as they engage in the discourses of struggle and hope, is the care [Sorge} and responsibility for the practice of thought, that is, the nurture, preservation, and defense of truth that is always and already “ahead of ourselves,” and which, therefore, becomes the opening for the “fundamentally new which is also fundamentally better.” Here, struggle and hope are brought together as thought: as provocation (struggle and resistance), invocation (the desire or call for what is ahead), and invitation (the call of and response to hope).

In the words of Derrida, the “...provocation [that] brings together in the same instant the desire for memory and exposure to the future, the fidelity of a guardian faithful enough to want to keep even the chance of a future...the singular responsibility of what he does not have and of what is not yet...” (Derrida 1983, 20).