

Rationality in the Sciences and Philosophy

by Tomas G. Rosario, Jr.

It is a common belief in most nations and cultures in the world that rational intelligence is the principal faculty of man by which he could establish harmony and solidarity with his fellowmen. In fact, it is an integral part of our academic training that conflicts are resolved and agreements are attained through rational discourse. This conviction is, most probably, grounded on the philosophical tenet that it is only through rationality that truth could be attained. Intimately related to this philosophical tenet is the equally strong conviction that it is in the attainment of truth that men could achieve unity and even relative peace. These convictions have evolved into grounding principles by which the formation or education of every human being is deemed to consist of the training of his rational faculty in order to provide him discipline, skills, and excellence in the pursuit of truth.¹ In this connection, both the philosophers and the scientists are perceived as possessing superior intelligence and formal training by which they excel over the rest of mankind in the effort to discover truths about man and his environment. Today, a new breed of iconoclastic thinkers is questioning the coherence and value of rationality as an almost god-like principle of unity and solidarity.

Rational Elitism

Two years ago a former Supreme Court justice in the Philippines belittles television news casting work as involving less intelligence than the task of being a lawmaker.² His

¹ A relatively new scholar on the philosophical foundations of education took note of the traditional view on the metaphysical foundations of liberal education:

“To be effective educators, then, we need the guidance of a prior theory of the aim of education, one which should be part of a larger, metaphysical theory of humanity, nature, and being. This is why educators have everything to learn from the questions and ideas of metaphysicians.” Rene Vincent Arcilla, *For the Love of Perfection: Richard Rorty and Liberal Education* (New York: Routledge, Inc., 1995), p. 15.

² “De Castro was good as a television newscaster, when all he had to do was read the idiot boards. He did not need much intelligence for that but only a baritone voice. Such

attitude reflects the common belief that some men are superior to others by virtue of their rational or intellectual capacities. We have a culture characterized by rational or intellectual superiority that has long dominated human outlook and attitudes and remains prevalent today in probably all areas of human endeavors and interests. Indeed, almost all men believe that scientists, lawmakers, judges, lawyers, medical doctors, engineers, academicians, business executives, and the like are, in principle, more intelligent than others such as janitors, messengers, movie stars, construction workers, drivers, farmers and the like. If one were to ask why they should be considered as intellectually superior to other members of the society, the most likely answer is that their minds tackle complex and abstract matters demanding great effort of the intellect. By this standard, it may be difficult for advocates of intellectual excellence how to classify literary artists³ like, poets, writers and dramatists; practical artists like musicians, painters, sculptors, and other artifact makers; or skilled people like industrial and computer technicians, etc. Should “intelligence-advocates” consider them as more intelligent than farmers, janitors, construction workers, and the like but less intelligent than scientists, lawyers, and the like? If these “intelligence-advocates” belong to the class of thinkers i.e. those who consider themselves as engaged in analytical and abstract thinking they would presumably assign the highest level of intellectual excellence to themselves. But it would not surprise them if they invite sharp criticism from artists and literary writers for their self-serving prescription of standards of intellectual superiority.

meager qualification was not enough justification to aspire to be a senator...” Isagani Cruz, “Noli de Castro sa pagka Pangulo,” *Separate Opinion, Inquirer* June 10 2001.

³ If to be “rational” is to be “methodical” as noted above, Rorty does not consider artists as “rational” which he refers to in the following observation:

“ We think of poets and painters as using some faculty other than ‘reason’ in their work because, by their own confession, they are not sure of what they want to do before they have done it.

They make up new standards as they go along.” Richard Rorty, “Science as Solidarity,” *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 36. Henceforth to be referred to as *ORT*.

Furthermore, it is not without basis to claim that the power and authority of reason is institutionalized.⁴ The stress on intellectual superiority has enabled reason to enter the halls and seats of power whether the White House oval of the American president, the holy office of the Pope, the spacious and luxurious office of the chief executive officer of a business corporation, the military tactics room of generals, or the academic office room of a university president.⁵ On top of their other qualities or virtues, these men are occupying positions of great power and authorities because of their outstanding intellectual abilities. They are very powerful because they are very intelligent i.e. they have a broader vision, they have a grasp of the universal application of the transcendent and everlasting values of truth, goodness, justice much better than anyone else in the society, they claim to envision better the long term goals of man and even the lasting solutions to persistent problems of various societies of man, and they know best what is appropriate for the formation of the young as human beings.

These rational giants, these exceptionally rational and so very powerful men define what is rational and what is “irrational.” They set the standards not only of what is truthful, of what is right and wrong, of what is beneficial to the national interest but also of what people should believe or not to believe. They are the preachers of truth, the big decision makers, the vanguards of morality; some of them have even attained the status of global leaders. Compared to them, the rest of mankind are followers, are less powerful because they are not as rational or they are less rational. “Those who dissent from the ruling standards of reason are often declared irrational in much the same way that those who dissent from the current administration in Washington are declared unpatriotic.”⁶ And yet it may actually be the case that the dissenters are against the prevailing vision of those who are in power --- political, academic, religious, etc. ---who would even prescribe what ideas to imbibe and what convictions to follow.

⁴ See John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 228-235.

⁵ “For the ‘principle of reason’ is all around us today. As a principle, reason is an *arche*, a *princeps*, a prince, which like all royalty makes its presence felt everywhere. It has an enormous sphere of influence (*Machtbereich*), leaving nothing out, no entity untouched by claim it makes.” *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

“No account of reason can prescind from the institutionalization of reason in the university.”⁷ The university is, most probably, the home not only of rationality but also of various expressions of outstanding rationality. Professors who are also scientists, or professors who are business or economics theorists, or political thinkers, or philosophers extol and glorify reason by passionately advocating high level of rationality in their studies and researches.

*“It is they who set the style and tone of the discourse in the profession. They define the ‘right questions’ and the right way to go about addressing these questions. They set the standards for, and determine the selection of, the kinds of articles that can be published in the journals, the sorts of books that the best university presses publish, the kinds of proposals that can be supported by the foundations. They review one another’s books, discuss one another’s articles, invite one another to the colloquia and seminars they sponsor, recommend one another for foundational support, hire one another’s doctoral students, invite one another to serve as visiting professors, nominate one another for distinguished chairs and lectureships and offices in professional societies –in a self-validating, self-congratulating circle which controls the profession.”*⁸

What one gets from this revelation by this postmodernist thinker who is an American professor is a factual picture of rational elitism among his fellow professors and colleagues in American universities. These rational elitists dictate the standards of intellectual superiority by forming their own exclusive circle or club, they rule the university by becoming administrators or by occupying key administrative positions or by recommending one another for promotion to the highest rank as senior faculty, they control rational discourse by organizing lecture series and assigning themselves as speakers or by putting up a journal in relation to which they reign as editor and editorial consultants. What we get in this panorama of the varying academic activities of the dominating rational elitists is the “ethnocentrism of reason” i.e. an attitude of intellectual superiority insofar as the rational elitists are exclusivists in their standards of rationality.

There is a sense then in which the university itself could be viewed as the institutionalization of reason insofar as there is an uncompromising stress on the primacy of rationality in almost all the academic activities of faculty members and in the training

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁸ *Loc.cit.*.

of students. In fact, since the university is famous for its bountiful resources of rational powers with its pool of Ph Ds, it extends its rational powers by opening its doors for consultation to government leaders, to businessmen, and to other sectors of the society on matters pertaining to politics, economy, justice and human rights, and even on moral and religious issues. Moreover, the university radiates its rationality by supplying "...the technical and professional needs of society –its needs for scientists, engineers, accountants, computer specialists, nurses, physicians, lawyers."⁹ But the technical rationality of the university could take a twist when it supplies "...the brain power for the will-to-power"¹⁰ i.e. when it sustains the superpower status of a nation by providing brilliant minds in the field of physics, engineering, computer and information technology, and the like in order to develop or improve nuclear weaponry of the military arm of the government.

It is probably in the sphere of philosophy¹¹ and science¹² where rational or intellectual excellence is the dominant character of anyone who engages in these

⁹ *Loc.cit.*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹¹ Rorty observes that the philosopher considers himself as the guardian of rationality. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 317.

¹² Richard Rorty who is critical of the traditional philosophical conception of reason or of rationality classifies scientists, judges, businessmen, and the like as belonging to the group of "rational" thinkers in the sense of being "...methodical, that is, to have criteria for success laid down in advance." Richard Rorty, "Science as Solidarity," *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 36. In the same place, he makes a clear reference to these "rational" men:

"...we think of *judges* as knowing in advance what criteria a brief will have to satisfy in order to invoke a favorable decision, and of *business people* as setting well-defined goals and being judged by their success in achieving them. Law and business are good examples of rationality, but the *scientist*, knowing in advance what would count as disconfirming his hypothesis and prepared to abandon that hypothesis as a result of the unfavorable outcome of a single experiment, seems a truly heroic example....*If to be rational means to be able to lay down criteria in advance, then it is plausible to take natural science as the paradigm of rationality.*" *Loc.cit.*.

Italics mine.

disciplines. We probably owe to the ancient Greeks, notably Plato¹³ and Aristotle,¹⁴ what has become the foundation of education, of truth-claims, of the superiority of some men over others, and of the superiority of a culture over another namely, that to be rational or intellectual is to be superior to others, and to be authoritative in knowledge. This paradigm of superiority based on rational or intellectual skills is pursued by the most favored and most esteemed doctor of the Catholic church, Thomas Aquinas, who clearly

¹³ In the *Phaedo*, Plato spoke of the unparalleled superiority of the intellect over the other faculties of man through the well-known discussion between Socrates and Simmias regarding the knowledge of pure Ideas or Pure Forms like Justice, Beauty, and Goodness:

“Socrates: Here are some more questions, Simmias. Do we recognize such a thing as *absolute uprightness*?

Simmias: Indeed we do.

Socrates: And *absolute beauty* and *goodness* too?

Simmias: Of course.

.....

Socrates: Don’t you think that the person who is likely to succeed in this attempt most perfectly is the one who approaches each object, as far as possible, with the *unaided intellect*, ...the man who pursues the truth by applying his *pure and unadulterated thought* to the pure and unadulterated object, cutting himself as much as possible from his eyes and ears and virtually all the rest of his body, as an impediment which by its presence prevents the soul from attaining to truth and clear thinking?” Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, editors. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), “Phaedo,” 65d-66a. Italics mine.

¹⁴ Following the Platonic tradition on the primacy of reason over other faculties, Aristotle pointed this out in his discussion of virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

“Life seems to be common even to plants, but *we are seeking what is peculiar to man*. Let us exclude therefore the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains then an active life of the element that has a *rational principle*...” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by W.D. Ross. (New York: Random House, 1941), 1097b30-1098a5.

In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle considered “wisdom to deal with the first causes and the principles of things;” [981b25] that “...theoretical kinds of knowledge to be more of the nature of Wisdom than the productive,”[981b30-982a] and that those which pertain to Wisdom are “...on the whole the hardest for men to know for they are farthest from the senses.” [982a25] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Trans. by W.D. Ross. (New York: Random House, 1941).

taught that “man’s intellect is his highest power”¹⁵ and that the highest activity of man is that activity which pertains to his highest faculty namely, reason or intellect.¹⁶ And he stressed that one man is superior to other men because of intellectual excellence when he taught that men of outstanding intelligence should serve as the political leader while the less intelligent should serve as followers.¹⁷

Critique of the Metaphysical Model of Rationality

In the eyes of today’s *avant-garde* philosophical thinkers or postmodern thinkers, the metaphysical model of rationality has dominated Western thought for many centuries. Viewed as an ‘objective theory of reason’ it served as the foundation of “great philosophical systems, such as those of Plato and Aristotle, scholasticism, and German idealism...”¹⁸ This metaphysical reason is a ‘universal rationality’ which embraces ‘subjective reason’ or individual reason understood as a partial expression of the former and as teleological in its activities whether for the benefit of the self or of the community.¹⁹ It is a universal rationality precisely because it is regarded as the *logos* inherent in the totality of reality; it is the over all regulating principle and norm of the order and harmony in nature, of the integrity of human institutions, of the rectitude of human behavior and human relations, and even of the truth and values of man’s ultimate end.²⁰ It is reason transformed into a ‘supreme arbiter’, a ‘central power’, an ‘unrestricted authority’ over human thoughts, morality,²¹ and culture.²²

¹⁵ “Optima autem potentia est intellectus...” *Summa theologiae*, I-II, 3,5. Cf. I, 82, 3. In fact, “...the intellectual soul sometimes gets named from the intellect as its principal power...” *Ibid.*, I, 79, 1 ad 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I-II, 3, 5.

¹⁷ “Ex eadem ratione, et inter ipsos homines ordo invenitur; nam illi qui intellectu praeminent naturaliter dominantur, illi vero qui sunt intellectu deficientes, corpore vero robusti, a natura videntur instituti ad serviendum...” *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 81.

¹⁸ Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

²⁰ *Loc.cit.*.

²¹ Habermas remains trapped in universal rationality when he said the following: “Therefore in morality it is *only the universal core of the moral point of view which is a matter for philosophers.*” Peter Dews, Editor. *Autonomy and Solidarity, Interviews with Jürgen Habermas* (New York: Verso, 1986), p. 200. Italics mine. It seems to me that his abovementioned position that the task of the philosopher is to determine the universal

Now, traditional philosophical thinkers could be said to advocate the pursuit of a universal and authoritarian rationality insofar as they are probably the foremost defenders of the predominant authority of reason.²³ This is allegedly true with Enlightenment reason, which has replaced religion as the new universal and supreme authority on Truth, Goodness, and Justice. In adhering to the tenets of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, philosophers have depicted themselves as the 'presiding judges in the court of rationality' in order to evaluate and to impress the stamp of validity on all areas of knowledge whether in the field of religion and science, morality, and of culture, in general.²⁴ Furthermore, they attribute to universal reason a so-called self-evident principle which is such a supreme rule that all thinking and speaking are deemed senseless unless these are subject to it.²⁵ And yet the authority of rationality is absolute insofar as it is not subject to its own principle.²⁶ Hence, the rationality of philosophers is

elements or dimensions of morality is a re-statement of the metaphysical character of ethics viewed as engaged in the knowledge of the universal principles of moral behaviour, a view espoused by the leading Greek thinkers, by the Thomists, and by the Kantians.

²² Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 9; Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 234.

²³ See *supra*, footnote # 10, p. 3. Heidegger says elsewhere that "philosophers are *the* thinkers *par excellence*." Martin Heidegger, "What Calls for Thinking?" *Basic Writings*. Edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 370.

²⁴ Referring to Kant, Rorty notes that "he thus enabled philosophy professors to see themselves as presiding over a tribunal of pure reason, able to determine whether other disciplines were staying within the legal limits set by the 'structure' of their subject matters." Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 139. Cf. p. 4, p. 131.

²⁵ Caputo states the inviolable authority of the "principle of reason":

"For the 'principle of reason' is all around us today. As a principle, reason is an *arche*, a princeps, a prince, which like all royalty makes its presence felt everywhere. It has an enormous sphere of influence... leaving nothing out, no entity untouched by the claim it makes. It demands reason, sufficiency, the rendering of a sufficient reason, for everything." *Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 222.

²⁶ Paraphrasing the view of Heidegger, Caputo makes the following observation:

"If we ask the principle of reason for its own reason, if we ask what is the reason for the principle of reason, if we ask about the reasonableness of reason, we get no answer... The principle cannot itself have a reason. It must be its own authority, speak with its own voice. It cannot call the police; it is the police." *Ibid.*, p. 225.

the highest²⁷ since it has the status also of being an ‘underlying’ or an ultimate foundation, an unconditional condition of all forms of understanding.²⁸

Furthermore, this new breed of contemporary “philosophers” is equally critical of rationality in the sciences.²⁹ They impugn the scientists, in general, as espousing universal rationality insofar as they seek objective truth by relying on methods and strict rules of verification.³⁰ In this context, there is a tendency “...to use ‘methodical’, ‘rational’, ‘scientific’, and ‘objective’, as synonyms.”³¹ It is not surprising then that modern science and Enlightenment philosophy were intimately linked since the period to which they belong is marked by the rapid advance of the natural, physical, and the mathematical sciences. Descartes, who is honored by historians as the father of modern

²⁷ Heidegger says elsewhere that “philosophers are *the* thinkers *par excellence*.” Martin Heidegger, “What Calls for Thinking?” *Basic Writings*. Edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 370.

²⁸ See Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 132.

²⁹ Rorty makes the following critical remarks: “If to be rational means to be able to lay down criteria in advance, then it is plausible to take natural science as the paradigm of rationality. The trouble is that in this sense of ‘rational’ the humanities are never going to qualify as rational activities.” Rorty, “Science as Solidarity,” *ORT*, p.36. Referring to adherents of scientific rationality, Rorty notes in another place: “We are being warned of the danger of ‘relativism’, which will beset us if we give up our attachment to objectivity, and to the idea of rationality as obedience to criteria.” *Ibid*, p. 38.

Gadamer, with whom Rorty categorically expresses certain allegiance in thinking, appears to assert the same position when he said that

“...the problem of hermeneutics goes beyond the limits of the concept of method as set by modern science....The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science ---yet it too is concerned with knowledge and with truth.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Introduction,” *Truth and Method*. Trans. By Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1989), p.xxi.

³⁰ Feyerabend, who is the object of both contempt and admiration in the philosophy of science circle for his iconoclastic views, contends that “the idea of a universal and stable *method* that is an unchanging measure of adequacy and even the idea of a universal and stable *rationality* is as unrealistic as the idea of a universal and stable measuring instrument that measures any magnitude, no matter what the circumstances.” Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* (London: Verso Edition, 1987), p. 98.

³¹ Rorty, “Science as Solidarity,” *ORT*, p. 35.

philosophy, is a mathematical scientist whose preoccupation with indubitable certainty and ‘objective foundations’ was obviously influenced by his training in science. Kant, who is probably the leading philosophical thinker of the Enlightenment period, was not uninformed in the sciences since he has also taught physics and mathematics,³² apart from philosophy. And Leibniz, whose “principle of sufficient reason” is interpreted as indicative of the majesty of metaphysical reason and has elicited critical commentary from Heidegger within the history of the forgetfulness of Being,³³ is also a great mathematical scientist and philosopher of the Enlightenment period.³⁴

Students who are enrolled in introductory philosophy courses still get today the familiar initial discussion on the distinction between the philosophical mode of thinking and the scientific way of reasoning. The attention given to the differences between philosophy and science is a reflection of the long-held traditional view, which originated from the Aristotelian-Thomistic intellectual alliance.³⁵ Hence, to speak today of the coalescence of philosophy and science in the Western culture will definitely be very unusual and strange to them. But this perceived fusion of philosophy and science is, from the postmodern perspective, nothing but the overstress on rationality and the preoccupation with the attainment of objective knowledge or of universal Truth. This deconstructive reading means that Philosophy and science have greater affinity³⁶ with

³² W. H. Walsh, “Immanuel Kant,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Paul Edwards, editor in chief. (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1967), p. 305.

³³ Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, pp. 222-223.

³⁴ L.J. Russell, “Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Paul Edwards, editor in chief. (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1967), p. 430.

³⁵ Thomist scholars are familiar with the following distinction made by the angelic doctor between philosophy, understood as wisdom, and science:

“...id quod est ultimum respectu totius cognitionis humanae est id quod est primum et maxime cognoscibile secundum naturam. Et circa hujusmodi est *sapientia*, quae considerat altissimas causas, ut dicitur in *Metaphysica*....Ad id vero quod est ultimum in hoc vel in illo genere cognoscibilium, perficit intellectum *scientia*.” *Summa theologiae*,

I-II, 57, 2, Italics mine. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 981b25-982b5.

³⁶ We may make a noteworthy observation in this connection that a favorable reinterpretation of both Aristotle and St. Thomas regarding the kinship between philosophy and science is not without basis. In the case of Aristotle we can find in the same place, where he distinguished philosophy from the sciences, pertinent texts which

one another than is commonly recognized since both are on the side of rationality against irrationality, objectivity against relativism, method against belief. If one agrees with this portrayal of mainstream philosophy and science, then the history, at least, of Western thought and culture is a history of initial struggle then progress of rationality beginning with the ancient Greek period to the Enlightenment era,³⁷ which is aptly called “the Age of Reason.”

Now, if the so-called crisis of ‘contemporary culture’³⁸ or the threat of nihilism³⁹ today is inseparably linked with the abandonment of an objective and universal Rationality, or the rejection of its universal principles and ultimate norms of truth, morality, and human dignity, does this herald the end of the role of philosophy as a foundation of intellectual culture, particularly of Western intellectual culture? It is paradoxical that the Enlightenment or the so-called ‘Age of Reason’ which is chiefly responsible for the emancipation of human consciousness and human conduct from religious dogmatism and totalitarian beliefs would itself be charged of rational dictatorship or ‘terrorism by reason’,⁴⁰ or, of transforming Reason into an object of

attribute participation in wisdom by scientists and artists although the highest wisdom is referred to the philosopher. See *Metaphysics*, I, 981b30-982a. Certain text in the *Summa theologiae* also show that St. Thomas was open to the view that ‘philosophy is a sort of science’: “...sapientia est quaedam scientia, in quantum habet id quod est commune omnibus scientiis, ut scilicet ex principiis conclusiones demonstrat.” *ST*, I-II, 57, 2 ad 1.
³⁷ Rorty makes the related observation that “the tradition in Western culture...centers around the notion of the search for Truth, a tradition which runs from the Greek philosophers through the Enlightenment...” Rorty, “Solidarity or objectivity?,” *ORT*, p. 21.

³⁸ See Feyerabend, *Farewell to Reason*, pp. 1-5.

³⁹ Pope John Paul II links the postmodernist movement in philosophy with nihilism insofar as he perceives it as affirming the ‘total absence of meaning’ and its ‘rejection of certitude’. See Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio, Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church*. September 14, 1998; # 91. See also #s 55-56, 61.

⁴⁰ Habermas appears to imply this accusation when he makes the following observation in connection with what he considers as the inclination to introduce ‘moral rigorism’ and ‘dogmatic doctrines’ in place of political institutions: “But these almost intangible connections should not mislead us into denouncing the intentions of an intransigent Enlightenment as the monstrous offspring of a ‘terroristic reason’.” Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Edited by Maurizio Passerin d’Entreves and Seyla Benhabib. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), p.50.

idolatry.⁴¹ If the alleged tyranny of religion is replaced by the perceived tyranny of Enlightenment Rationality, then the postmodern vision for a post-Philosophical culture⁴² is but a call to renounce the sort of philosophy which has spawned and nurtured a dictatorial and foundational rationality.⁴³

The intense criticism and rejection today of Enlightenment Rationality, and perhaps we should add, even of Platonic⁴⁴-Aristotelian⁴⁵ Rationality, is actually an outcry against the imperialism of rational culture in any form. The notion of a Platonic Pure Thought, of an Aristotelian Reason in Book Alpha of *Metaphysics*, of Thomistic *ratio naturalis*,⁴⁶ of Cartesian rational *Cogito*, of Kantian Pure Reason and an Autonomous Practical Reason, or of a Hegelian Absolute Reason insofar as all of these conceptions of rationality have the effect of fostering a culture of domination by one group, whether academic, political, religious, or scientific over the rest of other groups in a given society or over the rest of

⁴¹ Habermas thinks that “Hegel was convinced that the age of the Enlightenment culminating in Kant and Fichte had erected merely an idol in reason.” Jürgen Habermas, “Lecture II, Hegel’s Concept of Modernity,” *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. By Frederick Lawrence. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 23-24.

Feyerabend gives a sharp reading of the power and honor attributed to Rationality when he says that “...Reason and Rationality are powers of a similar kind and are surrounded by the same aura as were gods, kings, tyrants and their merciless laws.” Feyerabend, *Farewell to Reason*, p. 11.

⁴² See Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. xxxvii-xliv.

⁴³ After his introductory declaration that “philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture...” and subsequent categorical reference to Kant as the chief exponent of this image of philosophy because we could attribute to him “...the notion of philosophy as a tribunal of pure reason...” Rorty finally confesses his aim of drawing away his readers from their adherence to “... ‘philosophy’ as it has been conceived since Kant.” Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp. 3, 4, and 7 respectively.

⁴⁴ Rorty sees the Philosophy of Plato and Kant as belonging to the same mold namely, affirming two fundamental and interrelated teachings namely, that man has an essence and that knowledge is the essential act of human rationality. These teachings classify both Plato and Kant as “foundational” thinkers. See Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp. 356-57, 366-367. See also *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 76, 79.

⁴⁵ See *supra* my exposition of the teachings of Aristotle on philosophy in Book Alpha of his *Metaphysics* as constituting a conception of universal Rationality, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁶ In affirming the following, “foundationalist philosophers, such as Plato, Aquinas, and Kant...” it is clear that Rorty considers Thomas Aquinas as advocating an all-encompassing Rationality just like the thought of Plato and Kant. Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 171.

men, is deemed detestable. The long-held belief that Church leaders are anointed from an Eternal Realm and are bestowed with divine-like Rationality to propagate the truths of equality of men, of salvation and of lasting happiness is debunked as an alienated confidence in those who betray man's radically historical existence. Even the awe that used to be elicited by the transcultural, non-contingent, ahistorical, and transcendent Norms is construed as a conditioned feeling generated by Platonic-Christian alliance to dictate on all men a unified vision, a single destiny, and common goals of human existence. The new breed of philosophers contends that neither religion, nor science, nor Philosophy has specialized access to the Truth for it is not something "out there" or "up in the heavens" to be discovered by the heroes of Rationality.⁴⁷

It would probably amaze traditional philosophers that this new breed of philosophers does place them in the same category with scientists and even with a certain group of religious thinkers. Such categorization rests on the conviction of this new breed of thinkers that the traditional philosophers, the scientists and a certain group of religious thinkers are advocates of the metaphysical model of rationality. In other words, they are perceived as having invested unusual confidence on the capacity of reason either to uncover the non-perceptible yet essential principles of all realities, or to attain objective knowledge, or even to gain definite understanding of nontemporal and transcendent truths. Taking this as a premiss, it follows that those who are trained as philosophers, as scientists, and as theological thinkers have a very high state of understanding since they alone are singularly capable of the sort of knowledge, which they demonstrate to be most beneficial and most necessary to what is most essential in man. Since they know what it means to be man so they can also determine what is best for humanity. We could surmise that the predisposition of these rational giants is to be dogmatic and to be prescriptive.

Postscript

Does the analysis we have pursued so far depict a picture of reason as a principle of disunity and conflict rather than of solidarity and harmony? Quite obviously such is the impression being registered deliberately in our minds by these new breed of philosophical

⁴⁷ See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 4-5; 8; 44.

thinkers like Adorno, Feyerabend, Horkheimer, Rorty and many others. It is paradoxical that the confidence given to reason as the principle of universal agreement by the acknowledged pillars of philosophical speculation like Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Anselm, Descartes, Kant, Leibniz, and Hegel is now viewed as giving rise instead to intellectual imperialism and domination. And when a particular race, a particular culture, or, even a particular religion does not only project itself but even proclaims itself as the source of truths and values by which all men not only could be unified but also could make progress in their humanity such gospel statement would be rejected by these counter culture intellectual activists as a clear case of intellectual and cultural tyranny.

The limitation of time would not allow me now to explore what these new breed of thinkers consider as an appropriate way of re-discovering and re-establishing the more appropriate nature of rationality as a legitimate principle of harmony, tolerance, and cooperation even in the face of pluralism and differences in beliefs, convictions, race, and culture. Perhaps this could be discussed in the next world conference of the UTI.

REFERENCES

- Aquinas, Thomas, 1960. *De caritate*. Translated with an Introduction by Lottie H. Kendzierski. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
- _____, 1951. *De virtutibus in communi*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by John Patrick Reid, O.P. Providence, Rhode Island: Providence College Press.
- _____, 1923. *Summa contra Gentiles*. Literally translated by the English Dominican Fathers. London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, Ltd.
- _____, 1965. *Summa theologiae*. Translated by Blackfriars. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Arcilla, Rene Vincent, 1995. *For the Love of Perfection: Richard Rorty and Liberal Education*. New York: Routledge, Inc.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 1983. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Caputo, John D., 1987. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Crombie, I.M., 1962. *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd..
- Descartes, René, 2000. "Discourse on Method," *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*. Edited with an Introduction by Roger Ariew. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc.
- Dews, Peter Editor. 1986. *Autonomy and Solidarity, Interviews with Jürgen Habermas* New York: Verso.
- Feyerabend, Paul, 1987. *Science in a Free Society*. London: Verso Edition.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1989. "Introduction," *Truth and Method*. Trans. By Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum Publishing Co.
- Guthrie, W.K. C., 1965. *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. II*. Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen, 1987. "Lecture II, Hegel's Concept of Modernity," *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. By Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge,

Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

_____, 1997. "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Edited by Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves and Seyla Benhabib. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Hamilton, Edith and Cairns, Huntington. Editors, 1961. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Heidegger, Martin, 1993. "What Calls for Thinking?" *Basic Writings*. Edited by David Farrell Krell .New York: Harper Collins.

Horkheimer, Max, 1947. *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Küng, Hans, 1980. *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*. Trans. by Edward Quinn. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc.

Pope John Paul II, September 14, 1998. *Fides et Ratio, Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church*.

Rorty, Richard, 1982. "Keeping Philosophy Pure: An Essay on Wittgenstein," *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

_____, 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

_____, 1991. "Science as Solidarity," *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

_____, 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

_____, 1998. *Truth and Progress*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Ross, W. D., translator, 1941. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. by *Basic Works of Aristotle*. Edited with an Introduction by Richard Mc Keon. New York: Random House.

_____, translator, 1941. *The Metaphysics of Aristotle*. New York: Random House.

Russell, L.J., 1967. "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Paul Edwards, editor in chief. London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

Walsh, W. H., 1967. "Immanuel Kant," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Paul Edwards, editor in chief. London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

Wellmer, Albrecht, 1994. "Reason, Utopia, and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,"
Habermas and Modernity. Edited with an Introduction by Richard J. Bernstein.
Cambridge: The MIT Press.