

From Self-development to Human Solidarity
A Critical Study on the Dialogical Theology of "Inter-" Cultures.

By

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I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by the candidate and constitutes the result of my search on the subject. And that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree; and that all quotations have been distinguished and the source of information acknowledged.

Signed

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Abstract

This dissertation questions the politics of contemporary cultural development known as “multiculturalism” and “particularism” which permeate the realm of theology, particularly in relation with non-Western theologies. It begins by examining the mechanism of representing “different others” within the modern subjectivity and its universal validity claim, in order to reveal the modernist’s essentialism and reductionistic, totalising tendency. By arguing that reality is non-formalistic, ambiguous and contingent, and decentering of the subject, the study articulates the social source of rationality that exists in “in-between” people (subjects) against the philosophical metanarrative. From this standpoint, the focus shifts from the subject’s ontological/epistemological emphasis to a dialogical event or relation with the other.

Therefore, this study explores human desire on the relation of “I and the Other,” with particular attention paid to Emmanuel Levinas’ idea on the ‘ethical responsibility for the Other’ as the first philosophy. This argues that Levinas disrupts the philosophy of ontology by inserting a God who is infinite into the finite, and suggests a new modality (meta-ontological) of ethical responsibility for the Other/other. It argues that Levinas’ idea is concretised in Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism that perceives human consciousness not as a unified whole but one that always exists in a tensile, conflict-ridden relationship with other consciousness. It also argues that dialogism is not simply a textual or even an inter-textual phenomenon, but reaches beyond the text to the social world as a whole. It suggests that ethics exists in an open and ongoing obligation to respond and answer to the other, rather than as a consensus or philosophical end or rule. Ethics, as a reminder of the surplus in human dialogue, argues for the structural necessity of otherness in my solidarity with the other.

This thesis, then, explores the event of *kenotic* Christ as a fertile prototype for the leitmotif of ‘the Word made flesh,’ and the I/Other dichotomy, and as the consciousness of human development and dialogical orientation. It stresses a theological and religious affinity of creating an ethical space to experience the meaning of the future that interrogates the temporal reality and ‘givenness,’ a space which brings people into “radical communality and human solidarity” of the *great time*, the eschatological plenitude. From this perspective, I suggest theology as a critical engaging discourse and a cultural criticism within the public sphere, in creating a new world of human relation.

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Introduction

In our contemporary discussions, whether about politics, social sciences, or the humanities, the most pressing feature is the issue of ethnic or cultural identity. With the rise of nationalism and cultural and ethnic nationalism in the non-Western world, the dominant Western ideology and its principles have been put into question and furthermore, challenged and deconstructed by voices from other traditions of the non-West or even from the marginalised traditions within the West. As a result, a rhetoric of equal rights and a politics of difference have emerged which emphasise the uniqueness of particular identities, and in many cases, reject other groups and their rights. The aim of this thesis is the search for a meaningful relation between these particularities and an ethically responsible action that will bring us to focus on humanity.

In this sense, the question of identity is the kind of question we ask about ourselves and others, in the context of so-called post-modern multicultural society. Searching for one's own identity has been the Enlightenment project of discovering and understanding of the *I*, Descartes', *Cogito ergo sum*. The central assumption of intellectual tradition, especially in the West, has been that knowing and discovering are intrinsically related. When this searching for an identity becomes an obsession for ourselves only, where there is an insistence that one's own identity is a universal one without respecting and accepting the other, - when others are described in terms

of what is intelligible within *my* culture – a problem occurs. We are faced with the question: “what is the purpose of searching for *my* identity?”

The contemporary politics of multiculturalism attempt to recognise the marginalised groups including both minority ethnic culture within the Western country and non-Western cultures globally. But, in an actual socio-political/cultural representation within the dominant tradition (of the West), the entire multiculturalist model is flawed by “its tendency to essentialize those cultures, attributing to them far more unity, regularity, and stability than they actually have.”¹ Although multiculturalism seems to promote comparison, there is a danger or tendency to isolate one from another, and to stress differences to the degree that meaningful relation between cultures may be deemed impossible.

As a Korean-American, I have constantly questioned my identity and that of others to try to articulate my relationship with those different others. For me, it is not a combination of two identities, but a question of living in the hyphen between Korean and American. This living on the border is a continuing reminder that I have to live in a diaspora, and as a minority. For it provides a mode of breaking with the past, transforming the present, learning new things; and moreover, desiring a better country for all. For many, this project involves searching for authenticity and uniqueness, and emphasising the differences. But, the heart of this project lies in my relating to others. However, this does not mean that I disregard authenticity and difference. I choose to express it in terms of mutual existence and solidarity for all.

¹ Charles Bernheimer, “The Anxieties of Comparison,” in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed by Charles Bernheimer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p.8.

So, the question is 'How do I relate myself to the other', and 'What is the space that promotes such relations in which no one is excluded but all participate.' The idea of authenticity or uniqueness does not mean 'wholeness,' but a 'meaningful particularity' in itself. What is being attempted here is a definition of the limitedness of a particularity, because on a fundamental level it is the limit that divides, separates, and creates boundaries, in every culture. In other words, the subject under discussion is the human predicament of being limited - the mutual acknowledgement of one's ability and inability to see.

Having recognised limitedness, it is crucial to relate ourselves to the Other, in searching and articulating for a better future for all, since the Other is a necessary condition of our existence, not an option or addition. But, our past shows that the Other has been defined in reference to *me* and for *me*, and this trend has been intensified through the imperialist and colonialist periods, especially in the West. Consequently, Eurocentrism defined colonialism and described the process of European powers into much of the world. J.M Blaut called this "the coloniser's model of the world."² Eurocentrism as a discourse divided the world into the "West and the Rest,"³ and attributed to the West an inherent process of democratic tradition, progress, and humanism, while patronising and demonising the non-West. What I am addressing is not the European as individual, but rather the historically dominant and oppressive European relation to the Other, externally and even internally, rejecting Europe as the unique source of meaning. My question is not how far

² J.M. Blaut, *Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), p. 10.

Europeans have been guilty and Third World inhabitants innocent. But, rather, how far the criteria by which guilt and innocence are determined have been historically constituted; how the Other has been represented in the West; and how this history has been written about it. This study endeavours to show the mechanism of representation - marginalising, manipulating, and oppressing the different others in favour of *us*, through the reflection on contemporary cultural studies and post-colonial discourse. It is an attempt to reveal and overturn this structural domination upon which Western thought traditionally has rested, as Thomas Altizer says,

[T]rue revolution is not simply an opening to the future but also a closing of the past. Yet the past which is negated by a revolutionary future cannot simply be negated or forgotten. It must be transcended by way of a reversal of the past, a reversal bringing a totally new light and meaning to everything which is manifest as the past, and therefore a reversal fully transforming the whole horizon of the present.⁴

Post-colonial discourse exposes this inner mechanism, and indicates the constructive-deconstruction of the dominant ideology by its ethical questioning. The aim is not just to relativise Eurocentrism and related discourses, but to go beyond and make connections between different others in an effort to overcome and place ghettoised histories and discourses in productive relations. It also rejects essentialising tendencies (such as militant particularism) of the non-Western

³ Used in Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds), *Formation of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

discourse in articulating its own difference and uniqueness only. It searches for the ontological past and its re-discovery against all that is western and its implications. The crucial issue lies in their inter-connectedness, rather than speaking of cultural groups in isolation. What emerges from the “in-relation” or “in-between” is a dialogue and communication that is a process of doubling, never happening in isolation. Communication is a dialogic encounter of subjects creating together, not just a transference of knowledge. This means that people live in two different worlds at the same time; or if they live in one world, the oneness will be achieved at the expense of the other.

This discourse is an attempt to articulate the space of “in-between” borders and to experience the limitedness of the self and the acknowledgement of co-participating existence in the making of a fuller humanity. It challenges each of these borders and breaks one’s own totalising system. Thus, the implication of the dialogic process suggests a mode of questioning and interrogating the self and exposes the limit of a particular culture or view in the process of dialogical becoming. To be engaged in dialogue means to articulate the present as ambivalent and provisional, necessarily open to future evaluation. The purpose of the dialogical project is not to pursue order and certainty and thus destroy ambivalence, but to live with ambivalence and ambiguity. In other words, what emerges from dialogue is to be suspicious of and to question the present, as reflected in Derrida’s critique on modernism: full clarity means the end of history. This deconstructive criticism calls into question the structural relationship of Western tradition and dislocates its

⁴ Thomas J.J. Altizer, *The Descent into Hell: A Study of the Reversal of the Christian Consciousness* (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 53.

network.⁵ Its criticism not only creates a sense of ‘in-between’ that resists the traditional systematic form of Western theology, but also a new opening for religious imaginations.

The task of (post)modern theology is then to articulate the dialogical reality of human life that is constituted by its many dialogue partners. This includes contemporary cultural discourse, thoughts and belief foreign to the Western tradition itself, and the new emerging voices from feminist, Third World and other theological perspectives.⁶ In a way, the contemporary theological task is “to discover plurality” and “to rediscover the contingency and ambiguity of history and society.”⁷ As Rowan Williams says “it is more importantly exercised in the discernment of what contemporary conflicts are actually about and in the effort both to clarify this and to decide where Christian should find his or her identity in a conflict.”⁸ Since theology is constructed within socially and morally formative discourse, it should be a public discourse judging and contributing to public and individual spheres in what Williams calls “a real or possible community of speaking and responding persons, and a history of concrete decisions and acts.”⁹ The task is only possible through dialogical engagement in solidarity, a willingness to listen and to respond to the different

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. By A Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978,) p. 20.

⁶ See David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (pp. 99-167); *Plurality and Ambiguity* (pp.42-82).

⁷ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, p. 65.

⁸ Rowan D. Williams, “Postmodern Theology and the Judgement of the World,” in *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralistic World*, ed by Frederic B. Burnham (HarperSanFrancisco, 1989), p. 98.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

others. In other words, the task of theology is to serve humanity and the world around us, as Gordon Kaufman says,

Theology also serves human purposes and needs and should be judged in terms of the adequacy with which it is fulfilling the objective we humans have set for it. "The sabbath was made for man," Jesus said, "not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). This is, all religious institutions, practices and ideas - including the idea of God - were made to serve human needs and to further our humanization.¹⁰

Christian theology is not the science of religion that articulates ontological statements about the empirical existence of human being, cultures and religions, but a philosophy of religion that suggests the possibility and meaning of human endeavour in struggling for truth, justice and freedom. Hence, Christian theology as a transcultural or metalinguistic ethics, should reveal the violence and oppression committed in the name of the sacred and of culture and tradition. What emerges here is neither an epistemological understanding nor ontological discovery of being, but an ethical relation that comes out from the inter-subjective dialogic process of intimacy, vulnerability and mutual exchange; it is an attitude and a sense of faith that comes by participating in human life. In responding to the Other, as Levinas shows, it is an ethic that is rooted in human existence. He calls this "First Philosophy"-conditioning moral obligation and existential condition in human solidarity. This is, as Schüssler Fiorenza emphasises, to change the definition of theology from an "interpretive conversation" that ignores implicit structures of power and privilege, to

¹⁰ Gordon Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 264.

a different theological discourse.¹¹ For her, theology is about waging a critical discourse against the patterns of power and privilege, through the solidarity with marginalised voices that are traditionally excluded from theological conversation. What is needed is an ongoing theological struggle against oppression and violence, as she says,

The 'inclusion of the previously excluded as theological subjects, I argue, entails a paradigm shift from scientific to a rhetorical genre, from a hermeneutical model of conversation to a practical model of collaboration. Since rhetorical practices display not only a referential moment about something and a moment of self-implicature by a speaker or actor, but also display a persuasive moment of directness to involve the other, they elicit responses, emotions, interests, judgement, and commitments directed toward a common vision.¹²

In this process, the significance of religion makes us realise that the task of theology is never completed. It must reject perfection - the theological temptation of self glorification and narcissism.

What is being attempted is a recovery of the voice of theology, a theology that has lost the confidence of contemporary audiences by reminding it of the fact that if there is truth in particular traditions or cultures, freedom, justice, and human solidarity dwell with that truth. The theological task here is to assess traditions and cultures in line with the commitment to freedom, justice and human solidarity, by engaging in the dialogical relation. This is not just a matter of tolerating the other,

¹¹ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Commitment and Critical Inquiry," *Harvard Theological Review*, no. 82, 1989, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

but of accepting justice and human solidarity as a shared goal and task for all. This theological human solidarity is anticipatory and prophetic as regards the future, and despite circumstances to the contrary, it generates hope.

Thus, the task of this study is to create a space that generates hope and resists the totalising and de-humanising violence within the society. Because of the nature of its study, this argument operates in and around the dominant discourse of the West and other peripheries, as I am placed in this space of 'in-between.' It is possible only through a genuine dialogical process with the Other, in resisting those totalising powers. It reveals the mechanism of Western totalising power of fixing, controlling and inflicting violence on the Other. It challenges this listening to the discourse of the victim through the post-colonial discourse and its socio-political implications. This creates a feeling of ambivalence and uncertainty within Western discourse, and leads us to a radical questioning of the foundation of Western thought. This questioning displaces the West from its isolated privileged position and places it within a relationship with the Other.

What is required in this relationship exceeds mere understanding and requires a sense of ethical responsibility that comes from justice. Justice remains justice only where it is linked in a complex manner of relationships, a community of others. What becomes clear is that, while the history of humankind is a history of conflicts between people and their ideologies, justice does not arise from ego, or self-development, but from *our* moral responsibilities for the Other and solidarity with

the Other. In applying this 'new modality' into ordinary discourse, this study will seek to extend this Levinasian insight into Bakhtinian thought.

This me-ontological praxis of ethics as opposed to the hegemony of representation, is concretised in Bakhtin's understanding of dialogical relationship between discourses of real life and literature. In revealing what Bakhtin calls a 'mutual answerability' among human sciences and ordinary life with each other, this mode of interhuman relationship and interaction becomes a key to our task that ends comprehension, but opens ethics in our articulations. And, this Bakhtinian dialogical relationship, especially of ethical commitment (operating in Bakhtin's commitment to Russian Orthodox Christianity and the *kenotic* tradition) provides a way to attend, to re-orient, and to concretise our theological discourses in our sociality. Theology should be a reflection on *kenosis* that opens new possibilities in our theological discourse, in understanding God, self and world, and in developing self-critical thought in relation with the Other within a vision of human solidarity

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the mechanism of representation that violates and victimises the Other in the name of rationalism and modernity of the past, and the multi-culturalism of the present. This discussion includes a review of Edward Said and René Girard.

The second chapter deals with post-colonial discourse as the mirror image of the Western intellectual tradition, as well as that of the non-Western tradition. The colonised nations and their efforts to find cultural identity reveal a similar trend

within theology. This discussion involves the idea of doubling and hybridity that rejects the discourse which insists on the purity and origin of 'being,' but articulates 'becoming' in conflicts and struggles in tension. This idea of 'becoming' rejects the dominant reading practice but promotes a reading from the victim's perspective in order to reveal the limitedness and power structure of the dominant group. This is investigated through the thoughts of Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Michael Foucault and the theologians Naim Ateek and R.S. Sugirtharajah.

The third chapter is devoted to Emmanuel Levinas, especially his particular account of ethics as a new modality at the end of philosophy which rejects Western consciousness as being dominated by 'ontological comprehension.' He rejects rational-enlightenment philosophy and theology on the ground of their historic vassalage to such philosophy, by rethinking both philosophy and theology in the light of ethics as 'first philosophy.' The new modality is a me-ontological form of relating, which should be related to the concerns of philosophy and theology; it emphasises the dynamics of a me-ontological responsive praxis that comes from responsibility and moral consciousness on behalf of the Other. It deals with the necessity of the Other and the Other's ethical and religious significance in this rethinking process of moral consciousness.

The fourth chapter deals with Mikhail Bakhtin, who, as Todorov remarks, is "the most important Soviet thinker in the human sciences and the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century."¹³ This section argues for a

¹³ Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. by Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), p. ix.

communicative and dialogical event in human consciousness, by extending Levinas' perspective on the otherness and the me-ontological ethics of responsibility, into the fundamental question of self/other relations of Bakhtin. It attempts to find an alternative path to me-ontological praxis, by investigating Bakhtin's architectonic relationships (of constructive, compositional, or creative relationships) between discourses in life and literature. Bakhtin re-interprets relationships among genres, forms and discourses in a way that engages in an open-ended dialogical process. Here, Bakhtinian re-interpretation is applied in the sphere of the cultural domains of the human sciences, religion and life in general, as an attempt to find, what he calls "mutual answerability." This section explores the concept of 'novelness,' 'heteroglossia' and 'carnival' in order to emphasise the dialogical process and to find the answerable event. It finds significant theological echoes in Bakhtin, especially in his conception of Christ in the kenotic tradition of the Eastern church. The event of Christ is not only important for the cosmic history of human salvation, but also for the development of human consciousness of the self's relation to the other. Hence, this study reiterates the event of incarnation in John 1:1-14, as the signifying importance of dialogical interaction among people and of dialogical inter-orientation with each other.

Finally, the fifth chapter suggests that the ethics of dialogism should lie at the heart of our contemporary theologising process. It seeks to shift the task of theology from the investigation of essence or being and of self-development, to the ethical event of human solidarity that articulates how to live in communion with the other, and ultimately with God. This study suggests that theological education should be

an experience of the event of *kenosis* of de-centring the subject and of placing it into relations of ethical responsibility of togetherness. This kenotic event indicates the process of secularising 'official or elitist theological discourse' and weakens its strong ontological structure and human epistemology. Within the spirit of 'kenotic event,' theological interaction and encounter with others (or other values) should lead us to create an event that returns us constantly to a 'critical space' or 'border' in which Christianity is enacted differently in a heterogeneous plurality in the present. The important task of our theologising process is the ethically responsible action and living on the border, in creating a new order of human relations. As Bakhtin says of the borderline event,

the demand is: live in such a way that every given moment of your life would be both the consummating, final moment and, at the same time, the initial moment of a new life.¹⁴

The hope for a new order provides a sense of distance to keep ourselves from the present order and reality, and a desire to create a community that is without violence and in defense of all victims and the oppressed. This is only possible through the 'taking of responsibility rather than scapegoating others,' in order to create such a community of faith, hope, and love. It emerges from a sense of faith and an attitude of hope for a new humanity, believing in God's transformative presence among us for all.

¹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. by Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas, 1990), p. 122.

Chapter 1. Profile of the Other

“When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just *others*, that we ourselves are an ‘other’ among others. All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through civilization as if through vestiges and ruins. The whole of mankind becomes an imaginary museum: where shall we go this weekend - visit the Angkor ruins or take a stroll in Tivoli of Copenhagen?”

Paul Ricoeur, “Universal Civilizations and National Culture,” in *History and Truth*, p.278.

Los Angeles, like all cities, is unique, but in one way it may typify the world city of the future: there are only minorities. No single ethnic group, nor way of life, nor industrial sector dominates that scene. Pluralism has gone further here than in any other city in the world and for this reason it may well characterize the global megalopolis of the future.¹

Nowhere are the issues dividing America more pronounced: the imperative of the nation as a whole culture set against the desire for subcultures to flourish. *E pluribus unum* (out of many, one) is a formulation no longer adequate to that duality which many want: a dialogue between the one and the many, the center and the peripheries, with both sides equally acknowledged and allowed to talk.²

Today, in the West, *multiculturalism* is the most popularly used word in society, stemming from a desire to respect other cultures and to deny racial

¹ Charles Jencks, *Heteropolis: Los Angeles, the Riot and the Strange Beauty of Hetero-Architecture* (London: Academy Group and Ernst John & Son, 1993), p.7.

² Charles Jencks, *Heteropolis*, p.8.

hierarchy. It depends on the idea that every culture is equally valuable and that the protection and promotion of cultural diversity is an essential aspect of a democratic society. This idea of 'multiculturalism' rejects an apartheid policy, like that of former South Africa, and promotes the maintenance of cultural diversity. In modern Western society, this idea is applied and permeates every aspect of societal life including academic disciplines and religious practices. But the most worrying aspect is that this idea, while promoting and encouraging the maintenance of cultures and their uniqueness, also implies an underlying idea of cultural separation.

The most significant area affected by this prevailing idea is educational policy - multicultural education in western society, especially that of the North Atlantic states. Although multicultural education has been described as a means to accept cultural diversity, it seems, in fact, to present these differences as a static, unchangeable, and predetermined natural phenomenon. It is like a human museum or zoo where differences are displayed, emphasising the vertical orientation of culture. As the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss stated as an anthropologist, "the ultimate goal is not to know what the societies under study 'are'... but to discover how they differ from one another."³ Lévi-Strauss likened societies to trains moving each on its own track, at its own speed, in its own direction.⁴ This emphasises the

³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 2 (London: Allen Lane, 1968) p. 63.

⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View From Afar*, trans Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) pp. 10-11.

"The trains rolling alongside ours are permanently present for us; through the windows of our compartments, we can observe at our leisure the various kinds of cars, the faces and gestures of the passengers. But if, on an oblique or a parallel track, a train passes in the other direction, we perceive only a vague, fleeting, barely identifiable image, usually just a momentary blur in our visual field, supplying no information about the event itself and merely irritating us because it interrupts our placid contemplation of the landscape which serves as the backdrop to our daydreaming.

differences that make *us* separated from *the others*, even to the point where cultural difference is deemed to be the same as biological difference. He says,

In order to develop differences, so that the boundaries enabling us to distinguish one culture from its neighbours may become sufficiently clear-cut, the conditions are roughly the same as those promoting biological differentiation between human groups.... Cultural barriers are almost of the same nature as biological barriers; the cultural barriers prefigure the biological barriers all the more as all cultures leave their mark on the human body.⁵

This suggests a denial of the possibility of interaction between different cultures. In other words, while emphasising differences and certain ways of life, multiculturalism can be used to place others in a realm of indifference. Lévi-Strauss encourages the creation of barriers between different groups to minimise interaction because such contact between different cultures weakens their differences. He argues that the ideal situation is where “communication had become adequate for mutual stimulation by remote partners, yet was not so frequent or so rapid as to endanger the indispensable obstacles between individuals and groups or to reduce them to the point where overly facile exchanges might equalise and nullify their diversity.”⁶ For Lévi-Strauss, communication is proper, as long as there is no danger of contaminating each other.

Every member of a culture is as tightly bound up with it as this ideal traveller with his own train. From birth and, as I have said, probably even before, the things and beings in our environment establish in each one of us an array of complex references forming a system - conduct, motivations, implicit judgements - which education then confirms by means of its reflexive view of the historical development of our civilization. We literally move along with this reference system, and the cultural system established outside it are perceptible to us only through the distortions imprinted upon them by our system. Indeed it may even make us incapable of seeing those systems.”

⁵ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View From Afar*, p. 17.

⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View From Afar*, p. 24.

What is implied is that cultures should remain where they belong as distinctive cultural identities.

The principle of multiculturalism applied to education, politics, religious practices, etc., especially in Lévi-Strauss' terms, sounds reasonable enough in creating a society where individuals and groups are recognised in their differences, so that they are not manipulated by others. In this post-colonial and global society, this understanding of multiculturalism and its political implications still operates with hegemonic power..

A city like Los Angeles is a city of the future; not because of its geographical size or number of its population, but rather because of its multicultural, global, post-modern characteristics. It symbolises the central theme of post-modern urban imagery in the theme of difference. It rejects the old liberal ideal of universal and meta-narrative homogeneity. It also distinguishes itself from so-called 'cultural diversity,' which is an epistemological project in which "cultural difference is the process of enunciation of culture as 'knowledgeable,' authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification."⁷ 'Cultural diversity' is the 'recognition of pre-given cultural contents' which is only possible within a certain system of articulation; it gives rise to the liberal notion of multiculturalism and cultural exchange, which is probably possible only in a utopian situation.

The Los Angeles riots in 1989, however, raised a fundamental question. This

⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference," in *the Postcolonial Studies Readers*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p.206.

was more than just an urban riot in a city that is made up entirely of cultural minorities. The problem is not a problem of disorder, chaos or even violence. It is 'the dilemma of multiculturalism at its most acute' that is posed by the riots in Los Angeles – i.e. the need for all voices to be heard, for all identities to be affirmed.⁸ What is now needed is a politics of difference that is not a politics informed by an abstract notion of justice, but a genuinely multicultural politics within which alternative notions of justice can be brought into play.⁹ It should be a politics of difference which empowers the voices of all.

This politics of difference, however, should not be viewed as simply the reflection of pre-given ethnic and cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition, as in multiculturalism. It is more a "social articulation of difference," from a minority perspective. It "is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerges in moments of historical transformation,"¹⁰ as we live on the borderlines of the present. Renee Green, the Afro-American artist, said,

Multiculturalism doesn't reflect the complexity of the situation as I face it daily... It requires one to step outside of him/herself to actually see what he/she is doing. I don't want to condemn well-meaning people and say (like those T-shirts you can buy on the street) 'It's a black thing, you wouldn't understand.' To me that's essentializing blackness.¹¹

⁸ Joel S. Kahn, *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), p.105.

⁹ See Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)

¹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 2.

¹¹ Renee Green, *interview conducted by Miwon Kwon for the exhibition 'Emerging New York Artists.'* quoted from Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.3.

Going beyond the border of self identity means to encounter something new which is not part of the continuum of the past and the present. The borderline is not the final boundary, but the beginning of something new and a place where a different reality is encountered. Franz Fanon once said, "I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence,"¹² and "In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom."¹³

The journey of self-identity is well described in Eva Hoffmann's biography *Lost in Translation*. In three parts: Paradise, Exile, and The New World, she beautifully expresses in a moving and thought-provoking manner the problems which emigrants have to face: the problem of language, nostalgia, loss, and the search for identity. In the second part of the book, Hoffmann focuses on her alienation and her problem with the English language. The problem is that the signifier has become severed from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue. Her native language (Polish) becomes a dead language. She finds that Polish words don't apply to her new experience. This part contains a thoughtful discussion about life in a new language and her anxiety about identity:

'This is a society [an American says] in which you are who you think you are. Nobody gives you your identity here, you have to reinvent your self every day.' He is right I suspect, but I can't figure out how this is done. But how do I choose from identity

¹² Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 1986), p.229.

¹³ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 231.

options available all around me?¹⁴

In part three, Hoffmann gives an account of how she gradually begins to feel at home in the New World. She shares an acute sense of dislocation and the strong challenge of having to invent a place and an identity for herself without the traditional supports. Feelings of anomie, loneliness and emotional depression force her into therapy. She is asked: why do so many Americans go to psychiatrists all the time? She replies:

It's a problem of identity. Many of my American friends feel they don't have enough of it. They often feel worthless, or they don't know how they feel..... maybe it's because everyone is always on the move and undergoing enormous changes, so they lose track of who they've been and have to keep tabs on who they're becoming all the time.¹⁵

At the end of the book, Hoffman acknowledges that she is being remade, fragment by fragment, like a patchwork quilt, and that she is becoming a hybrid creature, a sort of resident alien. The book makes it clear that identity is changed by the journey; that subjectivity is recomposed. Exile and migration can be deadening, but it can be very creative, and a place for transfiguration. Therefore, identity is to be found in the process of becoming through the Other, because identity is always related to what one is not, and only conceivable in and through difference.

But such realities also pose a challenge to the traditional mechanism that limits and channels people and ideas, both at the individual and the larger-group levels. It changes people and their mentalities. New experiences result from the

¹⁴ Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language* (London: Minerva, 1991), p. 160.

coming together of multiple influences and peoples, and these new experiences lead to altered or evolving representations of experience and self-identity. This complex act of relating to a number of identities, in terms of linguistic, religious, economic, social, political, ethnic and cultural identities, calls 'us' into question, and challenges 'our' previous self-perceptions and images. It posits a change of attitude towards the past and the present, and hence to the future as well. Moreover, it creates feelings of uncertainty: the ambivalence that comes via the Other.

1. Desire for the Other.

The appearance of the Other is not a sudden phenomenon within Western intellectual history. It has been latently present, but suppressed by the dominant ideologies, cultures and their practice. In ancient times, the Greeks drew a sharp distinction between themselves (i.e. self) and the Barbarians (i.e. the Other): Greekness was the polar opposite of barbarism. This Panhellenism was a popular device of uniting the feuding city-states in an aggressive campaign against the same barbarian enemy. This becomes the Neo-Hellenism of the West which has assumed the guardianship of ancient Hellas and its legacy. Although the problem of the Other is as ancient as the metaphysics in Greek philosophy, the Other has been devalued or ignored by onto-epistemologically oriented Western philosophy and theology. Moreover, since the modern era, ushered in by Descartes and the Enlightenment, this

¹⁵ Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*, p. 263.

process of manipulation of the Other has been intensified and rationalised with the result that the Other is considered as ‘that which lacks what we have.’ Thus, the Other has a negative image, pushed to the peripheral and the margin, or otherwise dismissed from cognition.

This negative understanding of the Other has religious connotations, based on a mechanism that produces a scapegoat. As we see in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, the Other - in this case Islam - is always produced for the sake of *us*, the dominant tradition and structure, in order to preserve the *status quo* and its purity from contamination. Thus, René Girard particularly articulates a theory of the Sacred that explains the role of religious institutions and cultural formations and at the same time, provides a hermeneutical theory to interpret them.¹⁶ Girard indicates that society results from the collective murder of an arbitrary victim, in order to re-establish peace through finding and killing a single and common enemy to whom all attribute their misfortune.¹⁷ He argues that the nature of overarching authority is violence as the energy of the social system that includes primordial religious institutions and the relationship between individual and institutions.¹⁸ This event of killing of one by all, in Girard, founds society, religion, and other social institutions, and this process is both historical and mechanical in the sense that it happened (and

¹⁶ See Andrew J. McKenna “Introduction,” *Semeia* no. 33, 1985, pp. 1-11. *Semeia* 33 is solely contributed to René Girard and Biblical Studies. He articulates the dialectics of mimetic desire forming human relations, in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1965); the fundamental motivations of ritual sacrifice (the role of sacrifice and the surrogate victim) in *Violence and Sacred* (1972); anthropological theory and hypothesis of human culture in *Things Hidden from the Foundation of the World* (1978).

¹⁷ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 204-205.

¹⁸ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 17-18.

happens) and operates at a non-conscious social level, unrecognised at the level of religious interpretation.

Girard begins with the nature of desire, a desire for the Other viewed in terms of mimesis, rivalry, and collective violence. He uses this as a hermeneutical tool for understanding the development of human culture. Hamerton-Kelly articulates the Girardian model of culture as a 'likely story,':

Once upon a time there was a group of hominids that found itself unable to do anything in concert because of rivalry among them. Each one [was] inwardly compelled to imitate some other. As the imitation became more successful he found himself a rival of his model, and the more like the model he became the more violent became the rivalry. Co-operation was impossible until one day, [the momentous day human culture began,] two of them discovered that it was possible to agree on one thing, to agree to kill someone else. This was such a compelling possibility that the whole group imitated them, and so the first moment of human solidarity happened as the fellowship of the lynch mob.¹⁹

The mimetic desire that operates by copying the other's desire for an object brings an ultimate logical consequence - conflict.²⁰ What is being proposed in order to deflect violence away from the human community is the selection of a single victim or group of victims. What is achieved through this process of victimisation is peace in the community; in other words, through the violent act done to the 'scapegoat' the

¹⁹ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, "Sacrificial Violence and the Messiah: A Hermeneutical Mediation on the Marcan Passion Narrative," unpublished paper presented to the Bible, Narrative, and American Culture Seminar and the Jesus Seminar, October 15-18, 1987, pp. 6-7. quoted from James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 7.

²⁰ Andrew J. McKenna "Introduction," *Semeia* no. 33, 1985, p. 3.

community is able to alienate its own destructive violence. The victim is hallowed and sanctified for being a redeemer of the community and consequently the violence itself become sanctified as well.²¹ Accordingly, what is demonstrated here is that the foundation and preservation of culture is based on a sacred violence that repeats, following the original substitution, endlessly justifying itself. Hamerton-Kelly, in summarising Girard's idea, argues that "the energy is violence, the mechanism is the Sacred, and society is a system of sacred violence."²²

Girard's idea of the Sacred is directly opposite to that of Mircea Eliade who considers religion as a response to the Sacred and ritual and myth as a human response to the manifestation of the Sacred. For Girard, the Sacred is itself a product of community.²³ Therefore, the Sacred gains the dominance over man. In society, "violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred,"²⁴ for its ability to divert the intense mimetic desire of destruction into a way that unifies community by transferring not only our mimetic desire but also the deflecting mechanism of our surrogate victimage, to the victim. Theologically we make the victim bear both our sins and the sin of making the victim bear our sins. This double transference is "the foundational lie of culture and the original act of bad faith."²⁵ As Girard states in *Things Hidden from the Foundation of the World* the original sign of emerging humanity (or human relation) is the victim;

²¹ Andrew J. McKenna "Introduction," *Semeia* no. 33, 1985, pp. 3-4.

²² Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, p. 18

²³ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, p. 28.

²⁴ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 31.

The signifier is victim. The signified constitutes all actual and potential meaning the community confers on to the victim and, through its intermediacy, on to all things. The sign is the reconciliatory victim. Since we understand that human beings wish to remain reconciled after the conclusion of the crisis, we can also understand their penchant for reproducing the language of the sacred substituting, in ritual, new victims for the original victim, in order to assure the maintenance of the miraculous peace.²⁶

The important point is that this victimisation mechanism is a reflection of the human condition, and this scapegoating is more deeply rooted in the human condition than we are willing to admit.²⁷

The significant element about scapegoating is that the myth and ritual of surrogate victimage becomes a pattern of modern socio-political and psychological practice. Others are blamed for mistakes in the society.. And responsibility for society's own violence is transferred to others, as in the Gulf War, the Bosnian-Serbian conflict and its racial genocide, the Nazis, the South African Apartheid policy, anti-Islamic movements, racism, nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, and anti-Semitism, etc. This has to do with accusation and collective violence in human relations. The prevailing practice of human society is to identify a victim so that the group or community may exist in harmony. In other words, the sacred violence of scapegoating is a religious and cultural form that is capable of channelling and

²⁵ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, p. 27.

²⁶ René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the Earth*, trans by S.Bann and M. Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p.103

²⁷ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 96.

deflecting rivalry and preventing conflicts from erupting.²⁸ In a way, it is a consensus, a common ground on which parties in rivalry can agree, which becomes violent and victimises the surrogate victim.

The victim, as the source of the sudden unity and order [i.e., “the first moment of human solidarity as the fellowship of the lynch mob”], was regarded as a saviour; and [he or she] was blamed for causing the previous disorder. Thus [he or she] acquired the double valency of the sacred: attraction and revulsion. From the victim came the building blocks of social order: prohibition to control the course of rivalry; ritual sacrifice to reenact and so represent to the group the unifying energy of the founding moment; myth to explain and obscure the violence by covering it up with transformations. The victim became the god, at the stage of the emergence of the gods. Thus society formed in the crucible of religion. Religious feeling [is individual and group awareness of the community, whose power of mimetic violence is represented in the form of gods and the sacred. Therefore, religion is essentially sacrifice- sacrificare, “making or rendering sacred.”]²⁹

The victim is a necessary condition of social order in differentiating the other from the *all* by establishing prohibition and re-enacting myth and ritual. The victim is the different other (a foreigner, a witch, a purveyor of new ideas, a prophet and etc.) considered as the cause of disorder and at the same time the cause of order or peace. Moreover, all prohibition, myth, and ritual maintain the economy of the ‘victimising sacred violence.’ In this social system, what is important is not what really happened, but “the interpretation of what happened, - what the community transfers

²⁸ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 14.

²⁹ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, “Sacrificial Violent and the Messiah: A Hermeneutical Mediation on the Marcan Passion Narrative,” pp.6-7. quoted from James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*. p. 10..

to the victim and what the victim in turn represents to them.”³⁰ As a consequence, interpretation or hermeneutics is at the origin of culture, since as mentioned above, the matter is the (mis)interpretation of what happened.³¹ This (mis)interpretation of what happened is re-enacted or retold in the form of myth and ritual, in order to rationalise the founding mechanism of sacred violence, and to constitute or reconstitute the cultural order. Girard indicates that,

Monstrosities recur throughout mythology. From this we can only conclude that myths makes constant reference to the sacrificial crisis, but do so only in order to disguise the issue. Myths are the retrospective transfiguration of sacrificial crises, the reinterpretation of these crises in the light of cultural order that has arisen from them.³²

Such mythology is elaborated as “an unconscious process based on the surrogate victim and nourished by the presence of violence. This presence is not ‘repressed,’ not cast off on the unconscious; rather, it is detached from man and made divine”³³and ontological in its nature. Not only can the violence be survived, but “it has also provided the impetus for the development of religious ritual and myth, and, through their generative influence, legislation and human culture.”³⁴

Girard’s demythologising of the myth of sacred violence is a retelling of the story from the victim’s perspective. In so doing he exposes the lie and reveals the

³⁰ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, pp. 27-28.

³¹ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, p. 28.

³² René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 64.

³³ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 136.

³⁴ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a world of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 146.

founding mechanism of sacred violence. In the nature of this inquiry, the method employed is a deconstructive hermeneutics of suspicion which reveals the underlying mechanisms. It reveals the founding (ontological) mechanism of representation or (mis)interpretation of the Other for *us*. Therefore, a 'looking' or 'reading' from the victim's perspective, is not just a different reading, it is a memory trace of how the mechanism of sacred violence has been carried out in the cultural-political system and its practice. What is important is that we must refuse the illusion that there can be a legitimate safe violence, the violence of just retribution. Girard says that the Gospel tells a radically different story as "Jesus invites all men to devote themselves to the project of getting rid of violence, a project conceived with reference to the true nature of violence, taking into account the illusion it fosters, the method by which it gains ground, and all the laws that we have verified."³⁵ It is looking at reality from the victim's perspective and refusing to reciprocate in kind to legitimate violences.

René Girard attempts to see natural religion as founded on a victim-based conception of the sacred which then permeated the socio-political-cultural mechanism. Natural religion is organised violence in the service of social stability. So Girard interprets the scapegoating (sacrifice) as ritually concealed expulsion.³⁶ Therefore, although it had "a positive function insofar as it contributed to the pacification of human society," in fact, these sacrifices were "rooted nevertheless in a collective self-deception."³⁷ Girard's theory of sacred violence reveals the victim (the

³⁵ René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, p. 197.

³⁶ Raymond Schwager, S.J., "Christ, Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice," in *Semica* 33, 1985, p. 109.

³⁷ Raymond Schwager, S.J., "Christ, Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice," in *Semica* 33, 1985, p. 109.

Other), whose traces have been covered up by the (mis)representation of culture, social hierarchies, and power relations. In doing so, Girard particularly considers the text of the Scripture as a means of exposing the falsehood of the sacred in its victimisation of the different other (scapegoat). He articulates his theory in the story of Cain - "one of the two brothers kills the other, and the Cainite community is founded."³⁸ Although the story of Cain is similar to other stories of social origins in which culture and tradition begin with a murder, Girard also sees a difference. For example, in the Roman myth, the murdering of Remus was an action that was perhaps to be regretted, but was justified by the victim's transgression. In order for the city to exist, no one could be allowed to flout with impunity the rules it prescribed. So Romulus is justified. By contrast, the story of Cain tells us about a murderer, not camouflaged in myth and ritual from the standpoint of the mythic community. What is most significant here is the moral judgement the Scripture prescribes in this matter.³⁹ In this regard, Girard sees Max Weber as the one who understood the fact that the biblical writers have an undeniable tendency to take the side of the victim on moral grounds and to spring to the victim's defence.⁴⁰ What the Scriptures constitute from the story of Cain and Abel, of Jacob, of Joseph and his brothers, through the Law and the Prophets, is a theory of human violence. The history of Israel is a history of disclosure of God's intention to reveal the hidden mechanism of victimising the Other.⁴¹ Thus, we must reject the illusion that there can be a legitimate violence.

³⁸ René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the Earth*, p. 146

³⁹ René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the Earth*, p. 146-147.

⁴⁰ Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans by H.H. Garth and M. Martindale (Glencoe, IL,: Free Press, 1952), pp. 19-22; 429-495. quoted from *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the Earth*, p. 147.

⁴¹ See *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the Earth*, pp. 144-158.

From the perspective of the present situation, this mechanism is still active in relation to the Other in Western culture; in fact, the significance of this mechanism lies in the fact that it is very much a theologically oriented one. This fact brings modern Western society and its working into a fundamental questioning and, reveals “the infinite potential” of violence toward the Other.⁴² The dominant intellectual tradition of the West has been a history of mimetic desire in rivalry, in casting out the old (sacred) at the price of the new (sacred). This leads inevitably to conflict and rivalry. In order to resolve or overcome the event of crisis, a victim is chosen in order to regain the stable order of differences. The theory of sacred violence reveals the violent origin of sacrifice and the victimisation that makes the society exist in harmony. The important task we have however, is to seek a totally different point of view that undoes the mechanism. This is, according to Girard, the voice or perspective of the victim. As long as we try to situate sacrifice within a system, we tend to remain within the system. We discover what generates it. Accordingly, without an exploration of the victim’s perspective, we have little choice but to repeat and justify the system of violence,⁴³ operating at a non-conscious social level and at the level of religious interpretation. Therefore, it is important to uncover the horror of violence permeated into our modern social mechanism and consciousness, and reveal its inability to procure true peace with the others, from the victim’s point of view.

⁴² René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the Earth*, p. 137.

2. The Desire of Modernity

Anthony Giddens, in *The Consequences of Modernity*, states that “modernity refers to the modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onward and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence.”⁴⁴ In other words, the modern agenda and its ideology have cut across the world - across geographical boundaries, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, religion and class, as the West intensified its control over others, in the name of ‘progress’ and of ‘development,’ promising to liberate humankind from ‘ignorance’ and ‘irrationality’.

The significant matter is that modernity is more or less shaped by the western society - society shaped by an exclusive set of cultural values, and a western intellectual tradition which has been preoccupied with the pursuit of truth received as definable, locatable, something all reasonable people may finally agree upon (here, ‘reasonable people’ are mostly white, male and upper class). Moreover, the underlying principle of modernity is dominated by “the idea that the history of thought is a progressive ‘enlightenment’ which develops through an even more complete appreciation and reappreciations of its own ‘foundations’”. These foundations are often understood to be ‘origins’, so that the theoretical and practical revolutions of Western history are presented and legitimated for the most part as ‘recoveries’, rebirths, or returns, and “the new is identified with value through the

⁴³ James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*. pp. 19-20.

⁴⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) , p.1.

mediation of recovery and appropriation of the foundation-origin"⁴⁵. Therefore, it is clear that in this foundationalism the question it raised is contained within itself.⁴⁶

But, as society becomes multi-cultural and pluralistic, we also become aware of the realities of religious and cultural plurality in the study of Christianity. David Tracy in *The Analogical Imagination* shows that the "modern conflict of interpretations of religion has made it clear that it is not really possible to provide one definition for the essence of religion."⁴⁷ He therefore questions the traditional assumptions of Western theology that it was possible to define in general terms about religion and religions. In effect he shows that this involved a process of familiarisation in which the other culture was dehumanised to the level of an abstract structure, exemplified in the notorious but well-known saying that 'only a dead Indian is a good Indian' - that is to say, good only as an object to be classified in publications and museums.⁴⁸ The Other was understood only when translated into more familiar categories. Even in what has been called 'cultural encounter,' the Other is deconstructed in the favour of a monopoly of Western culture. But, in this process of translation, what is lost is the irreducible strangeness of the other

⁴⁵ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p.2.

⁴⁶ cf. Aristotle argued in book Gamma of the *Metaphysic* that the observance of the law of logic is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for rationality, whether theoretical or practical. See Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1988), p.4.

⁴⁷ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981), p.157.

⁴⁸ Thomas Mooren, *On the Border - The Otherness of God and the Multiplicity of the Religions* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), p.37.

Western Christians are now coming to a realisation of the Eurocentricism of Christian history, culture, and biblical interpretation. Until recently, it has been normal practice to define religion within Western presuppositions which are then applied to non-Western cultural phenomena. Contemporary scholars are now being forced to confront matters of definition and category in relation to other religions and cultures in a serious way.

On the other hand, in the West, although some of the key premises of Western ideology have been recognised, and some postcolonial argument has been accepted, there are attempts to maintain 'western value' against those whose cultures are perceived as different. In Europe, there is a growing feeling that a postcolonial language of culture and difference has been re-appropriated by the Right in a renewed racism. It has been pointed out that,

[the] colonial logic of universalism and assimilation has given way to the postcolonial logic of pluralism and difference. In this pluralistic context 'culture' has become the major site of struggle for new racist and anti-racist formations. It can be mobilized both to reinforce and to challenge exclusion and racism. This has clearly been a problem for anti-racism, whose language of 'difference' has been appropriated by the new racism and turned back on the anti-racist movement itself. Anti-racism has therefore been faced with the problem of how to challenge the essentialist concept of difference used by the New Right without reinforcing an essentialism of its own or slipping back into a universalism which it was at pains to challenge in the first place.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Maxim Silverman, "Introduction," in *Race, Discourse and Power in France*, ed by M. Silverman (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991), p.2.

This cultural Right is trying to distance itself from the traditionally known 'racism,' by claiming left-wing theoretical roots and emphasising the cultural over the political struggle. Its self proclaimed logic is the right of difference, of culture and of roots. The right to be different was inherited from left-wing discourse and, for the last few decades, it was used for the anti-racist movements. But this new approach of the Right (the so-called New Right) which appropriated the crucial term 'difference,' has used the idea of difference as the backbone for a so-called 'cultural' rather than racial argument. In other words, the use of the term 'race,' is being replaced by 'culture,'⁵⁰ and 'the difference of culture,' as was particularly evident in the Apartheid policy of South Africa in the last several decades.

These are real problems that we, the post-modern society, are facing today. Having witnessed and experienced the implications of this, these human predicaments require theological reflection and a new mode of hermeneutics. This is not to suggest a better definition of the Other but rather a change of attitude toward the Other; not an attempt to analyse the Other but to respond to the Other. Therefore, it is imperative that the Other "should be understood not as something at which our saying and doing aims but something from which it starts."⁵¹ This study is an attempt to create a 'space,' in which a rediscovering and encountering of the Other that is normally beyond the boundary of our identity, becomes possible. What is

⁵⁰ Clotte Guillaumin, "Race and Discourse," in *Race, Discourse and Power in France*, ed by M. Silverman (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991), p. 9.

⁵¹ Bernhard Waldenfels, "Response to the Other" in *Encountering the Other(s): Studies in Literature, History, and Culture*, ed by Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), p.89

important here is, that when we come to a boundary, we realise that on 'the other side' lies that which is not our own. Yet these realities meet at boundaries at which we sense not only difference but connectedness as well.⁵²

This 'rapprochement' of different cultures, especially in relation to theology explores an attitude that promotes the interaction in such a way that no one is excluded and appropriated but instead appreciated. In this inter-cultural encounter, the Other not only calls for respect, but also demands an ethical relationship. Ethics as a mode of critique puts Western epistemology and its system into question, and places them in relation with others. It is a critical question of looking on 'ourselves' as others see us; it is to place 'ourselves' before the judgement of the others.⁵³

The question of the Other inevitably implies the duty of deconstruction, and demands an ethical response; it should be understood as an ethical demand, the demand that puts "into question my spontaneity by the presence of the Other"⁵⁴ It is a critical question to the idea of liberty and the cognition of the ego that seeks to reduce all otherness to itself. The domain of the Same, as Levinas says, that "maintains a relation with otherness, but it is a relation in which the 'I', ego, or *Dasein* reduces the distance between the Same and the Other, in which their opposition fades."⁵⁵ Moreover, as for Derrida, one's thought itself is "a form of hegemony, totalization in its claims to understand, to comprehend, to force otherness

⁵² Paul R. Sponheim, *Faith and the Other: A Relational Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp.2-3.

⁵³ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), p. 16

⁵⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.43

⁵⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 126

and Absence in terms of presence and understanding.”⁵⁶

In this self closure, the limits of tradition and the possibility of transgressing those limits, are denied. Therefore, the deconstructive mode operates as the disruption and interruption of the limit that divides the inside from the outside of tradition. Deconstruction demonstrates that tradition, or text, or institution are dependent upon the presuppositions of a metaphysics of presence, and questions the metaphysics it presupposes. But, as Derrida indicates, deconstruction is not something negative; it is neither a process of demolition, nor an act produced and controlled by a subject, rather it is to locate a point of otherness and to open it up from the position of the Other;

We want to attain the point of a certain exteriority with respect to the totality of the logocentric epoch. From this point of exteriority a certain deconstruction of this totality ... could be broached.⁵⁷

It is a movement of traversing the text, that enables this reading to obtain a position of alterity or exteriority from which the text can be deconstructed. In other words, it is opening up this textual space to show that there are many genres operating within the text. The significant form is a kind of double-reading that comes from deconstructive reading, which searches for the other. In this way, reading opens a discourse on the other to philosophy, about otherness that has been dissimulated or

⁵⁶ Raymond Corbey and Joep Leerssen, “Studying Alterity: Background and Perspectives,” in *Alterity, Identity, Image: Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship*, ed. R. Corbey and J.T. Leerssen (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1991), xii.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. By G.C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), p.14

appropriated by the logocentric tradition, and articulates the ethical condition to interrupt the ontological or logocentric closure.⁵⁸ Therefore, in extending this deconstructive reading to the question of ethics, cultural reading is history read from the perspective of the victims of that history. Then, what emerges from here, is an ethical history.

In relation to the study of culture, colonialism is crucial for an understanding of the history and of interaction between cultures. The anthropological concept of 'culture' would not have been invented without a colonial expansion that encouraged and facilitated the new claims of Europe and its Other through its histories of conquests and rule. But although colonial conquest was predicated on the power of superior arms, military, political power, and economic wealth, it was also based on a complexly related variety of cultural technologies. Consequently, in both Western centres and colonial peripheries, the anthropological givens of culture have been transformed over and over again by colonial encounters. However, if colonialism is seen as a cultural formulation, culture can be seen as a colonial formulation. To the degree that culture was implicated both in the means and the ends of colonial conquest, culture was invented. Western histories, in fact, were both sustained and influenced by colonial events, which became fundamental moments in the unfolding narrative of the modern West.

Colonialism can be seen as an historical moment in relation to European political and economic projects in the modern era, as well as a trope for domination

⁵⁸ Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp 9-13

and violation. Culture can be seen both as a historically constituted domain of significant concepts and practices, and a regime in which power achieves its ultimate apotheosis. But, colonialism was neither monolithic nor unchanging throughout its history, and colonial power was never so omniscient as to imagine itself as total. While colonial rulers were always not certain that their power was dependent on knowledge, they were similarly aware of all the ways in which knowledge was power. Colonialism remade the world. Neither European nor the Third World, neither colonisers nor colonised, would have come into being without the history of colonialism; and the cultural predicates and categories of our world have been shaped through colonial encounters. Our post-colonial world is one in which we live after colonialism, but never without it. Colonialism continues to live in ways that we have only begun to recognise, despite decolonization; certain destinies and identities seem fixed, while others seem chaotic, disorderly, unfixed. Colonialism is coming back to haunt 'new nations and people,' and debates over nationality and multiculturalism mask increasing anxiety over the categories and identities of race, language, culture, and morality.

Therefore, by evaluating the encounter between the West and the non-West and its cultures, it might be possible to locate our identities and subjectivities. This project is neither concentrated on an intrinsic value of self-identity or the absolute relativising of all value, but is governed by the irreducible necessity of engaging with other voices. It is "the double perception that ours is but one voice among many and that, as it is the only one we have, we must need speak with it."⁵⁹ Here, ethical force

⁵⁹ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p.234.

is inseparable from an acknowledgement of one's own position and cultural identity; a means of immunising the self against any form of violent decentring of the Other, or as Levinas indicates 'the ethical commitment of self to the Other.'

Thus, this study is an attempt to bring the ethics into the discourses of hermeneutics, ethnography, epistemology, and postcoloniality, in terms of responsibility for the Other for ethics presumes a physical setting and relation with the others and commands to act accordingly. It is clear that any examination of the question of the Other leads to the radical questioning of the foundations of Western thought and tradition; its questioning is related to critiques of the subject, the West, and to the challenges to Western thought and its practices by diverse groups of others in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

3. Myth of Modernity

The situation of 'Post-modernity' or 'Post-Christendom' is posing a challenge to the way we understand the past, which indicates the history and our sense of what experience and knowledge are. This challenge is directly related to the structure of knowledge in academic institutions, since universities, colleges, seminaries, and other higher educational institutions have "a crucial relationship to the forms of knowledge developed within those institutions, and in their relationships

with other forms of knowledge and representation.”⁶⁰ What is important, today, is to see the knowledge produced in academic institutions in terms of the power-interests and relationships that sustain them, as Michel Foucault indicates,

No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communications, records, accumulation and displacement which is in itself a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and functioning, to the other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. On this level, there is not knowledge on the one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only the fundamental forms of knowledge/power.⁶¹

Today, Western Christian theology and its culture are facing and hearing powerful voices from the ‘two-thirds’ worlds of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania, as well as from Eastern and Central European countries. Western theology, however, tends to understand these voices not in the context of cultural difference, but of cultural diversity. As a result, Western understanding of the non-Western becomes an epistemological project in which cultural diversity is a category of comparative study. The recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs, held in a frame of relativism, means the West can *claim the Other’s time, control the Other’s space and the Other’s bodies, impose limitations on what can be said and done, and decide the Other’s being*⁶² Materials and thoughts from non-Western countries, are collected, analysed, compared, competed and classified in such a way that the Western subject

⁶⁰ Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of Contemporary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 6.

⁶¹ Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (London: Tavistock, 1980), p. 131.

⁶² Richard Ashley, and R.B.J. Walker, “Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies,” in *International Studies Quarterly* 34 (3), 1990, p.261.

can occupy the central role in representing their theologies in term of the power/knowledge relation. The same is true in relation to non-Western theologies; the Western academic institutions tend to represent them in the self-reflective and self-validating way of modern epistemology in which the Other is merely reflected and represented in otherness and difference, in a controlled space and time, like a museum display.

3.1. Familiarisation and Order

Zygmunt Bauman stated that the typical modern project was the struggle for order; he says, “it is not a fight of one definition against another, of one way of articulating reality against a competitive proposal. It is a fight of determination against ambiguity, of semantic precision against ambivalence, of transparency against obscurity, clarity against fuzziness.”⁶³ In other words, modern consciousness attempted to create a society that is “sustained by design, manipulation, management, engineering,”⁶⁴ by exterminating ambivalence. In fact, in this social engineering, the quest for order and an ambivalence-free homogeneity was enforced by an Enlightenment rationality in which everything including nature is subordinated to the human will and reason.

Modernity is dominated by “the idea that the history of thought is a

⁶³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp.6-7.

progressive ‘enlightenment’ which develops through an ever more complete appreciation and reappreciations of its own ‘foundation’”.⁶⁵ These foundations are also understood to be ‘origins,’ so that the theoretical and practical revolutions of Western history are presented and legitimated for the most part as ‘recoveries’, rebirths, or returns. The idea of ‘overcoming’, which is so important in all modern philosophy, understands the course of thought as being a progressive development in which the new is identified with value through the mediation of the recovery and appreciation of the foundation-origin.⁶⁶

As Plato maintained, the soul finds its true Being in returning whence it came. Its coming into the world in the first place was a fall, and so the essential thing is to undo the fall as quickly as possible, to redress the wrong which has confined the soul in the realm of change. Therefore, for him, the essential destiny of the soul is to recover its origins in the sphere of primordial Being and pure presence.⁶⁷ Knowledge is not a discovery but a recovery, a recollection; learning means to re-establish contact with a cognition that we already possess. In Plato, therefore, everything moves backward: from the fallen to the primordial, from copy to the original, from loss to recovery, from forgetfulness to recollection.⁶⁸ It is clear that this

⁶⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* p.7.

⁶⁵ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p.2.

⁶⁶ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, p.2

⁶⁷ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutical Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.13.

⁶⁸ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, pp.13-14. Kierkegaard said that recollection begins at the end instead of at the beginning, with the ‘loss; instead of the task, from S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.136; see also p.131 on his criticism against the Greek recollection. Johannes Climacus calls Platonic recollection a ‘temptation’ to recollect oneself out of existence, and he says that the greatness of Socrates was to have resisted this temptation, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton:

foundationalism, and the questions it raises, is contained within itself. Searching for the meaning has been the agenda of a Western intellectual tradition preoccupied with the pursuit of truth as though it were somehow definable and locatable in a meaningful way. This meaningful representation has been central to the study of theology, as seen in church history and systematic theology. In a time of globalisation, however, like today, the story of Western theology, which once was the central experience of the church, is now complicated by the addition of theologies from non-Western traditions or from minority cultures in a particular society, especially evident in the United States.

In fact, the notion of the description of a culture, in this situation, cannot appear as a neutral or trans-cultural, for it is linked to the epistemology of the Western tradition. Richard Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, indicates that hermeneutics is defined in opposition to an epistemology which is founded on the presupposition that all discourses are commensurate with and translatable among each other:

Hermeneutics sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts..... Epistemology sees the hope of agreement as a token of the existence of common ground which, perhaps unbeknown to the speakers, unites them in a common rationality.⁶⁹

Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 184-185.

⁶⁹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979),

Here, for epistemology, conversation is an inquiry which views the participants as united in what Oakeshott called a *universitas* - “a group united by mutual interests in achieving a common end,” as opposed to hermeneutics, in which inquiry is a conversation that views them as united in what he calls a *societas* - “persons whose paths through life have fallen together, united by civility rather than by a common goal, much less by a common ground.”⁷⁰ Therefore, in epistemology, when encountering other culture, alterity becomes to some degree regulated through the metaphysically inspired appeal to a common humanity. When representing the other, “the notion of knowledge as accurate representation lends itself naturally to the notion that certain sorts of representation, certain expressions, certain processes are ‘basic,’ ‘privileged,’ and ‘foundational.’”⁷¹ For Rorty, hermeneutics aware that there is no such single unifying language, tries to appropriate the language of the other rather than translate it into its own language. Hermeneutics is a bit like getting to know a stranger, rather than the development of logically constructed demonstration;⁷² in relation to other culture.

The notion of culture as a conversation rather than as a structure erected upon foundations fits well with this hermeneutical notion of knowledge, since getting into a conversation with stranger is, like acquiring a new virtue or skill by imitating models, a matter of *φρονησις* rather than *ἐπισημη*.⁷³

p.318.

⁷⁰ Cf. “On the character of a Modern European State” in Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Quoted from Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.318, no.2.

⁷¹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* p.318-319.

⁷², Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* p. 319. He said “coming to understand is more like getting acquainted with a person than like following a demonstration.”

Rorty writes, “we will be epistemological, when we understand perfectly well what is happening but want to codify it in order to extend, or strengthen, or teach, or ‘ground’ it. We must use hermeneutics where we do not understand what is happening but are honest enough to admit it...”⁷⁴ In other words, it is “discourse about as-yet-incommensurable discourses.”⁷⁵

What is clear is that the ideology and practice of “representation” cannot be an objective representation of reality, but the representation of a particular value system (it is the West’s in this case). It is the activity of self-representation of the West as the subject, that “constitutes a process of self-appropriation through which the subject comes into possession of itself.”⁷⁶ Therefore, by relating itself to itself, the subject realises itself as self-present subjectivity, and the realisation of the self’s full presence to itself necessarily involves a process of re-membering or re-collection. It is evident that ‘to know’ itself is to re-collect, even in the thought of a theologian like Augustine, since he recognised “the close connection between *cogo* (to drive together to one point, collect, assemble, gather together) and *cogito*” from his Platonic and Neoplatonic heritage.⁷⁷

In this act of knowing, the subject re-members and recollects what previously had been dismembered or dispersed. Recollection makes connections between what

⁷³ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 319.

⁷⁴ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 321.

⁷⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.343.

⁷⁶ Mark C. Taylor. *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) p.43.

⁷⁷ Mark C. Taylor. *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, p.44.

is disjoined and fragmented and enables the self to become present to itself by comprehending, gathering together, and unifying. This interplay of self-appropriation and recollection points to the importance of autobiography for self-realisation. The subject attempts to weave together the various strands of experience and to construct them into a unified whole, since a meaningful totality is not given.⁷⁸ It becomes evident, therefore, that the story of others is a story of the self; and what is represented is what the self constructs for narrating its own story. It is representing or exhibiting ourselves to ourselves, and telling the stories of our lives in ways which would be impossible otherwise.

3.2. Museum Practice as the Cultural Expression of the Modern West

One of the most distinctive characteristics of modernity is promoted and practised institutionally in the museum, in terms of telling and exhibiting ourselves to ourselves. In Western culture, there has been a gradual expansion of interest in human history and human activities, moving on from the ancient epics and writings to the ecclesiastical collections, and etc., to the creation of the museum as an institution, starting in the eighteenth century in Western Europe. From the end of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, there was an enormous

⁷⁸ Mark C. Taylor. *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, pp.43-44.

growth of interest in the housing of collections.⁷⁹ Museums are a characteristic part of the cultural pattern of modern Europe, and of the European-influenced world, and undoubtedly most European museums are, among other things, memorials to the rise of nationalism and imperialism. Every capital must have its own museum devoted in part to exhibiting the greatness of its past, and, to exhibiting the loot gathered by its monarchs in conquest of other nations.

More importantly, by nature, the museum is an institution which holds the material evidence, objects and specimens, of the human and natural history of our planet. What is important is to notice that all of the museum holdings were assembled, with some degree of conscious intention, by collectors whose collections found their ways into a holding museum, where they are cared for and interpreted by museum staff. In modern Europe, the museum became a modern institution around the middle of the fifteenth-century in the Renaissance cities and courts of Italy and has continued in a linear development in Europe since that time, spreading to the rest of the world along with all the other characteristically European institutions.⁸⁰ It was clear that museums became a typical characteristic of modernity and its cultural expression in the West.

Modernity was concerned with the scientific knowledge and understanding gained through the activity of reason upon natural phenomena, and for which

⁷⁹ Hubert G. Alexander. "Why Preservation," in *The Idea of Museum: Philosophical, Artistic and Political Questions*, ed. by Lars Aagaard-Mogensen (Lampeter: the Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), pp.7-15.

⁸⁰ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 1-2.

museums were perceived as the primary repositories of primary evidence. Philosophically, modernity promoted the meta-narratives, overarching discourses through which objective realities and eternal truths could be defined and expressed. In fact, civic pride was not the reason for having museums on a large scale, but rather the unique characteristic of museums to hold the real objects, the actual evidence, the true data, upon which in the last analysis the materialistic meta-narrative depended for its verification. It is the purpose of a museum to display, to demonstrate, to show the nature of the world and of man within it by arranging the collected material in particular patterns that reflect, confirm and project the contemporary world view.⁸¹

In fact, the whole of cultural expression, one way or another, falls within the realm of material culture. It is also true that the material culture held today by many museums falls within this frame, like the areas of an industrial landscape. It is significant that cultural value is given by this material culture and its idea of selection; the act of selection turns a part of the natural world into an object and a museum piece, as demonstrated by the sample of moon rock which went on display in the Milestones of Flight hall at the National Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC:

The moon rock is an actual piece of the moon retrieved by the Apollo 17 mission. There is nothing particularly appealing about the rock; it is a rather standard piece of volcanic basalt some 4 million years old. Yet, unlike many other old rocks, this one comes displayed in an altar-like structure, set in glass, and is complete with full-time guard and ultrasensitive monitoring device... There is a sign above it which reads, 'You may touch it

⁸¹ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, pp. 2-6.

with care.' *Everyone touches it.*⁸²

Through its selection and display, even the natural world (here, rock) has turned into material culture, and became a part of the world of human values. It is important to note the contemporary principles that are involved in selection, detaching objects from the natural context, and organising them into some kind of relationship with other material.

Museums hold the stored material culture of the past. The material has not arrived in museums in a steady, single-state flow, one piece at a time, but rather it comes in groups which have been gathered together by a single individual, or sometimes a closely associated pair or group of individuals. It is interesting to see how the notion of group identity and personal association is deeply embedded in the material itself. The making of a collection is one way in which we organise our relationship with the external physical world of which collections are a part. It is a part of a relationship between the subject (conceived as each individual human being), and the object (conceived as the whole world) which lies outside of him or her. Collections are a significant element in our attempt to construct the world, and so the effort to understand them is one way of exploring our relationship with the world.⁸³

The selection process is the crucial act of the collector when he decides how his selection will work, what he will choose and what he will reject. What he chooses

⁸² D.J. Meltzer, "Ideology and Material Culture" in *Modern Material Culture: the Archaeology of Us*, ed by R.A. Gould and M.B. Schiffer (New York: Academic Press, 1981), p.121.

bears “an intrinsic, direct and organic relationship, that is a metonymic relationship, to the body of material from which it was selected because it is an integral part of it. But the very act of selection adds to its nature.” The selected collection bears “representative or metaphorical relationship” to its whole. It becomes an image of what the whole is believed to be, and although it remains an intrinsic part of the whole, it is no longer merely a detached fragment because it has become imbued with meaning of its own.⁸⁴ It means that collected objects are both the signifier (that is the medium that carries the message) and the signified, the message itself. Here, it is imperative to realise the dual nature of the collection. The metaphor (the signified or message) has been added to the original material (the signifier or medium) by perceiving humans, from whose human experience come the perceptions and understanding which are imposed upon the world at any given moment.⁸⁵ Therefore, the attitude to the object would be either through contemplating its separateness, or through attempting to merge with and absorb what is before it. As Adrian Stokes expresses it,

Our relationship to all objects seem to be describable in terms of two extreme forms, the one a very strong identification with object, whether projective or introjective, whereby a barrier between self and non-self is undone, the other a commerce with a self-sufficient and independent object at arm's length.... the work of art is *par excellence* a self-sufficient object as well as a configuration that we absorb or to which we lend ourselves as manipulators.⁸⁶

⁸³ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, pp.36-37.

⁸⁴ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* p.38.

⁸⁵ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* p.41.

⁸⁶ Adrian Stokes, *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes* Vol. III (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), pp.151-152.

What is important about this experience is “the capacity to play with illusion, to use imagination working on an external object to create something for which a need is felt.”⁸⁷ Collecting has the character of ritual activity which is carried out for its own sake with all the social and emotional quality which this implies. It is quite right that collections are objects of love, but they are also objects of dominance and control.

What is clear is that the struggle is not only over what is to be presented, but over who will control the means of representing. What is evident in this struggle, is “the articulation of identity.” When cultural ‘others’ are implicated, “exhibitions tell us who we are, perhaps most significant, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for representing images of self and ‘other.’”⁸⁸ Regarding the museum as a Western cultural institution, it is possible to argue that the museum is a unique institution where the story of Western imperialism and colonial appropriation is being told, and the exotic objects displayed in the museum indicate their status as trophies of imperial conquest, in relation to the other cultures.⁸⁹ Moreover, this museum practice turns cultural material into some kind of art object. The products of other cultures are made into something that people look at.

In the practice of exhibition, people and their knowledge are limited to the objects displayed in a museum which are removed from their original setting and lost their meaning for existence - their function. The smells, sounds and emotions

⁸⁷ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. p. 46.

⁸⁸ Ivan Karp, “Culture and Representation,” in *Exhibiting cultures*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1991),p.15.

associated with the objects, especially if from other cultures, are prohibited in the exhibits. Things taken out of everyday life are regrouped and renamed. The objects are transformed, removed from the continuity of everyday uses in time and space, and put exquisitely on display, stabilised and conserved for the different meanings that the makers of exhibitions and collections may be said to carry.⁹⁰

The object begins to reveal a somewhat different meaning when it is drawn out of its original context and put into a setting that evokes the totality of cultural relations and makes that totality part of its defining frame.⁹¹ This was well exemplified in the French Revolution, when the Louvre Palace was designated as a national museum. The transformation of the old royal palace into the Museum of the French Republic was high on the agenda of the French Revolutionary government. And, public art museums were regarded as evidence of political virtue indicating that government provided the best for its people.⁹² In this process of change, the function of collection changes considerably as well, when it is no longer the private cache of a prince, but rather the content of a gallery visited by a cross section of visitors. Even the function of a painting changes when it becomes part of a collection; museums become places where works of art no longer have any function other than being works of art.⁹³ Therefore, as we have noted, “the effect of the museum was to

⁸⁹ Ivan Karp, “Culture and Representation,” p. 16.

⁹⁰ Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, “Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue,” in *Exhibiting Cultures*, p.159.

⁹¹ Masao Yamaguchi, “The Poetics of Exhibition in Japanese Culture”, in *Exhibiting Cultures*, p.62.

⁹² Carol Duncan, “Art Museum and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in *Exhibiting Cultures*, p.89.

⁹³ André Malraux, *The Voice of Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p.15.

suppress the model in almost every portrait (even that of a dream-figure) and to divest works of art of their functions. It did away with the significance of Palladium, of Saint and Savior; ruled out association of sanctity, qualities of adornment and possession, of likeness and imagination. Each exhibit is a representation of something, differing from the thing itself, this specific difference being its *raison d'être*.”⁹⁴

Museum and Myth

The traditional role of a museum has been described as that of a temple; the museum displays a “timeless and universal function, the use of a structured sample of reality, not just as a reference but as an objective model against which to compare individual perceptions.”⁹⁵ On the other hand, it preserves a newer role as a forum; the museum is a place for “confrontation, experimentation, and debate.”⁹⁶ Since the messages communicated through the museum and its practice do not have a predetermined content, museums and their exhibitions can claim to be morally neutral in principle. But, inevitably, all exhibitions are organised on the bias of assumption about “the intentions of the object’s producers, the cultural skill and qualifications of the audiences, the claims to authoritativeness made by the exhibition, and the judgements of the aesthetic merit or authenticity of the exhibiting process.”⁹⁷ The alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions, however, is

⁹⁴ André Malraux, *The Voice of Silence*, p.14.

⁹⁵ Duncan Cameron, “The Museum: A Temple or the Forum,” in *Journal of World History* 14, no.1 (1972), p.201.

⁹⁶ Duncan Cameron, “The Museum: A Temple or the Forum,” p.197.

⁹⁷ Ivan Karp, “Culture and Representation,” pp.11-12.

the very quality that enables them to become instruments of power, continually making moral statements in practice. A museum is not the neutral and transparent sheltering space that it is often claimed to be.

In addition to this myth of 'neutrality,' museums function like ritual sites; museums do not simply resemble temples architecturally, but they work like temples. Many, since the Enlightenment, think of religious truth as addressed to particular groups of voluntary believers, while secular truth has the status of objective or universal knowledge and functions in our society as higher, authoritative truth. In this sense, the museum goers today, like visitors to these ritual sites, bring with them "the willingness and ability to shift into a certain state of receptivity. And like traditional ritual sites, museum space is carefully marked off and culturally designated as special, reserved for a particular kind of contemplation and learning experience and demanding a special quality of attention."⁹⁸

It is also very important to realise that "objects have not a single past but an unbroken sequence of past times leading backward from the present moment. Moreover, there is no ideal spot on the temporal continuum that inherently deserves emphasis..... In elevating or admiring one piece of the past, we tend to ignore and devalue others. One reality lives at the expense of countless others."⁹⁹ This systematic collection depends upon "principles of organization, which are perceived to have an external reality beyond the specific material under consideration, and are

⁹⁸ Carol Duncan, "Art Museum and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Culture*, pp.90; 91.

⁹⁹ Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, "Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, p.160.

held to derive from general principles deduced from the board mass of kindred material through the operation of observation and reason; these general principles form part of our idea about the nature of the physical world and the nature of ourselves.”¹⁰⁰ Even in science, systematic collecting has been an intrinsic part of its development. The relationship of the scientist to the natural world is not a simple one. Specimens are selected for collections on the strength of their supposed ‘typicality’ or their ‘departure of norm’ so that they may act as referents, a process which is clearly circular and self-supporting. Again, collected specimens have become artefacts in that the act of selection turns them into man-made products, and when they have entered our world, they become part of the relationships which we construct for them. In fact, there is a distinct human tendency “to imagine classification systems in terms of human relationships, and a glance at any text book will show how the (European) human family paradigm underlies our ideas about the relationship of animal groups or, say, known languages.”¹⁰¹

Creating a voice for exhibitions, however, is not a straightforward task; it involves ‘authenticity.’ Authenticity is not about factuality or reality; “authenticity - authority- enforces the social contract between the audience and the museum, a social agreed-upon reality that exists only as long as confidence in the voice of the exhibition holds.”¹⁰² It is about authority; objects do not have authority, but people do. It is people who must make a judgement about how to tell the past from the multiple potential voices within the objects. It is the work of university-based

¹⁰⁰ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, p. 85.

¹⁰² Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, “Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue,” p.163.

scholars, by whom these voices in exhibitions are influenced, and on whom exhibitions frequently rely. In doing so, museums put works up against each other, literally as well as metaphorically, and this confrontation, this inescapable competition, alters the nature of the work in real ways. Ostensibly for contemplation, museums have become battlegrounds.¹⁰³

It is very important to recognise that exhibitions represent the nature of the produced meaning and knowledge in very specific ways. Therefore, by asking simple questions like, ‘what presumptions are made about why this display is worth looking at?’ and ‘what kind of understanding is this display offering?’ we unravel the nature of exhibition. Because the exhibition has been described as ‘a typical traditional ethnological exhibition in which a museum of the dominant culture attempts to represent the heritage of a minority culture, largely in its absence.’¹⁰⁴ In other words, exhibitions make meaning through the conventions proper to the dominant cultural group, and the kind of meaning generated from the exhibit is a part of the overarching meta-narrative of knowledge and understanding of the particular culture. Exhibitions are really works of imagination operating within an understood tradition of knowledge and interpretation, and contributing their share towards both the maintenance and the development of this tradition.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ John Fisher, “mUSEEums,” in *The Idea of Museum*, p.49.

¹⁰⁴ P. McManus, “Making Sense of Exhibits” in *Museum Language: Objects and Texts*, ed by G. Kavanagh (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), p.203.

3.3. Fixing the Text

All human experience is mediated through social contacts and the acquisition of language. Language and memory are intrinsically connected, both on the level of individual recall and that of the institutionalisation of collective experience.¹⁰⁶ The spoken word is “a medium, a trace, whose evanescence in time and space is compatible with the preservation of meaning across time-space distances because of human mastery of language’s structural characteristics.”¹⁰⁷ As Lévi Strauss says, language is a time machine, which permits the re-enactment of social practices across the generations, while also making possible the differentiation of past, present, and future.¹⁰⁸

Among many factors that shaped modern culture, one of the most influential factors was the impact of writing, that was later intensified by the print; it restructured human consciousness. Printing is the heir and successor of writing, and its advent has intensified the effects and magnified the importance of the written word. The print revolution in the modern West, and in modern high-literacy culture in general, has turned the book into one of the most common furnishings of our physical and mental world.¹⁰⁹ It is clear that “the custodians of knowledge have always been especially prone to exalt the written over the spoken word as the main

¹⁰⁵ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, p. 141

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.23.

¹⁰⁸ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (London: Allen Lane, 1968).

¹⁰⁹ Walter J. Ong, “Ramist Method and the Commercial Mind.” in *Studies in the Renaissance* 8, (1961), p.176.

bulwark of learning and progress.”¹¹⁰ Modern scholarship and its inquiry are suspicious of subjective emotions and personal engagement in favour of objectivity and visual verification - observation and analysis of the data of sense perception rather than immersion in them; and objectivity has been especially important in modern Western thought since the scientific revolution and Enlightenment era. This process has been hastened on by the printed word of the modern book.¹¹¹

Because of this new mode of function of printing, words and books lost their dynamism and personal quality, and became themselves things: mass-produced, impersonal objects. Printed words are particularly well suited to their roles as neutral bearers of objective content accessible to any literate person who can understand that content.¹¹² It is quite important to realise the fact that “when words are written....., they became static things and lose, as such, the dynamism which is so characteristic of the auditory word in general, and of the spoken word in particular.”¹¹³ The modern encyclopaedia is characteristic in its provision of a conspectus and its systematic arrangement of human knowledge. Graham said that

it offers a general literate public not only a comprehensive reference work, but functions also as a symbolic token of modern progress: It expands our knowledge of the world and makes access to it available to everyone..... a significant part of its appeal and its success is due to the pervasive illusion in our generally literate culture that books are the ultimate sources of

¹¹⁰ William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral aspects of scripture in the history of religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 21.

¹¹¹ William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp.21-22.

¹¹² William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word.*, pp.22-23.

¹¹³ J.C. Carothers, “Culture, Psychiatry and the Written Word.” in *Psychiatry* 22 (1959), p.311.

wisdom, proof, and authority.¹¹⁴

Since the Enlightenment, knowledge has come to be conceived of less and less either as wisdom and learning acquired from special persons or as the legacy of a cultural and historical tradition, and more and more as the accumulation and mastery of objective data and ‘scientific’ methodologies acquired through diverse means. The modern encyclopaedia changed attitudes toward not only words and discourse, but also towards knowledge itself.¹¹⁵

In contrast to written culture and its consciousness, oral culture does not have dictionaries. The meaning of each word is controlled by what Goody and Watt call ‘direct semantic ratification,’¹¹⁶ that is, by the real-life situations in which the word is used here and now. Ong indicates in *Orality and Literacy*:

words acquire their meanings only from their always insistent actual habitat, which is not, as in a dictionary, simply other words, but includes also gestures, vocal inflections, facial expression, and the entire human, existential setting in which the real, spoken word always occurs. Word menages come continuously out of the present, though past meanings of course have shaped the present meaning in many and varied ways, no longer recognized.¹¹⁷

Writing/printing is a technology, an artificiality that externalises thought and

¹¹⁴ William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, p. 27

¹¹⁵ William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp 27-28.

¹¹⁶ Jack Goody and Ian Watt, “The consequences of literacy,” in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed by Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.29.

¹¹⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), p.47.

alienates the self from nature and even from other selves. And it intensifies the development of the externalisation of knowledge - facts and science.¹¹⁸ In any culture, storage and retrieval of knowledge are very important; primary oral culture relies on the living human memory to store knowledge. Literary culture, by contrast, relies on writing, and later printed books. What is clear is that in a writing culture, knowledge has been stored in retrievable form, as in the eighteenth century encyclopaedia. Printing culture encouraged the collection of knowledges in a way which fosters closure and greater control. In fact, print replaced the lingering hearing dominance in the world of thought and expression with sight-dominance. And print “situates words in space more relentlessly than writing ever did. Writing moves words from the sound world to a world of visual space, but print locks words into position in this space. Control of position is everything in print.”¹¹⁹ In fact, it changed traditional concepts and their practice: print produced exhaustive dictionaries and fostered the desire to legislate for ‘correctness’ in language, a desire which grew out of a sense of language based on the study of Learned Latin. Learned tongues textualise the idea of language, making it seem at root something written. Print reinforces the sense of language as essentially textual. Therefore, the printed text, not the written text, became the text in its fullest, paradigmatic form.¹²⁰

It is clearly acknowledged that written documents count for more with us than

¹¹⁸ Bruce E. Gronbeck, “The Rhetorical Studies Tradition and Walter J. Ong: Oral-Literary Theories of Mediation, Culture and Consciousness,” in *Media, Consciousness, and Culture*, ed., Bruce E. Gronbeck, Thomas J. Farrell, and Paul A. Soukup (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991), p.17. See Ch.4 of W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, and *Interfaces of the word: Studies in the evolution of consciousness and culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.17-49.

¹¹⁹ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.121

¹²⁰. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.130.

does speech, whether we are dealing with business contracts or academic publications. In particular, our understanding of ancient worlds and other parts of world, is overwhelmingly dependent on written texts, and our use of the texts depends on the assumptions we make about how they were originally produced, read and understood. A connection seems unavoidable between the authority of texts and the expert readers' authority which enforce each other in sustaining power.¹²¹ In other words, "power exercised *over* texts allows power to be exercised *through* texts."¹²² The development of literacy, bureaucracy and documentation reinforces the autonomy of the institution in which it exists; for example: the Roman army was notorious for its tendency to record its operations and administration in a mass paperwork.¹²³ And this institutional literacy "enabled a broader spread and gave to the lives of individuals a social, economic and psychological coherence within the framework of Latin culture. This is an important clue to the reasons for the rapidity and success with which the army archived the acculturation of peripheral communities and used them in turn as instruments of furthering those processes."¹²⁴ Lane Fox shows that a similar phenomenon existed in the history of early Christianity by noting that the authority of texts derived originally from their sacred origin and from their value as guides to the proper way to live, but their use in contests for power, whether between Byzantine scholars or early Christian bishops, must have reinforced their status still further. Their interpretation of holy writ was so

¹²¹ Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, "Literacy and Power in the Ancient World," in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. by Alan K. Bowman & Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.13.

¹²² Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, "Literacy and Power in the Ancient World," p.8.

¹²³ Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.90.

¹²⁴ Alan K. Bowman, "Letters and literacy on Rome's another frontiers," in *Literacy and Power in*

important to the whole community that rabbis, priests won authority as expert readers and interpreters. Christians made use of the convenience of literacy as a means of exerting power or maintaining solidarity.¹²⁵

The printed text is supposed to represent the words of an author in definitive or 'final' form, because print is comfortable only with finality. What is clear, in terms of psycho-dynamics, is that once the word is printed, the text does not readily accommodate change. This printed culture has, Ong says, "a different mind-set," which works within its own closed system. Ong continues, "print culture gave birth to the romantic notions of 'originality' and 'creativity,' which set apart an individual work from other works even more, seeing its origins and meaning as independent of outside influence, at least ideally."¹²⁶ Because of this, when talking about the written text, we speak from within a thought world that is cut off in a variety of different ways from others. Writing necessitates distancing of the writer from his or her reader, unlike speaking that involves interaction with an audience.

As Paul Ricoeur says, the written text is utterly independent of its author, and is a logical expression of the autonomy of the written text. It is a different way of thinking; writing changes not only the amounts and kinds of information and ideas a culture collects and generates, but its fundamental mode of assimilating and using them as well. Writing tends to fix events temporarily and heighten the sense of the

the Ancient World, p. 123.

¹²⁵ Robin Lane Fox, "Literacy and power in early Christianity," in *Literacy and Power in Ancient World*. pp.126-148. See A. Harnack, *Bible Reading in the Early Church* (1912), and W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (1989).

¹²⁶ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 133.

distinctiveness as well as their 'pastness', or separation from the past and the individual person. In other words, written or print culture changes the relationship between a society and its tradition, as well as that between individuals and their past, because it fixes those traditions and that past in a way that distances both from the present. In fact, it has been said that "the more 'literate' people become, the more they tend to become detached from the world in which they live."¹²⁷

In oral societies the cultural tradition is transmitted almost entirely by face-to-face communication; and changes in its content are accompanied by the homeostatic process of forgetting or transforming those parts of the tradition that cease to be either necessary or relevant. Literate societies, on the other hand, cannot discard, absorb, or transmute the past in the same. Instead, their members are faced with permanently recorded versions of the past and its beliefs.¹²⁸

Therefore, in terms of relationship between the author and the reader being mediated through the text, readers are supposed to listen to a text as it speaks to them; thus, in fact, it is not communication, since there is no one-way human communication.

3.4. Controlling Time and Space

This world-view of modernity constructed a model in which every distinction between aspects and differences was translated into a certain spatial concept,

¹²⁷ Graham cited from Ashley Montagu, *Man: His First Million Years* (New York: New American Library, Menotr Books, 1958), p.150. Cf. Eric A Hovelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*, p.289: "Language uttered and remembered has no corporeal existence.... Language written and read becomes an object, a thing, separated form the consciousness that creates it, and immobilized in a condition of physical survival."

¹²⁸ J. Goody and I. Watt, *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 67.

especially the concept of time and space. Time is a fundamental dimension of human life represented in space; in other words, space and time are intrinsic categories of human existence. Modernity thematises in specific ways the dialectics between time and space, process and structure, change and continuity, and traces an underlying developmental logic (historical process) toward its epoch. In fact, in relation to a certain mode of experience of space and time, modernity has brought a new concept of space and motion, and the organisation of space has “become the primary aesthetic problem of mid-twentieth century culture as the problem of time (in Bergson, Proust, and Joyce) was the primary aesthetic problem of the first decades of this century.”¹²⁹ Throughout history, the historical and anthropological record is full of examples of how varied the concept of space can be, as we find similar diversity within outwardly homogeneous populations. But, since the eighteenth century, the pervasive idea was that we must acknowledge an over-arching and objective meaning of space; the Renaissance promoted “a radical reconstruction of views of space and time in the Western world.”¹³⁰ The traditional conception of infinite space becomes geographical knowledge that can be grasped and represented, as the discovery of other territories produced new knowledge about a wider world. It was a revolution in the concepts of space and time.

Since space is a ‘fact’ of nature, this meant that the conquest and rational ordering of space became an integral part of the modernizing project. The difference this time was that space and time had to be organized not to reflect the glory of God, but to celebrate and facilitate the liberation of ‘Man’ as a free and

¹²⁹ Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp.107-111.

¹³⁰ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.242.

active individual, endowed with consciousness and will. It was in this image that a new landscape was to emerge.¹³¹

This was the Enlightenment vision of how the world should be organised: the map, but maps had become abstract and strictly functional systems. In a way, it is 'positioning,' that is in relation to the others across time-space; the position of an 'I' is founded on a narcissistic tendency that sees the individual as the ultimate source and container of social power.

It is important to challenge the idea of a single and objective sense of time and space (time-space fixity), and against which we can measure the diversity of human conceptions and perceptions. Moreover, it is imperative that we recognise the multiplicity of the objective qualities which space and time can express, and the role of human practices in their construction.¹³² Therefore, the perception of time-space will, in fact, be a crucial factor in breaking and reconstructing human epistemology. Anthony Giddens argues that all pre-modern culture's modes of calculating time is always linked with place and the basis of everyday life - and is usually imprecise and variable. For example, hunting and gathering communities (and few nomadic cultural societies) were the societies whose overall time-space organisation implies regular movement of the whole group through time-space.¹³³ It was impossible for them to tell the time of day without reference to other socio-spatial makers: 'when' was almost universally connected with 'where.'¹³⁴

¹³¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* p.249.

¹³² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 203.

¹³³ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 260.

¹³⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p.17.

But, since the invention of the mechanical clock, time and space have been separated; the clock expressed a uniform dimension of 'empty' time, quantified in such a way as to permit the precise designation of 'zones' of the day. It is evident that the 'emptying of time' is the precondition for the 'emptying space' and thus has casual priority over it, and therefore, co-ordination across time is the basis of the control of space.¹³⁵ In pre-modern societies, space and place largely coincide, since the spatial dimensions of social life are dominated by 'presence,' but, with the advent of modernity, it became clear that space was torn away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction,¹³⁶ that Anthony Giddens calls "the *separation of time and space*."¹³⁷ In other word, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them.

This development of 'empty space' allows for the representation of space without reference to a privileged locale which forms a distinct vantage point, and makes the substitutability of different spatial units possible. It is well exemplified in the 'discovery' of 'remote' regions of the world by the Western travellers and explorers, as well as in creating universal maps presenting geographical position and form in terms of establishment of space as independent of any particular place or region.¹³⁸ In this Enlightenment project, the conquest and control of space requires

¹³⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, pp.17-18

¹³⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p.18

¹³⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.17.

¹³⁸ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 19.

that it be conceived of as something inept, and therefore capable of domination through human action. Enlightenment thinkers sought a better society. In this totalising vision of the globe, a conception of otherness might be admitted, and even flourish, but in such a way that the diversity of people could be appreciated and analysed in the secure knowledge that their place in the spatial order was unambiguously known.¹³⁹ For this progressive idea, they had to pay attention to the rational ordering of space and time as prerequisites in the construction of a society that would guarantee individual freedom and welfare. By treating certain idealised conceptions of space and time as real, Enlightenment thinkers ran the danger of confining the free flow of human experience and practice to rationalised configurations, and as a result of that, Enlightenment practice moved toward surveillance and control. This indicates the ‘totalizing qualities’ of Enlightenment thought,¹⁴⁰ regarding the Others.

4. Representation of the Other

Driven by the Enlightenment ideal, Western academic institutions formally recognised the Other as an area of study, and generalised the construction of ‘man and his others’ as objects of knowledge, from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth

¹³⁹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p.250.

¹⁴⁰David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, pp.253-259.

century in Europe, onwards. This ideological consistency extends into modernity. In terms of the mutual implication of power and knowledge, “the Western power, especially the power to enter or examine other countries at will, enables the production of a range of knowledges about other cultures. Such knowledge in turn enables (legitimizes, underwrites) the development of Western power in those other countries.¹⁴¹ Although colonial expansion was predicated on the power of superior arms, military and political power, and economic wealth, it was also based on a complex network of cultural technologies. In other word, colonialism was itself a cultural project of control, since for colonial rulers, the culture and nature of colonised were one and the same.

Now, after the decolonisation, colonialism was contextualised within a historical category, linked to the present term as *neo* or *post*. It seems that colonialism has become a subject of scholarship that calls for the study of the aesthetics of colonialism. This way we might end up ignoring the extent of it. However, it is imperative to see colonialism as an historic moment and as a trope for domination and violation. In the same way, culture should be seen as a historically constituted domain of significant concepts and practices, and as a regime in which power achieves its ultimate apotheosis. Any attempt to make a systematic statement about the colonial project runs the risks of denying the fundamental historicity of colonialism, as well as of conflating cause with effect.

¹⁴¹ Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, “Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: An Introduction.” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester & Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp.6-8. On the knowledge and power relations, see Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge* (New York: Panthenon, 1980).

It is a fact that colonial rulers were always aware that their power was dependent on their knowledge, but they were never aware that knowledge was power in any strategic sense. Therefore, the hegemonic and sinuous character of colonialism should be considered. Colonialism lives on in post-colonial society and psyches. It is very difficult to engage in the study of the colonial world without the basic categories and assumption that have been shaped by colonial rule, but Edward Said has made the case that the Orient was constituted as an effect of the collaboration of power and knowledge in the West. These power/knowledge relations are well exemplified in the study of Orientalism. The nineteenth century image of the Orient was constructed not just in Oriental studies, romantic novels, and colonial administrations, but in all the new procedures with which Europeans began to organise the representation of the world, from museums and world exhibitions to architecture, schooling, tourism, the fashion industry, and the commodation of everyday life. Edward Said's analysis argued that Western artistic and scholarly portrayal of the non-West was not merely an ideological distortion convenient to an emergent global political order but a densely imbricated arrangement of imagery and expertise that organised and produced the Orient as a political reality.¹⁴² The new apparatus of representation gave a central place to the representation of the non-Western world, and several studies have pointed out the importance of this construction of otherness to the manufacture of national identity and imperial purpose. The imagery of Orientalism was a new machinery for rendering up and laying out the meaning of the world.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

¹⁴³ Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.289-290. See Tony

4.1 Orientalism

The Orient and the Occident are not just words, but names used to construct identities which become territories, and in fact, the name, 'the Orient,' becomes the dividing line between the two. The Orient and the Occident are facts produced by human beings, and as such must be studied as integral components of the social, and not the divine or natural, world.¹⁴⁴ As a result of this division, the Orient only exists from the Western vantage point; the Orient becomes the Other for the West. The representation of the Orient as a nineteenth century phenomenon is well described in the Orientalist painting. The main initiator of Orientalism in France is the painter Gros, who was commissioned to glorify the Egyptian expedition of Bonaparte and created the prototypes of Oriental landscapes, costumes and faces without having set foot in Egypt; although he used props and artefacts brought back from the East to his studies, he was nevertheless convinced that he painted from direct observation.¹⁴⁵

Representation of the Orient may be said to be mythical, not just because they are delusions or false representation, but because they provide an explanation that

Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations* 4 (Spring 1988), p.96; in 1889, 32 million people visited the Exposition Universelle in Paris, to commemorate the centenary of the Revolution and to demonstrate French commercial and imperial power. See also Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹⁴⁴ Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered" in *Europe and its others*, vol. 1 (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), p.15.

¹⁴⁵ Oliver Richon, "Representation, the Despot and the Harem: Some Questions around an Academic Orientalist Painting by Lecomte-Du-Nouÿ (1885), in *Europe and its others*, vol. 1 (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), pp.1-2.

rationalises a present state of affairs to the West. For the nineteenth-century academic painting and literature, Egypt was used as a reservoir of archaeological information, providing the necessary factual details for a *mise-en-scène* of an 'Orient' - factual details (costumes, architectures, and design) were necessary in order to legitimise the fantasy of a Western Orient.¹⁴⁶

Edward Said was concerned about the representation of other cultures and societies and the relationship between knowledge and power. He raises the question as to "how the production of knowledge serves communal, as opposed to factual, ends, how knowledge that is non-dominative and non-coercive can be produced in a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions, and the strategies of power."¹⁴⁷ Such ideology and practice are well articulated in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, indicating Europe's relationship with, and discursive construction of, 'the Orient,' as paradigm of colonial and imperial structure. Here, "the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other."¹⁴⁸ Said uses Vico's observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extends it to geography. Both geographical and cultural entities - to say nothing of historical entities - such localities, regions, geographical sectors such as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made. It reminds us of the fact that "as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a

¹⁴⁶Oliver Richon, "Representation, the Despot and the Harem: Some Questions around an Academic Orientalist Painting by Lecomte-Du-Nouÿ (1885)," p.10.

¹⁴⁷ Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," p.15.

tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West.”¹⁴⁹ And, moreover “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”¹⁵⁰ Since the Orient is an integral part of Europe,

The Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.¹⁵¹

Orientalism was an academic tradition, whose fortunes, transmigrations, specifications, and transmissions were in part the subject of this study; it was a scientific movement whose analogue was the Orient’s colonial accumulation and acquisition by Europe.¹⁵² Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident.’ On this basic distinction between the East and the West, a very large mass of research, writing, idea and theory concerning the Orient, its people’s customs, mind, and so on, was produced. In the late eighteenth century, Orientalism was discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling it. By doing so, the West established a Western style of

¹⁴⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ Edward Said, “From Orientalism” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester & Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp.132-133.

¹⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p.1.

¹⁵¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.2.

¹⁵² Edward Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,”p.17.

dominating, restructuring and assuming authority over the Orient, and was able to manage the Orient politically, sociologically, ideologically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period. Therefore, the Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'oriental,' but also because it *could be made* Oriental. In other words, because of the Orientalism of the West, the Orient was not (is not) a free subject of thought or action of its own.¹⁵³

Having recognised the process, Orientalism is "a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness."¹⁵⁴ In the post-Enlightenment period, Orientalism is not merely academic subject matter of culture and its representation, but rather is,

a distribution of geographical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction, but also of a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philosophical reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only *creates* but also *maintains*¹⁵⁵

Since it has created itself upon this assumption, Orientalism can be regarded as a manner of regularised writing, vision, and study; the Orient is taught, researched, administrated, and pronounced upon in certain ways. Within this imagery,

¹⁵³ Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," pp.2-5.

¹⁵⁴ Edward Said, "From Orientalism" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. p.133.

¹⁵⁵ Edward Said, "From Orientalism," p.138 (my italic).

assumptions and intentions, the Orient that appears in Orientalism is a system of representation framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into the Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire. It is quite true that all cultures tend to make representations of other cultures the better to master or in some way control them, yet not all cultures make representation of foreign cultures and master or control them in such a way as the European manipulated the other cultures. It is the distinction of modern European culture that the non-European world is to be studied for both the representations and the political power they express.¹⁵⁶ For example,

the history of India became one of the means of propagating those interests. Traditional Indian historical writing, with its emphasis on historical biographies and chronicles, was largely ignored. European writing on Indian history was an attempt to create a fresh historical tradition. The historiographical pattern of the India past which took shape during the colonial period in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was probably similar to the patterns which emerged in the histories of other colonial societies.¹⁵⁷

Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilisation and people, and its objective discoveries in this school, are and always have been conditioned by the fact that its truths, like any truths delivered by language, are embodied in language, as Nietzsche said:

¹⁵⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 120.

¹⁵⁷ Thapar Romila, "Ideology and the Interpretation of Early Indian History," *Review* 5, No.3 (Winter 1982), p.390. Quoted from Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 121.

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.¹⁵⁸

Although it might look too nihilistic it nevertheless draws attention to the fact that this truth existed in the West's consciousness and awareness. Orientalism was perceived as such a system of truths, truths in Nietzsche's sense. Therefore, on this view, every European might consequently be described as a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric, since they spoke within their own system of truth.¹⁵⁹ Take, for example, the study of Islam. The perception of Islam in the West has been shaped by those people who tried to understand it in an analogical way to Christianity; since Christ is the basis of Christian faith, it assumed that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ to Christianity. "The Christian concept of Islam was integral and self-sufficient." Islam became a representative image for Christianity in the medieval period. As Norman Daniel points out "the inevitable tendency to neglect what the Qur'an meant, or what Muslims thought it meant, or what Muslims thought or did in any given circumstances, necessarily implies that Qur'anic and other Islamic doctrine was presented in a form that would convince Christians."¹⁶⁰ This episode has been a sophisticated attempt to put a representative Orient in front of Europe, and to relate the Orient and Europe together in some coherent way. Islam

¹⁵⁸ Frederick Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), pp.46-47. cited from Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.203.

¹⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 201-204.

¹⁶⁰ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), pp.252;259. Cited from Said, *Orientalism*.

was seen as just a misguided version of Christianity. In the light of functional truth in the West, this only demonstrated a Western ignorance that was becoming more refined and complex.¹⁶¹

In relation to other cultures of the West, "Orientalism aided and was aided by general cultural pleasure that tended to make more rigid the sense of difference between the European and Asiatic parts of world." Said says that "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness."¹⁶² Therefore, the Orientals were viewed

in a frame constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society having common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or - as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory - taken over.¹⁶³

It became evident that the Orient existed for the West in the sense that Orientalism became a cultural apparatus representing aggression, activity, judgement, will-to-truth and knowledge over others. Orientalism as a discipline represented institutionalised Western knowledge of the Orient, it came to exert a three way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western 'consumer' of Orientalism.

¹⁶¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp.61-62. See R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1962)

¹⁶² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.204.

¹⁶³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.207.

The Orient is *Orientalized*, a process that only marks the Orient as the province of the Orientalist but also forces the Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications as the *true* Orient. Truth thus becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself.¹⁶⁴ In other words, with the functional concept of truth, under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum.¹⁶⁵ This idea of representation is a theatrical one: “the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined”; “the Orient seems to be a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe.”¹⁶⁶

4.2 Image of Africa in the Western Church

The story is the same elsewhere; the image of Africa also has been historically reconstructed as the product of a monolithic imperial propaganda, and Africa was uniformly reproduced through a series of tropes as a ‘land of darkness,’ ‘the white man’s burden,’ peopled with savages of an inherently inferior order, both intellectually and morally, to the white coloniser. The material culture that was brought out of Africa was understood as trophy, since it was for the whites, the result of the civilising mission of the colonisers or missionaries. Consequently, representation of Africa tells us more about Europeans and their interests in Africa,

¹⁶⁴Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.67.

¹⁶⁵Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.7.

¹⁶⁶Edward Said, *Orientalism.*, p.63.

than about Africa and the African, especially in the high imperial period.¹⁶⁷

The objects collected in the public exhibition created the image of Africa, in a way which the representations would illustrate the eradication of ‘the unwholesome’ superstition of the past, and Africa has no history to speak of until the colonisers’ naming of the continent.¹⁶⁸ In fact, through representation, the African and African continent are contained within the museum, and the public idea which was created through the museum display, constructed the image and myth of Africa. One of the main characteristics of the African exhibition, which was shared with many, was to focus on the body, whether on its decoration, scarification, skin, colour, or measurement and proportion.¹⁶⁹ Because of the concentration on “the relation of physical ‘evidence’ to mental and inherited characteristics, the association of the body of the African with displays of material did much to encourage the popular conflation of living African with inert ‘specimens,’”¹⁷⁰ since they were classified in detail ‘scientifically.’ Consequently, the materials were viewed through an evolutionary prism, and through it, the ideology of European racial superiority.

This machinery of representation was not confined to the exhibition, but extended to stand for something larger: the political ideology with which Europeans began to organise the representation of the world “England is at present the greatest

¹⁶⁷ 1890 is the historical starting point, since this marks the period of concerted British imperial and colonial expansion in Africa. One of the consequences of imperial expansion, was the subsequent influx of material culture into Britain, from different regions of the African continent. Therefore, this period was the beginning of promoting ethnographic collecting generally, together with the new interest in African exhibition and collection by the general public.

¹⁶⁸ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p.131.

¹⁶⁹ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa* pp. 159-160.

Oriental Empire which the world has ever known,” proclaimed by the president of the 1892 Orientalist Congress at its opening session. His words reflected the political idea of the British imperial age. “She knows not only how to encounter, but how to rule.”¹⁷¹ This statement demonstrates that,

The endless spectacles of the world-as-exhibition were not just reflections of this certainty but the means of its production, by their technique of rendering imperial truth and cultural difference in ‘objective’ form.¹⁷²

In relation to the containing of the African continent, the evangelical missionary societies were arguably the more active agents in both promotion and criticism of colonial polity. It is remarkable to notice that most of the existing scholarship on mission and the colonial encounter on the indigenous societies, is a result of contact with the missionary communities in the field, in Africa and other colonies. Therefore, it is important to see how the missionary societies create the image of Africa, for the purpose of home mission, through the representation of the mission field.¹⁷³ Home mission was particularly effective in disseminating an image of Africa and the African, and ultimately served imperial interests.¹⁷⁴ Missionary societies were able to capitalise on the romantic, exotic appeal of the mission fields

¹⁷⁰ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p.160.

¹⁷¹ International Congress of Orientalists, *Transactions of the Ninth Congress, 1892* (London: International Congress of Orientalists, 1893), 1:35, quoted from Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p. 160.

¹⁷² Timothy Mitchell, “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,” in *Colonialism and Culture* ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.296.

¹⁷³ Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitude to Race* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,1971), pp.110-117. She discussed some aspects of the propaganda of the home mission regarding Africa, in dealing with missionary societies’ representation to British public.

¹⁷⁴ Susan E. Thorne, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Imperialism: British Congregationalists and the London Missionary Society, 1795-1925* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1991), p.18.

in order to recruit support. The missionary exhibition in particular was one of the activities most energetically pursued, by the societies at home, as a primary means of informing the congregations of the progress in the field and of drumming up financial and moral support.¹⁷⁵ But, it was possible to see the missionary exhibition as an “event that consolidated the misleading sense of class unity propagated by their recruitment and fund-raising activities, coupled with the powerful panaceas of national unity, both of which adequately served imperial interests.”¹⁷⁶

The missionary exhibition was primarily for the edification of the congregation at home, and played a very important role in the construction of a certain image of Africa, as Eugene Stock, the Church Missionary Society’s official historian reported,

Missionary exhibitions seem more attractive than ever. Very large ones have been held at Birmingham, Bristol, Rochester, Paddington, Newcastle and Liverpool..... The articles displayed and still more the lectures and explanatory talks have enlightened thousands of hearers.¹⁷⁷

It is clear that while the missionary societies were by no means impartial bystanders in the face of colonialism, they exploited an ambivalent position as both intrinsic to, and on the fringes of, that enterprise. They were able to present an image of Africa and the African thoughts through their exhibitions, as observed:

¹⁷⁵ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p.162. note: “the sustaining notion that ensured the success of this policy was the doctrine that everyone - young, old, rich, and poor - could become contributors for the same cause, since no matter how impoverished the Englishman, the heathen was even more spiritually and materially bereft.” *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁷⁶ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p. 163.

¹⁷⁷ Eugene Stock, *A History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol. 3 (London: CMS, 1989), p.306.

With equal enthusiasm, the missionary served as an agent of a political empire, a representative of a civilization and an envoy of God. There is no essential contradiction between these roles. All of them implied the same purpose: the conversion of African minds and space.¹⁷⁸

Therefore the image of Africa that emerged in the West, was also the product of a complex network of interests, hegemonies, and power relations, and of popular imaginations of the West. It was the West's self-definition of the African and Africa, and the self-appropriation of the Other.

What is evident is that, after having explored the nature of Orientalism and of the African image the West has, studying the relationship between the 'West' and its dominated cultural 'others' is not just a way of understanding an unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors, but is also a point of entry into studying the formation and meaning of Western cultural practices themselves. The exploration of colonial cultural politics is well articulated in the work of Edward Said, as seen in the last section. My chief concern, however, is to move beyond his general critique, both in the sense of breaking down the monolith of colonialism, and in engaging more directly with the brute realities of an Orient that resists reification in Western discursive or political formation. It is imperative therefore to delineate the spaces of resistance in the continuing study. Spaces in which there is a renewed concern to identify and celebrate resistance, although there is similar concern to avoid the

¹⁷⁸ V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa, Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomingtondale, 1988), p. 47.

pitfalls of romantic affiliation against forces that we resist far too often in vain.

In terms of the imperialism of representation, this dominating universal narrative may bring about the projection from the civilising imperial centres of fetishised image of Africa, the Orient, Latin America, etc. as civilisation's Other, in ways that simultaneously bring these regions into being for Europe, fulfil its need for psychological and political centring, and silence any attempts at self-representation by these people and their post-colonial descendants. As Edward Said writes, the Orient was not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other.¹⁷⁹ For Franz Fanon, the struggle was to find a form of self-definition for the black man that is not the obedient reproduction of Western paranoiac projections. He declares "I am not a potentiality of something. I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. No probability has any place inside me. My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It is its own follower."¹⁸⁰

While the imperialism of the colonial period tended to license only a cultural discourse that was formulated from within, today's post-imperialism has produced a cultural discourse of suspicion on the part of formerly colonised peoples. More recent studies, however, have emphasised the need to focus on the margins and have become suspicious of binary models; this suspicion is grounded in the belief that such oppositional models themselves may derive from and reproduce colonial

¹⁷⁹ Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered", *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers From the Essex Conference, 1976-1984*, ed Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diani Loxley (London: Methuen, 1986), p.215.

¹⁸⁰ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*(London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.135

structure of thought. There is a need for careful deconstruction of the very structure of 'dominance' and 'margin.' It is necessary to demonstrate the inner principles of weakness within the Orientalism of the West (although Edward Said was concerned with the internal contradictions within the dominant Western forms of knowledge) and the ideology of '*blackness*' and multiculturalism. What has been most criticised is a mode of representation, the systematic appropriation of different others in the name of rationalism and multi-culturalism, in the controlled space of West, where traditional theological principles also operate. There is a great danger in our theological articulations, especially in the West's relation to other cultures and different traditions, of being an abstract multicultural or ecumenical machine of so-called openness (charitable openness) or 'nice.' Since this understanding may come hand in hand with ignorance and indifference to historical and political reality of other culture and people, therefore the matter is not one of charity but of justice. It is, therefore, not only a question of communicating across borders but of discerning the ideologies or forces which generate the borders in the first place. Only then can a challenge be made to Western claims to a serene self-aware rationality and reveal its existential dependence upon otherness.

Chapter 2. Challenge of the Other

I can say that I know of only one people which felt able to assert that it actually had a divine command to exterminate whole populations among those it conquered; namely Israel. Nowadays Christians, as well as Jews, seldom care to dwell on the merciless ferocity of Jewish as revealed not by hostile source but by the very literature they themselves regard as sacred. Indeed they continue as a rule to forget the very existence of the incriminating material.¹

In constituting a relation with the others, Western traditional theology has been characterised as one that ‘speaks to/for the others’ claiming its universal authority and validity for all. These characteristics were particularly practiced in biblical interpretation. The task of exegesis was conceived as establishing the meaning (usually single) of the text, and applying it to other theological disciplines. In particular, missionary activity and its contextualisation processes have been the chief form of ‘speaking to/for the others’ in attempts to translate *the* message or *the* meaning of the text into relevant cultural terms: “the missionary’s ultimate goal in communication has always been to present the supracultural message of the gospel in culturally relevant terms.”²

¹ G.E.M. de Ste Croix, in Edward Said, “Michael Waltzer’s Exodus and Revolution: A Canaanite Reading,” in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, ed by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 1988), p.166.

² D.J. Hesselgrave and E. Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Leicester:Apollon, 1989), p. 1.

It is very much the same in the theological representation of the West, when encountering non-Western cultures and religions. Traditionally, the Western theologians employ those instruments which enable them to be master of theology. In the relationship with other religions, Christian religion has always looked for something 'useful,' 'profitable,' or 'praiseworthy' in an effort to maintain its superior ground, in terms of its own development. But, even in Karl Rahner's famous concept of the '*anonymous Christian*,' an idea of co-constitution, which recognises non-Christian religions as 'lawful' religions that share one history of the one world in their own particular way,³ such a practice of maintaining Christian superiority continues within Christian tradition. Hans Kung says that the "theory of the '*anonymous Christian*' is in the final analysis still dependent on a (Christian) *standpoint of superiority* that sets up one's own religion as the a priori true one."⁴ Here, the Other is defined in reference to *me*, classifying the non-Christian within a totality described and affirmed from a standpoint of Christian's understanding, as if the classification was already justified. Although Rahner admits the historical solidarity of worshippers from all religions, the concept of anonymity as the highest status of the other or the other religion, refuses to acknowledge the other under his/her own name. The other is always dependent on *my* truth, on what is of advantage to *me* and defined by *me*. Then, how is it possible to talk about the Other, without appropriating the Other's territory? How is it possible to enter into a full partnership with the Other? How is it possible to go beyond any tourist-exotic

³ Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in *Christianity and Other Religions*, ed by John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p52-79; p.75.

⁴ Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, trans. by Peter Heinegg (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 236.

ecstasy over the Other or the colonial discourse on racism, hatred and contempt which actually makes the Other both materially and mentally a slave?

As social consciousness changed, Western traditional theologies were forced to 'listen to' the other's voices or meanings - feminist, other minority groups and so on. The non-Western theologians raised their voices against Eurocentrism, sexism, racism, and patriachalism. But, even in this more liberal position that adopts a positive attitude toward minorities out of a sense of guilt, what is being attempted is to contextualise 'our' work, so that 'we' will help 'them' resolve 'their' problems. What still remains unchanged is 'our' claim of universality, the refusal to acknowledge that 'our' critical theology is in the interest of, and promoted by male European Americans, contextualised for the interests and concerns of the group. An alternative solution, however, is to abandon absolutisation and universalisation to recognise 'ours' as a particular perspective that is valid and legitimate in our own context, but also to affirm and acknowledge the validity of the otherness of others. In other words, to reject the tendency to absolutise what is not absolute. This is only possible after the recognition of the limitedness of one's particularity, where one places oneself in a position to 'speak with' others.

The first step would be the realisation of the givenness of the Other; the Other is always already there with us. It is essential to realise that in the human relation, the Other whom I meet is given. This means that the Other's reality is neither created nor controlled by me, because 'I' encounter the Other already there. As Edward Farley says,

“the other is what I do not and cannot experience in the mode of I experience myself. It is an ‘I’ which is not I.”⁵ It is similar to the parental relationship -: children are not extensions of their parents, but they exist ‘with,’ not ‘to,’ their parents. On the other hand, in relation to other cultures, studying the relationship between the West and its dominated cultural ‘others’ is not just a way of understanding an unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors, but also a point of entry into studying the formation and meaning of Western cultural practices themselves. The discourse that we are about to begin, is “not a mere depository of thin linguistic layers, an archive of structures, or the testimony,... [it is] instead, the essential element of a practice involving the sum of unconscious, subjective, and social relations in gestures of confrontation and appropriation, destruction and construction - productive violence.”⁶

The Western philosophical reflection hitherto consisted in neutralising the Other, the stranger, by means of a strategy of self-consciousness – which reduced the Other to one’s own self. The cultural other was assimilated as a part of Western thought, and became a part of the self-consciousness of the West. Therefore, through radical reflection on post-colonial discourse, Western cultural reality and thought reveal their inability to answer the questioning of the Other, because the Other breaks through into *my* being as a trace, and accuses *me* of a crime in the history of violence against the possibility of genuine human solidarity.

⁵ Edward Farley, *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p.35.

⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University, 1984), p. 16.

Therefore, the relationship with the Other is a point of entry into engaging and evaluating the totalising tendency of the West, especially in relation to colonialism and its impact on the people, both the coloniser and the colonised. One of the well read colonial modern realistic novels is *Robinson Crusoe*: a story about a man (European) who created his own world on a remote non-European island. This narrative and others like it have influenced the West in creating an idea about strange parts of the world as empty space to be filled, and accordingly, the identity of the West to the non-Western world was formed. It was part of a process of fixing relations between Europeans and others. It inscribed the fixity of that alterity (the Other), naturalising difference within its own cognitive codes. Colonialist literature is an exploitation and a representation of a world at the boundaries of civilisation, a world that has not (yet) been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology. Motivated by his desire to conquer and dominate, the imperialist configures the colonial realm as a confrontation based on difference in race, language, social customs, cultural value, and modes of production. It is significant that while the surface of each colonialist text purports to represent specific encounters with specific varieties of the Other, the subtext valorises the superiority of European culture, of the collective process that had mediated that representation. Its literature is essentially speculative: instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it uses the Other as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-images.⁷

⁷Abdul J. Janmohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" in *Race, writing and difference*, ed by Henry Louis Gate, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986), p 87.

1. Post-colonial Discourse

Edward Said's *Orientalism* demonstrated the way which the West has conceptualised its relationship to the non-West. In the imperial process, the globe and its people were treated as an object to be studied, ruled, and exploited. More importantly, the knowledge of cultural others was produced as a cultural project of the West's colonialism. In other words, "colonial knowledge both enabled colonial conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, culture was what colonialism was all about."⁸ As explained in the previous chapter, other cultures and traditional societies are classified, categorised, and reconstructed by colonial technologies. In fact, the anthropological concept of culture might never been invented without a colonial theatre that necessitated the knowledge of culture, and without colonialism, it could not have been facilitated. Therefore, culture was both the means *and* the end of colonial conquest, and culture was invented in relationship to a variety of colonial desires.⁹ In other words, it could be argued that

the power of colonialism as a system of rule was predicated at least in part on the ill-coordinated nature of power, and colonial power

⁸ Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonialism and Culture," in Nicholas B. Dirks (ed) *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.3.

⁹ Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonialism and Culture pp.3-4.

was never so omniscient nor secure to imagine itself as totalizing, and that while colonial rulers were always aware that their power was dependent on their knowledge, they themselves were never similarly aware of all the ways in which knowledge was, in any direct or strategic sense, power.¹⁰

This study is focused on the genealogies of problems that have been grown by the colonial encounters of the West with non-Western others, by explaining the characteristics of Western culture through the historical process.

1.1. Coloniality as a Shared Experience

Colonialist fiction is generated predominantly by ideological machinery, yet the relation between imperial ideology and fiction is not without direction. Ideology does not simply determine fiction. Rather through a kind of symbiosis, fiction forms ideology by articulating and justifying the position and aims of the colonialist. Thus, the ideological function of all symbolic colonialist literature is to articulate and justify the moral authority of the coloniser and to mask the pleasure the coloniser derives from that authority. As T. S. Eliot indicated, tradition is not just inherited, it can only be obtained by 'great labour':

¹⁰ Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonialism and Culture," p.7

Tradition involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity. No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone.¹¹

It is significant that the existence of empire depends upon the idea of having an empire. For the citizens of nineteenth century Britain and France, empire was a major topic of cultural attention. Edward Said states,

British India and French North Africa alone played inestimable roles in the imagination, economy, political life, and social fabric of British and French society and, if we mention names like Delacroix, Edmund Burke, Ruskin, Carlyle, James and John Stewart Mill, Kipling, Balzac, Nerval, Flaubert, or Conrad, we shall be mapping a tiny corner of a far vaster reality than even their immense collective talents cover. They were scholars, administrators, travellers, traders, parliamentarians, merchants, novelists, theorists, speculators, adventurers, visionaries, poets, and every variety of outcast and misfit in the outlying possessions of these two imperial powers, each of whom contributed to the formation of a colonial actuality existing at the heart of metropolitan life.¹²

¹¹ T. S. Eliot, *Critical Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), pp. 14-15.

At the same time, as seen in the words of Eliot, the significance of colonial experience in the past became a part of tradition and reality for hundreds of millions of people living in the post-colonial era, as shared memory and as conflictual texture of culture and ideology. Edward Said remarks, “Westerners may have physically left their old colony in Africa and Asia, but they retained them not only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continued to rule morally and intellectually.”¹³ Therefore, to study the relationship between the West and its dominated cultural others is not just a way of looking at an unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors, but also a point of entry for studying the formation and meaning of Western cultural practice. Moreover, having accepted the historical reality of colonialism in the non-Western world, it is important not to separate but to connect them, by articulating cultural dynamics and complexity in such a way that we can create ‘space’ for dialogue.

1.2. Post-colonial Discourse as a Resistance

Here, the ‘post’ in the post-colonial is not the same as the ‘post’ in the postmodernism (whether it is the cultural logic of late capitalism, or not), because ‘post-colonial’ doesn’t mean ‘post-independence’ or ‘after independence’ (for this would falsely ascribe an end of the colonial process). Rather post-colonialism begins from the very first moment of colonial contact; it is the discourse of oppositionality which

¹² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.8

¹³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.27

colonialism brings into being. Therefore, in a sense, post-colonialism has a very long history.

This post-colonial discourse articulates the nature of the colonised and of cultural and political resistance, the cultural impact of colonialism on the psyches of the colonised and vice versa and views of cultural identity. These matters are profoundly involved in searching for identity; “who in India or Algeria today can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from present actualities, and who in Britain or France can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities?”¹⁴ Therefore post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridised, involving a dialogical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity. Since it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional identity beyond the implications of European colonialism, its main project is to interrogate European discourse from the position between the two worlds (the coloniser and colonised). Post-colonial cultures are constituted in counter-discursive, and offer ‘fields’ of counter-discursive strategies to the dominant discourse.¹⁵ Post-colonial counter-discourse is dynamic, not static, in its operation; it does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but to evolve textual strategies which continually ‘consume their own biases,’ at the same time as they expose the

¹⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.15.

¹⁵ Dannis Lee, *Savage Fields: An Essay in Literature and Cosmology* (Toronto: Anansi, 1977), p.32-33.

dominant discourse.¹⁶ Therefore, the post-colonial counter-discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dismantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint.

On the other hand, post-colonial desire is the desire of decolonized communities for an identity. The search for an identity, both in literature and politics, centres around language. For the post-colonial to speak or write in the imperial tongue is to call forth the problem of identity; the question of language is political and cultural. The post-colonised identify with the culture destroyed by imperialism and its tongue. But there is not always a choice, because for many ex-colonies, the native tongue is English. This is not just true for Australia and Canada, but is also true for West Indians, many Maoris, Aboriginals and others. Therefore, what we encounter here is a politics of language which rests not on the power within language, but on the power behind language. Simon During, in "Postmodernism or Postcolonialism Today,"¹⁷ cited Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*. Near the beginning, the narrator is interrupted by a speaker who disputes his authority to tell the tale.

Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject... I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your

¹⁶ Wilson Harris, "Adversarial Contexts and Creativity," *New Left Review* 154 (Nov.-Dec.1985), p.127.

¹⁷ *Textual Practice* 1 (1), 1987. pp.32-47.

forked tongue, what can you tell but lie? I reply with more questions: Is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories? Can only the dead speak?¹⁸

This is to indicate, in the dialogue across the bar between the post-colonisers and the post-colonised in *Shame*, that the domination of people's language by the language of colonising nation was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised, because the colonial language functions as a carrier of culture. The English language is more than just the language of colonial British empire used just to communicate, rather it has great utility value as an instrument of propaganda to perpetuate imperial ideology and reinforce its hierarchical structure of power through the metaphors deployed in a rhetoric of democracy and persuasion. Colonialist writers fictionalised objects of conquest and built psychological power structures into their discourses and language. As Davis indicates,

A country must do more than simply steal another country: a series of explanations, representations, and rationalization must intervene as the project of colonizing cannot exist without the help of ideological and justifying political action. Even the inhabitants of the targeted colony must, for a successful colonization, accept the domination of language and symbols of this takeover. To win hearts and minds, one must occupy hearts and minds - in the dominant as well as the occupied countries.¹⁹

¹⁸ Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (New York: Vantage, 1984), p. 23.

¹⁹ Lennard J. Davis, *Resisting Novel*, p.63

Therefore, the task of post-colonial discourse is to demonstrate a strategy for demystifying power in discourse by tracing the internal operations through which textual structures capture the reader in a moment of collusion and coercion. By doing so, it reveals a colonial ideology which is set to operate on the mind of both coloniser and colonised so that they are conditioned to accept colonial ideals as ethical and mutually beneficial. As Said points out that whole world could and has been invented by the sheer power of words and its life sustained by a network of institutional support systems, such as institutions, traditions, conventions.²⁰ And moreover, this ideal involves a “flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerners in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without losing him the relative upper hand.”²¹ It is, therefore, necessary to explain the way in which power is exercised and how the webs of rules, traditions, and conventions are at work. The mutual implication of power and knowledge, is very important, when we talk about the Western power that enables the production of knowledge about other cultures. Such knowledge enables the development of Western power in those other countries. Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory, then, are critiques of the process of production of knowledge about the Other; it is a new academic inquiry, focused on the variety of textual forms in which the West produced and codified knowledge about non-Western, non-metropolitan areas and cultures, especially those under colonial control. It is important to note the reason for the success of *Orientalism*;²² this lay in the bringing together of two apparently very

²⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.22

²¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* p.7

²² It was preceded by a number of academic texts from a German intellectual tradition which shared with Said's concerns with the historical and theoretical relation between Western economic/political global

different areas: post-structuralism²³, in the shape of Foucault, and Western Marxism, in the shape of Gramsci.

These power exercises are particularly well articulated in Michael Foucault; he explains that knowledge enables power to be wielded, that each body of knowledge creates a new form to exercise this power. This knowledge self-constitutes expertise, so that it will make this particular discourse an acceptable reference for validating truth. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault speaks of a new concept of the human being as disciplinary object that has resulted in new ways of designing prisons, schools, hospitals for the purpose of effective surveillance; in *The History of Sexuality* (1979), he surveys the changing sets of knowledge on sexuality which contributed to our attitudes to the human body through the ages; in *Madness and Civilisation* (1967), he discussed how the madness came to be classified and treated by systems of our own making. Therefore, for him, “truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. Truth is linked in a

domination and Western intellectual production. Those thinkers are Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt. Especially, Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: André Deutch, 1986) contains a major and comprehensive account of the knowledge/power relations of nineteenth century imperialism which in many ways anticipates Foucault's archaeological methods of investigation; Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* (1944) offers a critique of the epistemic violence of Enlightenment philosophy which precedes post-structuralist critiques by several decades; Walter Benjamin described the process of commodity production as ‘*the always-new in the context of the ever-same*’, where the need of the commodity to present itself as always new, different, desirable.

²³ Patrick William and Laura Chrisman,, “An Introduction,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, pp. 5-6.

It is important to point out that post-structuralism has criticized existing models of individual subjectivity, above all the bourgeois liberal concept of the autonomous individual, while post-modernist theory, in the shape of Jean- François Lyotard, has announced the end of ‘les grands récits’, the ‘grand narrative’ of the Enlightenment.

circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A regime of truth.”²⁴ Since knowledge/truth is what counts as true within the system of rules for a particular discourse, and the power that determines and verifies this truth, it is very important to engage in a radical questioning of basic assumptions, of rules, and therefore of truth.

Through this realistic mode of presentation, then, the colonial milieu is made intelligible to the reader who is being positioned in discourse and is persuaded to collude with the narrating voice. Realist texts, in claiming to tell the truth by representing things as they are, assume that the fictional characters represented are intelligible and consistent; that the reader has a privileged position from which events and characters become intelligible; and moreover that the author who creates them has a coherent power to determine and endorse meaning. In this self-perpetuating form, realism allows for the invisible author to become the voice of knowledge, pursues the reader to collude with the author, and makes the reader forget that the text is an artefact. By doing so, the realist text conceals its own structuredness and places its reader into a position to accept the reality presented. In fact, realist text missed one fundamental step in the process of mediation between art and life, and that is, that novels can only depict life as it is presented by ideology.²⁵

²⁴ Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (1984), p,74. An interview with Foucault by Rabinow.

²⁵ Althusser's notion of the interpellated subject as a product of a larger system he calls the ideological state apparatus will be adapted to suit the much narrower operations at the level of textual response.

It is ideology as a signifying system that makes sense out of the complex and uncoordinated events and perceptions we call life. In other words, since the realistic novel depends on its ability to make us feel that we are witnessing not art but life, it conceals, as ideology, its own structuredness as ideologically loaded structure – which in this case, we call colonialist discourse. It is seeking a master position, a perspective, a single viewpoint from which the immensity of the colonial world can be reduced to proper dimensions, and as a result, places can be summarised, controlled, and intended for specific purposes. It had the power to make the natives see and experience themselves as ‘Other.’

But post-colonial discourse is an alternative position which reads colonialist discourse from a native perspective; here, the native readers will approach the text with their own cultural schema to interpret what is culturally not-said through what is actually said by the author and his colonial characters. Its critical approach is to question the basic assumptions of the binary oppositions of black-white, dark-light, good-evil, true-false, noble-savage, subject-object..., and then offer ways of demystifying and subverting these dominant, self-perpetuating literary forms, dismantling colonialism’s signifying system, and exposing its operation in the silencing and oppressing of the colonised and of different cultures. In addition, although post-colonial discourse shares a lot with the contemporary reading practice of postmodernism and deconstructionism, its reading is different from the western literary theories which ask the reader to leave his/her cultural identity at the door and disappear into the anonymity of the universal figure - the mock reader (Gibson), the implied reader (Booth, Iser), the model reader

(Eco), the super reader (Riffaterre), the inscribed, encoded reader (Brooke-Rose), the narratee (Prince), the ideal reader (Culler), the literent reader (Holland), the actual reader (Jauss) and the informed reader (Fish).²⁶ Here, post-colonial discourse encourages different cultures to have different interpretations of culturally sensitive materials, which means that, because of the difference the reader brings to the text, these differences arise.

Here, a significant contribution to this post-colonial reading practice, in recognising the voice of the Other (here, the native), is not only just to recognise the fact that reading inevitably entails a cultural input and therefore critical theory should accept this reality, but also to give speech to the silent native and the victim voice, - to have dialogues in discourse. Having a dialogue with the Other means to have a new philosophical counter-tradition, in which egocentrism, ethnocentrism, and eurocentrism have come to a dead end. This counter-tradition relativises the position of the traditional philosophy, theology, and anthropology of the West, as the Other shows the cultural difference. Clifford Geertz insists that

To see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst

²⁶ Elizabeth Freud, *The Return of the Reader* (London: Methen, 1987), p. 7.

Iser and Jass described the reading process in terms of reader's consciousness, while Fish describes it in terms of reader's response to the sequence of words in sentences. Culler believes that a theory of reading should uncover a whole latent system of conventions used by the reader. Holland concentrates on the psychological needs of the reader to process the text according to his/her most urgent motivation.

others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes. If interpretive anthropology has any general office in the world it is to keep reteaching this fugitive truth.²⁷

This counter-tradition is heterological, which is a new concept of knowledge that rejects the notion of truth as the instrument of mastery exercised by the knower over areas of the unknown. As Lyotard insists, knowledge must surrender its global pretensions,²⁸ because it is always limited to local knowledge,²⁹ but this localisation does not mean a call for the rediscovery of the 'original' culture or 'pure' self, but rather, as Fanon emphasised, a call for a project of developing culture - the dynamic nature of cultural formation.

1.3. Something In-Between: Franz Fanon

Traditionally, the notion of ideal authenticity or authentic identity was fixed in the beginning or origin, but Franz Fanon's³⁰ position on national culture in *The*

²⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (London: Fontans Press, 1993), p. 16.

²⁸ See Jean Franaçois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1984).

²⁹ See Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge*

³⁰ Born on 20 July 1925. The Martiniquean psychiatrist who had become an Algerian militant through the Algerian Revolution of 1954-62, died on December 1961, in the United States. It was in Algeria that he

Wretched of the Earth represents a good articulation of the cultural implications of colonialism and resistance, the anti-colonial struggle. Although Fanon's position on culture is "predicated on his essentially materialist recognition of the exploitative economic motives of colonialism as the decisive determinant of all aspects of the life of the colonized," his 'culture' "transcends such mechanical materialism and perceives certain inner dynamics within the development of culture among the colonized."³¹ Therefore, for him, national struggles were expressions of the national culture.

Fanon wrote about black culture, although it is debatable how much he wrote on the basis of his experience in black Africa, as opposed to his experience as a black man in white European society. He had experienced tremendous pride and happiness in the discovery of the black past, although he had struggled with the meaning of negritude. For him the central question was the liberation, the double task of liberating black men and liberating all colonial peoples, in political and cultural terms. However, he was also one of the earliest theorists to warn of the pitfalls of national consciousness as a perverse form of victory over colonialism; the victory of a reverse racism that indicated that the colonised were still unfree of the need to combat the coloniser by imitating him.

experienced his political awakening, and it was through the Revolution that he came to understand the meaning of the struggle for liberation. It was a concept which for Algerians, and for Fanon, meant more than political independence; it was the regeneration of men and societies. It was the process of self-liberation and rebirth; it was the travail of people undoing the effects of colonization and restructuring their relations with one another and with the former colonizing power on the basis of their new situation. Fanon wrote four books: *Black Skin, White Masks*, *Toward the African Revolution*, *A Dying Colonialism*, and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Also see David Caute, *Fanon* (London: Collins, Fontana, 1970), and Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York: Dial Press, 1971).

What Franz Fanon wanted was a nationalist pride that acknowledged the unique historical experience of a people without degenerating into chauvinism. He insisted that it is only possible through a “consciousness of oneself” to achieve an international consciousness.

The consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension.³²

On the question of national culture, Fanon began with a discussion of the relevance of the past in colonised societies; he acknowledged the need to return to the past as a means of resisting the role of colonialism. But, he also understood the danger of a counter action, to counter the colonial prohibition on expressions of a national culture.

The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native. Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. *By a*

³¹ Chidi Amuta, “A Dialectical Theory of African Literature: Categories and Springboards” Ch.4, *The Theory of African Literature* (London: Zed Books, 1989), p. 147

³² Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1967), p.198. It was from the statement made at the Second Congress of Black Artist and Writers, Rome, 1959.

*kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.*³³

It was in response to this disfigurement that native intellectuals were unconsciously taking the methods of the coloniser and turning them against themselves, by their own evocations of African culture. Fanon spoke of the dangers of reverse racism and, concentrating on black people and Africa, of the myth which assumes that there was one black nation identical all over the world. Fanon argued that the African sees himself as the coloniser saw him; undifferentiated, a representative of blackness, a brother to all other black people, because there were no African peoples, no nations, only the unrelieved blackness of the natives.

The concept of Negro-ism, for example, was the emotional if not the logical antithesis of that insult which the white man flung at humanity. This rush of Negro-ism against the white man's contempt showed itself in certain spheres to be the one ideal capable of lifting interdictions and anathemas. Because the New Guinean or Kenyan intellectuals found themselves to the combined contempt of their overloads, their reaction was to sing praise in admiration of each other. The unconditional affirmation of African culture has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European cultures.³⁴

In other words, he writes that the "historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves to radicalise their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley."³⁵ For the only basis on

³³ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 170. [my italic]

³⁴ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 171-172.

³⁵ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 173.

which Africans and black men generally could compare their experience was as blacks in relation to white society.³⁶ It was to deny the role of history in the predicament of the black masses and in the colonial phenomenon.³⁷

In this manner, it was absurd to suppose that American blacks had the same history, the same interests, and the same problems as Africans. Fanon wrote,

little by little the American realised that the essential problems confronting them were not the same as those that confronted the African Negroes. The Negroes of Chicago only resemble the Nigerians or the Tanganyikans in so far as they were all defined in relation to the whites. But once the first comparisons had been made and subjective feelings were assuaged, the African Negroes realized that the objective problems were fundamentally heterogeneous. The test cases of civil liberty whereby both whites and blacks in America try to drive back racial discrimination have very little in common in their principles with the heroic fight of the Angolan people against the detestable Portuguese colonialism.³⁸

³⁶ When the African Cultural Society was created by the African intellectuals, to affirm the existence of African culture, to get to know each other and to compare their experiences, the society fulfilled another need, the need to exist side by side with the European Cultural Society, which threatened to transform itself into a Universal Cultural Society. Now, this Society will very quickly show its inability to shoulder these different tasks, and will limit itself to exhibitionist demonstrations, while the habitual behavior of the members of this Society will be confined to showing Europeans that such a thing as African culture exists, and opposing their ideas to those of ostentatious and narcissistic Europeans. (Ibid., p.173)

³⁷ The degradation of the aims of this Society will become more marked with the elaboration of the concept of Negro-ism. The African Society will become the cultural society of the black world and will come to include the Negro dispersion, that is to say the tens of thousands of black people spread over the American continents. (Ibid., p.174)

³⁸ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 174. Note: during the second congress of the African Cultural Society the American Negroes decided to create an American society for people of black cultures (Ibid.).

It is Fanon's argument against the idea of a common black culture that under the circumstances, the historic situations of blacks in the United States, in Europe, and in Africa could be observed as distinct. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, while he had been deeply affected by Senghor's anthology of black poetry in his earlier period, he came to reject Senghor's position as a reactionary one.³⁹ For him, negritude was meaningful, but not as a national ideology. Therefore, for him, this negritude ought to be transcended and the black man, having discovered his pride and his past, would be free to join other men in a common struggle. Fanon noted in a reference he made to Senghor;

At the last school prize-giving in Dakar, the president of the Senegalese Republic, Leopold Senghor, decided to include the study of the idea of Negro-ism in the curriculum. If this decision was due to an anxiety to study historical causes, no one can criticize it. But if on the other hand it was taken in order to create black self-consciousness, it is simply a turning of his back upon history which has already taken cognizance of the disappearance of the majority of Negroes.⁴⁰

On the issue of negritude, Fanon did not see it as a form of black nationalism, but as a cultural phenomenon. What he was trying to do was to analyse the fact of blackness correctly, not to eternalise it but to put it into place and to return to the matter at hand - the liberation of all human being in colonial societies.⁴¹

³⁹ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 198.

⁴⁰ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.198, note (1).

⁴¹ When he turned to Algeria and the Arab world in the same context, it was in order to apply his observations on national culture to this part of the world.

1.4. Criticism on Native Intellectuals

The implications of Fanon's national culture have brought us into a complex discourse of post-colonialism: cultural identity. In post-colonial societies, the discovery of this identity is often the object of study, as Fanon calls it a

passionate research and this anger are kept up or at least directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves, and in regard to others.⁴²

He warned the native intellectuals, as they decided to go back further and to delve deeper down, that they would discover that there is nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but dignity, glory and solemnity, escaping from the barbarity of today.⁴³ It is understood that coloniser domination denies the colonised's cultural development, as the coloniser denies the colonised's historical development. The colonial experience shows that the coloniser, in the effort to perpetuate domination and exploitation, not only creates a system which represses the cultural life of the colonised people; the coloniser also provokes and develops the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by so-called assimilation of indigenous people, or by creating a social gap between the

⁴² Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.170.

⁴³ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 170

indigenous elites and the popular masses. As a result of this process, a considerable part of the population (the urban or peasant *petites bourgeoisies*) assimilates the coloniser's mentality, considers themselves culturally superior to their own people and looks down upon their cultural values.⁴⁴ On the native intellectual side, according to Franz Fanon,

While at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressors, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnic or subjective means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people.⁴⁵

Fanon explains this process, in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The native intellectual who has filtered into Western civilisation (in other words, exchanged his own for another), who has managed to become part of the body of European culture, is anxious to appear original, and feels that he must get away from white culture. But after witnessing the present situation throughout the continent which he wants to make his own, the intellectual is terrified by the void and the degeneration he sees there. Now, he must seek his culture elsewhere; and if he fails to find the substance of culture of the same grandeur as displayed by the ruling power, he will often fall back upon emotional attitudes and will develop a psychology. He sets a high value on the customs, traditions and the appearance of his people; but his inevitable, painful experience only seems to be a banal search. Here, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the

⁴⁴ Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return to the Source: Selected speeches of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 39-56

⁴⁵ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.193.

culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country. His aspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite strands in the literature of the mother country, such as the Parnassians, the Symbolists and Surrealists.⁴⁶

In other words, this is the native intellectual who wants to remember his authentic identity and rejects any attempt to assimilate him. But because of his own cultural alienation, the native intellectual's attempts at cultural reaffirmation remain romanticizations of the past in terms of the philosophical and aesthetic tradition of the world of the coloniser. This resuscitation of past glories is only a defence mechanism by native intellectuals "to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped."⁴⁷ Fanon was aware of the limitations of this retrospective fixation in terms of altering the present material conditions of life among the colonised: "all the proofs of a wonderful Songhai civilization will not change the fact that today the Songhais are underfed and illiterate."⁴⁸

In this cultural nationalism, "the native intellectual who decides to give battle to colonial lies fights on the field of the whole continent."⁴⁹ Here, Fanon was realistic enough to admit the legitimacy and historical necessity of doing so in the consciousness of the native, but he also cautioned that it must constitute only a transient phrase. To

⁴⁶ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 177-179.

⁴⁷ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp.169.

⁴⁸ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.169

adopt continental cultural reaffirmation and nostalgic romanticism as a permanent stance would amount to a false consciousness totally dysfunctional in the task of national liberation:

The historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley.⁵⁰

In this respect, Fanon anticipated some of the most radical positions of contemporary criticism by emphasising the need for the intellectual or writer to see and understand clearly the people who constitute the object of his study or writing (poetry) through a process of “self-immersion that literally approximates class suicide.” Therefore, cultural action cannot be divorced from the larger struggle for the liberation of the nation. Fanon, although he put emphasis on the present and the immediate, never totally discountenanced the insight which the past could provide in the process of national liberation. For Fanon, the nationalist writer “ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope.”⁵¹ It is the responsibility of the writer not to immerse the people in the past they have left behind but to join and inspire them to confront the present as a historic moment. As Fanon puts it,

⁴⁹ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.171.

⁵⁰ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.173.

⁵¹ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.187.

The responsibility of the native man of culture is not a responsibility *vis-à-vis* his national culture, but a global responsibility with regard to the totality of the nation, whose culture merely, after all, represents one aspect of that nation..... To fight for the national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material key-stone which makes the building of a culture possible. There is no other fight for culture which can develop apart from the popular struggle.⁵²

In this reciprocal relationship between history and culture, the national struggle as a historical act also becomes an act of cultural resistance. What emerges here is his view on culture as a struggle, because culture “has never the translucidity of custom; it abhors all simplification. In its essence it is opposed to custom, for custom is always the deterioration of culture. The desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people.”⁵³ Particularly, after the time of liberation, there comes a time of cultural uncertainty and of undecidability, but the native intellectuals

forget that the forms of thought and what it feeds on, together with modern techniques of information, language and dress have dialectically reorganized the people’s intelligence and that the constant principles which acted as safeguards during the colonial

⁵² Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 187-188.

Fanon gave an example: “all those men and women who are fighting with their bare hands against French colonialism in Algeria are not by any means strangers to the national culture of Algeria. *The national Algerian culture is taking on form and content as the battles are being fought out*, in prisons, under the guillotine and in every French outpost which is captured or destroyed.” p. 188. [my italic].

⁵³ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.180. “In an under-developed country during the period of struggle traditions are fundamentally unsuitable and are shot through by centrifugal tendencies. This is why the intellectual often runs the risk of being out of date. The peoples who have carried on the struggle are more and more impervious to demagogy; and those who wish to follow them reveal themselves as noting more than common opportunists, in other words latecomers.” Ibid.

period are now undergoing extremely radical changes..... [W]e must join the people in the fluctuating movement which they are just giving a shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called in question..... it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come.⁵⁴

As Stuart Hall indicates in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, there are at least two different way of thinking of ‘cultural identity’; the first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common; the second position recognises that there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are,’ or ‘what we have become.’⁵⁵ From the second position, on this ‘passionate research’, there is a danger of “losing their lives and thus becoming lost to their people, these men, hot-headed and with anger in their heart, relentlessly determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial spring of life of their people.”⁵⁶In other words, it is not the discovery of identity, but the production, because cultural identity is not located in a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature. Cultural identity is

⁵⁴ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 181-182.

⁵⁵ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, culture, difference*, ed by J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp.223-225.

⁵⁶ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 169-170.

a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have stories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power.⁵⁷

Cultural identity is not a fixed essence, lying unchanged outside history and culture, and not a fixed origin to which we can make absolute return, as we read in the myth of Odysseus on his journey home from Troy to Ithaca.

Culture is also an expanding and developing phenomenon, and in its fundamental character, it is the "highly dependent and reciprocal nature of its linkage with the social and economic reality of the environment, with the level of productive forces and the mode of production of the society which created it." Culture reflects "the material and spiritual reality of society, of man-the-individual and of man-the-social-being, faced with conflicts which set him against nature and the exigencies of common life." Therefore, it is composed of "essential and secondary elements, of strengths and weakness, of virtues and failings, of positive and negative aspects, of factors of progress and factors of stagnation or regression."⁵⁸ In this perspective, it is imperative to value the culture within the framework of the struggle, not within the ontological fixture of the past.

⁵⁷Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," p.225.

⁵⁸Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," pp.39-56.

1.5. Black Skin, White Masks: As a Mode of the Consciousness of Freedom

Here, within the struggle, this nature of identity has profoundly challenged the question of 'self,' as we realise that, "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty."⁵⁹ Because of the growing complexity of modern society, there is a growing awareness that the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but formed in relation to significant others. As we are all aware, there has been a shift from the traditional concept of identity (subject) of a unified and stable entity; the subject having no fixed, or permanent identity, is becoming fragmented and open-ended. As Anthony Giddens puts it, "In traditional societies, the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations. Tradition is a means of handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience with the continuity of past, present and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices," but in highly reflexive modern society, "social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character."⁶⁰ Hall also indicates that "identity becomes a

⁵⁹ K. Mercer, "Welcome to the jungle," in *Identity*, ed by J. Rutherford, p.43.

⁶⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp.37-38.

‘moveable feast’: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us”⁶¹

Fanon recognises the importance of asserting the colonised indigenous cultural tradition, but he is also aware of the danger of the fixity and fetishism of identity within the classification of colonial cultural system. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon criticises the colonial condition: the problem of identity. As he writes “What is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact.”⁶² This reveals the deep psychic uncertainty of the colonial relation itself.⁶³ Fanon vows to understand why it was that black men wore white masks, and in the process he acknowledges the universal implication that colonial racism does not differ from any other racism. From his experience from being Martiniquean, he realised the fact of blackness that, through the education and language of ‘whiteness,’ their relations to whites in the West Indies and in France was distorted. In other words, the ‘whiteness’ has been “hammered into the native’s mind” by the colonialist structure.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” in *Modernity and its Futures*, eds by Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew (Cambridge: The Open University Press, 1992), p.277.

⁶² Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 16.

⁶³ Fanon as a psychiatrist, said “If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization.... The social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged.” *Toward the African Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1967), p.63.

⁶⁴ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 47.

It is about the black man and language; it is about any man whose native language is not the language of the country in which he lives, and who carries his own tongue as a cultural mark of Cain. Here he explodes the myth of the neutrality of language, and offers what it means to speak the language of the dominant class. In his opening chapter, "The Negro and Language," he writes that for the Martiniquean to speak the Frenchman's French is to speak the language of the master, the language that opens door to French culture and society. But the interesting fact is that the French spoken in Martinique is not only shaded by the accents of the islands, it translates the intonations of the islander's status, it reflects the extent to which he is black, white, or a mixture of the two. To a certain degree, the Martiniquean who wishes to progress in society, will learn the correct Parisian French, and if he is fortunate enough to make a trip to the mother country, he will perfect his language.⁶⁵ "The black man who has lived in France for a length of time returns radically changed. To express it in genetic terms, his phenotype undergoes a definitive, an absolute mutation."⁶⁶ Fanon explains that "Negroes who return to their original environments convey the impression that they have completed a cycle, that they have added to themselves something that was lacking. They return literally full of themselves."⁶⁷ This ambiguous circumstance of the Martiniquean is that he knows that his destination is French and white, and he is impelled to progress in this direction; but the dimensions of his success will also determine the extent of his alienation from his own culture.

⁶⁵ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp.17-19.

⁶⁶ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.19.

⁶⁷ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.19, note 3.

The use of language as a tool of assimilation and the subsequent rebellion against linguistic integration and alienation have been familiar aspects of colonial life. It is significant that what Fanon described in Martinique, could be reproduced elsewhere, wherever a colonial situation introduced a coloniser whose language differed from that of the colonised. Here in Martinique as in the other colonised territories, French was the key to admission to another world, the world of the West, of progress, and of power. In the case of North Africa, Arabic was the mother tongue and the language of the people; to choose both French and Arabic was perhaps the solution to the problem, but it was a difficult choice and it was made successfully by relatively few people. Moreover, it has been illustrated by writers who suffer a permanent nostalgia as a result of their inability to address their people in their own language, and it remains one of the most visible signs in Algeria today of the cultural and psychic damage brought about by colonisation, as in the other territories under colonial control.⁶⁸

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon discussed the roots of pathology for the child brought up in a Martiniquean home and sent out into a white world, under the section, “The Negro and Psychopathology.” The black schoolboy in an environment totally

⁶⁸ Any discussion with contemporary writers in Algeria reveals this to be one of the most sensitive and difficult problems facing the modern state. The intensity with which arabization is pursued, even though it is motivated by political considerations as well, cannot be understood except by an appreciation of what the language problem means. Literacy is extremely limited, and those who have had schooling, until recently, were French speaking and French reading as a result. The trend is to change this pattern and to reintroduce Arabic as the language. In the interval, however, a generation of writers and intellectuals who have contributed to the nationalist movement, and who are unreservedly patriotic, nevertheless find themselves unable to address their fellow compatriots in their own language. This elite is still French speaking.

different from his own, was taught to identify with the society from which he was excluded. The black child identifying with the hero found himself identifying with the white figure against the black one, i.e. against himself (although he did not perceive this as such); and he will be growing up in the image of the white models he reads about and will not be aware of any conflict. In Fanon's reply to M. Mannoï's analysis of the Malagasy reaction to white men, he states:

It is of course obvious that the Malagasy can perfectly well tolerate the fact of not being a white man. A Malagasy is a Malagasy; or, rather, no, not he is a Malagasy but, rather, in an absolute sense he "lives" his Malagasyhood. If he is a Malagasy, it is because the white man has come, and if at a certain stage he has been led to ask himself whether he is indeed a man, it is because his reality as a man has been challenged. In other words, I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world....⁶⁹

Here, Fanon was concerned with the dynamics of acculturation; he recognised that both sides were affected, the dominant and the dominated, in this mutuality of human relations and communication. As Sartre had studied the anti-Semitic Christian which led him to affirm that it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew,⁷⁰ Fanon discovered that the

⁶⁹ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.98.

⁷⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. G.J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 134-135, quoted "It is society, not the decree of God, that has made him a Jew and brought the Jewish problem into being. As he is forced to make his choices entirely within the perspective set by his problem, it is in and through the social that he chooses even his own existence..... If in consequence he is reproached for his metaphysical inauthenticity, if attention is called to the fact that his constant uneasiness

alienated Martiniquean existed only where there was a dominant society that had reduced him to an inferior status. Fanon's concern was the gradual process of alienation from his own culture and tradition, and the fact that this was accompanied by self-hatred or at the least, a profoundly disturbed ambivalence. This is the rejection of self that came as a result of identification with the other and as a result of the acceptance of the other's image of one's inferior caste. Having acknowledged that his existence was predetermined by the perception of him which the other had, Fanon understood that this perception did not coincide with his own image of himself, and yet his self was not completely distinct from the reflection which came back to him in such a disturbing fashion, as shown in Jean-Paul Sartre,

If we start with the first revelation of the Other as a look, we must recognize that we experience our incomprehensible being-for-others in the form of possession. I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculpts it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it. The Other holds a secret - the secret of what I am. He makes me be and thereby he possesses me, and this possession is nothing other than the consciousness of possessing me.... By virtue of consciousness the Other is for me simultaneously the one who has stolen my being from me and the one who causes 'there to be' a being which is my being.... I am responsible for my being for others, but I am not the foundation of it.... But he is not responsible for my being although he finds it in complete freedom... Thus to the extent that I am revealed to myself as responsible for my being, I lay claim to this being which I am; that is, I wish to recover it, or, more exactly, I am the project of the recovery of my being. I want to stretch out my hand and grab hold of this being which is presented to me as my

is accompanied by a racial positivism, let us not forget that these reproaches return upon those who make them: the Jew is social because the anti-Semite has made him so."

being but at a distance - like the dinner of Tantalus. I want to found it by my very freedom. For if in one sense my being-as-object is an unbearable contingency and the pure 'possession' of myself by another, still in another sense this being stands as the indication of what I should be obliged to recover and found in order to be the foundation of myself. But this is conceivable only if I assimilate the Other's freedom. Thus my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other....⁷¹

The desire for the Other is doubled by the desire in language, which splits the difference between Self and Other so that both positions are partial; neither is sufficient unto itself. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* reveals the doubling of identity: the difference between personal identity as an intimation of reality, and the psychoanalytic problem of identification that always begs the question of the subject: 'What does a man want?' Binary identities function in a kind of narcissistic reflection of the One in the Other, confronted in the language of desire by the psychoanalytic process of identification:⁷² "For identification, identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality."⁷³ And it is only possible in the negation of any sense of originality or plenitude, in the process of displacement and differentiation, which renders it a liminal reality.

Fanon is not posing the question of political oppression as a violation of a human 'essence,' nor raising the question of colonial man in the universalistic terms of the

⁷¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes (New York: Citadel Press, 1969), pp. 340-341. Fanon shares with Jean-Paul Sartre the overwhelming sense of comprehension and empathy.

⁷² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 50-51.

⁷³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.51.

liberal-humanist, nor posing an ontological question about man's being. But he historicises the colonial experience of the Other.⁷⁴ As we have observed before, the ambivalent identification of the racist world turns on the idea of man as his alienated image, not Self and Other but the 'Otherness' of the self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity. Fanon, in exploring such questions of the ambivalence of colonial inscription and identification, illustrates the complexity of colonial relation in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He writes, "The black man has two dimensions:" "one with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonial subjugation is beyond question."⁷⁵ But, in Fanon, what is suggested is not the exile that results from the assumption of the white mask discourse, but volitional manipulation of that mask as a means of struggle, as he says, "I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself."⁷⁶ It is recognising a possibility of existence, rather than agonising in the dilemma, turning white or disappearing. Fanon says,

if society makes difficulties for him because of his color.... my objective, once his motivations have been brought into consciousness, will be to put in him a position to choose action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict - that is, toward the social structures.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Homi Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," Foreword to Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp. vii-xxvi.

⁷⁵ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 229.

⁷⁷ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 100.

It is not the colonialist Self or the colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness - the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body. This is the place where the liminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes emerges.⁷⁸ For Fanon, the willed action of wearing white masks was used as a means of struggle in this possibility of freedom. It is from this edge of meaning and being, and from this shifting boundary of otherness within identity, such ambivalent identification - black skin, white masks- is possible as a mode of freedom: the existential, creative and demanding freedom of consciousness.

Therefore, the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity or participation within a pre-existing social structure, but it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. On the other hand, since the colonial desire is always articulated in relation to the Other, the place of the Other must not be imagined, as a fixed phenomenological point, opposed to the self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness. Thus, the Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity - cultural or psychic - that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the 'cultural' to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historical reality.⁷⁹ Here, it was the challenge to authenticity, to understanding the existential postulates of the situation which determined the limits of man's freedom, the freedom to choose to be himself as he chose

⁷⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 44-45.

⁷⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 51-52.

himself to be, and not merely as others allowed him to be. In a sense, identification is a question of interpretation, since it is always spoken in the desire of the Other, the difference.

Having acknowledged the doubleness and splitting of the subject, the identity is to be imagined between the incommensurable differences, as Lacan described it, “the process of gap” within which the relation of subject to other is produced.⁸⁰ This means the undecidability in the signification of self and other; there can be no total negation or transcendence of difference. It is the process of becoming within the doubleness and splitting of the subject, as what Derrida calls the logic or play of the ‘supplement’:

If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes - the - place. As substitute.. it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere something can be filled up of itself... only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy.⁸¹

This idea resists the traditional concepts; it does in a relation that is differential rather than original, ambivalent rather than accumulative, doubling or dialogical rather than dialectical. Therefore, cultures come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are addressed and produced

⁸⁰ Jacques Lacan, “Alienation” in his *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977), p.206.

⁸¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University, 1976), p. 145.

through the Other, as opposed to the essentialist claims for the inherent authenticity or purity of culture.⁸² It is the in-between, where the Other falls upon the Self, and from here, the cultural difference/particularity emerges as an enunciative category, as opposed to the relativistic notion of cultural diversity, or the exoticism of the diversity of culture.

The global cultural reality of today, especially in the city, leads us to realise the limitations of a consensual or collusive idea of culture, and insists that cultural identity is constructed through an interaction with the Other. In the same way, identity is a construction, a consequence of a process of interaction between people, traditions and practices, because groups maintain boundaries to limit the type of behaviour within a defined cultural territory.⁸³ In fact, if culture is understood as a complex of meanings that is unique to a particular group, then humanity is very much fragmented, and expressed in different meaning, as opposed to the universal vision of Enlightenment anthropology. Multiculturalism of today, is calling for more stringent forms of separation and segregation, and we have an ideology calling for the proliferation of fragmented 'centrism.' Taken to its logical extreme, the logic of multiculturalism turns out to be a logic of ethnic cleansing, as shown in recent events in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo.

⁸² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 58.

⁸³ Madan Sarup, *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p.11.

Therefore, culture should be understood in terms of difference, rather than diversity, which is a category of comparative aesthetics or ethnology, and which is the recognition of unique and pre-given identity; it is “a process of signification through which statement of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate and authorise the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity.”⁸⁴ In other words, the cultural diversity of multiculturalism is an epistemological project in which culture is an object of empirical knowledge, whereas cultural difference is a process of cultural encountering with the others.

2. Cultural Identity and Difference

The previous section brings us to focus on the issue of ‘subject’ and ‘identity,’ in the process and changing. Talking about subjects and identities is not simple, but rather complex, fragmented and polydimensional in its process of separation and connection, and in the network of crossing and crossed aspects of identity. The significance of this project is that we understand our identities by reflecting on what we do, and by interpreting the texts we produce. Therefore, subjectivity is a starting point for the project itself.

⁸⁴ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.43.

In this process of becoming, the subject is necessarily incomplete, less autonomous, less self-controlled and less free than it may assume, but rather a socio-cultural construction which is again split and incomplete. In other words, identity has a long genealogy, and the place of identification is a place of splitting in the tension of demand and desire. Therefore, the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, but rather “a production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.” And “the demand of identification - that is, before an Other - entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness.” In fact, identification is “always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes.”⁸⁵ This process of identification is very ambivalent, not certain, in the desire of the Other, as also practiced in activities of interpretation that one-self meets with another-self in an elusive manner: the doubleness or splitting subject is enacted in the writing. Subjects do exist as ‘subjects-in-process,’⁸⁶ in a creative project of identity. Kristeva indicates that it is “this unlimited and unbounded generating process, this unceasing operation of the drives toward, in, and through language; toward, in, and through the exchange system and its protagonists - the subject and his institutions.” And “this heterogeneous process.... is a structuring and de-structuring practice, a passage to the outer boundaries of the subject and society.”⁸⁷ Identity is thus a construct; therefore

⁸⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 44-45.

⁸⁶ Julia Kristeva develops a theory of the subject-in-process in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

⁸⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p. 17.

subject needs to understand both the historical determinations of subject formation and the activity of subjects that creates the future. In addition, identity is always related to what the subject is not - the Other, and only possible through difference, as all understanding of subject is a combination of self-understanding and interpretation of others.

Therefore, to study culture is to relocate Western culture from its privileged position, into the realm of many others; cultural study is not only about the West's relation to the different cultures, but also the suspicion of, and challenge to the foundational assumptions of this inquiry in itself. As Raymond Williams stated, "you cannot understand an intellectual or artistic project without also understanding its formation; that the relation between a project and a formation is always decisive; and... the emphasis of Cultural Studies is precisely that it emerges with both."⁸⁸ Therefore, in a way, this is not a brand new approach or subject, rather it is a re-examination, a re-negotiation, and a re-interpretation of major Enlightenment and humanistic rationalist ideals, yet, not in terms of repetition of older ideals and themes, but in terms of comprehensive new ground which dissociates and scrutinises the materials of cultural studies of the past, showing an interpretation of how certain ways of thinking about culture have come into being, especially in relation to other cultures.

⁸⁸ Raymond Williams, "The Future of Cultural Studies," in *The Politics of Modernism* (London: Verso, 1989), pp.151-152

In this re-examination of a largely male, European world view, cultural studies have been linked with the development in previously marginalised areas, such as studies on women, ethnic minorities, race, diverse sexuality, different cultures, and unacademic subjects. By its orientation, this agenda is multi-directional, heterogeneous, and multi-textual, and its political potentiality is immense. It sets out to criticise the presuppositions within structures as a whole, and reveals that even structuralism, which was posited as a scientific, objective enquiry, a positive truth claim, is grounded in subjective, experiential reality, unable to transcend its place in the structure of civilisation/culture as it is presently situated. This is echoed by Derrida, whose deconstructive analysis demonstrates how the process of writing/reading is always being hindered by its own structurality. These deconstructive/poststructuralistic studies clearly show how knowledge is produced and circulated, and ultimately textualised within Western culture (such as art, literature, philosophy, law, politics, history, and aesthetics). Knowledge, as it is constructed, is implicated in language as a sign-system, meaning is thus arbitrary or locked into the power of the person who owns the language. These investigations demonstrate how such language is deployed discursively in culture.

This assertion of difference has become the principle in *postmodern* society today; “the emergence of new subjects, new genders, new ethnicities, new religions, new communities” has given hitherto invisible groups “the means to speak for themselves for

the first time.’⁸⁹ It means the rejection of grand narratives.⁹⁰ It is hostile to universalism, that is a ‘Eurocentric’ viewpoint, a means of imposing European (and American) ideas of rationality and objectivity on other people. Universalism is racist because it denies the possibility of non-European viewpoints. What we need is, as is the case in the reading practice of deconstruction, to free the reader from orthodox conventional reading and to reveal the ideological assumptions of the colonising West about itself and its Others. Postcolonial discourse seeks to relocate the master position of the single perspective and viewpoint, and to read from a silent native perspective or viewpoint. Hence, the postcolonial counter-discursive language of the native culture becomes a signifying system.

Postcolonial counter-discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dis/mantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified ‘local’... *Wild sargasso sea* directly contests British sovereignty - of persons, of place, of culture, of language. It reinvests its own hybridised world with a provisionally authoritative perspective, but one which is deliberately constructed as provisional since the novel is at pains to demonstrate the subjective nature of point of view and hence the cultural construction of meaning.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global,” in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 43.

⁹⁰ Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p.23.

⁹¹ Helen Tiffin, “Post-colonial literatures and counter-discourse’, *Kunapipi*, 9:3, 1987, p.23. quoted from Peter Hulme, “The locked Heart: the Creole family romance of *Wild sagasso sea*”, in *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 73.

Post-colonial discourse insists that knowledge must not serve as an instrument of domination, but rather renounce mastery over others, because as Foucault warned, “power produces knowledge”, and “power and knowledge directly imply one another.”⁹² In other words, its relation and discourse with the Other must be governed by ethical response; it is not offering “a better definition of the alien but rather a certain change of attitude,” and “instead of asking what the alien is or how it functions, I take the alien as what we respond to and what we must respond to, whatever we say or do.”⁹³ The Other is not to be understood as something at which our saying and doing aims but as something from which it starts. Thus, what the Other is or means is determined during and by the event of response, and it will never be determined in a complete and univocal sense.⁹⁴ It is an on-going process of constituting a self through an encounter with the other/s.

3. Bible and Post-colonial Discourse

Colonialism is a part of the history of Christianity, and colonial exploitation was one of the tragic events in which Christianity played a crucial role. Today, the memory

⁹² Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980) p. 27.

⁹³ Bernhard Waldenfels, “Response to the Other,” in *Encountering the Other(s): Studies in Literature, History, and Culture*, ed by Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Albany: SUNY, 1985), p.73.

⁹⁴ Bernhard Waldenfels, “Response to the Other,” p.73

of the colonial and imperial past raises questions about the religious roots of exploitation; the native voice or the post-colonial discourse is not a set of linguistic structures, but represents an alternative perspective demonstrating that there is such a thing as a colonised version of a colonial story which is already inscribed in the text. What is being attempted is to initiate a dialogue between the unspoken (silent) perspective with what the text seems to be saying, and to bring the ethical question into this dialogue, in relation to several issues.

In the Biblical narrative of Exodus, the Hebrew who came out from Egypt, invaded the land of Canaan which was already occupied. As the story goes, the people in the land were systematically killed; this biblical account is mandated by God who requires the destruction of other people: "You shall devour all the peoples that Yahweh your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity"(Deut. 7:16). Such texts were used in support of colonialism; the native people were cast as Hittities, the Girgashites, and others; the land was God's gift. And these biblically recorded accounts of the Israelites, according to Arnold Toynbee, sanctioned the British conquest of North America, Ireland and Australia, the Dutch conquest of South Africa, the Prussian conquest of Poland and the Zionist conquest of Palestine.⁹⁵

Although recent studies indicate that the Exodus story can be interpreted differently, and used to fight against colonialism, imperialism and oppression,

⁹⁵ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, VIII (London: Oxford University, 1954), p. 310.

especially in the Third World, the pattern of reading this story has not changed. In this understanding of the biblical narrative of Exodus, the perspective of Canaanites was excluded. Pui-Lan Kwok questions the Exodus narrative, “What is the promised land now?.. Can I believe in a God who killed the Canaanites and who seems not to have listened to the cry of the Palestinians now for some forty years?”⁹⁶ The Palestinian theologian Naim S. Ateek observes that,

The Bible is being used by both Jews and Western Christians to silence us, to make us invisible, to turn us into the negated antithesis of God’s “chosen people.” How can we interpret the Bible so that it becomes a redemptive message for us, for all people, but not in a way that sets one people against another, as was happening with the Jewish religious Zionists and some Western Christian fundamentalists’ use of the Bible?⁹⁷

Ateek reiterates the fact that the Bible is continuously quoted to give the primary claim of land to the Jews, and used in a way that has supported injustice as justice.⁹⁸ Therefore, as far as the Palestinian Christians are concerned, this brings an ethical question in relation to the Bible, asking “Can a text partial to ancient Israel be life-giving for Palestinians who are being oppressed by modern Israelis?”⁹⁹ Ateek also takes a

⁹⁶ Pui-lan Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 99.

⁹⁷ Naim S. Ateek, “The Emergence of a Palestinian Christian Theology,” in *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices*, ed by Naim S. Ateek, Marc H. Ellis and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 5.

⁹⁸ Naim S. Ateek, “A Palestinian Perspective: The Bible and Liberation,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed by R.S. Sugirtharajah (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 280-186.

⁹⁹ Mary H. Schertz, “People, Power, and Pages: Issues in Ethical Interpretation,” in *Voices from the Margin*, p. 141.

critical attitude towards the traditional reading of the Western Christian, by asking “How can the Bible, which has apparently become a part of the problem in the Arab-Israeli conflict, become a part of its solution? How can the Bible, which has been used to bring a curse to the national aspirations of a whole people, again offer them a blessing? How can the Bible, through which many have been led to salvation, be itself saved and redeemed?”¹⁰⁰

In this ethical questioning, what is significant is to read the Bible from the victim’s perspective, in searching for a new hermeneutics for human liberation and justice, that does not just end as a source of understanding or a model for liberation, but as a source of action in concrete socio-political conflict. In this sense, we need to read the Bible with the eyes of Canaanites, as the American Indian theologian insists, “The obvious characters for Native American to identify with are the Canaanites, the people who already lived in the promised land.... I read the Exodus stories with Canaanite eyes. And, it is the Canaanite side of the story that has been overlooked by those seeking to articulate theologies of liberation. Especially ignored are those parts of the story that describe Yahweh’s command to mercilessly annihilate the indigenous population.”¹⁰¹ What is needed is to see how the Bible has been used as an instrument of oppression, and to find what the misuse of the Bible is rather than the text of the Bible itself. The

¹⁰⁰ Naim S. Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, Ny: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 77.

¹⁰¹ Robert Allen Warrior, “A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” In *Voices from the Margin*, p. 289

blame is to be on the interpreter. When Pope John-Paul II visited Peru, he received an open letter from the indigenous people:

John-Paul II, we, Andean and American Indians, have decided to take advantage of your visit to return to you your Bible, since in five centuries it has not given us love, peace or justice. Please take back your Bible and give it back to our oppressors, because they need its moral teaching more than we do. Ever since the arrival of Christopher Columbus a culture, religion and values which belong to Europe have been imposed on Latin America by force. The Bible came to us as part of the imposed colonial transformation. It was the ideological weapon of this colonialist assault. The Spanish sword which attacked and murdered the bodies of Indians by day and night became the cross which attacked the Indian soul.¹⁰²

This traditionally silent perspective of the victim and native questions the way the Bible has been interpreted, and brings ethical demands that lead to the construction of a new hermeneutic of justice and liberation while demonstrating the oppressor or coloniser's myth and internal operation of power and ideology.

Throughout history, Zionism provided a political condition to warrant for colonialism, as it happened in Palestine, South Africa,.. etc. and later developed as so-called 'Christian nationalism' that took this paradigm as its ultimate goal, in many Western countries. For example, in South Africa, the Reformed Calvinist Afrikaners used the Bible to justify their treatment of the blacks and coloureds, since they understood the Exodus paradigm as the South African nationalist myth. The church

justified the apartheid as a divinely instituted division of nations as instituted in Deut. 4:37-38; 7:7-8; 10:14-15. Their interpretation of Deuteronomy in a particular way, promoted the unity of Afrikaners, on the other hand the separation from the blacks.¹⁰³ It is clear that a theological and biblical perspective played a significant role in developing the Afrikaner nationalist ideology.

Accordingly, the task we are facing is to rehabilitate the reading of the Bible from the native's or victim's perspective, so that there will be a critical space in between, an ambivalence. Ateek places the Palestinian situation against the Bible in searching for an ethical critique,

The Old Testament has generally fallen into disuse among both clergy and laity, and the Church has been unable to come to terms with its ambiguities, questions, and paradoxes - especially with its direct application to the twentieth-century event in Palestine. The fundamental question of many Christians, whether uttered or not, is: How can the Old Testament be the Word of God in light of the Palestinian Christians' experience with its use to support Zionism?¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Pablo Richard, "1492L The Violence of God and the Future of Christianity," in *1492-1992: The Voice of the Victim*, ed by Boff and Elisondo, Concilium 1990, no. 6. (London: SCM Press), pp. 64-65.

¹⁰³ F.E. Deist, "The Dangers of Deuteronomy: A Page from the Reception History of the Book," in *Studies in Deuteronomy*, ed by F.G.Martínez, A. Hilhorst, J. van Ruiten, and A. van der Woude (Leiden:Brill, 1994), pp.22-24.

¹⁰⁴ Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestine Theology of Liberation*, pp. 77-78.

Instead, Ateek raises the issue of universal ethics. Ethical Judaism (and its universal outlook) has been ignored or manipulated by the resurgence of a racially motivated concept of a people and their god.¹⁰⁵

The emergence of the Zionist movement in the twentieth century is a retrogression of the Jewish community into the history of its very distant past, with its most elementary and primitive forms of the concepts of God. Zionism has succeeded in reanimating the nationalist tradition within Judaism. Its inspiration has been drawn not from the profound thought of the Hebrew Scriptures but from those portions that betray a narrow and exclusive concept of a tribal god.¹⁰⁶

This Palestine perspective challenges the role that the institutionalisation of distorted biblical knowledge has played in the minds of the Western Christian, in which Israel is often portrayed as a modern David fighting the Arab Goliath, while the Palestinians are using the very same weapons of David, the stones, and the Israeli army is playing Goliath.¹⁰⁷ This discourse is to rehabilitate the conventional reading of Exodus in the light of the victim's perspective: we are challenged to read the Exodus narrative in the light of the story of Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21) in order to give voices to American Indians, black South Africans, Palestinians, and the silent others, and in order to bring victim's perspective or voice into the reading of Scripture, so that there would be struggles and ambivalences. It means not just to read again, but "to take a fresh look at

¹⁰⁵ Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestine Theology of Liberation*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁶ Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestine Theology of Liberation*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁷ Elias Chacour, "A Palestine Christian Challenge to the West," in *Faith and the Intifada: Palestine Christian Voices* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1992), p. 86.

the data and read anew and reformulate the message. It means investing the text with new meanings and nuances.”¹⁰⁸

The colonial conquest has been justified by traditional biblical exegesis. What is being proposed here, is not just to protest against Western biblical hermeneutics, but also an attempt to reclaim or rescue the Bible from being an instrument of oppression of the people: the key to the recovery of the Bible is to read from the victim’s or silent native’s perspective, in bringing ethics into the discourse. It is listening and responding to the “crying out” of the victim in Psalm 107, as “God heard our cry” in Exodus 2:25. It is to create a space for the native or victim’s voices in relation to the rival version of the ‘said’ in its incompleteness of understanding the text. This incompleteness, in fact, can become a site of resistance to colonialist interpretation, official unitary ideology, and monologic discourse. In this post-colonial reading, what is needed is to re-negotiate the power dynamics inherent in such oppositions as ‘colonised-coloniser,’ ‘victimiser-victim.’ In a way, the post-colonial reading itself is a battle ground for the decolonisation of linguistic and cultural control, against the dominant imperial language that is related to social structure, including the educational system and socio-economic structures. Its reading brings them into the sphere of ethics - the realm of justice and peace.

¹⁰⁸ R.S. Sugirtharajah, “Inter-faith Hermeneutics: An Example and Some Implications,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, p. 353.

4. On the Border with the Other

The perspective of 'victim' radically challenges our mode of reading and creates conflicts in 'us', and shows how our perspective is charged with ideology and power. This is breaking one's totality, denying one's absoluteness, and realising the incompleteness of the present situation, and moreover creating ambiguities through the encounter and relation with others. Therefore, living and reading in 'incompleteness' means engaging or working with/to the Other on the borders or edges; it is boundary crossing and destabilising one's identity. It also means experiencing and acknowledging the self-limitedness, that has created and separated boundaries and categories. For Jacques Derrida, 'incompleteness' is the issue of translation and a resistance to a text that is defined by one's borders and the limits of structure.¹⁰⁹ Living on the borderline is a dangerous life transgressing the limits that ensure security and stability. The important point of being on the border, is the positioning in line with other perspectives - a standpoint which creates a critical space in order to challenge hegemonic discourses.

¹⁰⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed by Harold Bloom et. al. (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 85.

Abdul R. JanMohamed categorises a person in this position as “the border intellectual”¹¹⁰ who stands at the borders of two cultures, and who questions “the unpleasant questions, the questions which are in bad taste, the embarrassing questions, the taboo questions”¹¹¹ to both cultures or traditions. Edward Said articulates a relationship between the notion of “home” and “exile” indicating the ironic reversion that home becomes a place of endangerment and exile,¹¹² and he says,

In a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exile cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience.¹¹³

Border-crossing means ‘a voyage in,’ a ‘going into’ the liminal space; it means negotiating between home and the other country, old and new, self and other. But, this crossing into ‘exile’ is different from that of Western intellectuals who crossed the borders, like Joseph Conrad, Eric Auerbach, T.E. Lawrence, and others. According to

¹¹⁰ Abdul R. JanMohamed, “Worldliness -without world, homelessness-as-home: Toward a definition of the specular border intellectual,” in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed by Michael Sprinker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 97.

¹¹¹ George Steiner, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals: A Discussion,” *Salmagundi*, No. 70-71 (Spring-Summer), p. 194.

¹¹² See Edward Said, “The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile,” *Harper’s Magazine*, No. 269 (September 1984), pp. 49-55.

¹¹³ Edward Said, “The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile,” *Harper’s Magazine*, No. 269 (September 1984), p. 54.

Said, these Western intellectuals cross the borders and re-crossed the border into the West in order to draw a map of other cultures constructed in their own image.¹¹⁴

Said's notion of "voyage in" as the movement and interrogation of Third World thinkers in the metropolitan First World, implies a crossing of the space separating the First and Third World:

The voyage in, then, constitutes an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work. And that it exists at all is a sign of adversarial internationalisation in an age of continued imperial structures. No longer does the logos dwell exclusively, as it were, in London and Paris. No longer does history run unilaterally, as Hegel believed, from east to west, or from south to north, becoming more sophisticated and developed, less primitive and backward as it goes. Instead, the weapons of criticism have become part of the historical legacy of empire, in which the separations and exclusions of 'divide and rule' are erased and surprising new configurations spring up.¹¹⁵

This brings a displacement of the Eurocentric logos from its secure position, into a place of negotiation not just to depose the authority of the West, but also to redefine its meaning as well as a recomposition and a redistribution. In this process, what is being created is 'double-vision or double-consciousness,' as Said describes the liminal crossing to the First World - the crossing of a liminal space presupposing not complete detachment but rather a mixing of "half-involvement and half-detachments."¹¹⁶ And

¹¹⁴ Abdul R. Janmohamed, "Worldliness -without world, homelessness-as-home: Toward a definition of the specular border intellectual," in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, p. 98.

¹¹⁵ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 295.

¹¹⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 49.

what is being realised in this process, is that “there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation.”¹¹⁷

But, the notion of ‘voyage in’ can be understood as an instrument to serve neo-colonialism by removing the intellectuals from the Third World and placing them in the First World. However, it must be remembered that exile or ‘voyage in’ is not a matter of choice but rather a condition of existence, internally as well as physically or geographically in many cases. This notion of hybrid cultural work as anti-imperialism also implies the struggle for decolonisation within a global context, addressing the Third World peoples, and warning national movements with their patriotic dogmas not to fetishise and romanticise the past, which Said calls the “pitfalls of nationalism.”¹¹⁸ Anthony Appiah criticises nativism or cultural nativism and its claims to ancestral purity. He accuses those who develop monolithic notions of identity of being trapped in the coloniser’s discourse and not being able to divest themselves from the institutional determinations of the West. In other words, although native argument is addressed to the West, the pattern of discourse and its mechanism remain with western discourse.¹¹⁹ Appiah insists that “the overdetermined course of cultural nationalism in Africa has been to make real the imaginary identities to which Europe has subjected to us.”¹²⁰ Robert

¹¹⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 60.

¹¹⁸ Jennifer Wicke and Michael Spinker, “Interview with Edward Said,” in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, p. 233.

¹¹⁹ Benita Parry, “Resistance theory/ theorising resistance or two cheers of nativism,” in *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial theory*, ed by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University, 1994), p. 177.

¹²⁰ Anthony Appiah, “Out of Africa: topologies of nativism,” *Yale Journal of criticism*, vol. 1, no. 2, p.164.

Young indicates in a similar way that a “nativist alternative” may represent “the narcissistic desire to find an other that will reflect Western assumptions of selfhood.”¹²¹

Again, Appiah argues that,

Railing against the cultural hegemony of the West, the natives are of its party without knowing it. Indeed the very argument, the rhetoric of defiance, that our nationalists muster are... canonical, time tested.... In their ideological inscription, the cultural nationalists remain in a position of counter identification..... which is to continue to participate in an institutional configuration - to be subjected to cultural identities that ostensibly decry..... Time and time again, cultural nationalism has followed the route of alternate genealogising. We end up always in the same place; the achievement is to have invented a different past for it.¹²²

Accordingly, what is being said in the notion of ‘exile’ is that cultural identities cannot be ascribed to pre-given, original, or ahistorical cultural traits, but rather it is a negotiation of cultural identity that involves the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances that produce a mutual recognition, in the liminal space of the hybrid.¹²³ The existence of ‘exile’ or ‘voyage in’ indicates a liminal space that does not separate but rather mediates their mutual exchange and relativises meanings with the critical view in a transcultural manner. Consequently, as Said suggests “solidarity

¹²¹ Robert Young, *White mythologies: writing, history and the west*, p. 165, cited from Benita Parry, “Resistance theory/ theorising resistance or the cheers of nativism,” in *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial theory*, p. 178.

¹²² Anthony Appiah, “Out of Africa: topologies of nativism,” *Yale Journal of criticism*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 162, 170.

¹²³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp.2-3.

before criticism means the end of the criticism”¹²⁴ as he applies ‘criticism’ not only to nationalism but also to class solidarity,¹²⁵ a critical mind is needed to resist and oppose the manipulating and fetishising discourse at ‘home.’

In this voyage crossing the liminal zone separating the First World and the Third World, the role of the intellectual is to construct an identity on the border, negating “the twin dangers of essentialism and infinite heterogeneity,” and refusing to provide a typology of border intellectuals.¹²⁶ On the site of the border, the danger is a desire for an authentic identity or origin within the socio-political structuration of reality. Here, the task of the intellectual on the border as space, is to reflect the gap, and to present “a sophisticated awareness of the politics produced by socio-cultural-classed-gendered locations.” It is an awareness that “does not subjugate itself to that politics,” but presents a freedom from “the politics of imaginary identification and opposition, from conflation of identity and location, so on - in short, from the varied and powerful forms of suturing that are represented by and instrumental in the construction of ‘home.’”¹²⁷ Thus, from a space outside ‘home,’ ambiguous space, what is needed for the intellectual, in reifying the relationship with the others, is to present the world as a dubious space of competing interests, so that the real questions for the intellectual can be addressed:

¹²⁴ Edward Said, *The World the Text and the Critic*, p. 28

¹²⁵ Edward Said, *The World the Text and the Critic*, p. 28

¹²⁶ Abdul R. Janmohamed, “Worldliness -without world, homelessness-as-home: Toward a definition of the specular border intellectual,” in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, p. 114.

However much intellectuals pretend that their representations are of higher things or ultimate values, morality begins with their activity in this secular world of ours - where it takes place, whose interests it serves, how it jibes with a consistent and universalistic ethic, how it discriminates between power and justice, what it reveals of one's choices and priorities.¹²⁸

Therefore, in the post-colonial discourses on 'exile' or 'voyage in,' what is implied is not a national solidarity, but rather a transnational solidarity of justice and peace as a fundamental element that conditions human relations, As Anthony Appiah says, "they reject not only the Western *imperium* but also the nationalist project of the postcolonial national bourgeoisie... the basis for that project of delegitimation cannot be the postmodernist one: rather it is grounded in an appeal to an ethical universal."¹²⁹

What is being created of the border-crossing, is a 'double-vision' or 'double-consciousness' that offers the intellectual creative responsibility in facilitating dialogues in difference, without promoting hierarchy, exclusiveness, and appropriation. What emerges from this positioning or dialogue with others, is a sense of ethics that only comes from the physical setting or encounter with others. Through ethical responsibility on the border, the virtue of situatedness within a particular culture or value system and structure, can be re-constituted and trans-nationalised by critical encounter

¹²⁷ Abdul R. Janmohamed, "Worldliness -without world, homelessness-as-home: Toward a definition of the specular border intellectual," p. 114.

¹²⁸ Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual*, the 1993 Reith lectures, London: Vintage, 1994, p. 120.

¹²⁹ Anthony Appiah, , "Is the post- in postmodernism the post- in postcolonial?," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, no.2, 1990, p. 353.

with and reflection of the Other. This positioning on the border creates a critical space to resist the language of dominant and hegemonic discourse, and also the militant particularism of all embracing discourse. From this ethical sphere, the reflection from the margin's or victim's position brings a counter-hegemonic discourse, as bell hooks indicates,

This marginality [is] a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and in the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose - to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center - but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.¹³⁰

This ethical space on the border is a place of struggle, and that of ambivalence, that is open to a different kind of becoming through the encounter with the Other; it is not a place of domination but a place of resistance to find more than what we used to know (the surplus), beyond the hegemonic rule of determination, in order to escape the dominant logic. This space is called 'home,' as bell hooks says,

the very meaning of 'home' changes with the experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a

¹³⁰ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*, cited from David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 103.

place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference.¹³¹

So, the important point as revealed in the idea of ‘home,’ is our constant ‘positioning’ with the different others. Hence, in the process of becoming, ‘Othernesses’ or “significant others”¹³² as George Herbert Mead calls them, are necessarily internalised within the subject (or the self) in a dialogical mode, seeing others in us, in this continuing conversation with the Other.¹³³

The Other is, however, not to be understood in terms of epistemological diversity, but rather in terms of the signification of difference in a real socio-political reality. David Harvey warns of the danger:

while it opens up a radical prospect by acknowledging the authenticity of other voices, postmodernist thinking immediately shuts off those other voices from access to more universal sources of power by ghettoising them with an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that language game. It thereby disempowers those voices (of women, ethnic and racial minorities, colonized peoples, the unemployed, youth, etc.) in a world of lop-sided power relations.¹³⁴

¹³¹ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*, cited from David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, p. 104.

¹³² See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), cited from Charles Taylor “The Politics of Recognition” in *Multiculturalism*, ed by Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 32.

¹³³ Charles Taylor “The Politics of Recognition” in *Multiculturalism*, pp. 32-33.

¹³⁴ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 117.

Therefore, what is required in this relation, is a critical evaluation of the socio-political-economy. This evaluation has a role in bringing or establishing a concept of social justice and human solidarity that comes from ethics, and resisting the hegemonic monologic ideology and its discourse. In this sense, the task of this border discourse of ethics is to defend social justice and human solidarity from the perspective or position of the oppressed or the victim: the Other.

This question of the colonised or victimised Other leads us to the radical questioning of the foundation of Western thought, and to show that one of the characteristics of Western metaphysics is to deny the otherness of the Other(s), or if not to actually deny its otherness, then at least to appropriate it, subsuming the Other dialectically within the 'same' of the absolute subject. It is also a protest against the original Enlightenment idea of reason, the entrenched reason, for being the latest and most dangerous totalizing authority of all; it is also against the notion of truth as the instrument of a mastery being exercised by the knower or interpreter over the Other. It is a critique of this epistemology from the outside - the victim, the oppressed, and a questioning of the fundamental mechanism of 'violence' and of institutionalised knowledge.

Emmanuel Levinas objects to the very idea of knowledge in the traditional sense, for in the process of understanding, Western philosophy undermines and devalues whatever societies, cultures or modes of living it comes across: "Western philosophy coincides with the discourse of the other where the other, in manifesting itself as a being,

loses its alterity. From its infancy philosophy has been stuck with a horror of the other that remains other.”¹³⁵ What Levinas means is the inability of Western conventional knowledge, to allow the objects of study to remain outside of its epistemological boundaries or to be defined in their own terms. He calls this ‘the imperialism of the same.’ In contrast to conventional knowledge, Levinas conceives the Other in terms of alterity, exteriority, distance. Something radically different - radical in terms of the illimitability of the Other, something we cannot fully comprehend, but we must respect, instead of grasping. Something that calls for responsibility in an ethical relationship and discourse that constitute forms of actual social interaction and practice. What is being attempted in the next chapter is to explore a kind of relationship without the violence of comprehension that would reduce the other(s) to the self, and to create an ethical space or signification that conditions or orients the “face-to-face relationship” between every form of inter-subjectivity and inter-culturality.

¹³⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” in Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Deconstructing in Context* (Chicago University Press, 1986) p. 346.

Chapter 3. Discourse on the Other

The philosophical discourse of the West claims the amplitude of an all-encompassing structure or of an ultimate comprehension. It compels every other discourse to justify itself before philosophy.

Rational theology accepts this vassalage. If, for the benefit of religion, it reserves a domain from the authority of philosophy, one will know that this domain will have been recognized to be philosophically unverifiable. (Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy"¹)

All forms of rhetoric agree that action of some kind is implied in communication, and those who are interested in theology will rejoice that we are moving toward an emphasis on thinking as a form of action or on the action that is intended as a result of thinking. (David Cunningham, "Theology and Rhetoric in the University,")²

David Cunningham has said that the analytic presumptions of modern philosophy have left theology lost within what he calls an "inadequate methodological framework."³ According to him, there are three main problems in contemporary theology: an apolitical pretence, an inordinate separation of the object of study from the

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Fordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 153.

² William Beardslee, "Theology and Rhetoric in the University" in *Theology and the University: Essay in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.*, ed by David Ray Griffin and Joseph C. Hough, Jr. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), p. 187.

³ David Cunningham, "Theology as Rhetoric," *Theological Studies*, no. 52, 1991, p.408.

studying subject, and a claim to universality,⁴ indicating theology's inability to enter into a highly contentious and disputed social reality. Thus, the task is to place or resituate theology and make a theological claim within contemporary socio-political-cultural discourses.⁵ Instead of being a definitive and totalising system, theology should realise that it is only within the contingent socio-political-cultural circumstances that theological or religious ideas are invented, advocated, interpreted, and revised. The task of theology is to participate in the physical or concrete setting of real life; it is taking theology back in to the public discourse. It is only within the public discourse and the physical settings of human relation with the others that the Christian message becomes 'gospel' and good news.

The need for a paradigm shift away from theology as an analytic discipline toward theology as a socio-politically engaging discourse, is obviously apparent. In this concrete human reality, theology should be a discourse that critically evaluates the fundamental human relation with the others. The relationship with the other has been traditionally acknowledged as an object of (mis)interpretation and (mis) representation, through fetishism, as argued in Said and others. And, especially in contemporary post-modern society, where there is a sense of increasing cultural fragmentation that produces particularities and privatised judgements; where the individual self-discovery is

⁴ David Cunningham, "Theology as Rhetoric," pp. 410-411. Cunningham cites David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity* and *The Analogical Imagination* as exemplars of the first problem; George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, as an exemplar of the second problem; and Dietrich Ritschl, *The Logic of Theology: A Belief Account of the Relationships between Basic Concepts in Theology*, as an exemplar of the third.

⁵ David Cunningham, "Theology as Rhetoric," pp. 419-420.

becoming disengaged, from the responsibility of common life, contemporary theology is also tempted to become particularised and privatised. As David Harvey indicates, there is a tendency to reduce everything into an undifferentiated multiplicity emphasising the difference without acknowledging meanings or values. For which, David Harvey points out in *The Condition of Postmodernity*,

while [postmodernism] opens up a radical prospect by acknowledging the authenticity of other voices, postmodernist thinking immediately shuts off those other voices from access to more universal sources of power by ghettoising them with an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that language game. It thereby disempowers those voices (of women, ethnic and racial minorities, colonised people, the unemployed, youth, etc.) in a world of lop-sided power relations. The language game of a cabal of international bankers may be impenetrable to us, but that does not put it on a par with the equally impenetrable language of inner-city blacks from the standpoint of power relations.⁶

This indicates that the totalising power relation is still enforced even in the so-called *Post-modern* discussion, which is supposed to acknowledge everything in its own terms, but which actually fails to see real socio-political change.

Against this retreat, Rowan Williams writes that “proclaiming the Gospel may have much to do with the struggle to make explicit what is at stake in particular human decisions or policies, individual and collective, and in this sense bring in the event of

⁶ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 117.

judgement, the revaluation of identities.”⁷ Thus, the task of postmodern theology is to participate in this recovery through “an engagement of solidarity, a willingness to listen and response.”⁸ It is waging an effective critique of the hegemonic discursive patterns of power and privilege, from the perspective of “perfect communality of language and action free from the distortions imposed on understanding by the clash of group interests and the self-defence of the powerful.”⁹ This means that theology is to be a discourse that comes from the on-going struggle between forces of social oppression and forces resisting oppression, and that includes other marginal voices in transforming human relations. In this sense, theology is a critical space or discourse that lays bare the structure of human discourse which contains violence or manipulating desires against humanity.

So, what is needed here is to relocate the standpoint in order to create a critical space, in order to challenge hegemonic tradition. This space is “a site of creativity and power” as bell hooks emphasises,

This marginality [is] a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and in the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose - to give up or surrender as part of moving into the centre - but rather of a site one stays in,

⁷ Rowan Williams, “Postmodern Theology and the Judgement of the Word,” in *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World*, ed by Frederic B. Burnham (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 97.

⁸ Rowan Williams, “Postmodern Theology and the Judgement of the Word,” p. 103.

⁹ Rowan Williams, “Postmodern Theology and the Judgement of the Word,” p. 102.

clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.¹⁰

In other words, it is a site of encounter; the attempt to see oneself through the eyes of the Other - the victim, the marginalised, and the oppressed; it is an attempt to relocate and place ourselves with the Other; an attempt to leave the place called 'home,' and break our own totality. This critical space is not an epistemological one, but rather an ethical one demanding commitment and responsibility for the Other and solidarity with the Other.

Hence, in ethical demanding, the question of the Other requires a deconstructive task. Deconstruction needs to take place ethically – it is an ethical criticism. In this sense, it is not something negative; it is not a process of demolition, rather the goal of deconstruction is to locate a point of otherness within traditional conceptuality and then to deconstruct this conceptuality from that position of the other; it is called into question by the Other. Here, ethics is defined as “the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other,”¹¹ who is “exceeding the idea of the other in me.”¹² If the Other is to remain as other, it cannot be appropriated within the context of any particular culture. On the contrary, that particular culture must find its origin and meaning in the exteriority of the ethical relation.

¹⁰ bell hooks, “Choosing The Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” in *Yearning Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, quoted from David Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 103.

¹¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 43.

1. Toward Transcultural Ethics

Ethical discourse theory demands that we grasp the reality that language is not just a means of communication with others, but rather it is the language in which we conduct our social life. It reveals that language and the social use of language as a vehicle of power, as indicated in Foucault whose main idea is the hegemonic nature of discourse and power. As previously demonstrated in post-colonial discourse, ethical discursive theory demonstrates a strategy for demystifying power in discourse by tracing its internal operations. Edward Said said that the whole world could and has been invented by the sheer power of words and its life is sustained by a network of institutional support systems. Thus is the oriental world made visible, “there” and the “other” by generations of Western writers, using techniques of representation that rely for their sense and effect “upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon a distinct and amorphous Orient.”¹³ Moreover, Said criticised these discursive structures that have fixed the colonised East in a powerless object position. They guaranteed the colonising West a superior subject position in which a negative image of the East has been contained and circulated to legitimise Western territorial expansions. Accordingly, this strategy involves a “flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the

¹² Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.50

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.22.

relative upper hand.”¹⁴ In other words, it is a discourse of power-construct, an inter-discursivity that inflicted violence, enforced exclusion and maintained relations of injustice.

There have been some attempts to find a counter discourse, the ethical discourse, developed by such writers as Jürgen Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty. Particularly, in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas claimed that the ethical universal could be retrieved from discourse itself. He argued that discursive exchange has “the intersubjective communality of mutual comprehension, shared knowledge, reciprocal trust and accord with one another,”¹⁵ in the rationally based consensus. But, for him, agreement depends on the degree of validity claimed and accomplished in four different ways: the comprehensibility of what is being said, the truth of what is being said, the sincerity of the speaker and the appropriateness of fit between what is said and the social context in which it is said.¹⁶ However, in order to be successful, there must be an unforced consensus which is free from distortion and constraint, and must be governed by no strategic intention, other than that of establishing truth.

Habermas seems to want to argue that the very existence of human language creates the possibility of a rationally arrived-at consensus between people, which

¹⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “What is Universal Pragmatics?” in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 3.

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “What is Universal Pragmatics?,” p. 2.

develops toward ideal consensus, which is a utopian orientation within the structure of discourse. It is his notion of the 'ideal speech situation,' which seems to imply the desire to close the gap between actuality and reality. But his ideals are implausible because of the irreducible heterogeneity of human interests and the inevitable conflict which this entails. But, for him, it could be said that the heterogeneity of human interest is precisely what makes the orientation towards consensus most necessary and desirable. On the other hand, Habermas's attempt to create the ideal speech situation, indicates his ethics of discourse to be formalistic and systematic in the direction of a search for universal consensus, where what matters most is the procedure of rational and unconstrained discourse, rather than the content of that discourse.¹⁷ His sociology is that of "regulated system, which orders and organises reality in ways which are often incompatible with the human needs of individuals."¹⁸

On the other hand, Jean-François Lyotard is very critical of Habermas' addiction to the Enlightenment ideals of reason and truth. While Habermas argues for the hierarchy of certain forms of language game over others - rational communication over purposive or instrumental language, Lyotard argues and assumes the decentring and multiplication of language games in denouncing oppressive attempts. And where Habermas assumes and promotes the ideal of consensus, Lyotard calls upon theory and criticism to tolerate difference and dissensus. For Habermas, Lyotard's rejection of the

¹⁷ Steve Connor, *Theory and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 102-110.

¹⁸ Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism & Globalism* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.172.

ideal of rational consensus is dangerous irrationalism, while for Lyotard, Habermas's adoption of this ideal can lead only to new versions of Auschwitz and the Gulag.

Lyotard, therefore, rejects the principle of translatability between particular languages and language games, and emphasises the notion of incommensurability. He argues that two different areas of activity cannot be measured according to the same scale, as he observes that "the linkage between the SS phrase and the deportee's phrase is undiscoverable because their phrases do not rise from a single genre of discourse."¹⁹ What he is trying to affirm is the absolute incommensurability of language games, which he then extends to the idea of translation. But, the point he is trying to make is that universal truths and norms are to be explained as the operation of a particular sinister linguistic violence, in which the force of a particular 'we' subsumes and assimilates the force of the 'you' and the 'they.'

For Lyotard, the principle of justice lies in the heterogeneity of language games, the irreducibility of any one language game to another. In other words, to assimilate others forcibly to one's own project of emancipation or cultural style more generally is an unjust violation. His principle for ethical discourse must be an absolute suspicion of all such principle. This means that, rather than seeking to confirm and subordinate the rule of law, ethical consciousness must represent an endless putting of the law into question. For Lyotard, there would be no possibility of embodying a universal norm in

¹⁹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Différend* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988), p.106.

practice, since such a thing is, or is always likely to be unjust. Whereas, for Habermas, everything is staked on this possibility. In their crucial difference, for Lyotard, ethical orientation must be carried out in embodied forms of value, whereas for Habermas, orientation means nothing without the possibility of such arrival at rational consensus. So, if we accept Lyotard's characterisation of the conflict, then we must call it a 'differend,' or a situation in which two discursive worlds are in opposition without the possibility of a higher principle of discursive justice with which to mediate that opposition. But, if we adopt Habermas's account of the opposition, then we must call it a disagreement, since the very structure of intersubjective speech presupposes a universe of shared rational norms.²⁰

In fact, in Habermas, enlightenment reason remains in the privileged position, and he tends to over-emphasise the question of communicative reason; he sees this reason as the normative foundation of his critical theory of contemporary society and politics. For Habermas, discursive ethics provides the formal universal principle that replaces Kant's ethical normative category. Thomas McCarthy argues that Habermas shifts the Kantian questions of 'How is experience possible' to 'How is mutual understanding possible?' in emphasising the intention of achieving agreement (even in everyday, conflictual, cross-cultural communication) to the same ethical model. But Thomas McCarthy points out the problem of transcultural ethics that this model poses: "if the structures of communicative action and discourse.... are to be found with

²⁰ Steve Connor, *Theory and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 110-115.

significant frequency only in certain cultures at certain times, how then is it possible to defend the view that these structures are universal-pragmatic feature of communication as such?" If such an ideal exists, a transcultural ethics must be free from chauvinism or ethnocentrism and demonstrate "the ability to act communicatively" over all cultures.²¹

However, Habermas maintains his position on universal reason or morality by defining ethical differences between cultures as belonging to diverse stage of moral development. Here lies the most crucial problem of Habermas in relation with transcultural ethics: the elitist moral development theory that he imposes upon the others, forcing others into the same mechanism of risky agreements within and between real-life-worlds. As history reveals, in any cross-cultural evaluation, "the so-called enlightenment ideals (including transcultural ethics) are not - and never were - universal; they are Eurocentric and patriarchal," and moreover, the ideals "have actually hidden and obscured a much darker, uglier and more brutal reality" of violent oppression and ruthless imperialism and colonisation on the other cultures.²²

Here, the argument is caught between two unacceptable choices: Habermas's defensive position in relation to the Enlightenment project, and Lyotard's celebration of postmodern collapse. However, as we have seen, it is not possible to decide which one

²¹ Thomas McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 134-135.

²² Richard Bernstein, "The Hermeneutics of Cross-Cultural Understanding," in *Cross-Cultural Conversation (initiation)*, ed by Anindita Niyogi Balslev (Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. 29-30.

to take, which indicates an inability to break away from the hegemonic system that is being denounced. This oversimplified binary argument between the two is again developed in an essentialist way, an irrevocably Euro or western-centric attitude traditional in its whole episteme. However, the attempts made by Habermas and Lyotard should at least be seen as a refusal and a resistance to such violence and exclusion. Their efforts indicate an urgent sense of responsibility in rejecting the distortions and subordinations and violences created by an orientation toward universal rules for the resisting of false universalisms.

2. Ethical responsibility and the Other

Therefore, what is being suggested, is to present an unusual conception of ethics, which will foster a new understanding and a reformulation of the traditional problem of subjectivity, in relation to the Other. Here, the traditional ontological tradition employed in discovering and describing the ultimate structure of reality, is questioned by an ethics of responsibility that involves the characteristics of self-reflection. Derrida calls this “a community of the question about the possibility of the question.”²³ Traditionally, an ethical project aims to submit freedom of will to the rule of rationality in an attempt to

²³ Jacques Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” in *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 80.

find a criterion for human action that is universally intelligible and applicable for everyone. In doing so, the particular human situations are subsumed under universal order. Therefore, when a philosopher talks about ethics, it is not as an individual, but always with regard for the universality of reason.²⁴

But, unlike the traditional philosophical approach, Emmanuel Levinas does not treat ethics as one branch amongst others, but as the basis of philosophy, what he calls “First Philosophy.” Ethics arise not from the ontological universality of reason, but from the uniqueness of the moral situation itself, and therefore, moral obligation comes exposed before understanding (knowledge) or consciousness. In his theological essay “God and Philosophy,” Levinas devotes extensive attention to the position of philosophy and rejects it. Against the position occupied by a totalising ontology, Levinas disrupts this concept of philosophy by putting a God who is infinite, a God who “comes to mind” in an attempt to change and challenge the traditional concept of philosophy presented in chapter one. Levinas sees philosophy as a mode of reflection that reduces everything to immanence, as the museum representation manages to hold the past and the future as present in consciousness. He challenges this presence of representation, such as objective and scientific investigations, and even religious experience locked within consciousness. For him, philosophy has been unable to bear God and “rational theology accepts this vassalage,”²⁵ “thematizing God into the course

²⁴ Fabio Ciaramelli, “Levinas’s Ethical Discourse between individuation and Universality,” in *Re-Reading Levinas*, ed by Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 84-85.

²⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” p. 153.

of being,²⁶ and as a result, doctrinal theology would simply apply philosophical conceptuality to the question of dogma. Thus he says,

Rational theology, fundamentally ontological, strives to take account of transcendence in the domain of being; God is said to exist eminently or *par excellence*. But does the height, or the height above all height, that is thus expressed belong to ontology?²⁷

The idea is the infinite, an idea that exceeds my capacities and that thinks more than it can think; the infinite cannot be thought, cannot be represented in my consciousness within the rule of reason. In other words, there are thoughts that exceed my capacities and break my autonomy. Thus, Levinas insists that “the *in* of infinite” does not only mean negation, but also indicates that the infinite comes into the finite.²⁸

He says,

The *in* of the Infinite designates the depth of the affecting by which subjectivity is affected through this “putting” of the Infinite into it, without prehension or comprehension. It designates the depth of an undergoing that no capacity comprehends, that no foundation any longer supports, where every process of investing fails and where the screws that fix the stern of inwardness burst. This putting in without a corresponding recollecting devastates its site like a devouring fire, catastrophizing its site, in the etymological sense of the word.²⁹

²⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” p. 154.

²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” p. 154.

²⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” p. 163.

The site of ontology is catastrophised and the I becomes passive. In fact, it is clear that Levinas talks about transcendence in "God and Philosophy," however, this turns out that the way the infinite interrupts consciousness and shatters its foundation is in my ethical responsibility for another person. He clearly says in one foot note, "It is the meaning of the beyond, of transcendence, and not ethics, that our study is pursuing. It finds this meaning in ethics. There is signification, for ethics is structured as the-one-for-the-other; there is signification, of the beyond being, for one finds oneself outside of all finality in a responsibility which ever increases, in a disinterestedness where a being undoes itself of its being."³⁰

Levinas explores ethical responsibility that precedes my consciousness and calls consciousness into the responsibility for the others, without limits. And the metaphysical structure of the infinite is performed and understood in relation to another person, a person with material needs. In other words, the question of the infinite becomes a matter of interhuman relations - ethics.

2.1. Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas³¹ particularly, has written about the relation to the Other in a radical and powerful way. His thinking was influenced by the critique of philosophical

²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," p. 163.

³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," p. 163, note no. 15.

³¹ Born in Lithuania in 1906, into an orthodox Jewish family but has spent most of his life in France, since emigrated to France in 1923. His philosophical writings can be tentatively divided into three periods,

reason in the writings of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig. His work constitutes a distinct voice in philosophy which resists attempts to incorporate it into some theoretical cataloguing. Jacques Derrida calls Levinas's work in "Violence and Metaphysics," a radically different idea that demands a completely different mode of thought. It is, he says,

a thought for which the entirety of the Greek logos has already erupted, and is now a quiet topsoil deposited not over bedrock, but around a more ancient volcano. A thought which, without philology and solely by remaining faithful to the immediate, but buried nudity of experience itself, seeks to liberate itself from the Greek domination of the Same and the One as if from oppression itself - an oppression certainly comparable to none other in the world, an ontological or transcendental oppression, but also the origin or alibi of all oppression in the world. A thought, finally, which seeks to liberate itself from a philosophy fascinated by the "visage of being that shows itself in war" which "is fixed in the concept of totality which dominates Western Philosophy."³²

It is clear that, in Levinas, the essential characteristic of philosophy is a Greek way of thinking and speaking, as he says that philosophy is primarily a question of language,

one before the Second World War and two afterward. The first period begins in 1930 with *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. During the 1930s, his work continued with interpretations and translations of Husserl and Heidegger. Several of these are collected in *En decouvrant l'existence avec Husserl and Heidegger*. While in a German stalag for five years as a French prisoner of war, he wrote what is considered the first of his highly original works, *Existence and Existents*. That book and *Time and the Other*, appeared after the War. The Second period gathers Levinas's writings around his seminal 1961 text, *Totality and Infinity*. In addition to that book, three essays are referred to in this study: "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," "Phenomenon and Enigma," and "Freedom and Command." The Third period gathers essays leading to his 1972 book *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* and includes work to the present. See Robert Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Dequesne University Press, 1993), pp. 1-14.

³² Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.83.

and employs a series of terms and concepts - such as *morphe* (form), *ousia* (substance), *nous* (reason), *logos* (thought) or *telos* (goal), etc. - from Greek. Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being. The neutralisation of the other who becomes a theme or an object is precisely his reduction to the same³³. For Levinas, thematisation and conceptualisation which are inseparable, are not at peace with the other but threaten suppression or possession of the other. Possession affirms the other, but only within a negation of its independence. Therefore, ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power, and that does not call into question the same.³⁴

Assuming the Greek origin of philosophy which lies in reason, science, and ontology (*ontos*, being and *logos* reason, language), Levinas calls this radical questioning “meontology³⁵ (*me-on*, non-being).” Moreover, he placed his thinking at the “end” of philosophy, associating the modern era with the culmination of the whole enterprise of philosophy that has characterised Western culture, as he says “It is true that philosophy, in its traditional forms of ontotheology and logocentrism has come to an end.”³⁶ But when Levinas was asked the question what role remains for philosophy if philosophy has indeed ended, he added that although philosophy as traditionally conceived is spent and can no longer think and perform a world in comprehensible

³³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.43.

³⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.46.

³⁵ Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, “Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas,” in *Face to Face with Levinas*. ed by Richard Cohen (Albany: State University of New York, 1986), p.25.

³⁶ Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, “Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas, p.33.

totalities, yet he asserted that there remains much room for philosophy as “critical speculation and interrogation.”³⁷

Having described his initial idea, it seems important to place Emmanuel Levinas in relation to other philosophers. Levinas was influenced by an early teacher, Edmund Husserl who was considered the father of twentieth century phenomenological philosophy. Levinas’s first book was the first interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology. According to Husserl, European philosophy into the twentieth century had been caught in a “dogmatic slumber” born of Idealist striving after complete and self-sufficient knowledge of the real.³⁸ A new philosophy was needed. According to Levinas, Husserl is to be credited for demonstrating the inability of thought to separate itself from the temporal quality, or horizon, of consciousness, characterising its methodological disclosure of how meaning comes to be, how it emerges in our consciousness. In a way, phenomenology is a way of becoming aware of where we are in the world. Therefore, for Levinas, phenomenology was a way of suspending our preconceptions and prejudices in order to disclose how essential truth and meaning are generated. In fact, it was a methodological return to the beginning, the origins, of knowledge.³⁹

³⁷ Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, “Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas,” p. 33

³⁸ Husserl’s assessment of Modern European thought is well examined in his book *The Crisis in the European Science* (pp. 7-20; 274-275)

³⁹ Emmanuel Levinans and Richard Kearney, “Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas,” pp.14-16.

Another important influence on Levinas is the work of Martin Heidegger. In Heidegger, Husserl's phenomenological description of transcendental consciousness is transformed into a description of the primordial ontological condition of consciousness. Levinas said that "It [Heidegger's philosophy] completely altered the course and character of European philosophy,"⁴⁰ as Heidegger redefined philosophy in relation to other forms of knowledge as fundamental ontology.⁴¹ Because, in Heidegger, "the difference between being and the beings does not presuppose anything common," and that in other words, it is a "difference without common ground,"⁴² which he acknowledges to be critical to his own thoughts - the ontological difference.⁴³ But it is not possible to speak about the significant relation between Heidegger and Levinas, except to say that while Levinas sees in Heidegger the culmination of Western philosophy, he does not finally see in Heidegger any movement beyond philosophy, which is the "Greek language of intelligibility and presence."⁴⁴ Because Levinas believes that Heidegger finally returns the ontological difference to the 'common ground' of presence - Being made present to being in a representing of meaning. "While Heidegger heralds the end of the metaphysics of presence, he continues to think of being as a coming-into-presence; he seems unable to break away from the hegemony of presence that he denounces."⁴⁵ Levinas describes the core of Western philosophy as

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," p.15

⁴¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and Infinity," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p.38.

⁴² Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Evil," in *Collected Philosophical Papers* p.177.

⁴³ Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Evil," p 177

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," p.20.

⁴⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 20.

‘ontologism.’ Fundamental ontology describes the phenomenological ground of ‘ontologism,’ but cannot step out of it. It demonstrates that there is no ontological escape route from being, only the meontological route.⁴⁶

Western philosophy has never got past this point. In opposing ontologism - when it has opposed it - it has struggled for a better being, for a harmony between ourselves and the world, or for the perfecting of our own being. Its ideal of peace and equilibrium has presupposed the adequacy of being. The inadequacy of the human condition has never been conceived in any other way than as a limitation of being - otherwise the meaning of ‘infinite being’ would never have been considered. The transcendence of these limits, communion with infinite being, has remained its only concern.⁴⁷

In other words, though fundamental ontology uniquely opens philosophy to the primordial aspects or phenomena of existence, it risks forgetting the possible quiddity of Being itself - its possible quiddity, that is, in relation to something other than being. This is to say that there is a relationship of Being to being myself - as a fundamental relationship - in a prior relationship to something other than what can be understood or described fundamentally. Levinas calls this possibility of a something other than the difference between Being and being an “otherwise than Being.” He also calls it a “metaphysical exteriority”⁴⁸ This meontological possibility gives birth to the whole of

⁴⁶ Wesley Damian Avram, *Theo-homilia* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1994), p.60.

⁴⁷ The French reference is from *Récherches Philosophiques* 5 (1935-6), p.377; quoted from Steven G. Smith, *Argument to the Other: Reason Beyond Reason in the Thought of Karl Barth and Emmanuel Levinas* (Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1983), p.58.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.29.

Levinas's philosophy.⁴⁹ Although Levinas's rejection of Heidegger's fundamental ontology is sometimes extreme, his struggle to escape "a long tradition of pride, heroism, domination and cruelty"⁵⁰ is significant to this investigation.

In addition to Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas was significantly influenced by the German Jewish thinker Franz Rosenzweig who called for a new thinking beyond the ontologism of Western philosophy. It seems that though Levinas's philosophical method comes from Husserl and Heidegger, much of the inspiration comes from Rosenzweig,⁵¹ as shown in *Totality and Infinity*, where he states that "We were impressed by the opposition to the idea of totality in Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern de Erlösung*."⁵² According to Rosenzweig, philosophy's first word is the *is* (as in God *is* Being), but as an alternative, Rosenzweig argued for the *and* (as in God *and* being, one person *and* the other....etc.). He called his articulation for the *and* a 'premise of separation' in which the differences between things are not necessarily reconciled in an interpretation of their meaning according to one side or the other of the juxtaposition. This new thinking had a different presupposition from the traditional philosophy that was preoccupied with the interpretation of being. His thinking was to be a philosophy of radical pluralism in which intersubjective relationships are mediated not primarily through one's interpretation of an other or of a thing, but through the contingent and

⁴⁹ See *Existence and Existents*, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" (esp. pp.51-53), *Totality and Infinity* (esp. pp.33-53), and *Ethics and Infinity* (esp. pp.37-44) for Levinas's Criticism of Heidegger.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," p.52.

⁵¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, p.76.

⁵² Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.28.

historic communicative practices of speaking persons in which knowledge is created. These practices, however, are not to be considered a new starting point for a more accurate sort of knowledge, nor merely shifting from analytic premises to dialectical premises. Rather, they are set outside of reason, in an arena in which differences flourish without common ground.⁵³

Rosenzweig called this new thinking oriented from these practices a 'speech-thinking.' This 'speech-thinking' is representative of the post-Enlightenment's new reasoning. He promoted his speech-thinking as a new paradigm in which "the method of speech replaces the method of thinking maintained in all earlier philosophies."⁵⁴ The norms of this new thinking are 'grammatical' rather than 'logical,'⁵⁵ dependent on the temporal, historical, social, and personal contexts of speech. Rosenzweig went in search of an 'absolute empiricism,'⁵⁶ by which he meant an empiricism which reached behind the 'static truths'⁵⁷ of the classical empiricists to those relational truths, or 'truths for someone,'⁵⁸ of his speech-thinking.

⁵³ See Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking," in Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Stocken, 1967), pp.190-208, and *The Star of Redemption*, trans. by William W. Hallo (Notre Dame, In.: Notre Dame Press, 1985).

⁵⁴ Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking," p. 198

⁵⁵ Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking , p.200

⁵⁶ Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking , p.207.

⁵⁷ Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking , p.206.

⁵⁸ Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking , p. 206

The “premise of separation” in Rosenzweig’s speech-thinking echoes in Levinas’s defence of a “principle of separation” between speaking persons in which Levinas believes that “it becomes possible to sustain a pluralism which is not reduced to a totality” of interpretative perspective.⁵⁹ It seems that Levinas exercises this ‘premise of separation,’ with a view to sustaining a radical pluralism in the simple interhuman encounter. Levinas identifies separation as the fundamental condition of ethics.⁶⁰ Here, he calls this encounter the ‘face to face.’ In this face-to-face encounter, the face of an other appears to a knowing person as a visage simultaneously knowable and unknowable, experienced both as an interpreted other and in a personal address commanding immediate attention and response. In fact, this face-to-face relation indicates the “end” of philosophy and its totalising ability to know, or understand, experience.

2.2. Ethics at the End of Philosophy

Having been influenced and inspired in a radical way, Levinas believes that by grounding ideas in concrete experience, this rethinking (phenomenological and metontological) challenges the intellectual privilege that continental philosophy has

⁵⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, “Signature,” in *Research in Phenomenology* 8 (1978), p.187.

⁶⁰ Robert Gibbs, “Jewish Dimension of Radical Ethics,” in *Ethics as First Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.14. Levinas said “the idea of Infinity requires this separation” *Totality and Infinity*, p. 102

historically taken upon itself as the universally reliable interpreter of the real, thinking for all cases and all people. As Adriaan Peperzak sums up Western culture:

The roots of Western civilisation lie in an attitude that precedes its theory as well as its practice: the human subject affirms itself as a freedom engrossing and reducing to itself all that resists its power, even if only by the obscurity of its being. Thought's ideal is the integration of everything in the immanence of a total knowing.⁶¹

To Levinas, Europe is philosophy, and against it "Husserl has thus brought into question the Platonic privilege, until then uncontested, of a continent which believes itself possessed of the right to colonise the world."⁶² And, more significantly, the Nazi and Stalinist terrors have shown the culmination and bankruptcy of the Western mind; they could not cope, could not interpret, and could not prevent the ethical eruption of an evil beyond human comprehension. With regard to this aspect of Levinas, Robert Manning cites Maurice Blanchot: "how can we philosophise after Auschwitz is the thought that traverses the whole of Levinas's philosophy and that he proposes to us without saying it"⁶³ Levinas identifies the cultural reality of the West, and will not excuse philosophy in the face of European history. His meditations on philosophy *qua*

⁶¹ Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993), p.45.

⁶² Emmanuel Levinas, "Signature," in *Research in Phenomenology* 8 (1978), p.179.

Derrida quotes Husserl's observation that "the irruption of philosophy" ("Aufbruch oder Einbruch der Philosophie," Husserl, *Krisis*) characterizes Europe's spiritual figure, in *Writing and Difference*, pp.311-312, note 4). Husserl characterizes Europe as the "epoch of mankind which now seeks to live, and only can live in free shaping of its existence, its historical life, through ideas of reason, through infinite tasks" (*The Crisis in the European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. by David Carr, Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1970, p.274).

philosophy become meditations of culture and politics, the fate of philosophy being the fate of European being.⁶⁴

the Holocaust is the moment, the event that necessitates a radical questioning and revision of the task and essence of philosophy. Whatever can be said about philosophy and its reflections on human existence, meaning, political order, ethics, etc., before the Holocaust, what must be said after Holocaust is that not only were all of the West's philosophical, ethical and religious teachings and reflections unable to prevent Auschwitz, but they also may have provided a certain legitimisation to the devaluation and desecration of human life.⁶⁵

Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*, is explicitly critical of the totalising vision of the previous philosophical system in the West. Here, he “rejects the synthesising of phenomena in favour of a thought that is open to the face of the other. The term ‘face’ here denotes the way in which the presentation of the other to me exceeds all idea of the other in me. The proximity of the face-to-face relation cannot be subsumed into a

⁶³ Robert Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1993), p.187.

⁶⁴ Wesley Damian Avram, *Theo-homilia*, p.80.

“In light of this equation of Europe and philosophy, when Levinas says that he “cannot forgive Heidegger,” despite his admiration for Heidegger's thought, he speaks of more than Heidegger's apparent complicity with Nazism or the possible role of Heidegger's philosophy in justifying the Nazi terror. He speaks through Heidegger to Western thought, culture and history in general, i.e., to the very phenomenon of Being and the thinking that attends it.” (Avram, *Theo-homilia*, p.80-81 note 28)

⁶⁵ Robert Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy* pp.185-186.

See the dedication to *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*: “To the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions of millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-Semitism.”

totality.”⁶⁶ For Levinas, the idea of infinity is set in opposition to totality, not as an alternative philosophical ordering in a simple negation of one totality for the totalling idea of infinity, but as the Otherness that interrupts philosophy. Infinity is not the negation of imperfection, rather an irreducible surplus to Being, because a perfection exceeds conception and overflows the concept.⁶⁷

Levinas disrupts the ontological concept of philosophy and its mode of reflection that reduces everything to immanence, and instead, inserts a God who is infinite. And, he shows how philosophy has been unable to bear God, and re-evaluates what reason and philosophy are. Therefore, the idea of perfection is an idea of infinity. Levinas says that “the perfection designated by this passage to the limit does not remain on the common plane of the *yes* and *no* at which negative operates; on the contrary, the idea of infinity designates a *height* and a *nobility*, a *transcendence*... The idea of the perfect and of infinity is not reducible to the negation of the imperfect; negativity is incapable of transcendence.”⁶⁸ This idea of infinity negates neither theory nor practice; it interrogates and judges them according to a responsiveness to an “ethic” of genuine transcendence. It is clear that, while Levinas talks about transcendence, not primarily on ethics, it just happens to turn out that the way the infinite interrupts consciousness is in my ethical responsibility for another person.

⁶⁶ Sean Hand, “Introduction” in *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.5.

⁶⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 25

⁶⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.41. [my italic]

Here, Levinas attempts to reorient the space by ethics, by drawing the place of height and nearness; he writes of the 'height'⁶⁹ of the Other, against the tendency to regard the Other as simply another being *alongside* me and therefore like me in all essential respects. Height is encountered through the other person's destitution and hunger,⁷⁰ but he resists the claim that the other person is simply an incarnation of God. Height is the gradient of transcendence⁷¹ in which *my* vision changes, as Levinas writes: "The other person is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, where he is disincarnated, and the other person is the manifestation of the height where God reveals himself."⁷² And then, Levinas changes emphasis from height to nearness (alongside) and explains some of the difficulty with height in the essay "God and Philosophy."⁷³ Levinas criticises the cosmic sense of height (the dimension of the sky over our heads) as bound to the realm of being, because, in a theological sense, height fails to evoke ethical transcendence.⁷⁴

Rather, the metaphysical structure of the infinite, beyond being, is performed in relation to another person. Levinas explores the way that I am bound in a responsibility without limits. For him, to be human with the other is not some secondary option, but to be human is to be with one who is other, as we speak of creation of human being in

⁶⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*. p.251

⁷⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 200.

⁷¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 86.

⁷² Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 79.

⁷³ Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," p. 154.

⁷⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," pp. 154-155.

God's image: male *and* female God created them (Gen. 1:27), being created with another, who is identified from the beginning as other: "the relation between the same and the other, metaphysics, is primordially enacted as conversation, where the same, gathered up in its ipseity as an "I", as a particular existent unique and autochthonous, leaves itself."⁷⁵ Conversation or speech presupposes a world of objects which it articulates, and the other to whom it is addressed. Here, the other is not simply that of an alter ego, and not to be conceived, comprehended by varying the attributes 'I' grasp in myself. It does not consist in a simply spatial or temporal remoteness from 'me,' nor is it reducible to the privation of some content of cognition which *de facto* eludes me. Rather the other is positive and a force, in the experience of being addressed, appealed to, and contested. Therefore, speech or conversation has not only an indicative function but also an imperative and vocative force constituted by the infinite. When faced with the other, the other is not just to be recognised, but answered, by a speaking that is responsive. In other words, to face another is to answer to him. To recognise the alterity of the other is not to grasp, to conceive, but to answer his solicitation and to answer for my being; it is to give - not a spontaneous giving of meaning (*Sinngebung*), but a giving of what is meaningful for him.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.39.

⁷⁶ Alphonse Lingis, "Translator's Introduction," in Emmanuel Levinas *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), pp.xii-xiv.

Therefore, this new thinking arises from “the idea of the overflowing of objectifying thought by a forgotten experience from which it lives.”⁷⁷ Levinas states this rethinking in *Totality and Infinity*:

The traditional opposition between theory and practice will disappear before the metaphysical transcendence by which a relation with the absolutely other, or truth, is established, and of which *ethics is the royal road*. Hitherto the relation between theory and practice was not conceivable other than as a solidarity or a hierarchy: activity rests on cognitions that illuminate it; knowledge requires from acts the mastery of matter, minds, and societies - a technique, a morality, a politics - that procures the peace necessary for its pure exercise. We shall go further, and, at the risk of appearing to confuse theory and practice, deal with both as modes of metaphysical transcendence. The apparent confusion is deliberate and constitutes one of the theses of this book.⁷⁸

Levinas uses the term ‘ethics’ to interrogate and to reorder theory and practice. Ethics, in this respect, becomes the new place for philosophy, as shown in Levinas’s work “Ethics as First Philosophy.”⁷⁹ Levinas’s ‘ethics’ inserts a forgotten questioning into this traditional philosophical pursuit of an ethics constituted in knowledge. Robert Manning says, “Levinas’s question is not: How does the solitary subject know the other person when the two initially confront one another? Instead, Levinas’s question is: What is the significance of the fact that knowing occurs within and is a result of the

⁷⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.28.

⁷⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 29. [my italic]

⁷⁹ Published for the first time in *Justifications de l'éthique* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1984, pp.41-51) “Ethics as First Philosophy” is a clear and powerful summary of Levinas’s methodical and yet radical move away from Husserl’s transcendental idealism and Heidegger’s hermeneutics towards the ethical question of meaning of being, presented in the face-to-face relation.

intersubjective relation? How does this fact affect our conception of knowing? Levinas has consistently thought out this question and, consequently, devised a novel and radical reinterpretation of the process of a human being knowing and what it means to know.”⁸⁰

With ‘ethics’ as a new thinking (or rethinking), Levinas challenges the power with which philosophical comprehension in the West has drawn all forms of theory and practice into its thematic gaze. And he asks demanding questions of what he perceives to be a link between the privileging of synoptic vision and comprehensive reason in the philosophical tradition and a tyrannous history of violence against the possibility of genuine transcendence and human solidarity.⁸¹ Levinas believes that Western thought is marked by a spirituality that equates synoptic vision, comprehensive reason, and knowing subjectivity. This equation has reduced the meaning of interhuman encounter to a structure of understanding, persons known to each other in the thematising gaze of consciousness, reduced to categories of comprehension already held within the language of the one perceiving. This is what he calls a reduction of the Other into the categories of the Same, as in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* :

The meaningful refers to a cognitive subjectivity and to the mathematical configuration of logical structures, as the eidetic (appearances) of the contents refers to the ‘spirituality’ of the intention conferring a sense on what manifests itself in the openness, by gathering up this sense. In conformity with the whole tradition of

⁸⁰ Robert Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy*, p.183.

⁸¹ Wesley Damian Avram, *Theo-homilia*, p.70.

the West, knowing, in its thirst and its gratification, remains the norm of the spiritual, and transcendence is excluded both from intelligibility and from philosophy.⁸²

In speaking against this reduction, Levinas believes that the fundamental human encounter with another is potentially mediated by something other than intelligibility. Levinas described this “forgotten experience”⁸³ as an imperative preceding every indicative. It is an unconditioned hortatory “do” and “do not” preceding and conditioning the propositional *is* and *is not* of philosophy.⁸⁴

2.3. Idea of Freedom and Ethics

This brings us another important question on moral consciousness and freedom. In his essay, “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity,” Levinas speaks of the idea of thematic consciousness that presumes a primordial freedom in human being, and that philosophy presupposes that freedom itself is of its own right, like Narcissus.⁸⁵ Freedom is reduced to being the reflection of a universal order which maintains itself and justifies itself all by itself, like the God of the ontological argument. In fact, it is evident that in every relation between the same and the other, especially in the Western

⁸² Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p.96.

⁸³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.28.

⁸⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy” p. 162, and “Freedom and Command.” p. 21.

⁸⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity,” pp.58-59.

philosophical tradition, when it is no longer an affirmation of the supremacy of the same, it reduces itself to an impersonal relation within a universal order.⁸⁶

In Levinas, “the sober coldness of Cain consists in conceiving responsibility as proceeding from freedom or in terms of contract. But responsibility for another comes from what is prior to my freedom.”⁸⁷ Therefore, he says:

Freedom is put into question by the other, and is revealed to be unjustified, only when it knows itself to be unjust. Its knowing itself to be unjust is something added on to spontaneous and free consciousness, which would be present to itself and know itself to be, in addition, guilty. A new situation is created; consciousness’ presence to itself acquires a different modality; its position collapses.
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In other words, within intersubjective relation, this freedom is not equivalent to license; it is the human potential continually to reinterpret and represent the world within given limitations. The idea of moral consciousness presumes a responsibility preceding freedom. It puts freedom into question.

This moral consciousness is an absolute obligation, a sheer response-ability. Therefore, Levinas’s description of moral consciousness explains the imperative nature of the “ethics” he posits outside of ontology, and this questioning to my free

⁸⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp.87-88.

⁸⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” p.167.

⁸⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity,” pp. 50-51.

consciousness, is to discover ourselves in injustice - this is what Levinas calls the “exposedness of my freedom to the judgement of the other”⁸⁹ It is a sense of responsibility or obligation for the other, that halts our ontological comprehension. But, it is not simply ontological freedom to be responsible, but it is the meontological responsiveness of freedom, the absolute obligation to the Other that precedes every so-called *free act*.⁹⁰

[The neighbour] orders me before being recognised... It is not because the neighbour would be recognised as belonging to the same genus as me that he concerns me. He is precisely other. The community with him begins in my obligation to him. The neighbour is a brother. A fraternity that cannot be abrogated, an unimpeachable assignation, proximity is an impossibility to move away without the torsion of a complex, without ‘alienation’ or fault.⁹¹

Levinas insists that the moral consciousness inspired by the proximity of the neighbour is a consciousness that stretches toward all others, even to the point of accepting the burden of their responsibilities for their neighbours. This responsibility for the neighbour “is precisely what goes beyond the legal and obliges beyond contracts; it comes to me from what is prior to my freedom, from a non-present, an immemorial.”⁹² He quotes Dostoevsky in *The Brothers of Karamozov*, to describe this effect of moral consciousness.

⁸⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity,” p.59.

⁹⁰ Wesley Damian Avram, *Theo-homilia*, pp.134-136.

⁹¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.87.

It is I who support all. You know that sentence in Dostoevsky: '*We are all guilty of all and for all men before all, and I more than the others.*' This is not owing to such or such a guilt which is really mine, or to otherness that I would have committed; but because I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility more than all the others.⁹³

Assuming responsibility for all may be the liberation from the striving for knowledge of all, because Levinas believes that an overdetermination and measurement in human relation is more dangerous than the apparent excessiveness of moral consciousness. For behind the fair measuring of human responsibility is a totalising thematic consciousness that betrays the otherness of the very others it attempts to bring into appropriate and well understood relationships.

In this scope of moral consciousness, Levinas claims that the moral life is essentially passive, and counter-constitutive to the philosophical milieu that presumes that ethical action is predicated upon an ability adequately to determine one's responsibilities toward others within a comprehensible world of rights, duties, and prosperities. This passivity is the very precondition for an "ethical" life.

It does not allow me to constitute myself into an *I think*, substantial like a stone, or, like a heart of stone, existing in and for oneself. It ends up in substitution for another, in the condition - or the unconditionality - of being a hostage. Such responsibility does not

⁹² Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," p.167.

⁹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, pp.98-99. Also see *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.146.

give one time, a present for recollection or coming back to oneself; it makes one always late. Before neighbour I am summoned and do not just appear; from the first I am answering to an assignation. Already the stony core of my substance is dislodged.⁹⁴

The self as substitution for another is an existing through the other and for the other; it is an inspiration and the ultimate responsibility of the ethical self, a passivity of the I before the Other.

This substitution of the self for the other is the event of hearing the command, of being addressed by a speech outside of being and of signifying that hearing in response.⁹⁵ The Biblical 'Here I am' (I Samuel, 3:4) which is offered as a responsibility for the other prior to commitment does not involve the reduction of subjectivity to consciousness. Instead it is subjectivity as substitution and action for the other. Therefore, the responsibility for the other represented by 'Here I am' is other than an epistemological one.

The psyche, a uniqueness outside of concepts, is a seed of folly, already a psychosis. It is not an ego, but me under assignation. There is an assignation to an identity for the response of responsibility, where one cannot have oneself be replaced without fault. To the command continually put forth only a 'here I am'(me

⁹⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," p.167.

⁹⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.114. Levinas calls this inspiration the psyche. The psyche precedes consciousness and coincides with subjectivity as substitution. Moral consciousness is psyche, is a responsibility in obsession, which, in substitution, becomes an expiation for the other. It is like a breathing, where passivity and activity coincide without thought (*Otherwise than Being or Beyond of Essence*, pp.115, 87).

voici) can answer, where the pronoun 'I' is in the accusative, declined before declension, possessed by the other, sick, identical.⁹⁶

Unlike representation that establishes the ego as the place of interpreting the past and future in the present, communicating with others in moral consciousness is signalled by a meontological substitution of one word for another, of one responsibility that does not sacrifice the truth of the Other outside of being. The 'Here I am' is the place through which the Infinite enters without delivering itself up to vision. In the Jewish revelation, the freedom of Being becomes the 'difficult freedom' of the ethical 'Here I am', an open greeting based on a deferring to a towards-God. Levinas is not afraid to use the term God to designate this ethical exigency: invisible, infinite, non-thematisable and irreducible to intentionality. But God is not an absolute rule; rather, He 'comes to the idea' as the absolute alterity revealed in the sacredness of the face-to-face relation. It is in this sense, as a revelation depending on an absolute ethical Law, which is never experienced as a stigma or enslavement, that the meontological subjectivity unfolded in Levinas' philosophy could be called Judaic, obedience to the Most High by way of the ethical relationship with the Other.⁹⁷ Because the individual is not just *Dasein*, he is also the site of transcendence, responding to the unfulfillable obligation of the Revelation. Sacred history, fidelity to the commandments of the Torah, points beyond ontology in affirming how being-for-itself is conditional on the unconditioned responsibility of

⁹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.142. Here, Levinas refers to the Song of Songs 6:8 "I am sick with love."

⁹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, "Revelation in the Jewish tradition," in *The Levinas Reader*, p.207.

being-for-the-other.⁹⁸ In other words, the question of philosophy and God becomes a matter of inter-human relation, for ethics.

2.4. New Modality

In this new modality of Levinas, moral consciousness “undoes thematisation, and escapes any principle, origin, will, or αρχη(arche), which is put forth in every ray of consciousness. This movement is, in the original sense of the term, an-archial.”⁹⁹ In Levinas, if the arche is the ontological beginning or overarching principle of meaning in knowledge, his me-ontological or an-archic relationship develops the interpretive intentionality of consciousness, opens a gap in the interpreted or defined relation between people, and presents possibilities of further interpretation. Here, Levinas’s anarchic tendencies are not purely obstructionist, but they are set toward opening closed systems to the infinite possibility of genuine transcendence. Transformed by the meontological call of the Other, anarchy becomes a utopian gesture, textured by a responsibility. It refuses to be synthesised into a representable relation. It is the wild and delirious edge of experience accompanying a critique which refuses synthesis.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, “Prayer without Demand,” in *The Levinas Reader*, p.232. Originally published *Etudes philosophiques*, 38 (1984), pp.157-63.

⁹⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.101.

¹⁰⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.191.

Anarchy is not disorder as opposed to order, as the eclipse of themes is not, as is said, a return to a diffuse 'field of consciousness' prior to attention. Disorder is but another order, and what is diffuse is thematisable. Anarchy troubles being over and beyond these alternatives. It brings to a halt the ontological play which, precisely qua play, is consciousness, where being is lost and found again, and thus illuminated.¹⁰¹

In relation to the descriptions of the meontological significance of anarchy, Levinas refers to the image of Creation in the Book of Genesis, in God's originating creation of the world. When God creates the world by speaking, it is as if from nothing. The Word is from outside of Being. Being is a 'said' in which the echoes of a 'saying' remains. The Word of Creation, still resounding, is necessarily an-archic - the anarchy that carries a trace of creativity. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, he says that the traces of the Other leave in thematic consciousness the analogy of Creation.

It is perhaps here, in this reference to a depth of anarchical passivity, that the thought that names creation differs from ontological thought. It is not here a question of justifying the theological context of ontological thought, for the word creation designates a signification older than the context woven about this name. In this context, this said, is already effected the absolute diachrony of creation, refractory to assembling into a present and a representation.¹⁰²

In other words, the Saying (*le Dire*) would be irreducible to the ontological language of Said (*le Dit*), in which all entities are disclosed and comprehended in the light of Being. Levinas uses the model of the Saying and the Said as the way of explaining how the

¹⁰¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p.101.

ethical signifies within ontological language. The Saying is my exposure to the Other, my inability to refuse the Other's approach. By contrast, the Said is a statement, assertion, or proposition, concerning which truth and falsity can be ascertained. The Saying is performative stating, proposing, or expressive position of myself facing the Other. It is the sheer radicality of human speaking, of the event of being in relation to an Other; it is the non-thematisable ethical residue¹⁰³ of language that escapes comprehension, interrupts philosophy, and is the very enactment of the ethical movement of the Same to the Other.¹⁰⁴ While the Said is interpreted as the content of speech, the Saying is the form of speech and the attitude of the interlocutor to the Other, and is the giving of myself in giving words to another. Ethics become a part of speech act theory.

Thus, language is the way to make myself available for the others. The Saying leads me to a life activity of responsibility. This is the anarchy of moral consciousness, through which it 'leaps' beyond philosophy to meontologically inspired practical action. This action (work) is a way of describing the creative sensibility of Levinas's anarchic moral consciousness; it is a leap toward the other than oneself, not absorbing and neutralising the Other. In contrast philosophy's itinerary is that of Ulysses, whose adventure in the world was only a return to his native island- a complacency in the

¹⁰² Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p. 113.

¹⁰³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Here, Levinas is concerned with how is the Saying to be Said, or given a philosophical exposition that does not utterly betray this Saying? How the ethical Saying is to be thematized and necessarily betrayed (*Otherwise than Being.*, p.6) within the ontological Said.

Same, an unrecognition of the other.¹⁰⁵ This is an action (work) which goes freely from the Same to the Other; “*A work conceived radically is a movement of the Same towards the Other which never returns to the Same.*”¹⁰⁶ It is a departure without return, and in fact, “as an orientation toward the other, as sense, a work is possible only in patience, which, pushed to the limit, means for the agent to renounce being the contemporary of its outcome, to act without entering into the Promised Land.” And, in this radical reorientation, “to renounce being the contemporary of the triumph of one’s work is to envisage this triumph in a time without me, to aim at this world below without me, to aim at a time beyond the horizon of my time, in an eschatology without hope for oneself, or in a liberation from my time.”¹⁰⁷ This radical patience reorients this work toward the time outside of time by which Levinas breaks the totalising hegemony of consciousness.

Levinas quotes the writing of Léon Blum in Bourassol prison and the Pourtalet Fort in 1941: “We are working in the present, not for the present. How many times in meeting with the people have I repeated and commented on Nietzsche’s word: Let the future and the things most remote be the rule of all the present days!” Levinas interprets the significance of Blum’s meontological words.

The force of his confidence is incommensurate with the force of his philosophy. 1941! - a hole in history - a year in which all the visible gods had abandoned us, in which god was really dead or gone back

¹⁰⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” pp. 90-91.

¹⁰⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” p.91.

¹⁰⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” p.92. See Deuteronomy 3:23-28; 32:48-52.

into his non-revealedness. A man in prison continues to believe in a nonrevealed future and invites men to work in the present for the most remote things, for which the present is an irreducible negation... There is a great nobility in the energy liberated from the hold of the present.¹⁰⁸

The anarchic work of moral consciousness is oriented toward a time outside time; and Levinas calls this radically impatient patience an eschatology. Theologically defined as the study of the last things, the end of history, eschatology takes on meontological resonance in Levinas. Eschatology is, for Levinas, the beyond of history, and the 'ending' of the time of representation, a 'liberation' from the time of the ego toward the time of 'ethics.'¹⁰⁹

The other is both fellow man and other. This alterity is not produced as a subjectivity that is the simple negation of his objectivity. It is present in the face and in a trace which refers to the passing of an alterity, disturbing my order, appealing and contesting. Levinas reads Psalm 119, "I am a stranger on the earth, do not hide from me your commandments, and Leviticus 15:23, "No land will be alienated irrevocably, for the earth is mine, for you are but strangers, domiciled in my land," in order to reflect the earth as the site of hospitality. In reading Psalm 191, which calls for commandments, for Levinas, the difference between the ego and the world is proclaimed by obligations toward the others. "They echo the Bible's permanent saying: the condition (or the uncondition) of being strangers and slaves in the land of Egypt brings man close to his

¹⁰⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," p.93.

¹⁰⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 22-25.

neighbour. In their condition of being strangers men seek one another. No one is at home. The memory of this servitude assembles humanity. The difference that opens between the ego and itself, the non-coincidence of the identical, is a fundamental non-difference with regard to men.”¹¹⁰

Levinas’s new theological and philosophical calling, originating as it does in ‘ethics’ rather than comprehension, is found in the metaphor of hearing rather than seeing. It is a cry of ethical revolt, bearing witness to responsibility for the other. This calling transforms philosophy and theology into a ‘new modality’ enacted in what Levinas calls a *work*. This suggests an ordinary form of action motivated not by productivity, technique, or meaning but by an extraordinary, unthinkable, and inspiring Other. In a way, what is important is the sense of truth rather than meaning, a ‘saying’ obeyed and trusted before it is a ‘said’ reorganised or understood. In this face-to-face relationship with the neighbour, Levinas shows that to be or not to be is not the ultimate question; it is but a commentary on the better than being, the infinite demand of the ethical relation.¹¹¹ In this non-thematic relation, the movement would be unending; a new ‘relation with everyone’ will be required to ensure the certainty of the first truth of everyone, which presupposes a *proximity* between me and the interlocutor, not our participation in a transparent universality.

¹¹⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, “No Identity,” p.148-149

¹¹¹ Seán Hand, “Introduction,” *The Levinas Reader*, ed by Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp.7-8.

The ethical indicates “a reversal of the subjectivity which is *open upon* beings and always in some measure represents them to itself, positing them and taking them to be such into a subjectivity that enters *into contact* with a singularity, excluding identification in the ideal, excluding thematisation and representation - an absolute singularity, as such unrepresentable.”¹¹² This relation of proximity is the original language, the foundation of the other one, a language without words or propositions, pure communication. This is the precise point at which this mutation of the intentional into the ethical occurs, and occurs continually, at which the approach *breaks through* consciousness. This is the human skin and face, in which contact is tenderness and responsibility.¹¹³

Proximity is not an intentionality, but a relationship with a neighbour. In other words, “to approach is to touch the neighbour, beyond the data apprehended at a distance in cognition, that is, to approach the other. This turning of the given into a neighbour and of the representation into a contact, of knowledge into ethics, is the human face and skin.”¹¹⁴ In this face-to-face relation, the idea of communication is like the idea of the infinite for Levinas, it is not a concept, but a proximity, the proximity of Same and Other, not an opposition of “this Same” to “that Same.”¹¹⁵ Because the Other

¹¹² Emmanuel Levinas, “Language and Proximity,” p.116. Levinas’s note: we call ethical a relationship between terms such as are united neither by a synthesis of the understanding nor by a relationship between subject or object, and yet where the one weights or concerns or is meaningful to the other, where they are bound by a plot which knowing can neither exhaust nor unravel.

¹¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, “Language and Proximity,” p.119; p.116.

¹¹⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, “Language and Proximity,” p.125.

¹¹⁵ Joseph Libertson, *Proximity Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), pp.203-204.

is not another Same, it indicates the impossibility of closure, alterity is by definition a non-reciprocity, but in itself describes a pure containment without terms or correlation. This is a wilful marginality in the philosophy of proximity, a refusal to share the epistemological horizons of its culture, in which the most common denominator is the tendency to thematise the real in terms of limits.

Thus the artificiality of a correlation whose subordination of communication to totalisation, is essentially violent. In Levinas's phrase, this metaphysics of autonomy and correlation implies the 'permanent possibility of war.' There can be no 'peace with reason,' when reason is the image of destruction and exploitation. It is for this reason that Levinas uses the somewhat confusing term 'non-violent' to describe communication in proximity. For the 'violence' of totalisation in Levinas is a violence heavily weighted by its accreditation in Western culture. War, exploitation, and institutionalisation of poverty, etc., are forms of violence which are and are not perceived as violent by a culture in which they are 'facts of life,' correlative to and sanctioned by the logic of limits and the destruction of limits - that is, the logic of constraint and the liberation from constraint.¹¹⁶ It is interesting to point out that violence is not accidental but is produced and required by a cultural or general configuration, as indicated in the great religious and political upheavals of Western history. Those events and movements often result from their unwitting recourse to the very concepts which organise violence: their need to 'make war,' to 'define' and 'eliminate' an 'ultimate cause' of injustice, to

¹¹⁶ Joseph Libertson, *Proximity Levinas, Blachot, Bataille and Communication*, p. 209

'perceive the totality' which produces violence, to sacrifice the egoism of human power in the name of a 'higher power' or 'higher wisdom'.¹¹⁷

Totalisation is the principle of multiplicity; the Same is the sole context of articulation of Same and Other, therefore incompleteness, and thus communication, are not possible in such an economy. But proximity exceeds manifestation and totalisation by virtue of its communicational economy, when consciousness is extricated from its rooting, and defined as a radical heteronomy or incompleteness. Therefore, the principle of the relation must be incomplete and in proximity, in order that such a moment of disturbance as the search for truth might arise within it. Here, Levinas derives the notion of interrogation as a desire which proceeds from an irreducible incompleteness.

But the search of truth is an event more fundamental than theory, although the theoretical search is a privileged mode of this relation to exteriority that is called truth. Because the separation of the separate being was not relative, was not a movement of distancing with regard to the Other, but was produced as psychisme, the relation to the Other does not consist in reproducing in an opposite sense the movement of distancing, but in going forward {the Other} through Desire, from which theory itself borrows the exteriority of its term.¹¹⁸

The possibility of interrogation is psychisme: a rapport with alterity which is a proximity and a desire, that is the impossibility which haunts totalisation. It is the idea of the infinite - which is not an idea, but a communication, as Levinas explains, and thus is not

¹¹⁷ Joseph Libertson, *Proximity Levinas, Blachot, Bataille and Communication*, pp.208-210.

deducible from interiority as identity, but only from interiority as incompleteness and heteronomy. It is a call to depart from the ethics of the West and all that is foreign to the 'foreign' proximity of a God, and depart from any theology that emerges from human familiarity. Levinas sets out his journey, departing from transcendental idealism where consciousness and subjectivity occupy the dominant place. He discovered that everything is reduced into this totalitarian system of consciousness, and that alterity is lost in the sameness of reflexive movement. God has become a working-hypothesis for the sake of world order. Also lost is God's continual displacement, infinity and specificity, which replace conscious acts where intent is to find God. But the Other comes in a specific 'face-to-face' relation of proximity so real that I have no choice but to respond, even before understanding and being conscious of the other.

As shown in the history of Israel, especially in the time of the exiles, when they have failed to capture or see God, one knows obliquely the unspeakable Otherness of the One who does not cease to call because he has promised to be there, utter and apart, but proximate and life-giving. What is *otherwise than being or beyond essence* indicates a meaning beyond our consciousness, as the heritage of a people in exile. Here, both ontological claims and a tribal faith are interrupted by the Other's break. However, the Other does not happen as it is said to happen, but as we witness, it is determined beyond our conscious events, as an exilic faith loses itself and returns to itself as it marks the

¹¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.61.

other beyond determination. A faith turns through itself and rediscovers itself in the withdrawal of what it posits, and finds itself articulated in the proximity. Therefore, it does not destroy identity, but rather in this discourse, re-establishes identity in an unending movement of removal to rediscovery.

The good is to hear and to respond to the other not as a philosopher or a priest, but as one who belongs to the other's proximity, and who responds out of passivity to the other's cry or call in a real world. In this turning, I find myself belonging to my neighbour, and feel my existence there. Here, ethics is never just a relation between human beings, it is already marked by the relation with God. This is what Levinas calls a 'curvature of space' expressing the relation between human beings that signifies the proximity of God. He suggests that "this metaphor of 'curvature of space' is, perhaps, the very presence of God."¹¹⁹ In this space of ethical determination, all living thing and their meanings reveal a syntax far in excess of our grammars and logics, and a 'saying' obeyed or trusted before it is a 'said' recognised or understood. This surplus of truth over ontological being, signifies the divine intention of all truth.¹²⁰

Levinas understands this as a characteristic of the exodic event, in contrast to the myth of Odyssey, in which Ulysses, the hero, returns to his native land, Ithaca. In other words, "philosophy's itinerary remains that of Ulysses, whose adventure in the world was only a return to his native island - a complacency in the Same, an unrecognition of

¹¹⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.291.

¹²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 291.

the other.”¹²¹ But, Abraham leaves his native land once for all, for a still unknown land.¹²² It is the Abrahamic journey towards the Other, and is to open the closed subjectivity to the demands of the Other. It is to leave the place called ‘home’ to move beyond boundaries; but home is no longer just one place. Home is a place that enables and promotes a different and everchanging perspective; it is a place where one discovers new ways of seeing different reality. It is a breaking of boundaries, or borders of the solitude of the knower, and engaging with the others in proximity. This is the common denominator which renders possible a communication with the exterior. It is irreducible to a situation within the totality.

Levinas’s me-ontological ethics redefines the inter-human relationship as irreducibly social (exposure of) ‘fact-to-face’ encounters with/to the Others, and exposes the tyranny of totalisation, of manipulation, of universalisation and of the impersonal.¹²³ But this society as a “multiple existing [un exister multiple] - a pluralism,” which is distinct from “numerical multiplicity,” can be “defenceless against totalisation,”¹²⁴ as in ‘multiculturalism.’ Therefore, it is necessary to provide the politics of difference against such a totalisation. Levinas indicates as above, a universal order

¹²¹ Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” p.91.

¹²² Abraham is an obedient to the Other, and becomes the archetype of faith, as Ulysses becomes the archetype of philosophy. “To the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we wish to oppose the story of Abraham who leaves his fatherland forever for a yet unknown land, and forbids his servant even to bring back his son to the point of departure.” (“Trace of the Other”, p. 348) What is implied, here, is that knowledge or identity is re-constituted or re-established in this un-ending movement, for the sake of practising an absolute responsibility to the commanding call of the Other.

¹²³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 242.

¹²⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 220.

which reflects and respects human plurality - pluralism, and advocates the face-to-face relationship as “the face of the Other relates us with the third party, the metaphysical relation of the I with the Other moves into the form of the We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality.”¹²⁵

The major threat to pluralism arises out of the clash of exclusivist claims made by particular traditions which insist that only they possess the truth. In order to avoid this threat, the realisation that there is an expanding religious consciousness that breaks boundaries of particular traditions and brings forward communication that unites people should be reached. However, it is not the discourse of universalism by which domination occurs and is justified, rather it rests on the mutual respect of separate individuals or groups that encounter each other.

Pluralistic society stands upon relations of true pluralism, that is, upon the respect and responsibility that the self expresses toward the other, otherwise, as Levinas warns, every communication that is not based upon responsibility is an effort in domination.¹²⁶ What is needed is a shared discourse in terms of ethics, as Levinas discusses the “march towards universality of a political order” in terms of “confronting multiple beliefs - a multiplicity of coherent discourse - and finding one coherent discourse that embraces them all, which is precisely the universal order.”¹²⁷ This

¹²⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 300.

¹²⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p. 120.

¹²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University press, 1990), p. 94.

discourse must be one that respects the alterity or otherness of the other, as Levinas writes “the relationship of language implies transcendence, radical separation, the strangeness of the interlocutors, the revelation of the other to me;”¹²⁸ this discourse must be the discourse of responsibility for others.

Ethics is an optics of the Divine. Henceforth, no relation with God is direct or immediate. The Divine can be manifested only through my neighbour.¹²⁹

The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed.¹³⁰

Therefore, in a human political society, this ethical proximity becomes a reference and a meaning of condition in human relation. In other words, it becomes a desire for the other, the desire that “measures the infinity of the infinite, for it is a measure through the very impossibility of measure.”¹³¹ This desire is like that of religion, as Levinas said, “Religion is Desire and not struggle for recognition. It is the surplus possible in a society of equals, that of glorious humanity, responsibility, and sacrifice, which are the condition for equality itself.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 73.

¹²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, p. 159.

¹³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 79.

¹³¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 62.

¹³² Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 64.

In this sense, desire is work that is “to act without entering the Promised Land.”¹³³ This exodus manifests the meta-physical character of human existence on earth, as the exodus “does not lead to the heights of heaven nor the depths of a netherworld,” but “leads to others who share the earth with me. For ‘we are in the world.’ This world is more than a space to dwell in and more than the general condition of a common ethos; as universe it embraces all possibilities of exodus and wandering.”¹³⁴ It is other-directed and neighbour-directed attitude. What is implied here, is that the me-ontological, ethical and religious relation to the Other is conditioned or constituted in sociality. Therefore, only in the desire of ethical responsibility for the Other, can we open ourselves to the mystery of the future that guarantees its difference from totalisation.

This new modality that begins at the end of philosophy, as a me-ontological praxis that is the anarchic work of moral consciousness, brings a forgotten question of ethics into our theologising and reminds the priority of the ethical relationship with others as the route to God. It is a perpetual ‘thinking beyond’ that defines a task and anticipates the future, rather than pure theory of knowledge or theory of reality that is fixed in the past. This dialogical ‘thinking beyond’ is a thinking toward, or in response to, the infinite reality of God.

¹³³ Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 92.

¹³⁴ Adrian T. Peperzak, “Transcendence,” in *Ethics as First Philosophy*, ed and intro. by Adriaan T. Peperzak (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 187.

As described in this chapter, Levinas's thought displays a radical questioning of the Western spirituality and moral urgency, as he argues towards a 'new modality,' that breaks the ontological comprehension and totalising tendency of representation. In an attempt to re-orient theory and practice, Levinas inserts a forgotten questioning of ethics into the traditional philosophical pursuit in knowledge, as he insists on the priority of the ethical for any proper understanding of transcendence. I have suggested that Levinas's call for a 'new modality' is a call for a transformation of philosophy and theology into a me-ontological praxis, otherwise, theology cannot think God, except as a philosophy thinking ethics. Thus, this new modality originated in ethics transforms philosophy and theology into a work; this ethical route within the inter-relationships with the human other is the only way to the Absolute Other. Moreover, this new modality and its me-ontological praxis should be inserted into ordinary discourse and real life situation, as well as theological discourses.

The significance is not a mere understanding of the Other, but a sense of ethical responsibility for the Other that comes from the issue of justice, while justice remains justice only in a society and is linked in a complex manner of relationship, a community of others. The Other awakens us to new possibilities in theology. What becomes clear is that, since the history of humankind is a history of conflicts between *egologists* and their ideologies, justice does not arise from an ego, from self-development, but from *our* moral responsibilities for the Other and *our* solidarity with the Other. Thus, theology must involve in liberating the victim and resisting the dominant, and at the same time, it must avoid the clear danger of a rigid perspectivalism that can easily accommodate

hegemonic values of militant particularism. In other words, every individual including the marginalised perspective, must learn to read both with and against one's own conventions in order to create an urgency for liberation and justice for all.

Chapter 4. Dialogue with the Other

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” John 1:1 and 14 (RSV).

“Have this mind among yourself, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” Phil. 2:5-8 (RSV).

1. Dialogism and Bakhtin

After having seen the implications of Emmanuel Levinas’s me-ontological responsibility in the human relation, questioning subjectivity in relation to the Other, this chapter seeks to develop a discourse on the dialogical process of human sociality, as developed by Mikhail M. Bakhtin.¹ He extends ‘new modality’ into the practice of

¹ Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was born on November 16, 1895 in Orel, Russia, and spent his childhood in the border towns, Vilnius and Odessa, mixed with different cultures and languages -Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian - since Vilnius was part of the ancient Lithuanian kingdom until the third partition of Poland in 1795. Vilnius was the intellectual center of East European Jewry, the ‘Jerusalem of the North,’ and Odessa was another of East Europe’s large Jewish enclaves, and a city of mixed cultures, and different languages. After a degree in classics and philosophy at the University of Petrograd, he continued to participate in a study circle devoted to the relationship between philosophy, religion, and politics, and in 1918, the nucleus of an ongoing “Bakhtinian circle” was formed. During his years in Nevel’ and Vitebsk, from 1918-1924, he attempted to rethink the possibility of constructing a wholeness in terms more complex than those provided by the Marburg School, emphasizing process, the radical un-givenness of experience with its openness and energy. In 1924, Bakhtin returned to Petrograd, and he was very active for the next six years participating in religious activity in the underground Russian Orthodox Church, the “catacomb church,” and writing several books. He was arrested in connection with a sweep of

discourse, and concretises it within human relationship. Bakhtin reinterprets the fundamental relationship of genre, form, speech, and inter-human relation. He understands discourse in life and discourse in literary art, as a way towards a dialogical process (Bakhtin calls this a ‘mutual-answerability’). This is called ‘dialogism,’ as Michael Holquist puts it: “Dialogism is also implicated in the modern thinking about thinking.”² But dialogism is not a systematic philosophy, and refuses to be systematic.³ In dialogism, the traditional definitions of theory and practice become obsolete, as shown in the previous chapter. Holquist remarks on Bakhtin, in the introduction to *Art and Answerability*:

But what is essential for Bakhtin is not only the categories as such that get paired in author/hero, space/time, self/other, and so forth, but in addition the architectonics governing relations between them. What counts is the simultaneity that makes it logical to treat concepts

intellectuals associated with the underground church, and sentenced to exile in Kazakhstan. During the 1930's, he wrote his famous essays on the theory of the novel (Discourse in the novel and the long essay on the chronotope), and researched a major work on Rabelais, which was submitted as his doctoral dissertation in 1941, to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow. After his return from exile in 1936, he was recalled to take up a professorship at the former teachers' college in the town of Saransk, and he became the chair of the faculty of “Russian and World literature.” Through good fortune and his relative obscurity, he escaped rearrest and retired to a less visible town during the insane xenophobia of the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns in 1950s. But there was a dramatic change in the early 1960s, when a group of young scholars at the Gorky Institute discovered Bakhtin's writings. Since then, a second edition of the Dostoevsky book appeared, followed by the Rabelais book, and other long-delayed Bakhtin manuscripts. In 1972, he was permitted to move into Moscow, and there, he had a quiet life, writing new essays and preparing his earliest texts for republication, until his death, on the morning of March 7, 1975, at the age of eighty; his funeral followed Orthodox rites. Though his life may have been rather humble, its significance lies in the intensive labour of writing. From Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-13; Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. xiii-xv; Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. by Wlad Godzich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 3-13. Also see Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

² Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 15.

³ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, p. 16.

together. The point is that Bakhtin honours both things and the relations between them - one cannot be understood without the other. The resulting simultaneity is not a private *either/or*, but an inclusive *also/and*. In other words, the logic of Bakhtin's simultaneity is - dialogic.⁴

In this notion of difference and plurality, "a question that fuels Bakhtin's whole enterprise, is, What makes difference different?"⁵ For Bakhtin, differences cannot be overcome, because separateness is a basic condition of existence, but through the concept of simultaneity, rather than through a mediating idea or common ground, differences are reconciled.

In Dialogism, everyone is an active participant in this relation of simultaneity, and the reality is not just perceived, but always experienced in the relation between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space. One has meaning only in relation to the other. But dialogism is not merely a dualism, it is rather a multiplicity that signifies itself as a series of distinctions depending on one's position and what is perceived of the other.⁶ Bakhtin discovers an interactive space that is not hostile to difference which resists the unifying visions of philosophical interpretation. He remarks on forms of responsiveness in culture:

⁴ Michael Holquist, "Introduction" to *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. xxiii.

⁵ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 9.

⁶ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism*, pp. 20-13.

In our enthusiasm for specification we have ignored questions of the interconnection and interdependence of various areas of culture; we have frequently forgotten that the boundaries of these areas are not absolute, that in various epochs they have been drawn in various ways; and we have not taken into account that the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries of its individual areas and not in places where these areas have become enclosed in their own specificity.⁷

The openness that exists in tension with dialogical interlocutors, indicates the unfinished nature of the self, and reveals its limit. Therefore, in dialogism, the self (I) is always at the border both joining and separating the reality that is intertwined and encountered with others.⁸ Dialogism is a shared event for us all, like language.

Bakhtin calls this interaction among words, ideas, and points of view in social language a dialogic inter-orientation. He argued in "Discourse in the Novel," that language should not be taken "as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all sphere of ideological life."⁹ Language as a system, is an abstraction and the product of deliberation on language. For the individual speaker, language never exists only as such a set of norms, but exists in its adaptability to the new situation in which language

⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee, ed by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 2.

⁸ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism*, p. 28-29.

⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 271

must take on meaning in a ceaseless flow of becoming.¹⁰ Bakhtin says, “What is important for the speaker about a linguistic form is not that it is a single and always self-equivalent signal, but that it is an always changeable and adaptable sign.”¹¹ Hence, as for the speaker, the important point is this concrete utterance he/she is making in a particular and concrete context. For Bakhtin, this dialogical inter-orientation is already in the writing and speaking. What he is trying to do is to locate and dialogise them as words among words.

Dialogism, therefore, is a form of architectonic, that shapes Bakhtin’s practice; it is an activity of relations. It is like architecture, ordering and manipulating parts into a whole; and its relation is never static, but always a process in relation to other things.¹² In a way, it is existence as sharing event with the other, and this means that we are in dialogue not only with other human beings, but also with the natural and cultural configurations of the world.¹³ Bakhtin sees otherness as “the ground of all existence and of dialogue as the primal structure of any particular existence, representing a constant exchange between what is already and what is not yet.”¹⁴ Therefore, for Bakhtin,

¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin/ Valentin Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, trans. by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 67

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin/ Valentin Voloshinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, p. 68.

¹² Michael Holquist, “Introduction” to *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

¹³ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁴ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 65.

architectonic refers to “the body of techniques by which its sheer flux may be erected into a meaningful *event*.”¹⁵

This dialogical event, however, is decisive in human relations. In Bakhtin, both life and aesthetics have the character of an event; in aesthetics, the author is the individual who performs and tries to finalise what is incomplete, and who assumes “an answerable position in the event of being,”¹⁶ and, in life “being presents itself to a living consciousness as an event, and a living consciousness actively orients itself and lives in it as in an event.”¹⁷ For Bakhtin, creativity (aesthetics) is a living, active, on-going event, and produces not a finished world but a range of possibilities and potentials. He assumes that life has the character of an ongoing event constituted through our deeds more than our words; and it is not finished until death. This is why Bakhtin was interested in artistic creation and the aesthetic sphere, especially literary prose, for reality and life are interpenetrated within, and created in the concrete unity in the form of architectonics or of answerability.

In Bakhtin, wholeness is always to be understood as relative. It is in answering and responding to the other that this self-to-other responsibility is achieved in any given action. Deed is understood as an answer. Self creates itself in crafting an architectonic relation between the unique locus of life activity which the individual human organism

¹⁵ Michael Holquist, “Introduction” to *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, p. xxxiv.

¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, p. 190..

¹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, p. 188.

constitutes and the constantly changing natural and cultural environment which surrounds it. This is the meaning of Bakhtin's dictum that the self is an act of grace, a gift of the other.¹⁸ In this interaction, which is dialogical, Bakhtin stresses the creativity of linguistic and literary spheres, generating new meanings, and interests in interrelations with the other, as he remarks,

I live in a world of other's words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others' words (an infinite diverse reaction)... All of each individual's words are divided into the categories of his own and others', but the boundaries between them can change, and a tense dialogic struggle takes place on the boundaries.¹⁹

In this inter-relation, the self is an activity, not being conceived in a static way, but in real life existence.

Self's existence in real life is like an event of language. In describing this, Bakhtin outlines his theory of language as the concept of voicing and the relation of speakers to their listeners. He articulates the relation of author to hero as the 'nonologic' and 'polyphonic' in "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," diverse ways of speaking in novels as 'heteroglossia' in "Discourse in the Novel,"; the genres of daily speech and their relation to the genres of literary discourse in "Speech Genres," and language and

¹⁸ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 68.

¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 143.

the problems of cultural analysis in “The Problem of the Text.”²⁰ In regarding this inter-relation of the self, each discussion is centred around a few concepts such as the nature of utterance, the asystematicity of language, and the problem of dialogization (doubling voicing).²¹ For Bakhtin, this is “a departure beyond the boundaries of linguistics.”²²

The unique nature of dialogic relations. The problem of the inner dialogism. The seams of the boundaries between utterances. The problem of the double-voiced word. Understanding as dialogue. Here we are approaching the frontier of the philosophy of language and of thinking in the human science in general, virgin land.²³

Here, for Bakhtin, the basic metaphor of the simultaneous unity of difference is the event of utterance. He believes the utterance to be the fundamental unit of meaning, as opposed to “the *sentence* as a *unit of language*.”²⁴ The utterance is a metalinguistic unit understandable only within actual speech communication. He says, “although utterances do typically contain words and sentences, those sorts of entities do not exhaust the utterance’s defining feature.”²⁵ In a way, this is an event answering to another utterance, and going beyond ‘recognition’ or ‘decode’ in active understanding. It is to grasp what is being said, and relate it to the listener’s own complex of interests

²⁰ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic*, p. 124.

²¹ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic*, p. 124.

²² Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 119.

²³ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 119

²⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 73.

²⁵ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 125.

and assumption, and moreover to prepare a response to that utterance. And, this event of answering (answerability) will be continued by the changing of listener, as “its beginning is preceded by the utterance of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterance of others.”²⁶ In living dialogue, the speaking subject is responding to the answer which is again a response to the previous utterance. In other words, the speaker’s utterance is a result of the previous utterance, and is always an answer. Therefore, utterance in dialogism is not a completely free act of choice, but works within the inter-relation between a particular speaker and the pre-existing generalising system.

Another aspect of utterance is the relation between what is said and what is unsaid in actual utterance: how a thing is said on what is said. Holquist indicates that, in Bakhtin, it is intonation that stitches the repeatable or just linguistic stuff to the unrepeatable social situation, and that pumps energy from a life situation into verbal discourse.²⁷ This dimension of utterance renders value, something new beyond the epistemological and psychological relationship. It is the “axiological weight of the *I* and the *other*,”²⁸ conditioning the relation; in other words, it is not abstract ideal, but ethical orientation in the world of daily experience, for ethics emerges only from the encounter of ‘I’ with the others in the concrete physical setting.

²⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.71.

²⁷ Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 207.

²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” in *Art and Answerability*, p. 114.

What is important is not the end result of action, but “the ethical deed in its making, as an act in the process of creating or authoring an event that can be called a deed, whether the deed be a physical action, a thought, an utterance, or a written text.”²⁹ In its singularity of the act, and its singular relationship, intonation signifies the singularity of the dialogic situation. Therefore, “no utterance can be put together without value judgement. Every utterance is above all an *evaluative orientation*.”³⁰ A common illustration can be found in a telephone conversation between persons whose identity is unknown to us; when we hear one speaker’s intonation or speech patterns, we can guess the person’s relation to the other speaker (i.e. through a stitching together of the said and the unsaid) in the context of the situation. Intonation is the simultaneity of interrelation between the said and the unsaid: it “pumps energy from a life situation into verbal discourse - it endows everything linguistically stable with living historical momentum and uniqueness.”³¹ Voloshinov/Bakhtin observes, “in living speech, intonation often does have a meaning quite independent of the semantic composition of speech. Intonational material pent up inside us often does find outlet in linguistic constructions completely inappropriate to the particular kind of intonation involved.”³² It reflects a situation outside language, and brings it to an evaluative conclusion, in this active and productive nature of utterance.

²⁹ Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 63.

³⁰ Voloshinov/Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 105.

³¹ Voloshinov/Bakhtin, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, trans. I.R. Titunik (New York: Academic Press, 1976), p. 106.

³² Voloshinov/Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 104.

In all real events, such in word, speech, or literary genre, socially constructed in their complexity, the significance of utterance is the fact that it is shared, no one owns it. This is different from the classical attempt to fix meanings and neutralise semantic flux between the signified and the signifier. Bakhtin says,

the word is interindividual. Everything that is said, expressed, is located outside the 'soul' of the speaker and does not belong only to him. The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener also has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one). The word is a drama in which three characters participate (it is not a duet, but a trio). It is performed outside the author, and it cannot be introjected into the author.³³

As such, for Bakhtin, "dialogue is the internal dialogism of the word," because "The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogical way."³⁴ Bakhtin indicates two tendencies in this interaction, as the *centripetal* and *centrifugal* force within social life and language activity: "a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language."³⁵ The centripetal tendency seeks to impose order, centralisation and

³³ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, pp. 121-122.

³⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 279.

³⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 272.

stability on an heterogeneous world and its complex reality, while the centrifugal seeks to disrupt and decentralise that order into fragmentation and instability.

What Bakhtin tries to reveal, is the fact that in a common unitary language, there is always a tendency to overcome different voices in language, and create an officially recognised literary language, which is stable and firm. In fact, in this process, language is ideologically saturated and politicised, in the name of maximising the mutual understanding of discourse. “Thus a unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralisation, which develop in vital connection with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization.”³⁶ In Western linguistic thought, this centripetal force was considered a scientific activity. But, in contrast to the idea of language as a system of abstract norms, language is never a unitary system of norms that is complete, but a task, a project that requires work in an on-going and never finishing process.

The problem now arises of the relation of particular languages to each other. For Bakhtin, difference itself is to be dialogised in various ways. It is to see one language through the eyes of another language.³⁷ When this happens, the value system and worldviews in these languages come to interact, in the heterogeneity of intersubjective space; this dialogism prompts a radical shift, conversion of one to another, as they enter into dialogue. In this complex interaction (dialogizing) of languages, the words become

³⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 271.

³⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 296.

dialogized, disputed, and reaccented in another way, as they encounter another utterance. What is significant is that in this dialogized or relativized situation, the various languages of heteroglossia lose their status as the unique and unquestioned way of speaking about a given life situation. For Bakhtin, this change is beyond systematisation, but messy, produced by the unforeseeable events of everyday activity in which people engage in their daily lives, where the centripetal and centrifugal forces meaningfully interact together.

2. The Problem of Monologism and Ideology

Traditionally European linguistics has been preoccupied with the analysis of written texts, which are taken to be the finished and monologic utterance, as a self-contained system. Linguistics treated a “living language as if it were a dead language”³⁸ such as ancient Greek. Voloshinov/Bakhtin in *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*, sees language as ideology, and shifts its understanding from epistemological preoccupation towards a concern with semiotic and linguistic processes.³⁹

³⁸ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 223.

³⁹ Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 9.

Voloshinov/Bakhtin rejects the suggestion that language can be understood as an objective and abstract system, but perceives it as a dynamic process of becoming in real historical time and space. At the same time, he rejects the subjectivism which insists on the primacy of the creative subject. While subjectivism is correct in seeing the individual utterance as a crucial aspect of language it mistakenly locates the meaning of the word in the individual psyche rather than in society.⁴⁰ Therefore, both objectivism and subjectivism are monologic in nature. Bakhtin characterises the concept of monologism:

Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another *I* with equal rights (*thou*). With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form) *another person* remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word*. It closes down the represented world and represented persons.⁴¹

Monologism denies the equal rights of consciousness,⁴² and does not recognise the other's thoughts or ideas, but functions as "a mouthpiece for the transmission of the author's own ideological viewpoint."⁴³

⁴⁰ Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 11-12.

⁴¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 292-293.

⁴² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 285.

It is the ideology that monologises the author's consciousness over other consciousnesses, and locks other consciousnesses into a unified whole. This ideologic monologism was exercised by the unified and exclusive reason of European rationalism and Enlightenment thought. Bakhtin said:

Ideological monologism found its clearest and theoretically most precise expression in idealistic philosophy. The monistic principle, that is, the affirmation of the unity of existence, is, in idealism, transformed into the unity of consciousness..... The unity of consciousness, replacing the unity of existence, is inevitably transformed into the unity of a single consciousness; when this occurs it makes absolutely no difference what metaphysical form the unity takes: "consciousness in general (*"Bewusstsein überhaupt"*), "the absolute *I*," "the absolute spirit," "the normative consciousness," and so forth.⁴⁴

From the perspective of "consciousness in general," the plurality is accidental, and everything in it that is essential, must be a part of this "consciousness in general." In other words, there is no individual consciousness. This monologic idealism of single and unified consciousness is inevitably related to the idea of truth that is single and unified. Consequently, a genuine interaction and dialogue between consciousnesses are impossible on this monologic principle, as Bakhtin points out, "Everything capable of meaning can be gathered together in one consciousness and subordinated to a unified

⁴³ Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology*, p. 27.

⁴⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 80-81.

accent; whatever does not submit to such a reduction is accidental and unessential.”⁴⁵ Bakhtin argues that modern thought has been dominated by a monologic conception of truth, not only reflected in philosophy but also in literature. In fact, this monologism has permeated into all aspects of life and its ideology was accompanied by the European rationalism of unified and exclusive reason, in developing a single utopian consciousness and unity.

Bakhtin’s analysis of the monologic conception of truth reveals that it comprises two elements: “the separate thought”, and “the system of thoughts.”⁴⁶ In this monologic thought (ideology), “there exist separate thoughts, assertions, propositions that can by themselves be true or untrue, depending on their relationship to the subject and independent of the carrier to whom they belong.”⁴⁷ These elements are “no-man’s thoughts,” for these are “faithful to the referential world” and “are united in a systematic unity of a referential order.”⁴⁸ What this means is that it really does not matter who enunciates these thoughts; the contents of these thoughts are detached and not affected by their source. Once enunciation takes place, the truthfulness of the thought is entirely separable from the person who utters it. As a result, the proposition is repeatable as a scientific experiment that can be repeated by others. Then, these separate thoughts “gravitate” toward a system, as “the system is put together out of separate thoughts, as

⁴⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, pp. 81-82; 82.

⁴⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 93.

⁴⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 93.

⁴⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 93.

out of elements.”⁴⁹ In this monologic thought, the goal is systematic unity, at least in principle. Thus, a good example of monologic thought is the great hero(s) who synthesises and shapes separate thoughts, insights and proposition into a coherent system.

In a monologic work, the author assumes the power to express a truth directly, as the ‘ultimate semantic authority,’ and the author’s ideology functions as the limits of what can be known.⁵⁰ Therefore, the truth belongs to his work, and all other truths are merely ‘represented’ in it. In the case of the novel, each character’s truth is measured against the author’s ideology, because authorial ideology dominates the novel and creates its unity. This monologic author considers ‘other truths’ as partial, and does not engage in dialogue with them, because the author’s truth does not lie in the same plane as the truths of his characters. The author assumes “full control over the work and never surrenders the right to mediate between characters and readers. If that control is lost, the work becomes flawed.”⁵¹ The hero is merely the carrier of an independently valid idea, that gravitates toward the systematically monologic worldview of the author himself.⁵²

Bakhtin sees language and ideology as being determined and determining of human consciousness, hence, monologism (as well as dialogism) is not only a literary

⁴⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 93.

⁵⁰ Nancy Glazener, *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, eds. by Ken Hirschkop & David Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 124.

⁵¹ Gary Saul Morson & Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic*, p.238.

⁵² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 79.

tendency, but an ideological tendency in thought and language. He says, "These basic [monologic] principles go far beyond the boundaries of artistic creativity alone; they are the principles behind the entire ideological culture of recent times."⁵³ As a consequence, monologism is a form of violence and manipulation against human consciousness which, according to Bakhtin, is not a unified whole, but always exists in a tensile, conflict-ridden relationship with other consciousnesses, in a constant alterity between self and other.

Monologism is the basic ideological system and practice of modern society, in which social languages and ideological systems correspond with antagonistic social lines, including class, race, gender, etc. It legitimates a particular ideological point, and claims a privileged knowledge - the official discourse and institutionalised genre.

The ruling class strives to lend the ideological sign a supraclass, external character, to extinguish or exhaust the struggle of class relations that obtains within, to make it the expression of only one, solid and immutable view. Any living abuse may become praise, any living truth is bound to sound to many like the greatest lie. The *internal dialectic character* of the sign unfolds finally only in an epoch of social crisis and revolutionary displacement. In the normal conditions of social life that contradiction with which every ideological sign is invested cannot completely unfold because the ideological sign in the prevalent ruling ideology is always somewhat reactionary and, as it were, attempts to arrest, to render immobile the *preceding moment* in the dialectical flow of social coming-to-be, to mark and fix *yesterday's truth as today's truth*.⁵⁴

⁵³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 80.

⁵⁴ V.N. Voloshinov/ M.M. Bakhtin, "Literary Stylistics," *Bakhtin School Papers*, ed. by Ann Shukman, *Russian Poetics in Translation* 1983 No.10, p. 147.

Monologism as ideology charged with authoritative word refuses any dialogical contact; it always assumes itself to be the 'last word,' one that cannot be responded to, and challenged. It is the word that "retards and freezes thoughts" and "demands reverent repetition and not further development, correction and additions." And, it is the word that is "removed from dialogue" and is only to "be cited,;" and this "has spread everywhere, limiting, directing and retarding both thought and live experience of life."⁵⁵

3. Heteroglossia and Novelness

For Bakhtin, monologism is nothing less than the ideological expression of forces which strive to control and to unify the social world. Monologism also conceptualises the literary text as a closed system, that is as a self-sufficient authorial monologue, the literary counterpart of the theoretical or ideological conception of language as stable and monolithic. Official language takes its cue from an elite, which defines itself over against what it identifies as the 'low' speech types found in the street. It attempts to fix or impose an order on the heteroglot languages, and introduce official canonical language. Nevertheless, tension or conflict between two forces - the unifying centripetal and the centrifugal tendency - continue.

⁵⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.133.

For Bakhtin, the place or space where this interaction between centripetal and centrifugal forces is most powerfully expressed, is in what we call 'texts.' He considers dialogism as the fundamental principle of constructing the literary text. Bakhtin calls this plurality in interaction and interrelation 'heteroglossia (many voices or plurality of relations).' This is a situation and condition of language, and a way of conceiving the world, in which heteroglossia pervades all languages from the professional to daily life use. Heteroglossia operates and pervades the operation of meaning in the literary text, as in any utterance. Bakhtin sees the literary text as utterances, words that cannot be divorced from particular subjects in specific situations, and something that depends on the author and the socio-historical context that produced it.

In this textual space, according to Bakhtin, genre is a specific way of seeing a given reality, like "an X-ray of a specific world view, a crystallisation of the concepts particular to a given social stratum in a specific society."⁵⁶ For him, genres are not fixed in time, but changing, and genres are forces within the literary history. Therefore, Bakhtin considers the history of literature as the history of struggle among genres:

They do not see beneath the superficial hustle and bustle of literary process the major and crucial fates of literature and language, whose great heroes turn out to be first and foremost genres, and whose 'trends' and 'school' are but second or third-rank protagonists.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 275.

Moreover, he perceives genres in terms of the natural centripetal and centrifugal forces of discourse. Genres are inter-acted, complicated, and transformed in contact with other genres. Otherness is included in the discursive context - the centrifugal forces of otherness within discourse. Therefore, Bakhtin differentiates the novel from any other genres or literary modes (poetry and epic), because it is plastic and evolving while other literary genres are accounted fixed and dead. As a result, he applies the notion of genre to all kinds of communicative practice by which communities of understanding are established.⁵⁸

For Bakhtin, poetics tends to suppress the competition and conflictual interaction of genres. As he remarks: "The great organic poetics of the past - those of Aristotle, Horace, Boileau - are permeated with a deep sense of the wholeness of literature and the harmonious interaction of all genres contained within this whole. It is as if they literally hear this harmony of the genres."⁵⁹ For the epic, the absolute past is valorised, the theme is tradition itself, and the emphasis lies on closure and completeness, while the novel is the genre of historic present, the on-going and unfinalizable process of every day life connected or interrelated with difference.

As the monologic representation of a single and authoritative voice, "the world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of 'beginning' and 'peak times' in the

⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 81.

⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 5.

national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of ‘firsts’ and ‘bests.’”⁶⁰ And the epic has come down to us as an absolutely completed and finished genetic form, in which the past is an absolute, not just a merely transitory past.⁶¹ In the world of the epic, everything is good, and this ‘good’ is good for later generations as well. In its monochronic and valorised character, it lacks any relativity, so the epic depicts a completed, perfected world as legend, the sacred and incontrovertible. According to Bakhtin, the epic is

as closed as a circle; inside it everything is finished, already over. There is no place in the epic world for any openendedness, indecision, indeterminacy. There are no loopholes in it through which we glimpse the future; it suffices unto itself, neither supposing any continuation nor requiring it.⁶²

But, the novel is inherently dialogic, an unfinalized and imperfect world. The novel is distinctive in character, as Holquist points out, it opens a window in discourse from which the extraordinary variety of languages can be perceived; it is able to create a work space in which that variety is not only displayed but in which it can become an active force in shaping cultural history.⁶³ Bakhtin singles out the novel as his “personal hero,” and “a special kind of force” which he calls “novelness,” that reveals the limits of a given system as inadequate, imposed, and arbitrary,⁶⁴ and manifests the self-discovery

⁶⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 13.

⁶¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 19.

⁶² Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 16.

⁶³ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism*, p. 72.

⁶⁴ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 276.

of the other. Novelness is a correlation of the dialogized heteroglossia, and as a form of knowledge or, of authoring, it puts alternative orders of experience into dialogue with each other, in potential double-voicing in a single utterance. According to Bakhtin,

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organised. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, genetic language, language of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific socio-political purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphasis) - this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelations (always more or less dialogued).⁶⁵

It is an articulation of different voices, the heteroglossia. It resists the centripetal forces of an official literary language, but represents an integral form of life and different perspectives.

⁶⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, pp. 262-263.

The novel can be considered as an ideology which shapes a form that develops a special view of language in their interaction and combinations. But, Bakhtin sees the novel as “the expression of a Galilean perception of language, one that denies the absolutism of a single unitary language - that is, it refuses to acknowledge its own language as the sole verbal and semantic center of the ideology.”⁶⁶ He understands all languages are related, but not in terms of an absolute relativism, which makes competition among languages useless and pointless. He means that no language can have an absolute privilege, because each language is to be interrelated and questioned with respect to others, continuously; each language encounters the other, as it is encountered by the other. The Other is required in this process, as “an image of a language may be structured only from the point of view of another language, which is [temporarily] taken as a norm.”⁶⁷ The novel ‘dialogues’ languages as intensely as possible, by creating images of one language from the stand point of others. Therefore, in Bakhtin, both heteroglossia and intense dialogisation are necessary for language to be novelistic. “What is realised in the novel is the process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own conceptual horizon in someone else’s horizon.”⁶⁸

From this perspective, Bakhtin considers or places Dostoevsky’s novel as a double-voiced discourse. As he remarks,

⁶⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 366.

⁶⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 359.

⁶⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 365.

We consider Dostoevsky one of the greatest innovations in the realm of artistic form. He created, in our opinion, a completely new type of artistic thinking, which we have provisionally called *polyphonic*. This type of artistic thinking found its expression in Dostoevsky's novels, but its significance extends far beyond the limits of the novel alone and touches upon several basic principles of European aesthetics. It could be said that Dostoevsky created something like a new artistic model of the world, one in which many basic aspects of old artistic form were subjected to a radical restructuring.⁶⁹

In the polyphonic novel, of Dostoevsky, the multiple voices and characters are not subsumed to the authorial world view, but independent and "equally valid" "*alongside the author's world.*"⁷⁰ Moreover, different consciousnesses are engaged in a dialogue, in which characters are "not only objects of authorial discourse but also their own directly signifying discourse."⁷¹ In a conventional sense, the most significant turn is a "radical change in the author's position,"⁷² since the polyphonic work demands the author to cease exercising monologic control. It resists the traditional expectation of unity, as he writes, "The unified, dialectically evolving spirit, understood in Hegelian terms, can give rise to nothing but a philosophical monologue."⁷³ Rather he insisted that "the fundamental category in Dostoevsky's mode of artistic visualisation was not

⁶⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 3.

⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 7. "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels..... a plurality of consciousness, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event." *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 7.

⁷² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 67.

⁷³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 26.

evolution, but *coexistence* and *interaction*. He saw and conceived his world primarily in terms of space, not time.”⁷⁴ As Bakhtin perceives the world as essentially a collectivity of subjects who are themselves social in essence, not individuals, so he also perceives human language as permeated with many voices - a social, not a private event. Humans, according to Bakhtin, are situated and conditioned in the world, where individuality is never private or autonomous, but achieved in multi-voicedness and multi-centeredness.

In this polyphonic novel (of the irreducible multi-centeredness and voicedness of human life), the consciousness of the creator is “constantly and everywhere present in the novel, and is active in it to the highest degree. But the function of this consciousness and the forms of its activity are different than in the monologic novel: the author’s consciousness does not transform others’ consciousness (that is, the consciousness of the characters) into objects, and does not give them secondhand and finalising definitions.”⁷⁵ Bakhtin subordinates the voice of author to the interactions of consciousness, as he remarks on his hero, Dostoevsky:

Dostoevsky, like Goethe’s Prometheus, creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus), but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him. A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of full valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky’s novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a

⁷⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 28.

⁷⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, pp. 67-68.

plurality of consciousness, with equal right and each with its own world, combines but are not merged in the unity of event. Dostoevsky's major heroes are, by the very nature of his creative design, not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse. In no way, then can a character's discourse be exhausted by the usual functions of characterization and plot development, nor does it serve as a vehicle for the author's own ideological position (as with Byron, for instance). The consciousness of a character is given as someone else's consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a single object of the author's consciousness.⁷⁶

Thus, in dialogic-polyphonic interrelation, the new position of the author is, in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, "a *fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position*, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero.... As this dialogue - 'the great dialogue' of the novel as a whole - takes place not in the past, but right now, that is in the real present of the creative process."⁷⁷ Its idea is inter-subjective and inter-individual, in relation to the other living voice or consciousness; its relation is the 'in-between the voices,' that goes beyond themselves, as "the word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction."⁷⁸ Bakhtin's hero is characterised by 'unfinalizability'; he is a subject of becoming, not of being. The hero is engaging with the alien consciousnesses,

⁷⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 63.

⁷⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 280.

and becoming 'himself' through a dynamic encounter with other's discourse - that we call the process of dialogue. The process becomes very important in developing and redirecting our consciousness, as Bakhtin says,

The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. This process is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness (just as they struggle with one another in surrounding social reality). A conversation with an internally persuasive word that one has begun to resist may continue, but it takes on another character: it is questioned, it is put in a new situation in order to expose its weak sides, to get a feel for its boundaries, to experience it physically as an object.⁷⁹

In the conflation of two voices in one utterance, languages are hybridised when the languages are viewed from each other's perspectives in a discourse. This is what he calls "hybridisation," which is "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor."⁸⁰ For Bakhtin, the concept of 'mode of production' is determined intersubjectively, and what determines that we know about

⁷⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 348.

⁸⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 358.

them at all are intersubjective human relations which are never complete. Therefore, this internal dialogism is never subject to ultimate resolution or closure, but permits

languages to be used in ways that are indirect, conditional, distanced. They all signify a relativizing of linguistic consciousness in the perception of language borders -borders created by history and society, and even the most fundamental borders (i.e., those between languages as such) - and permit expression of a feeling for the materiality of language that defines such a relativized consciousness.⁸¹

Here, Bakhtin uses the idea of hybridisation to unmask the voice of the other within the same utterance, through a language that is double-accented or double-voiced, because,

What we are calling a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages," two semantic and axiological belief system.⁸²

Bakhtin uses the idea of multiplicity and openness to subvert the forces of stability and closure. He rejects essentialism, because "the conscious subject is itself dialogically constructed, and can therefore only exist through its materialisation in social or intersubjective signs."⁸³ This means that utterance is already related to an immediate

⁸¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, pp. 323-324.

⁸² Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, pp. 304-305.

⁸³ Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology*, p.87. "Individual consciousness is not the architect of the ideological superstructure, but only a tenant lodging in

social situation and wider socio-historical circumstances, so that the basis for actual choices and decisions is made in the realm of everyday social existence. Bakhtin says that when we seek to understand a word,

what matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions - this is the false front of the word; what matters is the actual and always self-interested *use* to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker, a use determined by the speaker's position and by the concrete situation. Who speaks and under what conditions he speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning.⁸⁴

What Bakhtin is trying to emphasise is that every utterance comes into contact and interacting with alien words, and must be an active participant in social dialogue. Through interaction, the utterance's potentiality for multiplicity generates new significances and meanings: "Contextual meaning is potentially infinite, but it can only be actualised when accompanied by another (other's) meaning."⁸⁵ Language can generate new meaning that did not exist previously, through the interactions between inter-texts or contexts, 'in a continuous chain of speech performances': "There can be no such thing as an isolated utterance. It always supposes utterances that precede and follow it. No one utterance can be either the first or the last. Each is only a link in the chain, and none can be studied outside this chain."⁸⁶ As this process is potentially

the social edifice of ideological signs." Voloshinov [Bakhtin], *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 13.

⁸⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 401.

⁸⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 145.

⁸⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 136.

infinite, Bakhtin stresses the need of a living and creative hermeneutics: "I live in a world of other's words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others' words (an infinite diverse reaction)."⁸⁷ What is important is our location within interrelation or interactional polyphonic discourses in which we become aware of others and ourselves.

Novelness is rooted in Bakhtin's understanding of reality, the novel is the characteristic text that signifies the history of consciousness, not because it shows the self-discovery of itself, but because it manifests the self-discovery of the other.⁸⁸ For Bakhtin,

Novelness is a means of charting changes that have come about as a result of increasing sensitivity to the problem of non-identity. Greater or lesser degrees of novelness can serve as an index of greater or lesser awareness of otherness. The history of the novel has its place in literary history, but the history of novelness is situated in the history of human consciousness.⁸⁹

The novel presents the creative memories of otherness (the centrifugal force of otherness) across discursive contexts, and correlates these voices in dialogue, the dialogue between characters, through metalinguistic relationships. It is "a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even a diversity of languages) and a diversity of

⁸⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 143.

⁸⁸ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Mikhail Bakhtin and his World*, p.75.

⁸⁹ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Mikhail Bakhtin and his World*, pp. 72-73.

individual voices, artistically organized.”⁹⁰ Bakhtin argues that novelness best presents the undeniable fact of life, for it is multiform in style, speech and voice, and signifies diversity of social speech types. This means that novelised work is driven by other possibilities, struggles, and contingencies, and in this course, the past is dialogised, contested, unresolved and open-ended. The novel is “the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness,”⁹¹ different voices inhabit time differently, as in space,⁹² in a continuing struggle for meaning. Consequently, novelness as the fact of reality, opposes monoglossia and its privileged position, its official genre/discourse and its elite culture. As a liberating force, it ruptures the hierarchical and mythological image of the past.

Novelness is “the expression of a language consciousness that has been profoundly relativized by heteroglossia and polyphony. It is precisely thanks to the novel that languages are able to illuminate each other mutually; literary language becomes a dialogue of languages that both know about and understand each other.”⁹³ The novel demands a broadening of the language horizon, a sharpening in our perception of socio-linguistic representations. Bakhtin indicates that the novel reveals

⁹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 262.

⁹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 11.

⁹² Bakhtin’s important concept of chronotope meaning “time space,” is intrinsically related with “the connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.” “What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time.” “In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully through-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.” Bakhtin “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 84.

the limits of the literary system as inadequate and opposes canonisation. As Clark and Holquist point out, Bakhtin views the novel as “a kind of epistemological outlaw, a Robin Hood of texts. Because the fundamental features of any culture are inscribed in its texts, not only in its literary texts but in its legal and religious ones as well, ‘novelness’ can work to undermine the official or high culture of any society.”⁹⁴ Therefore, the novel as a developing genre, characterises the idea of becoming or unfinalizability, and celebrates the interrelation of genres and voices, displaying otherness. As opposed to the official or high culture, this idea of novel (ness) has even greater implications in real life, for the novel is a book about life, associating in the living elements of unofficial language and thought, that go beyond the boundary of tradition.

4. The Idea of Carnival: Bakhtin and Rabelais’ World.

Bakhtin sees the novel as being dialogised in the heteroglossia which bears many voices, in the concrete and historical reality of time and space. He claims that, just as the novel plays this role in literature, the carnival does the same in the real life of cultures: carnival is “one of the most complex and most interesting problems in the

⁹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Discourse in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 400.

⁹⁴ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 276-277.

history of culture.”⁹⁵ Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*, focuses on the cultural dynamics in a particular historic moment as reflected in the novels of François Rabelais, and uses Rabelais as a kind of sounding board, to relate Bakhtin himself to Rabelais in the 1930s, as Rabelais did to Villon in the 1530s.

In his novel, and by means of his novel, Rabelais behaves exactly as did Villon and the Lord of Basché. He acts according to their methods. He uses the popular-festive system of images with its charter of freedom consecrated by many centuries; and he uses them to inflict a severe punishment upon his foe, the Gothic age. It is a merry play and therefore immune, but a play without footlights. In this setting of consecrated rights Rabelais attacks the fundamental dogmas and sacraments, the holy of holies of medieval ideology.⁹⁶

Rabelais was directly against the serious force of official language and ideology that would deny the dynamic nature of human life. Rabelais presented the opposite, manifesting the extreme act of body and the word that rejects all “ideologically negative things” of the “transcendental ascetic world view” of the Middle age.⁹⁷

Rabelais’ task is “to purge the spatial and temporal world” of a transcendent world view, “to clean away symbolic and hierarchical interpretations,” and to re-create “a spatially and temporally adequate world able to provide a new chronotope for a new,

⁹⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 122.

⁹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.268.

⁹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 185.

whole and harmonious man, and for new forms of human communication.”⁹⁸ For this task, Rabelais uses the images that oppose all finished and ready-made solutions, and at the same time, he challenges entire ideological perceptions within it. He uses images drawn from the traditional folk culture of humour, for example, carnivalesque laughter, belonging to the culture of folk carnival humour - “A boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture.”⁹⁹ Bakhtin sees this idea of carnival as a constellation of rituals, games, plays, eating, and drinking, which constitutes an alternative social space, where everything is permissible, and everyone is equal. He says that “carnival is the people’s second life, organised on the basis of laughter. It is festive life.”¹⁰⁰

In its opposition to official ideology, Bakhtin says, “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal.”¹⁰¹ According to Bakhtin, one of the most significant elements in carnival is the suspension of all hierarchical precedence during the carnival;

⁹⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 168.

Chronotope (literally time-space) is a mobile term which alludes to the way time and space are together conceived and represented. Rabelais rediscovers the chronotope in response to the dissolution of medieval society, and it serves as the basis for his extra-ordinary grotesque images, from Smith Denith, *Bakhtinian Thought* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 52-53.

⁹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 8.

all were considered equal during carnival. Here, in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age..... People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind. This temporal suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. A special carnivalesque, market place style of expression was formed which we find abundantly represented in Rabelais novel.¹⁰²

Bakhtin uses this idea of carnival as a means to signify a new picture of the world, because in carnival, “everyone participates,” “there is no other life outside it,” and “life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom.”¹⁰³ With this utopian vision, Bakhtin criticises the monologic tendencies within contemporary society (then, Soviet regime) and suggests an alternative image. He defamiliarises the present system, historicises what an elite projects as eternal, and relativises the abstract truth claiming, as carnival “discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10.

¹⁰² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10.

¹⁰³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 48.

Bakhtin perceives carnival, as a function, not a substance, that “absolutizes nothing, but rather proclaims the joyful relativity of everything,”¹⁰⁵ since it relates different things together, as the novel functions. In its interconnectedness, Bakhtin sets out his vision, in terms of “grotesque body.” The grotesque body is “a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.”¹⁰⁶ It is the body that is interwoven and constantly generating something new. In this body, the individual body loses its definition, but collectivises at a transindividual (as in translinguistics) level, and he says,

the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people... this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualised. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are constantly growing and renewed.¹⁰⁷

In this collective body, what belongs to whom is irrelevant and impossible to detect, because everything is combined and intercorporated.

¹⁰⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 317.

¹⁰⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 19.

Moreover, for Bakhtin, there is no demarcation between the human body and the realm of culture, because the individual body is not an autonomous object, but rather an indivisible unity of a collective cosmic representation of the people. Carnival does not recognise distinctions between actors and spectators, because “carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.”¹⁰⁸ This means that carnival creates a different order of human relations, and constitutes an alternative vision.¹⁰⁹ Bakhtin’s definition of the grotesque body is positive and assertive in nature, but anti-classicist in its rejection of the humanistic bodily ideal of the Renaissance. For example, death in the grotesque body as the collective body of the people, is not an unmitigated disaster, but in this blurring of boundaries, death and life become indistinguishable: “Death and health throes, labor and childbirth are intimately interwoven,”¹¹⁰ for it “debases, destroys, regenerates and renew simultaneously.”¹¹¹ For Bakhtin, the nature of the grotesque body is crucial in reflecting cultural and artistic nature. As Clark and Holquist note, the grotesque body “incorporates what are [Bakhtin’s] primary values: incompleteness, becoming, ambiguity, indefinability, non-canonicalism - indeed, all that jolts us out of our normal expectations and epistemological complacency.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Ann Jefferson, “Body matters,” *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, p. 165.

¹¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 151; Ann Jefferson, “Body matters,” *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, p. 167.

¹¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 151

¹¹² Clarke and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 312.

Carnival is described as a clearing away of dogma so that new creation can take place - a hybridity of high and low forms of culture. Carnival is not simply the underside of the symbolic official culture, but rather it is an engagement of dialogical relation in its becoming. It creates a space that permits the participants to escape social distinctions temporally, and establishes the crossing of borders and limits.

The popular-festive language of the market place abuses while praising and praises while abusing. It is a two-faced Janus. It is addressed to the dual-bodied object, to the dual-bodied world; it is directed at once to the dying and to what is being generated, to the past that gives birth to the future.¹¹³

For Bakhtin, the carnivalesque has been the most important factor in the development of culture, opening towards the future, as he says: “Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future.”¹¹⁴ Hence, history must be understood as something that is *becoming*, rather than something completely ordered or random. Bakhtin’s idea of becoming as historicity, opposes the thinking that reduces the present moment to a simple derivative of what went before”, but rather it emphasises “the ‘eventness’ of the event and the necessity of responsibility here and now,” as he insisted on “the presentness of each

¹¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 415.

¹¹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 166.

moment,” and on the fact that “time is open and each moment has multiple possibilities.”¹¹⁵

Bakhtin calls this ‘creative consciousness,’ ‘creative understanding,’ or ‘re-accenting,’ that comes into being at the cross-roads of inter-relation, in its unfinalizability. He sees this creativity as an active, living, on-going event, happening everyday and everywhere, and for him, this creativity produces not a final word, but a range of possibilities, for a unified word could be only theoretical, nothing to do with real act of life. Bakhtin is “after aggregates of forces, suggestive metaphors, the possibility of an artistic or real life action doing something not systematic and predictable, but precisely new, unexpected.”¹¹⁶ In this real life situation, full of the unexpected and new, Bakhtin understands the self as unfinalizable, and history as fundamentally open, in its intrinsic creativity. In this process, theories of language, literature, culture, and the self can be understood in terms of creativity and openness towards the future.

Bakhtin’s determination to escape from fixed monological ideas, to an active, incomplete, and open sphere, also emerges in the sphere of culture. He emphasises the unity of human personality and of culture:

¹¹⁵ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic*, pp.45-46.

¹¹⁶ Caryl Emerson, “Review of Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle,” *Comparative Literature* 38 (Fall, 1986), p.371.

One must not, however, imagine the realm of culture as some sort of spatial whole, having boundaries but also having internal territory. The realm of culture has no internal territory: it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its very aspect. ... Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and significance; abstracted from boundaries it loses its soil, it becomes empty, arrogant, it degenerates and dies.¹¹⁷

What Bakhtin requires is “new semantic depth”¹¹⁸ in other cultures and in our own culture, rather than trying to collect artefacts and present the foreign cultural point of view in its own language. The latter has been a very strong, but one-sided practice of the West. So, in order to understand a foreign culture, Bakhtin suggests, “one must enter into it, forgetting one’s own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture.”¹¹⁹ For him, entering into a foreign culture is an imperative part of the process of understanding, but if this understanding becomes a goal, this process becomes merely “duplication and would not entail anything new or enriching.”¹²⁰ Thus, Bakhtin says:

Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be *located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding - in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one’s own

¹¹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 301, note 7.

¹¹⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, pp. 6-7.

¹²⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 7.

exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are *others*.¹²¹

Outsideness (the other) constitutes the possibility of dialogue, and through dialogue it becomes possible to understand a culture in semantic depth, and reveals a potentiality which creates new possibilities for the future activity and dialogue. This dialogical encounter of two cultures “does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched.”¹²² This is a challenge to the fetishization or reification of social relation, “the false tendency toward reducing everything to a single consciousness, toward dissolving in it the other’s consciousness.”¹²³ Dialogical encounter helps create a liminal social space of interaction and interrelation of cultures, as “[c]reative understanding continues creativity, and multiplies the artistic wealth of humanity.”¹²⁴

Through the dialogic interaction between different languages and cultures, a new world is born; the key to carnival is its function as the ultimate mediator of humanity. Carnival periodically relieves human lives from alienation, the sense of separation, division, and the loss of a sense of wholeness. Carnival has life-giving and

¹²¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 7.

¹²² Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 7.

¹²³ Mikhail Bakhtin, “From Notes Made in 1970-71,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 141.

¹²⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, “From Notes Made in 1970-71,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 142.

transformative power, as it re-establishes the link between the individual, the community, and the universe. Bakhtin characterises this participation in carnival as a moment of transcendence out of the self, into a large fellowship. He defines carnival as the second life of a people.

5. Bakhtin and Theological Implications

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic engagement and interaction defines our existence as a shared event - we are in relation and dialogue with the other. He rejects the theoretical categories of authoritative word or discourse, as counter-productive communication. He insists on a "mutual answerability" between the boundaries of culture and ordinary life human activities, and he considers the reality of life as an on-going dialogue, an unfinalizable process.

He reminds us of the dialogic nature of consciousness and the dialogic nature of human life itself; it is an open-ended dialogue:

To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in

discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogue fabric of human life, into the world symposium.¹²⁵

This dialogical human nature requires a dialogic thinking of truth, as opposed to the official monologism of ready-made truth. For Bakhtin, “Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.”¹²⁶ According to Bakhtin, Socrates brought people together, and as a result, truth was born (he called himself a ‘midwife’) but, in Plato’s dialogue, the genre of Socratic dialogue was destroyed and made into ready-made irrefutable truth, when this entered the service of the established, dogmatic worldview of various philosophical and religious traditions; for Bakhtin, Plato later turned this “completely into a question-and-answer form for training neophytes (catechism).”¹²⁷ He considers this thematisation or formulation as intellectual or linguistic, political, even theological imperialism or colonialism.

This radical revision of knowledge echoes certain theological implications in the concept of language, and of inter-relational dialogism. The significant theological point is that Bakhtin sees Christ, not only as an event of human salvation, but also as a decisive event in inter-human relationships. In Christ, the word was made flesh, and a primary feature of Bakhtin’s concept of language is his emphasis on the materiality of the word: “Consciousness can arise and become a viable fact only in the material

¹²⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 239.

¹²⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 110.

¹²⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 110

embodiment of signs.”¹²⁸ In other words, the word or sign has its meaning and purpose when it is shared with the others. Discourse is a communal engagement as “Word is two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant.”¹²⁹ Bakhtin, who is influenced by the Russian Orthodox tradition, understands the passages from Gospel of John 1:1 - 1: 14, as God’s engagement to us with ‘enfleshment and embodiment,’ then translates it into his own terms - the word becomes real and substantial when people commit themselves to dialogic interaction with others. God’s kenotic act in Christ is the consciousness by which we are oriented, as we share the Word with the others for the development of the idea of God in humankind.¹³⁰

5.1. Theological Sense and Attitude

In contemporary pluralist society, Bakhtin’s theological implications provide a challenge for us to engage with many other voices, and offers rich resource for a theology of dialogue, in the making of togetherness. In this relation to the others, the consciousness Bakhtin is trying to establish is “not theory (transient content), but a ‘sense of theory.’”¹³¹ It is the same in his theology: it is “not faith (in the sense of a specific faith in orthodoxy, in progress, in man, in revolution, etc.), but a *sense of faith*,

¹²⁸ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 86.

¹²⁹ Voloshinov/Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), p. 86.

¹³⁰ Anton Ugolnik, “Tradition as Freedom from the Past: Eastern Orthodox and the Western Mind,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 21:2, Spring 1984, p. 290.

that is, an integral attitude (by means of the whole person) toward a higher and ultimate value.”¹³² For Bakhtin, atheism is an indifferent attitude toward an ultimate value, and a rejection of an ultimate possibility in the world.¹³³ For Bakhtin, Christ is a result of the inter-relation or encounter between the self and other: the enfleshment of God, the Word; and Christ is the generator of ‘*sense and attitude*’ for everything and every human relation.

Something that is new or creative, does not happen in the abstract, as shown in the incarnation of God in Christ; God had to incarnate himself and descend from the abstract standpoint of justice into a unique event, to have a relation with men (rather to relate himself with men). As for human relations, creativity in the event is intrinsically theological, because human creativity reflects or expresses the divinity of God, the surplus of meaning, which is a necessary condition in carrying the life forward into the future. For Bakhtin, a Russian Orthodox whose emphasis is on the relational aspect of the Trinity and on the Incarnation, God is not to be understood as a static entity, but as an active engendering energy being concretised in physicality. As mentioned previously, God is like the air we breath, hence God is all-pervasive and life-giving and sustaining; God is the absolute other who enables human creativity. As for the human life situation, our activity in and through the everyday encounters with the others, creates something new out of ourselves.

¹³¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 294.

¹³² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 294.

¹³³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 294.

Having explored the inter-human relation in Bakhtin, it turns out to be impossible to set a principle for an ethical theory. Because, on the issue of what is right and wrong, absolutist approaches are inadequate to particular situations, and sometimes, contradict each other, while relativist approaches deny the meaningfulness of the questions completely. For Bakhtin, rejection of absolutism does not mean accepting relativism, because relativism (or subjectivism) is located in the realm of abstract theory, and as such, relativism (subjectivism) and absolutism (dogmatism) are two sides of the same coin.¹³⁴ These two approaches are, in fact, attempting to generalise and systematise morality into a general norm, as Kant argued - "ethics could be grounded on the principle that moral agents should make judgements," "as if each judgement might effect any person at any time."¹³⁵ Bakhtin calls this "the universality of ought,"¹³⁶ where principle is a "philosophically defined, rationally motivated version of the golden rule," built into the theory of law.¹³⁷ In the abstract theory, the 'oughtness' and 'eventness' are removed or destroyed by its rules. Against this principle, Bakhtin tries to link ethics with the everyday life in a particular situation as a living act performed and felt in the real world. Holquist remarks,

He [Bakhtin] seeks the sheer quality of happening in life before the magma of such experience cools, hardening into igneous theories, or

¹³⁴ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic*, pp. 25-26.

¹³⁵ Michael Holquist, "Foreword," in Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, pp. xi-x.

¹³⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 25.

¹³⁷ Michael Holquist, "Foreword," in Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. x.

accounts of what has happened. And just as lava differs from the rock it will become, so the two states of lived experience, on the other hand, and systems for *registering* such experience on the other, are fundamentally different from each other.¹³⁸

An ethical system is destroyed by the assumption that ethics are activated by the rule, attempting to totalise knowledge in itself - “the abstractly theoretical self-regulated world (a world fundamentally and essentially alien to once-occurrent, living historicalness)”¹³⁹. For Bakhtin, this is essentially an epistemological crisis, that is a crisis of philosophy, because “any kind of *practical* orientation of my life within the theoretical world is impossible: it is impossible to live in it, impossible to perform answerable deeds. In that world I am unnecessary; I am essentially and fundamentally non-existent in it.”¹⁴⁰

So, what is important for ethics, is physicality, a physical setting in which the subject participates and interacts in the singularity of its unique place in existence; it is a real experience, as the ethical dimension is generated in the act of reading, resulting from the interaction between the reader and author. It is a “participating thinking” that “seeks to overcome its own givenness for the sake of what-is-to-be-attained.”¹⁴¹ For

¹³⁸ Michael Holquist, “Foreword,” in Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. x.

¹³⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 9.

¹⁴¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 11.

The idea of ‘what -is-to-be-obtained’ is equivalent of German *Aufgegebenheit* (something given as a task-yet-to-be-accomplished, a problem-to-be-solved) as opposed to *Geebenheit* (something given, what is given). In Bakhtin, this idea is used in terms of ‘something-yet-to-be-achieved’ or ‘yet-to-be-accomplished’ or ‘yet-to-be-determined.’ *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

Bakhtin, ethics are fundamentally dialogic, and he rejects and attacks the notion of universal oughtness that becomes a rule or a system which is closed and static, because for him, ethics are constituted by the axiological dimension of life, generating something new through interaction. The way in which we act and speak is not just a product or a reflection of what is given, rather “it always creates something that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable, and, moreover, it always has some relation to value (the true, the good, the beautiful, so forth).... *What is given is completely transformed in what is created.*”¹⁴²

Bakhtin’s concept of creative understanding in an actual and concrete situation, indicates four steps of a process: physical perception, recognition, significance, and active-dialogic understanding.¹⁴³ This process is much more than an acknowledgement of an existing context; it is creative and generates new contexts constantly. He says,

My attitude toward Formalism: a different understanding of specification; ignoring content leads to “material aesthetics” (criticism of this in my article of 1924); not “making” but creativity.... My attitude toward structuralism: I am against enclosure in a text. Mechanical categories: “opposition,” “change of codes”.... Sequential formalization and depersonalisation: all relations are logical (in the broad sense of the word). But I hear voices in everything and dialogic relations among them.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, pp. 119-120. [my italic].

¹⁴³ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences,” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences,” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 169.

For Bakhtin, in all human knowledge, everything begins as an interaction between at least two points of views. Unlike natural science which assumes one subject, or the researcher studying inanimate voiceless things, human science requires things that have surrounding factors. The goal is not objective knowledge, but rather what Bakhtin calls 'event' which entails an evaluation that must in turn anticipate a counter-valuation, as "the text lives only by coming into contact with another text (with context). Only at the point of this contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue."¹⁴⁵ In this event, "thought knows only conditional points; thought erodes all previously established points,"¹⁴⁶ and therefore, its creative understanding

fusses about in the narrow space of small time, that is, in the space of the present day and the recent past and the imaginable - desired or frightening - future..... the trivially human attitude toward the future (desire, hope, fear); there is no understanding of evaluative nonpredetermination, unexpectedness, as it were, "surprisingness," absolute innovation, miracle, and so forth. The special nature of the *prophetic* attitude toward the future. Abstraction from the self in ideas about the future (the future without me).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 162.

¹⁴⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 162. Here, Bakhtin compares the 'event' as opposed to the idea of dogmatic thought being like a fish in an aquarium, not being able to swim farther and deeper, but knocking against the bottom and the sides. Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 167.

Thus, in this event, “the limit here is not *I* but *I* in interrelationship with other personalities, that is, *I* and *other*, *I* and *thou*,” in its infinite dialogue in which “there is neither a first nor a last word.”¹⁴⁸ What is significant is the fact that there is no cultural text which could be understood merely on its own terms: “creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be *located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding - in time, in space, in culture.”¹⁴⁹ For Bakhtin, the Other, or the outsideness is a very important factor in understanding inter-cultural discourse; it is only possible through the eyes of the other culture, to see ourselves in depth, because its meaning reveals itself through this encounter or contact with other or foreign culture. In the economy of inter-relationship (*I* and other, or *I* and thou, or even inter-cultural relation), says Bakhtin, “Question and answer are not logical relations (categories); they cannot be placed in one consciousness (unified and closed in itself); any response gives to a new question. Question and answer presuppose mutual outsideness. If an answer does not give rise to a new question from itself, it falls out of the dialogue and enters systemic cognition which is essentially impersonal.”¹⁵⁰ In other words, life as an event, is constituted by a living consciousness of the others, through inter-relation.

¹⁴⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences,” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, pp. 167-168.

¹⁴⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*,” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences,” *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 168.

Bakhtin's understanding of 'event' is intrinsically theological and ethical; creativity is theological because God creates us and enables all humans to create; creativity is ethical in this inter-personal relationship of daily life, requiring an answer and a responsible relation with others; thus, creativity is also theological in its response to the sphere of life. In relation to theological implication, Bakhtin writes the absolute axiological dimension: "outside God, outside the bounds of trust in absolute otherness, self-consciousness and self-utterance are impossible, and they are impossible not because they would be senseless practically, but because trust in God is an immanent constitutive moment of pure self-consciousness and self-expression."¹⁵¹ He does talk about the awareness of God, in which,

one can live and gain consciousness of oneself neither under a guarantee nor in a void (an axiological guarantee and an axiological void), but only in faith. Life (and consciousness), from within itself, is nothing else but the actualization of faith; the process of life's gaining self consciousness is a process of gaining consciousness of faith (that is, of need and of hope, of non-self-contentment and of possibility).¹⁵²

For Bakhtin, life becomes a naive life, when it doesn't know the air it breathes. God for Bakhtin is actual and symbolic 'air,' since human beings are not self-sufficient in themselves. God is not in a static system for human beings, but rather God is expressed in human creativity.

¹⁵¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, p. 144.

¹⁵² Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, p. 144.

The outside or the other is therefore the most important factor in understanding ourselves, as we engage in a dialogue which exposes the closedness and one-sidedness of particular meanings in particular cultures. Bakhtin sees human existence in a way which allows the other to play a significant and decisive role. The same applies to his understanding of other cultures,

We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. Without one's own questions one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreign (but, of course, the questions must be taken seriously and sincere).¹⁵³

Therefore, it is the other and its meaning that prevents us conceptualising a particular question, and the other has "the role of commentary,"¹⁵⁴ revealing us, so that "there can be a relative rationalisation of the contextual meaning or a deepening with the help of other meanings. Deepening through expansion of the remote context."¹⁵⁵ It is only through the encounter with others, 'we' can discover 'our' meaning in its profundity. A dialogic encounter of cultures promotes unity that is mutually enriching and open to infinity, "an infinity of symbolic contextual meanings and therefore it cannot be scientific in the way precise sciences are scientific."¹⁵⁶ In other words, understanding is

¹⁵³ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Methodology for the Human Science," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p.160.

¹⁵⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Methodology for the Human Science," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p.160.

¹⁵⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Methodology for the Human Science," *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, p.160

always a correlation with other texts, cultures or interpretations, which exceeds its boundaries, as understanding correlates into a new and future context.

We participate in a communal mode of existence, in mankind, in God's world, as we live our lives with axiological weight, in the other and for the other. Bakhtin likens this existence to being 'in a chorus,' " I do not sing for myself; I am active only in relation to the other and I am passive in the other's relationship to me..... I do not *create* rhythm for myself: I join in it for the sake of the other... Not my own nature but the human nature in me can be beautiful, and not my own soul but the human soul can be harmonious."¹⁵⁷ This chorus, the future of meaning, is not yet fulfilled, as something not yet final, as I experience temporarily within myself. I am aware of myself being illuminated with the yet-to-be meaning, as Bakhtin says,

This absolute future, the future of meaning that stands axiologically over against me, over against my whole temporality (everything that is already present in me), is not a future, but in the sense of being a temporal continuation of the same life, but in the sense of being a constant possibility, a constant need to transform my life formally, to put new meaning into my life.¹⁵⁸

The task of life is something to be achieved in the future, as something yet-to-be-achieved, as a future yet-to-be, as a unity-yet-to-be, in relation to the others. It is an acknowledgement of myself as someone yet-to-be, whose "axiological centre of my self-

¹⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, pp.120-121;121.

¹⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, p. 122.

determination is displaced into the future;” it is also accepting ‘my’ inability to see “my own pure givenness.”¹⁵⁹ What is important is the future, not here, not in the past and present, since myself will continue to be someone other than the self-satisfied one.

In this process of becoming or to be toward the future, Bakhtin says, ultimately “I turn to the outside of myself and surrender myself to the mercy of *the other*,” because “the position of outsideness makes possible (not only physically, but also morally) what is impossible for me in myself, namely: the axiological affirmation and acceptance of the whole present-on-hand givenness of another’s interior being.”¹⁶⁰ My own idea can only come from the perception of the other, not from my own perception, as I am conscious of myself only through the other, so human consciousness is intrinsically surrounded by the other’s consciousness. This means that a human being cannot exist simply in givenness (given being), and therefore, for Bakhtin, a single consciousness is impossible, as he says:

I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a *thou*). Separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as the main reason for the loss of one’s self. Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the boundary between one’s own and someone else’s consciousness, on the *threshold*. And everything internal gravitates not toward itself but it turned to the outside and dialogized, every internal experience ends up on the

¹⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 127.

¹⁶⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 128.

boundary, encounters another, and in this tension filled encounter lies its entire essence. This is the highest degree of sociality (not external, not material, but internal). Thus does Dostoevsky confront all decadent and idealistic (individualistic) culture, the culture of essential and inescapable solitude. He asserts the impossibility of solitude, the illusory nature of solitude. The very human being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion*. To be means to *communicate*. Absolute death (non-being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized, unremembered (Ippolit). To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into *the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another*..... I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance). Justification cannot be *self-justification*, recognition cannot be *self-recognition*. I receive my name from others, and it exists for others (self-nomination is imposture). Even love toward one's own self is impossible.¹⁶¹

Ultimately, in this event of inter-relation of consciousness, is a negating of myself, my 'own being-as-a-given,' as God incarnates himself and descends from the abstract standpoint of justice, in Christ. The act of incarnation of God, as an event in Christ, does indicate the fact that "the abstract standpoint does not know and does not see the movement of being as an ongoing event, does not know and does not see being as a still open process of axiological accomplishment."¹⁶² What is being implied here is that it is impossible to live and perform answerable acts or deeds in the theoretical or abstract world. Hence, these theories or abstract ideas need to be brought into communion with the actually occurring event of being in an ethical sphere, where a human being accepts

¹⁶¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.287-288.

¹⁶² Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, p. 129.

responsibility (or answerability) for the act of its cognition, that is *my* deed in actual living.

5.2. *Kenosis as Theological Space*

Bakhtin sees the act of God in Christ, the incarnation, as “a great symbol of self-activity,” because “in self-renunciation I actualize with utmost activeness and in full the uniqueness of my place in Being. The world in which I, from my own unique place, renounce myself does not become a world in which I do not exist, a world which is indifferent, in its meaning, to my existence: self-renunciation is a performance or accomplishment that encompasses Being-as-event.”¹⁶³ The act of God in Christ, the incarnation, is an inter-relationship and participation in the on-going event, as Bakhtin puts the image of Christ as “the resolution of ideological quest”¹⁶⁴; therefore, in this sense, “non-incarnated action, non-incarnated thought, non-fortuitous life” are empty possibilities.¹⁶⁵ Our answerable action or deed should participate in the context of Being as an event, where answerability is not for meaning in itself, but surpassing the meaning of the past, into participative thinking. Individual uniqueness moves away

¹⁶³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 43.

from theoretical unity, into the sphere of concrete reality and real life situation, as Bakhtin insists:

the uniqueness of actually occurring Being-as-event, in immediate proximity to which the answerable act or deed is set. Answerable inclusion in the acknowledged once-occurrent uniqueness of Being-as-event is precisely what constitutes the truth [*pravda*] of the situation [*polazhenie*].... What underlies the unity of an answerable consciousness is not a principle as a starting point, but the fact of an actual Being-as-event, and this fact cannot be adequately expressed in theoretical terms, but can only be described and participatively experienced.... I, too, participate in Being in a once-occurrent and never repeatable manner: I occupy a place in once-occurrent Being that is unique and never-repeatable, a place that cannot be taken by anyone else and is impenetrable for anyone else. In the given once-occurrent point where I am now located, no one else has ever been located in the once-occurrent time and once-occurrent space of once-occurrent Being.¹⁶⁶

This is what Bakhtin calls “my non-alibi in Being,” to indicate the moral responsibility in which there is no justification to bypass or escape from it, and to demand “the answerably performed act,”¹⁶⁷ in concrete real life situation. To live by an alibi means that we refuse to relate to the world, and to have relationships in the world; it is to become what Bakhtin calls a “pretender” by which he means “not someone who feigns someone else’s identity, but someone who avoids the project of selfhood and so tries to live without an identity of his own.”¹⁶⁸ This is the fact that I exist in the participation of once-occurrent Being, therefore, “my uniqueness... always makes possible my own

¹⁶⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁶⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 40.

unique and irreplaceable deed in relation to everything that is not *I*.”¹⁶⁹ For Bakhtin, in an actual participation, the most significant factor is the unique act or deed that is about “to perform - in its totally undetermined, concrete, unique, and compelling oughtness.” What is implied here, in the actual participation, is that truth of the event is “not the truth that is self-identical and self-equivalent in its content [*istina*],” generalising human being as a whole, but “the rightful and unique position of every participant - the truth [*pravda*] of each participant’s actual, concrete ought,”¹⁷⁰ existing in the uniqueness and in the concrete situation.

Therefore, in Bakhtin, the act of God in Christ - the incarnation, becomes the ethical reality of human relationship, in which the fundamental difference between *I* and the *other* makes an axiological act possible through the actual evaluation of the fundamental value-categories of *I* and the other. The axiological world is only possible in the relationship between *I* and the other, in which *I* cannot exist as a self-contented consciousness of uniqueness; rather

I am situated on the frontier of the horizon of my seeing; the visible world is disposed before me. By turning my head in all directions, I can succeed in seeing all of myself from all sides of the surroundings space in the center of which I am situated, but I shall never be able to see myself as actually surrounded by this space.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Emerson and Morson, *Creation of Prosaic*, p.31.

¹⁶⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p.42.

¹⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p.46.

In this relation with the world, another human being or other culture, *my* concrete experience with others, never becomes consummated, but infinitely participates and acts in its relationship. It is an ongoing process that cannot be experienced as complete, but ‘yet-to-be.’ For Bakhtin, meaning of one’s life is governed by “the cognitive-ethical tension of a lived life from within itself,” that is not “in the potentially consummated *whole* of what constitutes my present-on-hand life,” but in “progression of my own life.”¹⁷² Because, in Bakhtin,

Such a temporal whole is not capable of determining and organizing my thoughts and my acts from within me myself, for these thoughts and acts possess cognitional and ethical validity -they are extratemporal. One could say: I myself do not know how my soul looks from outside - in the world, in being; and even if I knew, its image would not be capable of founding and organising a single act of my own life from within myself, for the axiological validity (aesthetic validity) which such an image possesses is transgredient to myself (recourse to feigning is possible here, but feigning, too, exceeds the bounds of such an images, is not founded by it, and destroys it). Any consummation represents a *deus ex machina* for a life-sequence which, from within itself, is directed toward meaning (toward the validity of meaning).¹⁷³

In this axiological dimension, the concrete life of the other exists not in abstraction, nor scientific time, but “in the emotionally and axiologically ponderable time of lived life that is capable of becoming a musical-rhythmic time.”¹⁷⁴ It is to experience the chorus

¹⁷¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 37.

¹⁷² Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 108.

¹⁷³ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 108.

¹⁷⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 110.

of others a chorus I do not sing for myself, but participate in; “I feel in myself the body and the soul of another.... a movement or an action is incarnated into the other or is coordinated with the action of the other.. my own action enters into rhythm.... But I do not create rhythm for myself: I join in it for the sake of the other. Not my own nature but the human nature in me can be beautiful, and not my own soul but the human soul can be harmonious.”¹⁷⁵

This means rejecting the idealism and epistemology of the particular subject, for the subject’s idealism is “a phenomenology of my experience of myself, but not of my experience of the other.”¹⁷⁶ This is to affirm the unity of existence and transform it into the unity of consciousness, for epistemological reflection has nothing to do with the individual form of experiencing an object, but with transcendent forms of object and their ideal unity.¹⁷⁷ In other words, no stable definition of the self is possible, for we need the other, and the other needs us. It is only in the world of others that real life experience is possible. The significance of Christ, therefore, is the fact that He has felt at home in the world of other people *given* to Him; as Bakhtin says “the first and foremost condition for an aesthetic approach to this world is to understand it as the world of other people who have accomplished their lives in it.”¹⁷⁸ Our living in the world is to participate and to join in the communal mode of existence and in God’s world, where I live in the other and for the other. The act of participating and

¹⁷⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 110.

¹⁷⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 114.

experiencing “derives its activeness, its weight, from that which confronts it compellingly as a task (something-to-be-achieved),” and it is only the task that “organizes a life’s actualization-from-within (transforms possibility into actuality).”¹⁷⁹ The future (the absolute task) stands “axiologically against me,” and “over my whole temporality,” “transforms my life formally, to put new meaning into my life;”¹⁸⁰ through reflecting on lived experience from the perspective of its to-be-attained meaning, and of a future-yet-to-be.

On the other hand, what is implied here is the fact that *I* is yet-to-be, and such as, everything in my unity belongs to a future task. It is a realisation of myself as “the-one-who-is-yet-to-be-achieved, govern myself actually from the infinite prospect of my absolute future,” consequently,

as soon as I release myself as the-one-who-is-yet-to-be-achieved from the axiological field of my vision and stop being intensely with myself in the future, my own givenness loses its yet-to-be unity for me and disintegrates into factually existent, senseless fragments of being. The only thing left for me to do is to find a refuge in the other and to assemble - out of the other - the scattered pieces of my own givenness, in order to produce from them a parasitically consummated unity in the other’s soul using the other’s resources.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 111.

¹⁷⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, pp. 121-122.

¹⁸⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 122.

¹⁸¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability*, p. 126.

For Bakhtin, the gravity and axiological centre of my own self-determination is located solely in the future. What is important is not the pure givenness of I, but I as someone yet-to-be. Then, from this perspective, the life already totalised or consummated in its givenness, is one without hope of moving toward the future or the ultimate meaning of life. Bakhtin says, "In the deepest part of myself, I live by eternal faith and hope in the constant possibility of the inner miracle of a new birth,"¹⁸² in relation with the others.

In this sense, theology must be an ethical activity that is an open and evolving discourse, for the ethics emerge only from the concrete and physical setting of relationship. Theology is not a set of doctrines. Unlike traditional theologies that are based on untenable presuppositions, interpreting the given creeds and doctrines, this theology analyses what it is to be human in a real living situation with others; it analyses God in Christ as an event, searching for its capacity to provide insight for the contemporary real situation. As mentioned above, in Bakhtin, God, or the concept of God brings one's particular meanings into question, and demands a kind of self-criticism. For Bakhtin, the Johannine Word, in which paradoxically the new blends with the old that preceded it, provides a new creative consciousness of humankind toward more open and wider perspectives. This new creative consciousness is like generating energy through a spark produced by the friction of various languages and cultures; it is like mixing various chemical components, and producing something new. From this perspective, all that was definite and completed within itself is revealed as

¹⁸² Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, p. 127. Bakhtin indicates that Dostoevsky depicts the heroes in his novel, not as finalized, but unfinalized and changing

limited, and all that was determined and finite is about to die and open new possibilities in the future.

Theology, therefore has the capacity to provide insight into the contemporary human situation, as God in Christ has done by participating in the human situation and not just revealing himself. In this sense, a theological approach to the world should be formed as a question, rather than as an idea which states definitely what or who God is, or setting a proper method of interpreting God's revelation. Traditionally, God or the idea of God has been a kind of 'working hypothesis' that supposedly answers to human needs, and a kind of function of our notions of the human and the world. The doctrine of God has been regarded as the first and primary source of Christian theology, as in the *Summa Theologia* of Thomas Aquinas or the *Institute of the Christian Religion* of John Calvin. Those are directed toward interpreting, apprehending, and elaborating the complex meaning of the word God.¹⁸³ However, these are human constructions of God, and a personification of human virtue. If people acknowledge human capacities, theology must consist in continually asking questions, such as, where is God? who or what is God? what was revealed in the life and death of Jesus? in a concrete human situation. And, the ultimate question: "How are we to live?"¹⁸⁴ in the world. In this continuous questioning, we can talk about God, faith, and the world as all

on the threshold of life (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 73).

¹⁸³ Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 13.

¹⁸⁴ Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*, pp.14-15. Also, see *Theology for a Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), p. 18.

interconnected, in a way in which we discover our misconceptions and as a consequence, become open enough to allow other meanings in our exploration. The idea of God, or God, reveals our humanness and relativises our particular meaning, and moreover creates a “unique and powerful internal dialectic.”¹⁸⁵ God in this manner must be “the ultimate point of reference in terms of which the human and the world are to be understood, not the human and the world the principal points of reference for understanding God.”¹⁸⁶ Here, Kaufman says,

If God is to be the ultimate point of reference for understanding and orienting us in the world in which we live, then our contemporary experience and knowledge and problem must themselves function as a criterion to be taken into account in criticizing conceptions of God received from tradition and in formulating notions adequate for today... That is, God must be understood as in meaningful relationship to, and thus significantly relevant to, our contemporary human life with its particular problems. This criterion will, of course, be employed rather differently in different local situations, since each such situation confronts men and women with its own unique problems. In this respect theology is always heavily influenced by contextual factors, and should acknowledge this openly.¹⁸⁷

What this means is that the idea of God is a significant means for self-criticising and self-understanding in the contemporary human situation; the idea of God poses the question of value and meaning in a particular time and space, and opens towards a creative future.

¹⁸⁵ Gordon Kaufman, *Theological Imagination*, p. 34.

¹⁸⁶ Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁸⁷ Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*, p. 30.

The idea of God as the ultimate point of reference, poses a great challenge to the traditional theology of the West and questions the ethical legitimacy of its monologic and separate thought, in relation to other discourses. It also poses an ethical challenge to western cultural history concerning the West's rejection of the other and the West's manipulating attempt to develop and impose Western thinking on other people from different cultures. Thus, theology as a form of cultural criticism sets out to acknowledge and analyse the world and inherited reality critically in the light of the ultimate point of reference, God.

Having accepted the idea of God in this manner, the event of incarnation is a participating action of ultimate reality in the world. For Bakhtin, it is a degradation, as he says "the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract,"¹⁸⁸ and in other words, grotesque realism is a way of refuting intellectualism. In this perspective, the Incarnation means not the negation of the higher, but the participation of the higher in the lower. In fact, for Bakhtin, degradation means,

coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation,

¹⁸⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 19-20.

conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving.¹⁸⁹

The grotesque body is “ambivalent. It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth;”¹⁹⁰ it is a body that is becoming, and open to the world and the future through the death, pregnant, and birth. In its ontological ambiguity, it rejects the isolated meaning and value within the system and the modern picture of the world.

It is the degradation of God in Christ, the incarnation; the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and finally anticipated death and descended into Hades, the underground. In referring to degradation, Bakhtin quotes the words of the priestess, from Rabelais, in introducing the downward movement:

Go, my good friends; may you depart under the protection of that intellectual sphere, whose centre is everywhere, whose circumstance is nowhere, and whom we call God. When you return to your world, bear witness to your fellow men that the greatest treasure and most

¹⁸⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 25. Bakhtin grotesquely stresses on the parts of body that is open to the outside world, he says that it is “the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose.”

wonderful things lie hidden underground - and not without reason.
(Book 5, Chapter 48)¹⁹¹

Into the earth, Bakhtin says, “they bury their victim. But at the same time they are creative; they sow and harvest;” in this downward movement, creativity emerges,¹⁹² as he continues to say that “The material bodily lower stratum is productive. It gives birth, thus assuring mankind’s immortality. All obsolete and vain illusions die in it, and the real future comes to life,”¹⁹³ in referring to the future of mankind.

In Bakhtin, the idea of carnival, as indicated in the previous section, is significant for theological thinking, as well. As the Word became man in Christ, this idea of carnival provides the celebration of difference in unity, through the laughter and gay time and festivity. It has a redemptive force, because it stresses its life-giving and transformative power, as carnival is characterised as re-establishing the link between the individual, the community, and the universe that surrounds them both. Its victorious image cannot be separated from banquet images; “[i]n the act of eating, as we have said, the confines between the body and the world are overstepped by the body; it triumphs over the world, over its enemy, celebrates its victory, grows at the world’s expense.... the

¹⁹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 369. Rabelais’ world is directed toward the underworld - earthly and bodily. Downward movement signifies forms of popular-festivity and grotesque realism. *Ibid.*, p.370.

¹⁹² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 370.

¹⁹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 378. St. John Chrysostom takes Christ’s descent into Hell as a form of a parodic eucharist. In this sacrament, Christ is food. “Easter Homily of St. John Chrysostom,” translated by Paul Kachur, in Veselin Kesich, *The First Day of the New Creation* (Crestwood, NY.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), pp. 183-184.

victorious body receives the defeated world and is renewed.”¹⁹⁴ Bakhtin describes the utopian vision and hope in Christ as a function of carnival:

Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communicates in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants *live* in it, they live by its law as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a *carnivalistic life*. Because carnivalistic life is life drawn out of its *usual* rut, it is to some extent “life turned inside out,” “the reverse side of the world” (“*monde à l’envers*”).¹⁹⁵

Bakhtin characterises carnival as a moment of transcending the self into a larger fellowship, as during carnival, “every hierarchical structure”, “everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people,” is suspended. “All distance between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: free and familiar contact among people.”¹⁹⁶ Carnival inverts hierarchies and undermines boundaries. For Bakhtin, “carnival is the place of working out,” and carnival forms and functions as a “new mode of interrelationship between individuals,”¹⁹⁷ a different order of human relations. Thus, as in carnival, the incarnational act of God in Christ was functional in bringing the individual consciousness together and its connectedness into the ethical relation that requires an answerable deed and a responsible relation to others in a concrete life situation. Here,

¹⁹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 282-283.

¹⁹⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 122.

¹⁹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 123.

¹⁹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 123.

theology is ultimately a function of discourse, a becoming real, taking flesh only when it comes among people, as shown in the act of God in Christ, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'

5.3. Theology towards the *Great Time*

From this perspective, theology must be functional, since it is the human's creative and imaginative activity in the world, a limited world, calling temporally consummated meaning into question, as Bakhtin asserts that wholeness and order are never given, but set as a task-to-be-achieved. What is implied here, as far as theology is concerned, is that meaning is specified through conversation or contact with the other. Theological conversation must be self-critical and creative at the same time. There is no room for monologic principles or monologic truth in this sphere, because as in Bakhtin, monologic consciousness can be true or untrue only by itself and for itself. The dialogic sense of truth, in contrast to monologism, involves the participation of more than one consciousness; dialogic truth is ultimately unfinalised, because it exists on the threshold or cutting edge of interacting consciousness in opening for the future and in creating the new.

Theology as a form of discourse, in attempting to describe ultimate meaning, is a creative activity that is based on a fundamental attitude of faith and belief in God. Theology is a cultural discourse, but it breaks the cultural meaning in a particular society

as open, and expresses it in terms of interconnectedness. Since ethics exist only in a concrete setting and in relation with others, theology is ethically grounded and functions as a cultural criticism in examining our claims, and in offering new and affirmative vision for the future.

The future as the ultimate meaning in Bakhtin, “is hostile to the present and the past as to that which is devoid of meaning; hostile in the way a task is hostile to non-being-fulfilled-yet, or what-ought-to-be is hostile to what-is, or atonement is hostile to sin.” Therefore, “The demand is: live in such a way that every given moment of your life would be both the consummating, final moment and, at the same time, the initial moment of a new life.”¹⁹⁸ In the process of ‘to-be-achieved, fulfilled or fulfilled,’ what we need is to engage into dialogue, the ongoing process of communication, toward the ultimate meaning. What is important to realise here, is that dialogue is not a goal (or destination) to achieve (arrive), but rather it is a starting point itself, as Bakhtin says,

To be means to communicate..... To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has not internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another.¹⁹⁹

Theology is supposed to reveal what it is to be human, and what human ought to be; then, if a theology is self-enclosed within itself within a particular system, it will lose

¹⁹⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, p. 122

¹⁹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 287.

itself, because “separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as the main reason for the loss of one’s self.”²⁰⁰ Hence, monologic theology that pretends to be the ultimate word, is self-defeating, self-destructive and unethical and moreover denies the ultimate meaning of God. Theological monologism denies the “existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou), and considering the other merely an object of consciousness, not another consciousness.” As such, “No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalised and deaf to the other’s response.”²⁰¹

As previously mentioned, in section 1, we have to begin with the dialogic nature of consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself that is open-ended dialogue, in our theologising. Theology is not to be separated from life, as

Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 287.

²⁰¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 292-293.

²⁰² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 293.

This idea of dialogism rejects any attempt to interpret the reality of heteroglossia as just one of many, the vision of pluralism. Rather, it is personal as the different voices interact in conversation, taking place within intersubjective space. Bakhtin's goal is to break the totalitarian desire of authorial perspective (self-reflective), and to challenge the pretence of any one mode of representation to reflect reality. This is to bring the heteroglossia into the relation of interrelation, interorientation, and interaction, not just as an historical reality, but as an ethical force.

This means that we live entering into relation with others. Theology, in relation to other perspectives, should renounce its own consciousness and engage in a dialogical relation that does not come as a result of mixing, but rather mutually enriching in openness. What is revealed in human relations and the study of theology and culture is the fact that theory cannot provide the basis of responsible action and deed in the world; rather it is the concrete act or deed which provides what is most meaningful, answerable and responsible within human relations, indicating that,

The centre of gravity lies not in the meaning that has returned but in the return of the activity of movement (the internal and external movement of body and soul) that engendered this meaning.²⁰³

Theologically, it is revealed in an act of God in Christ, the kenotic Christ, which is the centre of Russian Orthodox spirituality that influences Bakhtin's thought profoundly;

God emptied himself to seek communion with the human , and in this process, Jesus was an example of this kenotic way of relating to each other in creating communication. God's incarnational act of self-emptying was "a choice made for the other, as an act of selflessness to benefit the other, rather than as an act of filial obedience to fulfil a divine ethical imperative."²⁰⁴ And this is translated in Bakhtinian ethics, "in all of Christ's norms the I and the other are contraposed: for myself - absolute sacrifice, for the other - loving mercy..... What I must be for the other, God is for me. What the other surmounts and repudiates within myself as an unworthy given, I accept in him and that with loving mercy as the other's cherished flesh."²⁰⁵ Then, what is important is our concrete living experience of the other. The fact is that, as the kenotic Christ shows, in creating communication and achieving the salvation of all creatures, the radical ethics of discourse is required.

The ethical imperative of discourse is that all must respect open-endedness, and that everything must be looked into in the light of the question of the future. In the light of the meaning of the future, the hidden mechanism of control and totalitarian desire might be exposed, as shown in the carnival bringing the question of the future into the *status quo* or temporally consummated meaning. Influenced by the kenotic Christ, Bakhtin, in theological terms, expects the eschatological time, saying,

²⁰³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, p. 310.

²⁰⁴ William D. Lindsey, "'The Problem of Great time': A Bakhtinian Ethics of Discourse," *Journal of Religion*, 73, July 1993, p. 326.

²⁰⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, p. 56. See also pp. 38-42.

[t]here is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalised, ended once and for all) - they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way that are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival. The problem of *great time*.²⁰⁶

It is the great time that breaks through the boundaries of people's own time and their lives within their own time, as in the sphere of culture, indicating that a particular culture cannot be enclosed within itself as something already made and completely finalised, but rather as something that is open and unfinalised, and existing and enacting in the time and space of the other.

In dialogical interaction, with the reference of the great time, no voices are ultimately dead, but rather silenced voices and manipulated voices speak and interact as happening in a space of carnival that transcends temporal and spatial confinement and creates something new that bears the seed of hope within it, as Holquist indicates,

in so far as my "I" is dialogic, it insures that my existence is not a lonely event but part of a larger whole. The thirdness of dialogue frees my existence from the very circumscribed meaning it has in the

²⁰⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Methodology for the Human Science," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 170.

limited configuration of self/other relations available in the immediate time and particular place of my life. For in the later times, and in other places, there will always be other configurations of such relations, and in conduction with that other, my self will be differently understood. This degree of thirdness outside the present event insures the possibility of whatever transgression I can achieve toward myself..... Poets who feel misunderstood in their lifetimes, martyrs for lost political causes, quite ordinary people caught in lives of quiet desperation - all have been correct to hope that outside the tyranny of the present there is a possible addressee who will understand them.²⁰⁷

Our participation in the *great time* enables dialogical discourse to move forward to the future - the ultimate meaning; the eschaton in theology. In this ethical/dialogical discourse, what is most needed, is a radically different presupposition that would create a space where other voices could be heard, where the future interrogates the significances of the past and present, and moreover where 'surprise' can be manifested. The important thing is to acknowledge the mystery of life and of God, in order to understand the world as an ongoing event and in order to orient 'myself' and live 'the living' as a process toward open-ended dialogue with the others. Theology as a discourse, is ultimately about becoming real when it participates among people.

²⁰⁷ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, p. 38.

Chapter 5. Theological Solidarity with the Other

Communication with the other can be transcendent only as a dangerous life, a fine risk to be run. (Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*)

it is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language.... we must never cease renewing those images, because once we do, we fossilise." (Brian Friel, *Translations*)

The main issue, in this chapter, is how to participate in a living discourse concerning national and cultural boundaries within the global context, especially in relation to theology and its implications. What has been most criticised is the mode of representation, the systematic appropriation of the Other(ness), as western culture has shown in its radical distinction between *us* and *the rest*. Instead, what is proposed is a living discourse that goes beyond traditional theological boundaries and classifications done and defined by *me* and *my truth* in the *controlled space*; this is a dialogical space that is shared, mutually experienced and mutually constructed. One standing not on foundationalism or essentialism, but rather on what Paul Rabinow calls 'shaky ground,' or living in 'holy insecurity' in Nicholas Lash.¹ It is not a 'common ground' that is being proposed, but rather a common acknowledgement of one's own 'limitedness,' that breaks the totality.

¹ See Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977) and Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experiences and the Knowledge of God* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1988).

Then, in the realities of cultural and religious plurality, what is the function of theology (or religion)? and what are Christian obligations to the world? Developing a new relationship and attitude towards the Other, states Mark Kline Taylor,

the Christ symbol expresses and creates Christian existence lived within, but at the margins of, at the limen of, its own cultural and linguistic worlds. The Christian's liminal existence involves an affirmation of the culturally other and, ultimately, an affirmation of all those who are most severely marginalized, "made other" by the dynamics and structures of oppression.²

It is how to live 'the living' in communion or dialogical relation with the other, and ultimately with God, as revealed in the person and work of Christ, who enables us to be redeemed into relationship. Then, the function of theology should be a discourse that rejects a monologic view (of oppression and manipulation), but recognises heterogeneity and diversity and brings them into a dialogic relationship, but not a common ground. Bakhtin articulates this attitude in characterising Dostoevsky,

His [Dostoevsky] entire material unfolds before him as a series of human orientations. His path leads not from idea to idea, but from orientation to orientation. To think, for him, means to question and to listen, to try out orientations, to combine some and expose others. For it must be emphasised that in Dostoevsky's world even *agreement* retains its *dialogic* character, that is, it never leads to a *merging* of voices and truths in a single *impersonal* truth, as occurs in the monologic world.³

² Mark Kline Taylor, "In Praise of Shaky Ground: the Liminal Christ and Cultural Pluralism" *Theology Today*, vol.43. no.1 1986, p.37.

³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 95.

Hence, the discourse in which we intend to engage, is not a fusion, nor dialectics, in which two speakers must understand each other perfectly, but rather a communication that is “dependent upon the preservation of a gap” in which “they must remain only partially satisfied with each other’s replies, because the continuation of dialogue is in large part dependent on neither party knowing exactly what the other means.”⁴ What is implied here is that discourses must not be static, and each discourse must be beginning of a new kind of discourse towards the other’s voice and the other’s world. It is a constant decentering of the subject, which has been instrumental for one’s own rationality and particularity.

1. Transformation of the Theological Task

What is being attempted is not the discovery of another academic theology to substitute for an out-dated one, but the transformation of its structure, so that theology can become a reference for the everyday practice of people living in a contemporary reality of plurality, and theological pluralism. The basic proposition of this study is the fact that all meaning depends on the presence of the other. In other words, meaning is made through the (active) participation of subjects or terms, as expressed in Bakhtin’s thought,

⁴ Caryl Emerson, “Editor’s Preface,” in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. xxxii.

But what is essential for Bakhtin is not only the categories as such that get paired in author/hero, space/time, self/other, and so forth, *but in addition the architectonics governing relations between them*. What counts is the simultaneity that makes it logical to treat these concepts *together*. The point is that Bakhtin honours *both* things and the relations between them - one cannot be understood without the other. The resulting simultaneity is not a private *either/or*, but an inclusive *also/and*.⁵

Thus, what is important is the relationship, a dialogical relationship with the other, in which “nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future.”⁶ What is significant is the idea of ‘surplus of humanness’ that is directed and open toward the unspoken and undetermined *new word* in the future.⁷ This is to position the *I* before future meaning, and it is, as Bakhtin said, “a moment where that which *is* in me must overcome itself for the sake of that which *ought to be*.”⁸ It is a moral obligation (of ought-to-be) to be open to the Other; it is like the anarchic work of moral consciousness in Levinas, which originates in a sense of responsibility to the call or command of the Other (the ethics “of responsibility, that is, of sociality”⁹) and in Bakhtin, the dialogism of ethical responsiveness or answerability.

⁵ Michael Holquist, “introduction: the Architectonics of Answerability,” in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, p.xxiii.

⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 166.

⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 166. This is “into the absolute future, the future of meaning. That is, not into the future which will leave everything in its place, but into the future which must finally fulfil, accomplish everything, the future which we oppose to the present and the past as a salvation, transfiguration, and redemption.” *Art and Answerability*, Notes, p. 118.

⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, p. 118.

⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, p. 26.

Theology is seeking a social space where one must learn to find one's own voice and to hear the voice of the other within a common social context. But, this does not mean that one should become the other through taking on the identity of the other, but rather "one enters another's place while still maintaining one's own place, one's 'outsideness' with respect to the other."¹⁰

1.1 Creating a Space: Liminal and Ethical Space

What, then, is the theological ground for us to stand or live in the world, the world of plurality in culture and religion? As far as Christian theology is concerned, it should be the person and life of Jesus Christ who should become the symbol of cultural affirmation and the dialogical open-ended-process of our life in the world. But, one of the pitfalls of interpreting Christ's symbol in different cultural and linguistic settings, is to reduce the Christ event to individualistic and existential concerns only, rather than the Christ event as a cultural-linguistic system.¹¹ In other words, the Christ event should be a 'reference' to the reality of cultural plurality, the ultimate meaning by which present meaning is 'limited' or 'bounded.' And, moreover, the Christ event as a cultural-linguistic system, should be a place for a cross-cultural-boundary communication, that rejects cultural relativism and one's

¹⁰ Morson and Emerson, "Toward a philosophy of the act," in *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extension and Challenges* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), p. 21.

¹¹ Mark Kline Taylor, "In Praise of Shaky Ground: the Liminal Christ and Cultural Pluralism," p.39.

own cultural ethnocentrism, in favour of contemporary experience of cultural plurality.

The significance of Jesus in a contemporary pluralistic reality is as a limit breaker, who preached to and shared table with other people on the edges of Jewish society; he remained on the edges as a physician to the sick and sinners (Luke 5:30-32). He broke the code of food by the meal and table-fellowship enjoyed by himself together with disciples and the sinners. Which means that he broke the pattern of social relations and social rank set by Jewish tradition, as Mary Douglas said,

If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries... Food categories encodes social event.¹²

By breaking the code of the ceremonial meal, Jesus crossed the social boundaries and created a new social map indicating ‘all foods are clean and may be eaten.’ Here, Jesus as an event, signifies persons on the border and activities in the liminal space. He then enables us to cross the border.

¹² Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” in *Implicit Meanings* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 249. This idea of meal or food signifies the social map instructing how to relate people with others, in order to keep the purity of society. And the human body is a model of the social body, therefore, as Mary Douglas indicates, the physical body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 115ff.

In explaining inter-cultural space, Paul Rabinow, in *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, comments on his relationship to his informant, Ali, that there has been a terrain of inter-cultural liminality created. He explains,

Under my systematic questioning, Ali was taking realms of his own world and interpreting them for an outsider. This meant that he, too, was spending more time in this liminal, self-conscious world between cultures. This is a difficult and trying experience - one could almost say it is “unnatural” - and not everyone will tolerate its ambiguities and strains. This was the beginning of the dialectic process of fieldwork. I say dialectic because neither the subject nor the object remain static..... With Ali there began to emerge a mutually constructed ground of experience and understanding, a realm of tenuous common sense which was constantly breaking down, being patched up, and re-examined, first here, then there. As time wears on, anthropologist and informant share a stock of experiences upon which they hope to rely with less self-reflection in the future. The common understanding they construct is fragile and thin, but it is upon this shaky ground that anthropological inquiry proceeds.¹³

This space is ‘fragile and thin,’ it can be ‘breaking down, being patched up, and re-examined, first here, then, there,’ as Rabinow said. This inter-cultural liminal space is a dialogical space (although Rabinow calls it dialectic) so fragile, that it can only exist as an ethical sphere, where ‘ethics’ comes first before anything else (ontology, epistemology, and etc.). It is like the ‘Christ-event’ that was explained previously a symbol of theological studies in a culturally plural context.

The liminal world between cultures is a dialogical space where all participants do not remain static, but are in the process of engaging something new;

¹³ Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, p. 39

this space is a mutually constructed and shared experience, in which neither absolutism nor utter relativism exist.¹⁴ This is what Rabinow calls “doubling of consciousness” in which Rabinow and Ali become conscious not only of their own cultural and linguistic worlds but also of the liminal world that is born between them through encounter with each other’s self reflection.¹⁵ In this inter-cultural liminal space, what is broken is one’s totality and what occurs is a kind of self-loss, a sacrifice in the quest for participant-observation of ‘the other.’¹⁶ Thus, the symbol of Christ should be related to our concern of the inter-cultural liminality in which we can understand the intrinsic Christian faith and praxis in relation to the other. As Mark Kline Taylor argues that “Christian liminal existence orients one toward affirmation of the other that is necessary... for living in the uncertainty and discomfort that often attend the disclaiming of any privileged, imposed common ground existing outside of dialogical encounter.”¹⁷ The dialogical encounter between Moroccan Ali and American Rabinow, signifies the intrinsic Christian liminal existence “to accent those differences, to highlights one’s own particularity and the other’s, and only then to talk about unity”¹⁸ by standing on the ‘shaky ground.’

On this shaky ground, the dialogical event stands. It is the space in-between cultures that creates a new meaning, apart from and together with cultures involved.

¹⁴ Mark Kline Taylor, “In Conversation with Gilkey,” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 11, no. 2, April 1991, pp. 162-163.

¹⁵ Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, p. 119; Mark Kline Taylor, “In Conversation with Gilkey,” pp. 154-155.

¹⁶ Mark Kline Taylor, “In Praise of Shaky Ground: the Liminal Christ and Cultural Pluralism” p.43.

¹⁷ Mark Kline Taylor, “In Praise of Shaky Ground: the Liminal Christ and Cultural Pluralism” p.46.

¹⁸ Mark Kline Taylor, “In Praise of Shaky Ground: the Liminal Christ and Cultural Pluralism” p.46.

In this respect, Homi Bhabha indicates in relation to the new meaning that “the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilised in the passage to a Third Space.”¹⁹ The readiness to accept a new reality means,

a willingness to descend into that alien territory... may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multi-culturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity.²⁰

Bakhtin also indicates its new cultural productive effect:

It must be pointed out... that while it is true the mixture of linguistic world views in organic hybrids remains mute and opaque, such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world view.²¹

This ‘third’ space, a space ‘in-between’ is uncertain, ambivalent, undecidable in its character, and moreover, it is always a dangerous space that is separated from the familiar world. Victor Turner in explaining the ritual space of ‘in-between,’

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae are necessarily ambiguous since these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions assigned and arraigned by law, custom, convention, and ceremony... Liminal entities, such as neophytes in initiation rites, demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status.

¹⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 36.

²⁰ Homi Bhabha, “The commitment to theory,” *New Formations*, no. 5, 1988, p. 22.

²¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 360.

Their behaviour is normally passive or humble. It is as though they are being ground down or reduced to a uniform condition to be fashioned a new and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life.²²

Hence, going through the 'third' space is like a ritual process in which the old role and status are rooted out, and something new is created; this is to say that a radical transformation is happening by the experience of undergoing the ritual.²³ Liminality presents a border zone encounter between cultures, races, or nations, the area of "blurring and merging of distinctions."²⁴ In the border zone, the subject may experience freedom from the constraints of normative or oppressive social structures, because, for Turner, liminality represents "the possibility... of standing aside not only from one's own social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potential unlimited series of alternative social arrangement."²⁵ Turner reiterates the power of liminality to effect a radical change of consciousness:

The knowledge obtained in the liminal period is thought to change the inmost nature of the neophyte, impressing him, as a seal impresses wax, with the characteristics of his new state. It is not a mere acquisition of knowledge, but a change in being.²⁶

²² Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 95.

²³ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), p.102.

²⁴ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), p. 26, Cited from Mae G. Henderson, "Introduction: Border, Boundaries, and Frame(work)s," in *Borders, Boundaries, and Frames: Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies*, ed by Mae Henderson (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 5.

²⁵ Victor Turner, *Drama, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University, 1974), p. 13-14.

²⁶ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), p.102.

Therefore, 'being in dialogue' means to be in a 'third' space for 'the I *and* the Other' together in conversation (as shown in the idea of Franz Rosenzweig, in ch. 3.) This is a space where common presence has to be shared, where partners are acknowledged, and where new possibility can be contemplated. And in this space, dialogical event occurs. This dialogical event of togetherness is not the same as the understanding that comes out of it, but rather it is an event that limits oneself and places oneself in relation to the other event, in conferring the meaning of the event in a particular situation; in a way, this is to see ourselves constantly through the eyes of others. Meaning in this space, is always experienced in relation with others, in physical settings. Meaning is therefore an ethical product.

This is our relationship together living in the unfinished/ongoing world, where we have an ethical obligation to bring people together into human solidarity. It is only in ethical solidarity that (the infinity of) the Other can prevent the I being manipulative and totalising for myself,²⁷ for, as Levinas says, "subjectivity is being a hostage" of the relation to the other.²⁸ And, as Derrida writes, "Without that [ethical] responsibility there would be no language,"²⁹ the response that one offers to the other in dialogue always carries this ethical responsibility prior to response. This human solidarity and ethical responsibility for the Other are a structural necessity and should be the consciousness of human activity and, moreover, of theological discourse.

²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 80.

²⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, p. 127.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am," trans. Ruben Berezdivin, *Re-Reading Levinas*, ed by Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1991), p. 23.

1.2. Inter-Cultural Dialogue as Theological Discourse.

In this global and culturally pluralistic context we are in, what is being proposed here is that our theological focal point should be on humanity as a relation of beings in dialogue, attempting to be open toward the future and to overcome the limits of each other. In this sphere, what is important is the necessity of how to think and to act truthfully and faithfully in the continuation and the development of dialogical relations. The partners in dialogue or interlocutors in dialogue should accept each other as those who have an inalienable right and an unconditional obligation, and learn from each other in developing 'togetherness.' In a way, togetherness is the beginning and end of dialogical relation, even in ever changing situations, which means that the temporal togetherness is also to be open and dialogised in the future dialogue. This is a dialogical event in which the meaning of truth defines and confirms itself, because the truth of being is actualised in the figure of dialogical relation.

From this perspective, dialogue is a principle force in the formation of cultural history. Inter-cultural correlatives come in connection with the actual development of dialogical relations, as the dialogical principle is aimed at the integrity and solidarity of humanity, against totalisation, domination or systematisation. This inter-cultural dialogue is a dialogical event of cultures and traditions, creating or conditioning a third space in which people from various

origins speak with each other. Therefore, this event is a necessary condition before one can talk about its effects.

But, this dialogical event occurs when people from different cultures come to talk with each other; it occurs in the commitment of human solidarity. It desires to create a new situation “to overcome fragmentation and to find a new system offering a unified world view and simple and strict rules for human conduct.”³⁰ However, what is created internally in the dialogical event, is ‘double-voiced discourse’ or ‘double-consciousness,’ in which participants view things from each other’s perspective. Bakhtin explains this discourse in terms of the discourse of the novelist:

It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they - as it were - know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized.³¹

Consequently, what is important in cultural history, is the fact that its centre is nowhere but at the in-between of cultures and traditions. The central point of

³⁰ Thomas M. Seebohm, “Literary Tradition, Intercultural Transfer and Cross-Cultural Conversation,” in *Cross-Cultural Conversation (Initiation)*, ed by Anindita Niyogi Balslev (Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1996), p. 164.

³¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 324.

reference is neither certain subjects nor communities, but universal meaning. The task of inter-cultural dialogue is to discover particular meanings, through the dialogical event, in connection with ultimate meaning. The desire is to go beyond the provisionality of a particular cultural meaning.

In the same way, the theological discourse means to go beyond a particular understanding of the God-man relationship. Dialogical discourse between different theologies from different cultures is a condition for discovering the universal meaning of that relation. This inter-cultural theological discourse brings a particular cultural meaning into question, and makes possible a kind of self-criticism and self-transcendence. However, we must acknowledge that conversation within theology has been going on for a long time in a way which voices from remote pasts are available to us through historical evidences (such as scriptures, creeds, texts, etc.), and through historical exchange, it has continually developed.³² But, what is radically different from the historical development of Christian theology, is the fact that today there are many new voices from radically different historical backgrounds and milieu desiring (or demanding) to participate in this on-going theological conversation. Again, the most significant realisation is from the fact that the inter-cultural theological dialogue demands the ethical (moral) responsibility of 'I' in relation to the meaning of 'others.'

³² See Walter E. Wyman, Jr. "The Historical Consciousness and the Study of Theology," in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, ed by Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 91-117.

Therefore, what constitutes the space for theological discourse within differences, is firstly the realisation of the limitedness of a particular meaning; secondly, dialogical engagement; thirdly, the effects of dialogue between different meanings, that form new meanings apart from, and together with meanings involved: in other words, a 'third space.' This space 'in-between' is not an expression of dogmatic considerations, but rather an actual situation or reality in which we live . Homi Bhabha indicates that "the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilised in the passage through a Third Space," and furthermore, the meaning of the third space "makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process." This brings a challenge to the traditional "sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenising, unifying force, authenticated by the original Past," and constitutes "the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised, and read anew."³³ In the same way, theological discourse should be articulated in the third space, if it desires to be faithful to the possibility of the true God who is infinite. Standing in the third space always, means, as Bhabha says, "a willingness to descend into that alien territory" and an "articulation of cultural hybridity,"³⁴ - or ambivalence.

Thus, inter-cultural dialogue becomes a significant discourse for theology in recognising or promoting the creativity of human relations, and offers itself as an opportunity – a place where one's cultural and theological understanding becomes

³³ Homi K. Bhabha, "Commitment to Theory," *New Formations* 5, 1988, pp. 18-21

possible in the experience of different others, in realisation of the human togetherness or solidarity. Inter-cultural discourse promotes a self-criticism of one's own meaning in accepting structural limitation. It seeks the possibility of the development of human reality, beyond the confines of a particular culture. In this space of 'inter,' "we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others," and "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves."³⁵ Inter-cultural dialogue promotes and enforces the meaning of humanity, as the theological discourse brings anthropocentrically consummated meanings into question and demands a self-criticism in the light of future meaning.

For theological discourse, inter-religious dialogue is possible within the context of inter-cultural dialogue, because the meaning of the inter-cultural correlative signifies the ultimate meaning or quest of religion. As shown in inter-cultural discourse and its effect in the above, Raimundo Panikkar says,

Dialogue is, fundamentally, opening myself to another so that he might speak and reveal my myth that I cannot know by myself because it is transparent to me, self-evident. Dialogue is a way of knowing myself and of disentangling my own point of view from other viewpoints and from me, because it is grounded so deeply in my own roots as to be utterly hidden from me. It is the other who through our encounter awakens this human depth latent in me in an endeavour that surpasses both of us. Dialogue sees the other not as an extrinsic, accident aid, but as the indispensable, personal element in our search for truth, because I am not a self-sufficient, autonomous individual. In this sense, dialogue is a religious act par excellence because it recognises

³⁴Homi K. Bhabha, "Commitment to Theory," p. 22.

³⁵Homi K. Bhabha, "Commitment to Theory," p. 22

my *religatio* to another, my individual poverty, the need to get out of myself, transcend myself, in order to save myself.³⁶

Inter-religious theological discourse makes us become aware of the multi-religious milieu, as does inter-cultural dialogue. And the important point is that inter-religious theological discourse also requires the dialogical space of ‘in-between’ always. Panikkar calls this situation “existential risk” in the inter-religious dialogue,

It is not that I wilfully consider myself both an Indian and a European, a Hindu and a Christian, or that I am by birth, education, initiation and actual life a man living from and sharing in the original experiences of the Western tradition, both Christian and Secular, and the Indian tradition, both Hindu and Buddhist... The mutual understanding and foundation of the different traditions of the world may be accomplished only by sacrificing one’s life in the attempt to sustain first the existing tensions without becoming schizophrenia and to maintain the polarities without personal or cultural paranoia.³⁷

In this respect, inter-religious dialogue is structurally similar to the inter-personal dialogue of utterance, in a way in which religion allows the actual inter-religious combination, but at the same time, acknowledges human togetherness as an event in which we evaluate each other. This is seeing one’s ‘own’ religion through the eyes of the others. In this inter-religious dialogical event, we see ourselves in the light of the ultimate point of reference, that I call God in this sense, and that poses the question of value. In other words, through reflection of the ultimate value, one can

³⁶ Raimundo Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp.242-243.

³⁷ Raimundo Panikkar, “Philosophy as Life-Style,” in *Philosophers on Their Own Work* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978), p. 201. quoted from David J. Krieger, *The New Universalism: Foundation for a Global Theology* (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 45.

break away from the limitedness of the self and deepen one's own meaning in relation to the world and others, so that we can find ourselves in new possibilities. Since all religious ideas and systems are human constructions in order to further our humanisation, theology is the human creative and imaginary activity that seeks possible adequate orientation in our provisional life and our contingent world.³⁸ Thus, theologically, the ultimate point of reference poses the question of what it is to be human, as theology is for humans and not for God, by calling our anthropocentric values into question, and through and by the ultimate point of reference, everything is understood. God, the ultimate point of reference, presents the reality that relativises and humanises us, as the tension between relativisation and humanisation creates a "unique and powerful internal dialect."³⁹

What has been focused on is the possibility of inter-religious dialogue in the context of inter-cultural dialogue, since the inter-cultural co-relative allows religious traditions to exist next to each other. What, then, is required for this inter co-relative is an attitude toward the border, not coming into the centre - a willingness to become wise and have a sense of faith. In fact, the idea of a cultural space in between cultures and traditions is no longer a theoretical possibility, but an actual reality we have to cope with. In this respect, the ideal environment of this inter-relatedness is the post-modern city, as Michael Fischer describes Houston:

³⁸ Gordon Kaufman, *An Essay on theological Method* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), p. 32. Also see Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 127: Geertz indicates that theology attempts to develop a coherent world view and ethos, as he says "it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects."

³⁹ Gordon Kaufman, *Theological Imagination*, p. 34.

Multiculturalism takes on a new form in these spaces, both like and unlike the older urban immigrant entrepôts of New York and Chicago. What fascinates me in these spaces, places and passages are the cultural translations. We need a new map of America that begins to envision the pilgrimage sites that Indians are establishing among the Hindu temples of North America, the establishment of a little Tehran in Los Angeles.... Above all, we need attention to the discourses immigrants use in making sense of their own lives, in comparing their own value system with their new setting, or in forging philosophically resonant frames that draw on the genres, tropes, metaphors and imagery of both old and new cultural settings... Descendants in the future may retell these stories differently and in more seamless, less discordant form; for the moment they serve as birth pangs of something new.⁴⁰

This is the contemporary urban reality of 'borderland,' the space between cultures where diverse cultural influences produce ambivalences and 'undecidables'. Although, as history shows, there has been a consistent exercise of "rational social engineering, in bringing about, by artificial means, that ambivalence-free homogeneity," in the past, failed to produce it.⁴¹ As shown in René Girard's idea of Sacred Violence and in modern genocides in relation to ethnic-religious-cultural others, this act of violence has been traditionally justified and legitimised, for violence or genocide is "rationally instrumental to their ends."⁴² In this respect, Bauman uses Rorty to explain violence: "the language of necessity, certainty and absolute truth cannot but articulate humiliation - humiliation of the other, of

⁴⁰ Michael M.J. Fischer, "Orientalizing America: Beginning and Middle Passages," *Middle East Report*, Sept-Oct, p. 32f. cited from Joel S. Kahn, *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture* (London: Sage Pub., 1995), p. 103.

⁴¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 38.

different, of the not-up-to-the-standard.”⁴³ Therefore, accepting the other as the other who has equal justification, means ending fear of the other and resisting the temptation of the cultural crusade. The most significant contributing factor to cultural plurality is to bring ethics or moral responsibility into the public discourse of human inter-relation as ambivalence⁴⁴ or proximity in Levinas’ ethical relation to the Other.

In addition to our relationality with the others, this inter-cultural dialogue offers an opportunity to actualise the potential of being human, in self-understanding and developing this understanding through the experience of others. It is a realisation of the same humanity that we ought to live in a world where inter-cultural relationality is the key to evaluating one’s own culture. Common existence signals the enhancement of the human being beyond particular culture and its confined understanding. Having realised the limitedness of particularity, it confirms the reality of in-between cultures and traditions. These dialogical relations are necessary conditions for humanity, inter-cultural dialogues which enable human beings to enter and share the space in-between cultures.

Therefore, since religious traditions are answers to the fundamental questions of being human and dialogical relations are a necessary condition for a realisation of cultural existence and the constitution of humanity, the theological task is to

⁴² Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York : Free Press, 1979), p. 8. Cited from Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 38.

⁴³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 235.

articulate the meaning of dialogical relation and its significance, and to participate in dialogical relation.

2. Inter-Orientation

In a multi-cultural society, inter-cultural and religious dialogue bring an ('my') ethical responsibility for the Other, not scapegoating the Other, into public theological discourse. This uncovers 'sacred violence' and its mechanisms in religious institutions and the world. The inter-cultural dialogical event, therefore, created from the encounters between cultures has great implications for theological studies. This dialogical doubling, double-consciousness, or hybridity, as an event challenges traditional Western theology that has been placing itself in a flexible position, and re-evaluates its position as being unjustifiable due to its ethnocentric and patriarchal character.

What is needed today, especially in the setting of a 'post-modern' multicultural urban life, is "an affirmation and a genuine recognition of the integrity and worth of radically different cultures" and a fight against "all forms of demeaning stereotypes."⁴⁵ Moreover, what is needed is not just a conceptual recognition, but a politics of cultural difference and identity that can promote an ethical and political involvement in human solidarity. In this respect, what emerges here are the political-

⁴⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 234-235.

⁴⁵ Richard Bernstein, "The Hermeneutics of Cross-Cultural Understanding," in *Cross-Cultural Conversation*, p. 30.

ethical implications that come from the hybridity which undermines the authoritative discourse of a single voice.⁴⁶ As for Bhabha in relation to the post-colonial discourse, this hybridity situation reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourse on authority and “hybridity becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other.”⁴⁷ He indicates that it is “the moment of political change for its transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation,”⁴⁸ it also denies the monolithic model of division between the West and its other.⁴⁹

Bakhtin emphasises the crossing of borders and limits and the blurring of boundaries. Here, the traditional boundary is rejected as he says, “two discourses equally and directly oriented toward a referential object within the limits of single context cannot exist side by side without intersecting dialogically,” and “two embodied meanings cannot lie side by side like two objects - they must come into inner contact; that is, they must enter into a semantic bond.”⁵⁰ The significant point is the consciousness that is born out of dialogical intersecting or mixing, and in other words, it is a creative consciousness on the borders or at the cross-roads. In this dialogical space, subjects meet, participate and answer one another in this ongoing event, otherwise, we lose our own self. This creative consciousness takes place not within self-consciousness, but “on the boundary of one’s own and someone else’s

⁴⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 344.

⁴⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, “Signs taken for wonders” p. 154, quoted from Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 22.

⁴⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” *New Formations*, 5, p. 13.

⁴⁹ See Homi Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” *New Formations*, 5, pp. 5-23.

⁵⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, pp. 188-189.

consciousness, on the threshold,” encountering one another in tension. This is what Bakhtin call “the highest degree of sociality.”⁵¹

It is like *metalinguistics* that studies the word “within the sphere of dialogic interaction itself, that is, in the sphere where discourse lives an authentic life,”⁵² , as Bakhtin says,

The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of these concrete contexts into which it has entered.⁵³

Here, Bakhtin indicates that the living word is already transcultural. It is the kind of living that people experienced on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2; it is not just a translingual perception, but it brings and binds people into community. This event calls for critical dialogue among the many other tongues, indicating that there is no master narrative but many narratives in dialogue. It indicates the world where there is no Jerusalem but many Jerusalems; “a world in which the fundamental problem lies not in the translation and dissemination of a centralized and hegemonic message into other languages but rather in having different tongues engage in critical dialogue with one another.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 287.

⁵² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 202.

⁵³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 202.

⁵⁴ Fernando F. Segovia, “‘And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues’: Competing Mode of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism,” in *Reading from this Place: Social Location and*

Bakhtin's significant contribution is a dialogism that is not just perceived within the epistemological and aesthetic sphere, but is resolutely included in the political and semiotic sphere.⁵⁵ Therefore, "to be means to communicate" and "to be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself,"⁵⁶ in human living together. Bakhtin also views cultures in terms of 'to be means to communicate';

The realm of culture has no internal territory: it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect, the systematic unity of culture extends into the very atoms of cultural life, it reflects like the sun in each drop of that life. Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and its significance; abstracted from boundaries, it loses its soil, it becomes empty, arrogant, it degenerates and dies.⁵⁷

According to Bakhtin, this is an existential question of becoming in dialogue with the others. As he says, to live means to participate in dialogue and to enter into the world of symposium.⁵⁸ Through the crossing of cultural boundaries or the dialogical event, what is created is some kind of transculturalism in which different cultures come into contact in a transcultural ethics that conditions the dialogical discourse. Trans-cultural effort opposes essentialism and monologism; it is me-ontological praxis that reorients discourses by bringing 'ethics' in. It means ethical participation

Biblical Interpretation in the United States, ed by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 32.

⁵⁵ Graham Pechey, "On the border of Bakhtin: dialogisation, decolonisation," in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepeherd (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 55-56.

⁵⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 287.

⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 301.

⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 293.

in dialogue that requires a willingness and ability to move beyond 'limited' situations.

What we now have to establish is a 'transcultural ethics' and then bring this into public discourse, especially into theological discourse. What I am suggesting is that a dialogic space is provided or created for an ethical discourse that can create hybrids through dialogue, and that is open to the future meaning-yet-to-be-achieved.

2.1. "Oughtness" over "Pre-Given"

Multi-culturalism is an unavoidable social fact. People who belong to different cultural traditions have to live together in the same society, or the same world. But, multi-culturalism presents not only an opportunity, but also a great potential for conflict, as mentioned before, Bernstein says,

There are all too real dangers of fragmentation, the break-up of societies, and bizarre forms of separatist doctrines and practices. There is a danger that a politics of cultural difference slides into a politics of cultural animosity where no serious mutual understanding is even ventured. There is a danger of a "clash of absolutes" where cultural and ethnic groups treat each other as threatening enemies.⁵⁹

Therefore, assuming the responsibility for the Other means that 'I' am no longer the measure of all things, but rather measured by the Other. The Other questions 'my'

⁵⁹ Richard Bernstein, "The Hermeneutics of Cross-Cultural Understanding," in *Cross-Cultural Conversation*, p. 32.

narcissistic imperialism, and as Levinas says, cuts to the very marrow of my existence and my freedom, and then reveals the shame of 'my' guilt. So, what is being suggested to both the West and the non-West, or the colonised and the coloniser, is to abandon 'my' privileged position for the Other and to respect others as other.

In recent decades, the non-Western cultures have demanded that the Western philosophical tradition break its eurocentric egoism and its total manipulation over the others. But, while demanding it of the West, non-Western intellectuals have often fallen into the same cultural nationalism, in their insistence on cultural difference that derived from the past. Conventionally, in the process of decolonisation, the colonised tended to restore their subjectivity by the simple inversion of the colonised/coloniser opposition, not realising that they were working within the same mechanism of differentiation and incommensurability of the hegemonic practice of the West or the coloniser. Post-colonial discourse is designed to deconstruct and displace the Eurocentric premises that constructed the Third World, and at the same time, the culture this discourse represents.⁶⁰ Therefore, the post-colonial discourse exposes the danger of cultural nationalism, although cultural nationalism is a necessary step toward decolonisation, because there is a danger of false consciousness, as Fanon says,

The historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves to radicalise their claims and to speak more of

⁶⁰ Benita Parry, "Resistance theory / theorising resistance or two cheers for nativism," in *Colonial discourse / postcolonial theory*, pp. 172-173.

African culture than of national culture tend to lead them to a blind alley.⁶¹

In this respect, Fanon's articulation of *cultural* nationalism or discourse reminds us of the danger that it can become an ideological project of romanticism toward the mythic or magic beginning or origin of the past and the so called 'authenticity of a particular culture.'

What is important is not 'pre-given' cultural identity or authenticity, but rather our ethical response which attempts to find 'ethical significance,' in a changing situation of encountering other cultures. This means, the tendency to fix one's 'own' tradition should be changed, because "to be hostile to changes within one's own tradition implies a potential hostility to other cultures."⁶² In this cultural engagement, Bhabha argues that cultural identities cannot be ascribed to be 'pre-given,':

The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.⁶³

In the on-going process, the significant point is social transformation by bringing ethics into the public discourse of sociality for all the others. Living on the border

⁶¹ Franz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 172.

⁶² Thomas M. Seebohm, "Literary Tradition, Intercultural Transfer and Cross-Cultural Conversations," p. 149

⁶³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

means more than self-serving; it offers an ethical space in which to break the mechanism - the inside and outside, the static division of margin and centre, and the pure and contaminated, and create the liminality between identities. Holquist says, “dialogue bears the seed of hope” of human solidarity: “in so far as my ‘I’ is dialogic, it ensures that my existence is not a lonely event but part of a large whole.”⁶⁴ This ethical space of dialogue “frees my existence from the very circumscribed meaning it has in the limited configuration of self/other relations available in the immediate time and particular place of my life.”⁶⁵ This means the crisis of self-identity, and therefore, it requires one to re-evaluate everything that is ‘inward-looking-from-within.’ As Bakhtin says on this defamiliarization process

the immanent criteria of a given domain of culture are not accepted any longer, nor are the domains of culture as determinate cultural domains.... One strives to act and create directly in the unitary event of being as its sole participant; one is unable to humble oneself to the status of a toiler, unable to determine one’s own place in the event of being through others, to place oneself on a par with others.⁶⁶

Therefore, the self needs to look for something from the outside; in this process, as Bakhtin says, “the *culture of boundaries* becomes impossible, of course; boundaries are just what life has nothing to do with; all creative energies withdraw from the boundaries, leaving them to the mercy of fate.”⁶⁷ This realisation of the impossibility of stable boundaries and the necessity of looking for something other

⁶⁴ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, p. 38.

⁶⁵ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, p. 38.

⁶⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” in *Art and Answerability*, pp. 202-203.

⁶⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” in *Art and Answerability*, p. 203.

than one's own, renders a world view of a future, that is not the absolute future, but "the proximate, social (and even political) future - the proximate morally imperative plan of the future,"⁶⁸ that comes from an ethical position which arises in participating in the event of ultimate meaning-yet-to-be-actualised. The provocation of border life and of cultural hybridity, provides an ethical condition which resists stagnation, control and manipulation, the desire to fix-the-identity-within, and opens up the possibility of new forms of human solidarity in the future, by participating in the dialogical process. This is an obligation, the 'oughtness of responsibility' that responds to each situation; an ethical 'saying' of dialogue over the 'said' of tradition in discovering the significant meaning of humanity for all, in the hope of "a tranquillity as a founded axiological posture of consciousness" and "an expression of trust, or faith."⁶⁹

As for Christian theology, dialogue invites us to join with non-Western Christian traditions and other religions to explore the riches of religious pluralism. Dialogue is not essentially a search for agreement. It is a method of arriving at a better understanding of each other. We need the perspectives of others to give us fresh insight into the creative possibilities of our own faith. We need the perspective of others to help us to teach the faith more effectively. In religious dialogue, the significance of other religions must become part of the Christian tradition, for religious pluralism is part of the context in which the church exists. As for the non-Western Christian traditions, this plurality of traditions is a necessary condition in keeping theology on the dialogical path of becoming towards ultimate meaning-yet-

⁶⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in *Art and Answerability*, p. 205.

to-be. The recognition of outsideness or the Other should not result in our apathy, but rather in mutual necessity as we need others and others need us. In this relation of interaction, the constituting and conditioning factor is the ethical responsibility of necessity, not of occasional choice. In the ethical space, there is no 'moral relativism':

the multitude of value centres should lead us to doubt our values and to make our commitment to them provisional. But we do not end up with moral relativism. On the contrary, we arrive at a view that makes us continually and personally responsible for our actions and for assessing our moral responses.⁷⁰

In a way, dialogue makes these theologies of dialogue the significant theology in deepening, creating, criticising, and sustaining hope. This is a fundamental attitude of faith and trust in God, in this process of becoming towards ultimate time and meaning.

What then is the role and function of intellectuals or theologians in bringing ethics into public discourse and education? How do we bring public discourse into the ethical space of dialogue and promote the human solidarity and justice for all ?

2.2. Pedagogy of the Victim.

Turner argues that education is a ritual process in which, when the ritual process is completed, the initiands return to society with new roles and status, and

⁶⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in *Art and Answerability*, p. 205.

new rights and obligations. And their status in the community has been redefined. In fact, after the ritual, they become useful again to society as they take up the roles for which the ritual has prepared them.⁷¹ But, as Edward Said points out in *Orientalism*, in the West, the institution and the individual become professionalised, as the imaginable and static East became the object of Western pursuit and the intellectual became ‘expert.’ In what is happening today the same mechanism of *Orientalism*, still operates in contemporary academia. As Bruce Robbins reminds us what is now called the ‘Third World’ becomes the career of the professionalised intellectual interpreting and debating from the metropolitan academic perspective.⁷² However, what is revealed through ‘post-colonial discourse’ is the political benefit of this particular professional logic, and as Edward Said says, its neglect of religious duties or spiritual needs.⁷³

It is similar with the Third World intellectuals; if the profession is based on ‘culture,’ then it “restricts its oppositionality to what ever political value the resupplying of this object might have.” Because, as Robbins says, “if the past proximates of culture are the foundation of the humanities in a time of inhuman distances, then the criticism remains a stay-at-home.”⁷⁴ Edward Said in “Third World

⁷⁰ Morson and Emerson, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Bakhtin*, p. 20.

⁷¹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 251-60.

⁷² Bruce Robbins, “The East is a career: Edward Said and the logics of professionalism,” in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, p. 48.

⁷³ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 34. cited from Bruce Robbins, , “The East is a career: Edward Said and the logics of professionalism,” p. 62.

⁷⁴ Bruce Robbins, , “The East is a career: Edward Said and the logics of professionalism,” p. 68.

Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture” points to the irony of the fact that ‘the East’ is a career of its own for intellectuals of the Third World, as he pointed out:

the work of intellectuals from the colonial or peripheral regions of the world, intellectuals who wrote not in a native language but in an “imperial” language, who felt themselves to be organically tied to a mass effort at resisting imperial rule.... These figures address the metropolis using the techniques, the discourses, the very weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European.⁷⁵

Here, the intellectuals of the Third World are professionalised in the same way the Western metropolitan intellectuals are confined within the academic-elite group, and sometimes create for themselves the bourgeois-elite intellectualism and nationalism that ignores and marginalises the mass. Spivak warns of “the continuing construction of the subaltern,”⁷⁶ in the presence of Third World nationalist discourse, and warns against professionalised intellectualism as a form of social practice.⁷⁷ Professionalism and elitism are as dangerous in Third World discourse as in Western discourse, because they cease to speak for or with the mass, but begun to speak to the mass.⁷⁸ Therefore, a significant break with the discourse of intellectuals of both ‘West’ and “non-West,” revealed in the post-colonial discourse of border, is the resistance to professionalisation as a social practice, and the initiation of a counter ‘anti-intellectual intellectual movement’ to fight monologic and oppressive

⁷⁵ Edward Said, “Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture,” *Raritan*, vol. 9, no. 3. (Winter 1990), p. 29.

⁷⁶ Gayatri Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 295.

⁷⁷ Gayatri Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, p. 308.

⁷⁸ Neil Lazarus, “National Consciousness and intellectualism,” p. 215.

discourse or social policy, in favour of justice and human solidarity based on ethical responsibility for the Other.

A Sri Lankan theologian Sugirtharajah indicates in the introduction of *Voices from the Margin*, that the term 'Third World' has another meaning which designates "a people who have been excluded from power, from the authority to mould and shape their own future - racial minorities, the poor, women, and the marginalized people of the world."⁷⁹ And he quotes from Aloysius Pieris, an other Sri Lankan theologian saying that 'Third World' is "something that happens wherever and whenever socio-economic dependence in terms of race, class, or sex generates political and cultural slavery, fermenting thereby a new personhood."⁸⁰ This clearly signifies the relation of culture and power, being centrally located in the socio-political struggle of human reality. The other meaning of 'Third World' indicates the universal desire of the 'oppressed' or 'victim' to question hegemonic discourses and take them into the public discourse of ethics -social responsibility, justice and human solidarity.

The ethics of the oppressed or victim challenges the contemporary discourse of professionalised pursuit, especially in education, since, in many cases, it has been the most useful instrument of a mechanism for social and cultural reproduction and a repository for transmitting both the knowledge and ideas of the culture of capitalism and the high cultural value and ideals of the dominant society and of the official

⁷⁹ R.S. Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," in *Voices from the Margin*, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 87, cited from Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," in *Voices from the Margin*, p. 3.

discourse. This indicates the gap between the public or popular discourse and the official or dominant discourse, and reveals the fact that the gap is filled by the 'power-knowledge' relation of the privileged position. From this perspective, the most important element in contemporary education is the intellectual. Cornel West comments:

The fundamental role of the public intellectual - distinct from, yet building on, the indispensable work of academics, experts, analysis, and pundits - is to create and sustain high-quality public discourse addressing urgent public problems which enlightens and energises fellow citizens, promoting them to take public action. This role requires a deep commitment to the life of the mind - a perennial attempt to clear our minds of cant - which serves to shape the public destiny of a people. Intellectual and political leadership is neither elitist nor populist; rather it is democratic, in that each of us stands in public space.⁸¹

Thus, the significant role of the intellectual is to contest professional expertise and its hierarchical and dominant role, and to create institutional spaces on the border, the hybridised space creating the conditions for new forms of human solidarity. As Bhabha indicates, border subjects are able to negotiate difference, while opening or creating possibilities for the new: "Communities negotiate 'difference' through a borderline process that reveals the hybridity of cultural identity: they create a sense of themselves to and through an other."⁸²

⁸¹ Cornel West cited in Henry Gates, Jr. and Cornell West, *The Future of the Race* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p. 71. cited from <http://www.peterlang.com/taboo/giroux.html>

⁸² Homi Bhabha, "Black and White and Read All Over," in *Artforum* (October, 1995), p. 17. cited from <http://www.peterlang.com/taboo/giroux.html>

The role of educator or intellectual, is similar to that of the ‘cultural worker,’ in inter-cultural studies, since inter-cultural studies “challenges the alleged ideological and institutional innocence of mainstream educators by arguing that teachers always speak within historical and socially constructed relations of power.”⁸³ Inter-cultural discourse, then, offers some possibilities for education system and educators to provide institutional spaces so that a critical interrogation of the relationship between knowledge and power or authority can be articulated. Education as a space on the border-crossing, offers the means to examine one’s own historical location and to construct an ethical language. It calls for the intellectuals “to assume responsibility with regard to the task of translating theory back to a constructive practice that transforms the everyday terrain of cultural and political power.”⁸⁴ The intellectual or educator engaging in dialogue on the border, unlike the elitist intellectual, advocates that the vocation “be rooted in pedagogical and political work tempered by humility, a moral focus on suffering, and the need to produce alternative visions and policies that go beyond a language of critique.”⁸⁵

What is important is not the question of ‘where are you coming from?’ but of ‘what are you standing between (or in-between)?’ as James Clifford suggests of “a subject who travels cultures,”⁸⁶ in dynamic shifts and translations. The challenge is to articulate the space of ‘in-between’ that takes us outside the familiar boundary.

⁸³ Henry A. Giroux, “Is there a place for cultural studies in college of education?” in *Counternarratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern Spaces*, ed by Henry Giroux and Colin Lankshear, Peter McLaren and Michael Peters (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 42-43.

⁸⁴ Henry A. Giroux, “Is there a place for cultural studies in college of education?” p. 54.

⁸⁵ Henry A. Giroux, “Is there a place for cultural studies in college of education?” p. 54

This is an act of positioning of the subject who sees himself or herself as a site of contradiction and ambivalence, and who refuses to become a detached observer, but a participant in the process. This indicates a de-centring of the subject; an ethically motivated intellectual critique both in its pedagogical practice and in its institutional formation. This is a decolonisation in which the Third World comes into dialogue with the First World, and the recognition of the First World being constituted by relations beyond its borders - the otherness in the subject of 'I.'

One of the difficulties, however, that we are facing in the institutional formation of the West and the challenges of internationalism or globalisation, is the issue of curriculum, as Aronowitz and Giroux point out:

Few efforts are being made to rethink the entire curriculum in the light of the new migration and immigration, much less develop entirely different pedagogies.... Some schools have "added" courses in the history and culture of Asian, Latin American and Caribbean societies, but have little thought of transforming the entire humanities and social studies curricula in the light of the cultural transformations of the school.⁸⁷

As a consequence, the important condition for a 'new pedagogy' is to open up new institutional spaces, a hybridised cultural space, in which "students can experience and define what it means to be cultural producers capable of both reading different

⁸⁶ James Clifford, "Travelling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, ed by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treicher (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 109.

⁸⁷ Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, *Postmodern Education* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 6, quoted from Henry Giroux, "Slacking Off: Border Youth and Postmodern Education," in *Counternarratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern Spaces*, ed by Henry Giroux, Colin Lankshear, Peter McLaren and Michael Peters (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 67.

texts and producing them,”⁸⁸ against the institutionalised ideology that attempts to maintain the *status quo*. On the border-crossing, ‘new pedagogy’ offers a new vision of human solidarity and at the same time, initiates the critical mind and attitude from this new perspective, in resisting the totalising and systematising discourse of violence and representation, and in looking for the transcultural ethics that suggests a new way of being and becoming human for all.

What is being proposed here is an ethical responsibility within the educational system which questions how historical events position Western intellectuals as authoritative and empowered speakers. This seeks a dialogue with the Other allowing “for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a ‘counter-sentence’ that can then suggest a new historical narrative.”⁸⁹ Therefore, intellectuals should accept the voices of the Other in questioning the truth, and also find “ways of putting fragments of knowledge, partial views, and separate disciplines in contact with questions” so that the world we live in can be seen for what it is.⁹⁰ Merod insists on political engagement of intellectuals on the issues of social injustice and the oppressed, when he talks about the North American academy:

North American intellectuals need to move beyond theory, tactics, and great dignified moral sentiments to support, in the most concrete ways possible, people harmed or endangered by the guiltless counter-revolutionary violence of state power... The major intellectual task today is to build a political community where ideas can be argued and sent into the world of news and

⁸⁸ Henry Giroux, “Slacking Off: Border Youth and Postmodern Education,” p. 75.

⁸⁹ Linda Alcoff, “The problem of speaking for others,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (1991-1992), p. 23.

⁹⁰ Jim Merod, *The Political Responsibility of the Critic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 188.

information as a force with a collective voice, a voice that names cultural distortions and the unused possibilities of human intelligence.⁹¹

In achieving this task, Bhabha insists on “a borderline moment,”⁹² the ritual moment in Victor Turner, “to perform the act of cultural translation,”⁹³ that creates hybridity which is “the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; it is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign - ‘the minus in the origin’ - through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalisation.”⁹⁴ Thus, ‘moving into liminality’ is what we are calling ‘border crossing.’ This is a site in which the border subject discovers the cultural creativity and cultural authority to formulate “new model, symbols, and paradigms.”⁹⁵ Education becomes the site of translation, and critical educators are translators, like performing priests and their rituals, therefore, the educators in both the First and Third World, must assume a transformative role by dialogising the Other rather than trying to represent the Other.

The aim of critical education as a ritual process, is to cross the boundary of one’s identity into the new; here, the traditional boundaries and barriers are broken and become transcultural or translinguistical space for dialogue. Like the idea of Carnival in Bakhtin in this self-other relation, it is not ‘I’ representing the others, but as an alternative, it is ‘I’ participating in relation, as carnival “does not acknowledge

⁹¹ Jim Merod, *The Political Responsibility of the Critic*, p. 191.

⁹² Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 314.

⁹³ Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 314.

⁹⁴ Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 314.

⁹⁵ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Treatise*, p. 28.

any distinction between actors and spectators... Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.”⁹⁶ Therefore, critical education is a theological moment in which the third meaning is realised, a universal spirit that is “a special condition of the entire world, of the world’s revival and renewal, in which all take part,”⁹⁷ in creating a different order of human relations. Hence, as this carnival moment is the moment of escaping from systematic and official high culture, and from the ideology that limits what can be known, felt and thought, critical education as “creative destruction”⁹⁸ should challenge the *status quo* or the unsaid underlying assumptions that makes the *status quo* possible, and suggest an alternative way of concrete life of renewal. Bakhtin’s “carnival sense of world” is the dialogic sense of truth in generating “genre-shaping significance,”⁹⁹ - “a new mode of interrelationship between individuals, counterpoised to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life.”¹⁰⁰ Education as a function, like carnival, is value generating, and offers a vision of hope, and it is also the site of working towards a new world. Accordingly education should be worked out from an ethics that is a matter not of knowledge but of wisdom, in a continuing process of becoming-as-open-ended-dialogue. As Bakhtin expresses it,

Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken,

⁹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

⁹⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 121.

⁹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 131.

¹⁰⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 123.

the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future.¹⁰¹

Hence, pedagogy or education intrinsically presupposes a sense of faith, an attitude toward an ultimate value, the divine outsideness. It is only through the dialogical-critical structure, that theological education can ensure its critical character in promoting human solidarity as an act of faith, desiring the transformative presence of God and hoping for a new humanity in resisting violence and oppression.

2.3. Theology on the Border or a *Hermeneutics of the Diaspora*

Traditionally, theological education in Western academia, has locked itself within the boundary of its own authority in an attempt to preserve and protect the status quo.¹⁰² In a sense, theologising and theological practice is idolatrous. There is a tendency to absolutise what is only culturally and politically relevant in a particular situation. What is needed is a critical theological pedagogy to resist systematising and totalising discourse, and to rethink the role of the intellectual in a contemporary condition, as Cornel West says:

No longer should intellectuals deceive themselves by believing - as do humanist and Marxist intellectuals - that they are struggling

¹⁰¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 166.

¹⁰² Paul Knitter, "Beyond a Mono-religious Theological Education," in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, ed by Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 153

“on behalf” of the truth; rather the problem is the struggle over the very status of truth and the vast institutional mechanism which accounts for this status.¹⁰³

This Foucaultian idea can be an instrument in interrogating and destabilising totalising tendencies and privileged positions within theological discourse so that they can engage in discourse with others, so called ‘minority’ discourses. The important thing is to acknowledge that our models of interpretation, perspective and ideology are constructed, and we need to break down the traditional and Eurocentric boundaries of the discipline. Paul Knitter says that “one effective way of unlocking the door of the house of authority is to recognize that there are other traditions that also claim us,”¹⁰⁴ indicating the awareness of pluralism and the resistance to domination as important elements in theological education. In order to achieve this, as bell hooks describes the role of an intellectual, we need “somebody who trades in ideas by transgressing discursive frontiers... who trades in ideas in their vital bearing on a wider political culture.”¹⁰⁵ We need intellectuals who refuse to occupy a single territory and who cross geographical, cultural, national, and disciplinary borders.

In developing the border intellectual as one who stands at the border of two cultures, the task of theological education is to break familiar boundaries and create a mode of translation resistance. In this sense, theology should be, as Farley says, “wisdom and critical reflection attending faith,”¹⁰⁶ as we engage in discourses with

¹⁰³ bell hooks and Cornel West, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991), p. 142.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Knitter, “Beyond a Mono-religious Theological Education,” p. 156.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Knitter, “Beyond a Mono-religious Theological Education,” p. 152.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge*, p. 133, quoted from Thomas W. Ogletree, “Christian Ethics as a Theological Discipline,” in *Shifting Boundaries, op cit*, p. 204.

different others, on the journey. Having witnessed the post-colonial and global intercultural reality, the significance of diaspora in theological discussion has emerged as a new way forward to the future. There has emerged a new theological discourse. Fernando F. Segovia calls it “the hermeneutics of diaspora,”¹⁰⁷ and it is relevant to our discussion for it is comparable to the ‘Abrahamic journey’ of Levinas as opposed to Ulysses’ journey home. This diasporic journey or life is extensively mentioned in the Bible; ever since Abraham’s call, foreignness was stressed in the Biblical narrative. Abraham described himself as “a stranger and a sojourner” (Gen. 23:4). Lev. 25:23, “For the land is mine, and you are strangers and sojourners with me” indicates that the land is given, and not disposable to anyone. This also reminds us that we are all strangers and that this estrangement frees us from the immediate environment, dominant ideology and value systems, and opens a future possibility.

This diasporic theological discourse rejects a rigid perspectivalism and militant particularism in their emphasis on a unified self with a single and essential identity.¹⁰⁸ Rather, this diasporic discourse operates “in an endless exercise of human and social translation”¹⁰⁹ and attempts to overcome binary oppositions and biculturalism, “resulting in a very paradoxical and alienating situation involving a continuous twofold existence as permanent strangers or aliens, as permanent

¹⁰⁷ Fernando F. Segovia, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement,” in *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, ed by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 57-73.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Ann Tolbert, “Reading for Liberation,” in *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, p. 274.

¹⁰⁹ Fernando F. Segovia, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement,” p. 61.

‘others.’”¹¹⁰ In this existence, as Segovia says of himself, “it is this diaspora in which I find myself ‘thrown’ (*arrajado*) as a human being, as a critic, and as a theologian; it is this diaspora, therefore, that serves not only as a fundamental constitutive factor for my social location but also as a point of departure for my critical and theological voice.”¹¹¹

Life in the diaspora as permanent stranger and alien in a process of constant translation, reminds us of the existence of other human beings, as ‘they’ struggle for life and betterness of life against sustained discrimination and rejection, dehumanisation and socio-political and cultural devastation. The diaspora provides a model that defamiliarises one’s own tradition and generates a new experience of a “liminal self-conscious world between cultures,”¹¹² where difference and critique dwell together. Thus, Fernando F. Segovia emphasises,

the voice of our otherness becomes a voice of and for liberation: not afraid to expose, critique, and provide an alternative vision and narrative; grounded in mixture as something not to be eschewed and marginalized but valued and engaged; and committed to the fundamental principles of freedom and justice.¹¹³

Here, emphasising freedom and justice is not an individualistic act but a communal act. In this new communal perspective, the communal act is to create a community

¹¹⁰ Fernando F. Segovia, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement,” p. 62.

¹¹¹ Fernando F. Segovia, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement,” p. 61.

¹¹² Paul Rabinow, *Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco*, p. 39.

¹¹³ Paul Rabinow, *Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco*, p. 67.

that is interdependent and multi-cultural in dialogue, in an effort to promote freedom and justice for humanity. For this vision, we need a new identity that is, as Boyarin says, “ethically appropriate only when the cultural identity is that of a minority, embattled or, at any rate, non-hegemonic,”¹¹⁴ for the absolutisation of any particular group leads to the denial of the ethical constraint on the others.

In this sense, the diaspora is characterised as a model; as Boyarin says “Diaspora provides the model, and only in conditions of Diaspora can such a resolution be attempted.”¹¹⁵ In Christian Theology, this condition is the event of Christ who is on the border between God and humans, and between humans: *kenosis* enables us to realise the border condition as a way of doing theology, and of escaping territorialising tendencies. This means breaking one’s own totality, solitude, and particularity. Thus, cultural and nationalistic conflicts and differences can be resolved through diasporaic identity and the life of being a stranger and sojourner. This condition provides us with an instrument of de-territorialisation and directs us towards the borders, in expecting a “better country” or “promised land;” it is not a conversion to the other’s identity nor becoming the other. Being in the diaspora means to become wise and to actively participate in liberating praxis.

In the same way, the starting point of theology is not an abstract concept, but a concrete praxis that establishes a space and a language for critique and self-critique in radical openness; it is a constructive reflection upon strategies of emancipatory

¹¹⁴ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 256.

¹¹⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, p. 257.

action. Thus, theological education should start from the inter-cultural ethnography in evaluating the present human condition, and the “strategies of cultural critique need to become intrinsic to theological critique in theological education.”¹¹⁶ And, if theological education is to restore the human condition, its task is to commit to creating a space where everyone participates without discrimination, violence, or totalisation.

Having realised that the self is not a pre-given, but comes into being by and through the act, Christian identity does not originate from the beginning as clearly defined, but, rather it is a task within the world. Theology reflects on the possibilities of coping with this task.¹¹⁷ From this perspective, theological education should become a discourse through which students critically engage and challenge diverse cultural discourses, and examine the historical, social, political and economic factors that concern us in the present situation. Theological education through cultural critique, signifies a shift away from Eurocentric master narratives, and offers a transcultural approach of de-centering and of border-crossing. It constructs an ethical space that offers the possibility of extending these ideas to the wider public discourse of social relations. In other words, it is a call for intellectuals to assume responsibility for social justice, economic equality and human rights in a wider sphere, in an effort to produce social change.

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process.
Education either functions as an instrument which is used to

¹¹⁶ Mark K. Taylor, “Celebrating Difference, Resisting Domination,” in *Shifting Boundaries*, p. 274.

¹¹⁷ Werner Jeanrond, “The Problem of the Starting-Point of Theological Thinking,” in *The Possibilities of Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p. 86.

facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformation to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.¹¹⁸

Theological education should challenge the students to go beyond any particular cultural and theological understanding, and engage in acts of constant translation and critical dialogue with others, in order to recognise theological inquiry as an emancipatory praxis that transcends differences.

3. From self-development to human solidarity

The inter-cultural dialogue or dialogical relation makes ‘us’ re-define the meaning of human relation, by locating ‘us’ at the edge or border of our own culture and all other cultures. The significance of dialogical encounter, here, is not just to understand and re-evaluate ourselves in the light of other cultures, or to understand other cultures and recognise their values. Rather, the dialogical significance of critical self-reflection of all the parties or cultures involved, is located in ethical responsibility for each other. If this dialogical significance does not go beyond the cultural boundary, but remains within the pursuit of one’s own development and discovery, then there is a danger of re-building the boundary again, or re-crossing back to one’s ‘own’ territory. Consequently, this relation must be based on the

¹¹⁸ Richard Shaull, “Foreword” to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire, trans. by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1984), p. 15.

ethical responsibility of 'togetherness,' indicating an ultimate future, otherwise, we will repeat the same mistakes all over again.

As the inter-cultural encounters and studies indicate, what we are looking for is not just an authenticity of identity, but a kind of identity that follows and contributes to human togetherness and ethical responsibility for all. This is not just emphasising one's cultural uniqueness and difference over against the others in setting of public policies or educational developments. It should be done in conjunction with a recovery of the way in which human togetherness can be achieved. The implication of inter-cultural discourse is focused on ethical space, a third space of 'in-between,' as each culture comes out from its own territory to the border and gains the meaning of 'the third' through the effects of dialogue. The implication of inter-cultural discourse in the third space is not an expression of a theoretical understanding, but is rather a way of living actual life. With this intention, the purpose of dialogical relation of being human means human solidarity.

In the light of the history of mankind viewed through a post-colonial discourse that re-iterates the ethical responsibility for the Other, the act of God in Jesus is the supreme act of ethical manifestation for all. The Incarnation is the greatest outpouring of God's own self to this world - *kenosis*, that is the act of God in relation to the world and the embodiment of God in Jesus, with the world. In his act, the Incarnate Word living 'among us' creates a different space, where everyone can engage. The act of God in Jesus, is an ethical one of self-emptying, not a

theoretical one for Christians exclusively, and therefore, Jesus is the dialogue itself in God's relation to the world.¹¹⁹

Ethical responsibility in dialogue, as shown in this act of God - the Incarnation, restores the possibility of hope, peace and justice in human solidarity for all, since the act of God in Jesus, is the willingness and its manifestation to be with the world. It is participating in the event of Jesus, as David Kerr describes the act of God in Jesus: "His lived message was world-denying only in the conditional sense of opposition to the tragic human temptation to espouse the lower values of transient creation." Hence, in this ethical priority, dialogue restores humanity from "a moral disqualification of humanity,"¹²⁰ and from an institutionalised Western Christianity that "deprives man of his freedom, of his responsibility, of his self-respect."¹²¹ What is restored through the dialogue based on ethical responsibility is hope in the humanity God creates, and deepening that hope in faith. Dialogue is an act for the future. The more we Christians participate in the event of Jesus, the more we understand how God has willed to communicate with all human beings through Jesus, and the more we will understand each other. Having a dialogue means going toward the border that constitutes a mystery and assumes the ethical responsibility for all. This is not a search for a new territory in which to stay or double/multiple belonging to the territory, but rather acknowledging a limitation, from which a new border-crossing or exodus begins toward hope in God and humanity, in its becoming.

¹¹⁹ David Kerr "Christology in Christian-Muslim Dialogue," in *Christology in Dialogue*, ed by Robert F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), p. 206.

¹²⁰ David Kerr, "Christology in Christian-Muslim Dialogue," in *Christology in Dialogue*, p. 206.

¹²¹ Ismail al-Faruqi, *On Arabism: Urubah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1992), p.99, Cited from David Kerr, "Christology in Christian-Muslim Dialogue," p. 207.

It is only through dialogue that Christianity can discard its Western clothing, clothing which has provided the idea that Western Christianity is non-historical one and ethically innocent, free from cultural limitations and ideologies.¹²² At the same time, one's particular cultural militantism (or militancy), as well as in non-Western culture, can be overcome and freed in the acknowledgement of limitedness and the hope that comes from it. In this critical sense, dialogue enables us to achieve a self-distantiation from the inherited tradition or belief and opens us to a vision of hope in the good, and justice for all. This is not to close oneself up in subjectivity on the basis of one's freedom, but means being responsible for the Other and standing in an ethical space. Moreover, as seen in Levinas, it is a breaking of 'my' narcissistic world of self-development, a conversion to a radical reversal or reorientation of the self, in favour of justice for all.

Dialogue or the dialogical process rehabilitates the structure of academic study that has been supporting the *status quo* on behalf of the dominant tradition and professionalised intellectuals, and uncovers the hidden layers of ideology and power-relations. As the meaning of dialogue is "talking through" the barrier,¹²³ its function is to 'break-through' (or break-down) familiar and comforting categories.¹²⁴ Thus, pedagogical sites must have a vision that is not content with the status quo but is dedicated to transforming the very conditions that promote such conditions. In one

¹²² Johann Baptist Metz, "The 'One World': A Challenge to Western Christianity," in *Radical Pluralism and Truth: David Tracy and the Hermeneutics of Religion*, ed by Werner G. Jeanrond and Jenniffer L. Rike (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p.205.

¹²³ David Kerr, "Christology in Christian-Muslim Dialogue," p. 207

sense, dialogue has a diagnostic function in examining the historical, socio-political and economic factors of the present discourse, to give the intellectual or educational system the most serious ethical obligation and responsibility for the oppressed or victim. Since religion is a response/protest and “fundamentally a defiant gesture” against the problem of suffering, from an affirmation of life,¹²⁵ dialogue is religious and theological in the way in which it protests the power-relation that causes suffering, and demands an ethical action for it. Theology and its task are profoundly based in the human historical situation. Religious hope means that all are required to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8).

Being engaged in dialogue means resisting the power of oppression and manipulation and the dangerous illusion of pure reason and rationality, in the hope of peace and justice for all in human solidarity, in the future. Dialogue is a theological act of faith following the *kenosis* of God in Jesus. In the dialogical event, the temporal moment becomes the realisation of the ultimate meaning that comes from the future. In this vision, we reject the recovery of the self in terms of its self-identity, but rather promote a ‘togetherness’ that is conditioned from the ‘oughtness’ animating one’s ethical action in relation to the Other. The ‘oughtness’ of ethics orients the discourse that links the socio-political setting and subject-religious experience, and puts them into faithful action for justice and peace, in human solidarity. Theology as a form of dialogical discourse functions as cultural criticism

¹²⁴ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutical Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 269.

¹²⁵ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 280.

in questioning the ethical question and criticising self-development, and offers a new affirmative vision of the future.

Christianity is a religion of ethical responsibility. Our relationship with God is ethical, proclaimed by the prophet Jeremiah “to stand up for the poor and the needy is what I call knowing Me - says Yahweh” (Jer. 22:16). The ethical demand of the Other is required in Christianity; doing justice to the Other brings ‘us’ closer to God. This is taking responsibility for the Other, not just representing or scapegoating the Other for ‘me.’ Taking responsibility breaks the mechanism of ‘sacred violence’ as shown in the event of Jesus, and means recognising the silence of the victim, listening to the voice of the victim, and defending the victim:

A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.
(Matt 2:18 and Jer 31:15)

5. Beyond Interpretation

The starting point of theological thinking is to be found not in the classical epistemological and ontological representation, but in concrete responsibility for the Other, as God acts in solidarity with the world in the event of Jesus, the incarnate

word engaging in a dialogical relation. The dialogical relation does not happen simply in relation to one another, but in relation to a third one, the divine initiative in overcoming the infinite gulf between God and man. In this respect, what is being proposed is our participation in the event of Jesus, not a particular quality of his personhood, especially in relation to other cultures and religions. The event of Jesus reveals, as in Girard, the victim based concept of the sacred in religion and the community as falsehood. The event of *kenosis* as God's incarnation, secularises the sacred structure and mentality that creates a separation from the Other. The *kenosis* as God's self-revelation, questions the human idea of truth and its related ideology. This kenotic act of God in Jesus brings a new meaning of God and man into the discourse, and liberates from the myth that held human thoughts for a long time. It has a significance for today: it leads to an effort to integrate one's subject position (traditionally of the West) into a continual change of its existence that can only be sustained by the global historical development of the humanity. This means positioning oneself within the network of different others, and orienting oneself in this relation and developing a new sense of attitude and of responsibility to respond to the Other, in committing oneself in the relation.

Theology as a reflection on *kenosis* opens new possibilities in theological discourse, in understanding God, self and world, and in developing and promoting self-critical thought for a new form of discourse. It reclaims the mystery of God who has been domesticated by theological dogmatisms and a rational-functionalism that "opens the door to idolatry, and the dominant idols are, in the end, those of the powerful." Hence, "if we let human beings design God, then the socially dominant

result will not be a deity fitted to the needs of the oppressed of the world.”¹²⁶ This kenotic theology based on the incarnation suggests an alternative, it re-defines the meaning of Christianity within our own culture;

The only way to communicate Christian faith with passion in a culture like ours without asserting cultural dominance in a way that is offensive to our neighbors and at odds with the central themes of the Christian stories is to keep rejecting the advantages that Christianity’s residual cultural status could provide. We as Christians have to keep making ourselves into outsiders who can speak with a prophetic voice.¹²⁷

Participating in the event of Jesus means identifying with the oppressed, because solidarity with the victim and the oppressed is solidarity with God. Christian life consists in following the kenotic life of Jesus, the mystery of God, as Christians reflect the ethical responsibility taken by God in Jesus, for humanity. In this ethical responsibility that exists in a physical setting, theology should be able to provide insight into the contemporary human living situation and public discourse, and see the trace of God in others, in ordinary discourse. It raises a question and initiates a discourse that breaks the totalising system and monologic discourse of the world: silence is not possible.

In theology and Christian living as the border-crossing, we do not claim any territory as home; we break tribal identity and the solitude of the subject into a relation with others in a proximity that preserves the Other’s mystery from

¹²⁶ William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 16.

totalisation. The goal of Christian hermeneutics is to reveal the mechanisms of oppression and violence, and expose them in the light of ethics as the first philosophy, and then rehabilitate them for the sake of freedom and justice in human solidarity before God. This is to uncover the structure of *our* desire and violence, and see the truth of the victim as articulated in Isa. 52:13-53:12., witnessing the event of Jesus, the Man-God. The starting point of theology should be based on the vision and hope for the future from the victim's perspective - a participation in God's initiatives toward the world in history: with the prophetic suspicion that conceives of history as unjust and broken. This is to take responsibility for the oppressed and the victim and through the vision of the future that renders hope, we have faith in God.

What is important is not a theoretical understanding, but our commitment and attitude, the sense of faith that relates ourselves to the Other in an ethical relation of dialogue, in its becoming. In kenotic praxis, there is an exodus toward the Other away from 'home,' into the border. This means dialogising and responding to the question of the Other; it is to live and grow as we learn and hear the voices of others and to engage in discourse with them for the joint-inquiry towards hope for the future - peace, justice, and human solidarity - that comes from faith in God. Therefore, dialogue re-claims our human togetherness and solidarity in action before God, in "the desire for a better country" (Heb. 11:16), the great time of carnival in which everyone participates and shares in new life.

¹²⁷ William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 178.

Conclusion

This study is about the ethical relation to the other, and as the *I* have studied the other, the *I* have been interpreted and interrogated by the other. This study has endeavoured to expose the inner mechanism of human societies in its tendency to essentialise *I* and to totalise and fix *others* in the system of representation, as shown in the dominant Eurocentric discourse that divided the world into 'the West and the rest' and even in contemporary multiculturalism in the West. Since the same mechanism has operated within Western theological discourses, its relationship with other religions and traditions has also existed within a self justifiable totalising system, marginalising and demonising different others. Moreover, religious institutions have played a role to justify such 'violences' as the energy of social system, since they maintain the *status quo*. Thus, this study shows how deeply rooted this mechanism is, within our cultural formations, socio-political systems and even theological discussions.

In this contemporary theological discourse, therefore, we need to question the fundamental assumptions and unexamined traditions of religious orthodoxy and its cultural system, in order to break the totalising system and then, place them in relation to others. This critical discourse has not only relativised the dominant Western discourse, but also exposed essentialising and totalising tendencies in non-

Western discourses which articulates only their own difference and uniqueness against all that is called 'Western' (i.e. militant particularisms and tribalisms). This means that theologians need to transform themselves from traditional intellectuals or theologians who are instruments of particular traditions, to become critical theologians who are aware of the ideological underpinnings of the particular opinions they express, and who are willing to listen to the others, and moreover engage in dialogical relationships.

Thus, theology should be a dialogically engaging discourse that places us into a relation with others, reverses the mechanism of totalising power, and awakens a sense of responsibility that comes from justice for all. This dialogical engagement reflecting the Incarnation of Christ, God's engagement to us, should be a theological consciousness and attitude that commits people to dialogical interaction with others. Theological discourse should be self-critical and creative at the same time, since there is no room for monologic truth that pretends to be the ultimate word. This dialogically engaging theology should be an open and evolving discourse, since theology is not a set of doctrines, but that which shows what it is to be human and what a human being ought to be in a real living relationship with others. It should be rooted in the future and in the process of realisation of a goal that is always yet-to-be-achieved. Everything must be viewed in the light of the question of the future, so that a particular culture or tradition cannot be closed within itself as something already made or completely finished, but rather something that is open and unfinished, and to exist in the future. We need a theological discourse that faces the

future, the future redemption of the entire creation, the consummate fulfilment of all things.

Theology that exists in the hope of future can save religion from the self-isolation, and become a critical public discourse that questions and challenges the socio-political ideology and its mechanisms which marginalise and oppress people. Theology thus becomes a critical way of resisting hegemony and identifying with those who are its victim, in an attempt to achieve the vision of future - peace, justice, love and human solidarity - that comes from faith in God.

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